

Treasure Singapore's maritime past

As someone who has been advocating that serious efforts be taken to research and record Singapore's maritime past, I was thrilled to learn about the launch of the Maritime Heritage Fund "to get people to delve more deeply into Singapore's shipping stories" ("\$500k to fund projects on S'pore maritime past"; last Sunday).

While the fund was being launched at the Asian Civilisations Museum, a parallel event was being held at the Sentosa Boardwalk.

Under the leadership of Captain Frederick James Francis, a number of maritime-related civic organisations have come together

to showcase a variety of projects to promote an appreciation of Singapore's maritime past.

Among the projects are a collection of artefacts related to the seas around Singapore, an e-book containing the recollections of the pioneer generation of Singaporean seafarers and a Museum On Wheels (an enterprise by the students of Raffles Institution).

Happily, both the National Heritage Board and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore have supported these projects.

To move forward, I suggest that encouragement be given to the establishment of a Maritime Heritage Centre, which could serve as the base for all maritime-related heritage activities.

Notable examples of such centres can be found in Hong Kong and Sydney. These have become major tourist attractions – a point that the Singapore Tourism Board would no doubt take note of.

The jewel in the crown for such a centre would be the housing of the Tang Cargo. It would be a wonderful gift to the nation if this valuable collection of Ming Dynasty porcelain could be unveiled to the people of Singapore on our country's 50th birthday.

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