

The tragic expedition

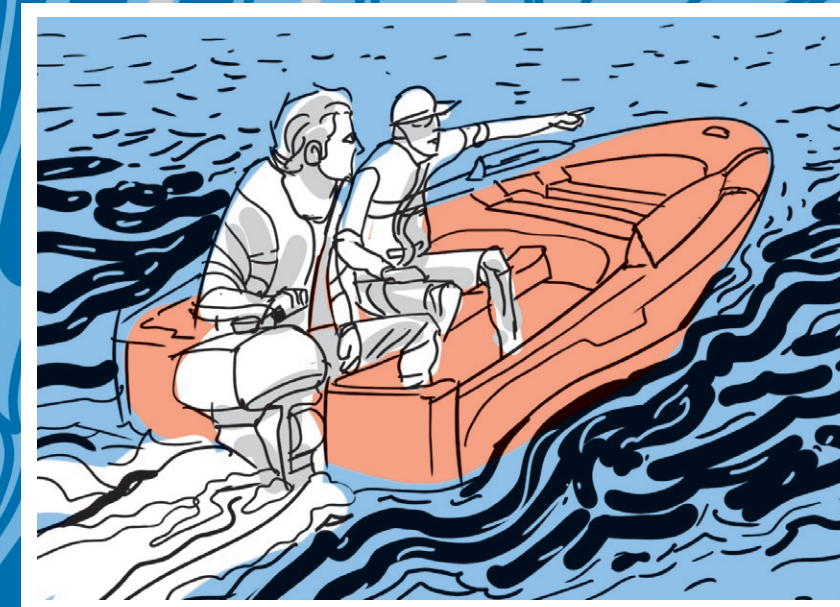
1 The group of 15 departed from Mersing on Aug 8 in high spirits. Before they headed out, expedition leader Goh Khee Wei told the group to keep close together while kayaking.



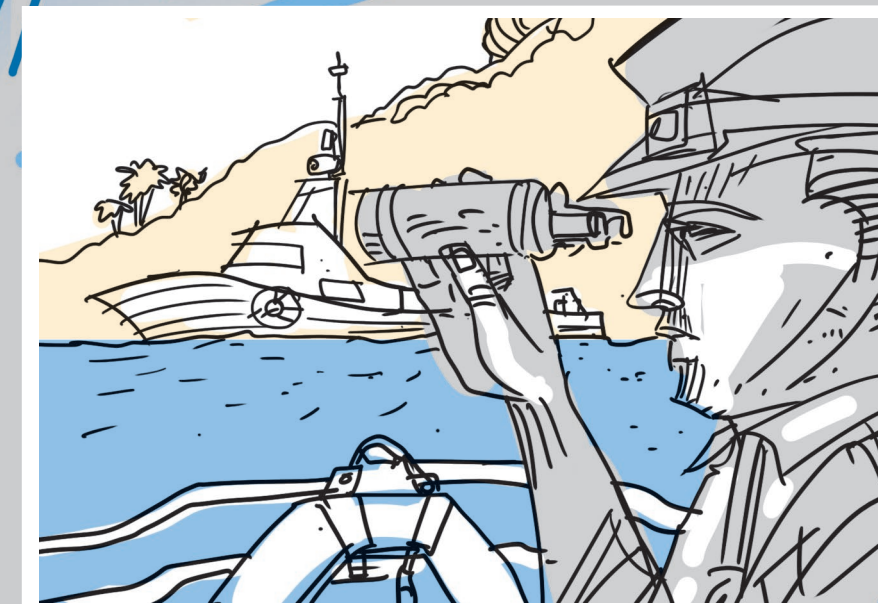
2 While the group was heading towards Pulau Mertang Timur - the intended destination of that leg of the expedition - strong winds blew and the waters became choppy. The kayakers struggled to stay on course. The eight kayaks started drifting apart in the rough weather.



3 Meanwhile, the safety boat, which carried the team's tents and other supplies, had gone ahead of the pack and anchored near Pulau Mertang Timur. By that time, the kayaks had drifted some distance from one another. One had even gone off course. One team member said he saw Mr Goh and his kayaking partner on another nearby island. The team waited for the last kayak, which carried Madam Puah Geok Tin and Mr Tan Eng Soon, to arrive on the island, but they never did.



4 One of the expedition members, Mr Tay, went out on the safety boat together with the boatman to pick up Mr Goh and his partner, before heading out to look for the two missing paddlers around 6pm. After it started to get dark, the four gave up the search and returned to the island where the other kayakers had set up camp. There was no reception or network on the members' mobile phones.



5 The next morning, around 7am, Mr Goh went out on the safety boat to the mainland to get help. A police report was made at 10.30am, according to the Malaysian authorities. A search and rescue team was activated at Penyang jetty in Mersing at 3.30pm to look for Madam Puah and Mr Tan.