

Sea change in Singapore's maritime past on display

By JOANNA SEOW

A CHART of Singapore's surrounding waters could take a year to be prepared in the past.

Information on the depth of the water and any rocks, reefs or wrecks would be passed from a hydrography department to the cartography department, before the charts were drawn by hand by cartographic workers like Madam Loh Yuen Hoe, 65.

"It's an interesting job because you get to know what is happening underwater and we can visualise beyond the surface of the sea," said Madam Loh, who retired this month.

The former higher technician of cartography at the Maritime

and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) recalled going to India for training in the earlier part of her 45 years of service.

It was only in 2000 that a computer system that could prepare charts in three months was introduced.

"Through updating charts, we can see the changes to Singapore's coastline," said Madam Loh, adding that her work has helped her to understand the nation's transformation better.

She was one of around 40 maritime pioneers who attended the launch of the inaugural Maritime Heritage Exhibition yesterday.

The free exhibition showcases the transformation of Singapore's sea activities, and will be open



Transport Minister and Second Minister for Defence Lui Tuck Yew (right) and staff of the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore looking at beacon lights at the Maritime Heritage Exhibition at Marina Bay Sands. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

from 10am to 9pm daily until Friday at the Marina Bay Sands Event Plaza. The event is organised by the MPA and its partners.

Transport Minister and Second Minister for Defence Lui Tuck Yew opened the exhibition as part of the launch of this year's Singapore Maritime Week, which also runs till Friday.

The series is in its 10th year and features 30 events, including dialogues and social events.

Some 54,000 public participants and local and international delegates from the port authorities, companies and educational institutions are expected to attend the events, which will include a maritime technology conference for the first time.

At the exhibition, multimedia presentations and artefacts are on display, including the engineering certificates and discharge book of retiree Ron Pereira, 74, a marine surveyor of 44 years.

"We would file reports on ship repairs and ship casualties, making sure things were done according to specifications," said Mr Pereira, whose discharge book is a record of his five years of sailing.

After the 1978 Spyros tanker explosion, the industry finally started to catch up on safety standards, he added.

He said: "Now every shipyard has to have a properly trained safety officer... People are more educated about safety."

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