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New initiatives by the National Heritage Board (NHB) aims to get young people interested in Singapore's heritage and promote heritage education for life.



One of the exhibits at the Tanjong Katong Heritage Lab.

SINGAPORE: Culture, Community and Youth Minister Lawrence Wong re-traced his footsteps as a schoolboy in a trip down memory lane on Saturday (Oct 11). It was part of a charity walk organised by his alma mater, Tanjong Katong Secondary School (TKSS).

To preserve the history of the neighbourhood, a heritage corner - called the Tanjong Katong Heritage Lab - has been set up. It aims to cultivate a sense of belonging among students and engage the community. Students will also be trained as guides to conduct tours for fellow schoolmates and the community.

One of the student guides is 15-year-old Haikal Afiq Mohd Rizal. He said: "I get to be more exposed to the history of the development of Tanjong Katong - that is very much related to the development of Singapore."

James Sim, an alumnus of TKSS, also reminisced about his school days: "(The) post office is very old, the wanton mee is very famous, and so is the tau kwa bau (stuffed fried beancurd) also. Brings back old memories, old friends."

This is part of a School Heritage Corners Programme, where the National Heritage Board (NHB) works with primary and secondary schools to provide funding and advice on the design and

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curation of such corners. Schools will be funded up to a maximum of S\$50,000 or 50 per cent of the total project costs. As of 2014, there are 15 schools under this programme.

"With this new heritage lab, you can learn why Tanjong Katong is special," said Mr Wong. "You can learn about how the school contributes to the community. You can preserve memories from the past, some of the memories we have, but more importantly, I hope the students will be able to create their own memories, so that they can pass it on to the next generation, to future students."

He added: "We want to do more to help our young get in touch with our history and heritage, because that's an important part of strengthening our identity as Singaporeans. And that's why we are always looking out for creative ways to nurture this passion and love for heritage."

Soon, tertiary students will also get more opportunities to develop their interest in heritage. The NHB and the Singapore Management University will sign a Memorandum of Understanding to explore more areas of cooperation. This comes on the back of Singapore's first museum studies course, launched earlier this year. The course is offered by Singapore Management University's School of Social Sciences.

NHB hopes such initiatives will help grow a pool of passionate and capable heritage professionals.