

Teens can now apply for ham radio license

Teenagers as young as 16 can now apply for amateur radio licences.

Mr Goh Chee Wee, Minister of State for Trade and Industry and Communications, said the minimum age for applicants has been lowered from 21 to 16.

Amateur radio operators, better known as ham radio enthusiasts, operate their own radio receivers and transmitters and communicate with other enthusiasts all over the world as a hobby.

Mr Goh said in his speech at the Ninth International Amateur Radio Union Region 3 (IARU 3) conference on Monday that amateur radio operators had proven to be a useful backup resource for governments in times of emergency when other radio communication facilities fail.

He said the new requirements are part of the Telecommunication Authority of Singapore's efforts to encourage younger Singaporeans to take up the hobby.

There are about 90 enthusiasts here, 71 of whom are members of the Singapore Amateur Radio Transmitting Society (SARTS).

SARTS member Chew Lip Heng, 27, an administrative officer with Raffles Medical Group, said: "There aren't many young amateur radio hobbyists here. The mean age is between 40 and 50."

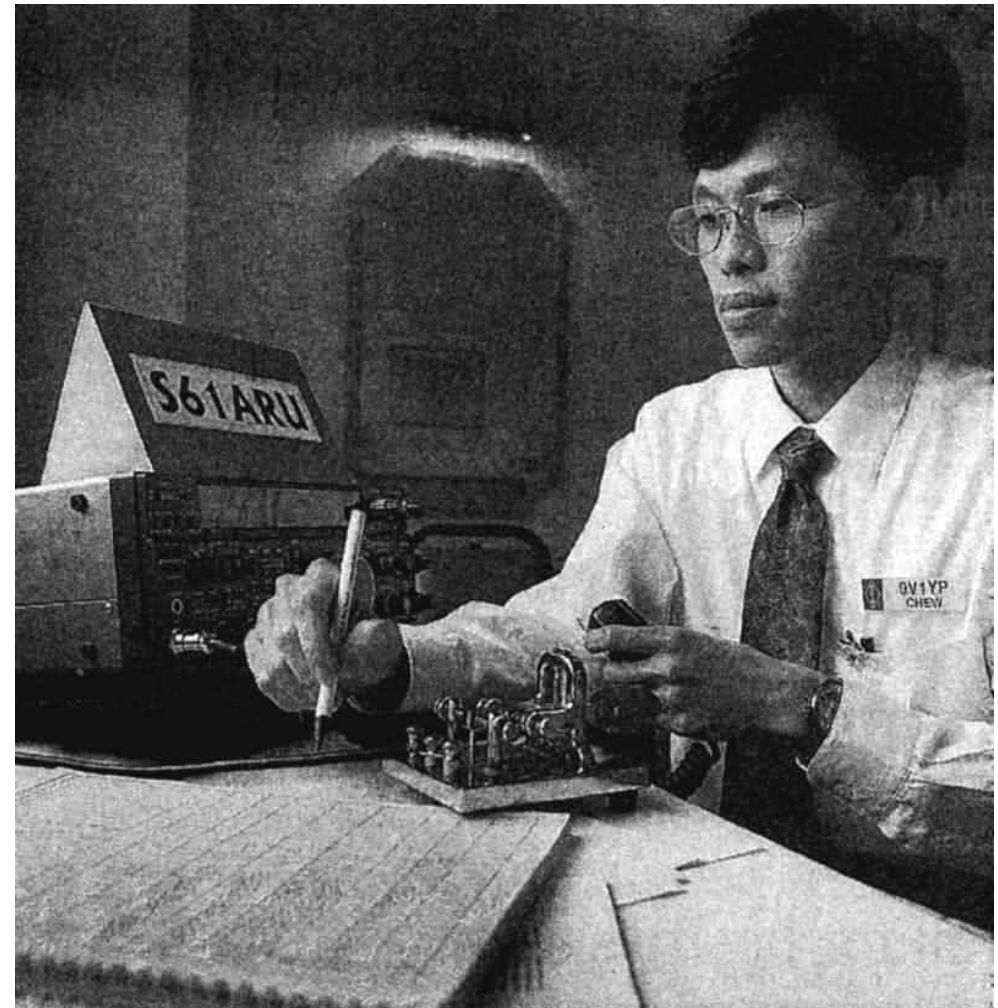
The hobby can be expensive – low end radio sets cost about \$2,000 - but enthusiasts insist it is rewarding. Said Mr Chew: "It's very exciting and expands your horizons. I've spoken to seamen on ships near Antarctica."

Some members have even constructed their own radios. SARTS president K.C. Selvadurai, 62, corporate finance consultant at DBS, said sets can be built for \$200 to \$300.

Those interested in taking up the hobby must first obtain an Amateur Radio Licence from the TAS.

There are two classes of licence. For the General Class licence, applicants must pass a written test and morse code test. The Restricted Class licence is for those who have passed the written but not the morse code test. They are restricted to transmitting on fewer frequencies.

For more information, call TAS on 1800-538-5060.



Singapore calling: Amateur radio enthusiast Chew Lip Heng, 27, jotting down the particulars of a man from South Korea whom he has been speaking to over the radio