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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**EMBARGOED TILL AFTER DELIVERY**

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF SPECIALLY TAILOR-MADE PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG ATHLETES TO PURSUE THE OLYMPIC DREAM WHILE GOING THROUGH TERTIARY EDUCATION IN REPUBLIC POLYTECHNIC**

Singapore Table Tennis Association (STTA), Republic Polytechnic (RP) and Singapore Sports School (SSP) are pooling efforts to create a specially-tailored programme that will meet the educational and training needs of young athletes like Pang Xue Jie and Isabelle Li. This exclusive programme will meet the demands of the professional sport and allow the athletes to concurrently pursue the Diploma in Sports and Leisure Management.

This partnership creates an exceptional programme that allows Xue Jie and Isabelle to train with the National Team under the guidance of Coach Zhou Shusen and Coach Jing Jun Hong in the morning (9 am to 12.00 pm) and pursue their studies in the afternoon (1 pm to 3 pm) and night (7.30 pm to 9.30 pm) at SSP from Mondays to Thursdays. Please refer to Annex 1 for the detailed training and academic schedule. Academic staff from RP will conduct lessons at SSP and private make-up lessons are available when the athletes return from overseas tournaments. The duration of the programme is three years, which includes 24 modules, an Industry Immersion Programme and Creative Engagement. Xue Jie and Isabelle will commence their classes in March 2011 and are expected to graduate in 2014.

“STTA believes in the holistic development of our local sporting talents in table tennis and we are committed to providing the best opportunities for our athletes. STTA, RP and SSP have put in special efforts to develop this programme as we understand how critical it is to provide our youth paddlers the support and resources they need to compete and succeed in table tennis and in life,” said Er Lee Bee Wah, President, STTA and Member of Parliament for Ang Mo Kio GRC.

“I would like to thank RP and SSP for partnering STTA in providing opportunities for our top youth talents. We hope that our players will continue to work hard and achieve greater sporting achievements for Singapore.”

Dr Michael Koh, Senior Director Academic Services and Director of the School of Sports, Health and Leisure at Republic Polytechnic, said: “RP is committed to helping Singapore’s young athletes, chasing their Olympic dreams, to realise their aspirations and to receive a sound education for a sustainable future.

“Through this collaboration between SSP, STTA and RP, we would like to emphasise that sport and studies can be integrated seamlessly. With discipline and drive on the part of the athletes, a good infrastructure and steadfast cooperation between the institutions, athletes today can be rest assured that we have their interests at heart. Hence, we groom budding stars like Xue Jie and Isabelle to be qualified professionals for the growing sports and leisure industry, supported by a diploma that is academically-rigorous and industry-relevant.

“This will certainly equip them with the necessary skills set for second careers when their sporting careers come to an end and they prepare to contribute in turn to the further development of their chosen sport in other ways.”

Mrs Deborah Tan, Principal of Singapore Sports School, added: “This specially customised RP-SSP DSLM will provide the academic flexibility for both Xue Jie and Isabelle to pursue their sporting dreams without compromising their academic aspirations. This collaboration with RP and STTA is unequivocally a testament of our commitment to provide suitable post-secondary pathways and customised solutions in nurturing the future talents of Singapore sports.”

“I would like to sincerely thank STTA, RP and SSP for initiating and developing this programme for us. With this new initiative, it gives me the freedom to pursue my Olympic dreams and at the same time completing my studies,” said Pang Xuejie.