

Chingay goes to the heartland

70,000 in Woodlands, Sembawang, Yishun get to watch parade

TWO days after Marina Bay was lit up by the Chingay performances, the festivities made their way to the heartland last night.

The 3½-hour procession - organised by Sembawang GRC and the single-member constituencies of Nee Soon East and Nee Soon Central - brought the annual street festival to the doorsteps of residents living in Woodlands, Sembawang and Yishun.

About 70,000 people joined in the revelry.

This was the second time the parade has come to the north of the island, after its debut in 2008.

The parade will make its way to Tampines and Chinatown this weekend.

About 100 performers on 13 colourful floats thrilled residents along the 28km stretch, which started from the open field beside Causeway Point shopping mall in Woodlands and ended at Yishun Avenue 9.

The parade was launched by Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan, who is also an MP for Sembawang GRC. Several other MPs were also present, including Senior Minister of State for Law and Home Affairs Ho Peng Kee.

To engage residents in the festivities, organisers arranged a mass renewal of marriage vows for couples married 20 years or more on the sidelines of the parade.

About 150 residents aged five to 76 also got into the action by performing in an eight-minute dance segment. Woodlands resident Hairiah Hamzah, 62, who was among the crowd outside Causeway Point last night, said she last saw the Chingay parade about 10 years ago when it was held at Orchard Road.

"I find it troublesome to travel, so it is great that it is here in my neighbourhood this year," she said. "I can experience other cultures, and the floats are beautiful."

AMELIA TAN



Residents of Woodlands, Sembawang and Yishun had their skies lit up by a spectacle of bright, multicoloured floats such as this one by the Singapore Flyer. The float carried the Flyer and winged horses as it moved down the 28km route from the open field beside the Causeway Point shopping mall in Woodlands to Yishun Avenue 9. ST PHOTOS: DESMOND WEE



One of the floats carrying a flying horse was damaged before the parade started. Workers managed to mend the damaged head, and the float continued on the 3½-hour procession, making its way under this bridge at Woodlands Avenue 3.



Mr Khaw (centre), MPs and PA officials mingling with 50 PAP Community Foundation kindergarten children after the launch of the parade. The 50 children, picked to symbolise the 50th anniversary of the People's Association this year, were also dressed to welcome the Year of the Tiger.