

Tree climbing group gets into the swing

The sport is finding more enthusiasts, with the number of members of the only tree-climbing society here doubling

BUSINESS manager Khan Hong Chiew, 48, thinks he might have "monkey blood" in him, and he tried to test this out when he took his daughter Elizabeth to Marina City Park to attend a tree-climbing class.

But Miss Khan, a 21-year-old administration officer, was not taken with her father's antics.

She kept yelling: "Dad, what are you doing? Don't rip the tree bark off!"

Strapped to a harness and using ropes to pull himself up, Mr Khan was happily hanging off a three-storey-high tree as other climbers and park-goers watched his progress upward.

He said: "The thrill is getting to the top. I've tried rock-climbing, but that is more strenuous. With tree-climbing, you can sit on the harness and relax for a while, appreciating the breeze and the view. It's really quite easy, and fun."

But all this would not have been legal without his trainer, Miss Valerie Law, the founder

of Singapore's first and only tree-climbing society.

The 23-year-old undergraduate lobbied the National Parks Board (NParks) about two years ago for access to trees in parks. She also had to cajole the Registrar of Societies to register her group, by convincing it of the legitimacy of the sport.

Finally, in September 2000, NParks allowed the so-

ciety's members to climb trees in Kent Ridge Park, Marina City Park and Pasir Ris Park.

And the Registrar of Societies gave her the green light after she told it that tree-climbing was a well-respected sport in the United States and Japan.

She also showed it her training certificate from US association TreeClimbers International.

She has climbed about 50 trees since she started two years ago.

When the Sunny Island Tree Climbers Society was



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By ALICIA YEO