

**Straits of Malacca and Singapore Survey**

It was announced a few weeks back that a key hydrographic survey within the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore was underway, as part of the Marine Electronic Highway (MEH) Demonstration Project, a regional project that IMO is executing for the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/World Bank. The purpose is to produce an updated electronic navigation chart of the area.

In mid-February the specially-refitted survey vessel MV *Arifah Adni* sailed from the Loyang Offshore Supply Base in Singapore to the survey site, with surveyors and crew from GEMS Survey Limited and the MEH Project Oversight Team which included six hydrographers from Indonesia (Dinas Hidro Oceanografic Office (DISHIDROS)), the National Hydrographic Centre of Malaysia and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.

Surveyors were using shallow-water multi-beam and side-scan sonar technology to acquire accurate hydrographic data, including the location of any obstructions such as wrecks, covering an area of 621.28 square kilometres around the One Fathom Bank area, representing around 14% of the total area of the TSS. The target area has a depth of less than 25 metres and, it is understood, some parts of the target area have been resurveyed at various times between 1972 and 2005, but this latest survey will provide completely up-to-date data. The effort involved calibration of survey instruments and deployment of tide gauges and 50 days were set aside for the task, including two port calls in Port Klang.

According to IMO this US$2.754 million contract was signed on 20th May last year between GEMS and IMO, following an international competitive tender process. The MEH Project aims to establish a regional mechanism in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore for enhanced maritime safety and marine environment protection, in a co-operative arrangement with the three littoral States (Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore) as well as the Republic of Korea, the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO). It is understood that the demonstration project will link shore-based marine information and communication infrastructure with the corresponding navigational and communication facilities aboard transiting ships, while also being capable of incorporating marine environmental management systems.
This MEH is being built on a network of electronic navigational charts using ECDIS and environmental management tools, all combining in an integrated platform covering the region that allows the maximum amount of information to be made available both to ships and shipmasters as well as to shore-based users, such as vessel traffic services.

The overall system, which will also include positioning systems and real-time navigational information such as tide and current data, as well as the provision of meteorological and oceanographic information, is designed to assist in the overall traffic management of the Straits and to provide the basis for sound marine environmental protection and management. Funding for this hydrographic survey comes out of a US$6.86 million grant agreement signed in June 2006 between the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/World Bank and IMO.