



Mr William Tay, 62, overseeing a bitumen-content test with technician Rabiul Islam Abdul Mannan Mir, 39. Accreditation means clients have confidence in the on-site concrete and steel test reports. PHOTO: ZINKIE AW FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

# No accreditation means no business

FOR CAST Laboratories, standards and accreditation are the basis of its entire business.

The company, which began as a small concrete-testing facility in 1981, now tests materials used in the construction, shipyard, oil and gas industries, here and abroad.

Its adoption of standards, starting in 1988 with Civil Engineering Testing certification, was prompted by the Government's move to get such laboratories' test certificates recognised, says Mr William Tay, its executive chairman.

Customers insist that testing, calibration and inspection services are done only by Singapore Accreditation Council (SAC) accredited labs.

Without accreditation there would hardly be any business.

For CAST Laboratories, accreditation meant customers could trust that its on-site concrete and steel test reports were accurate and reliable, and it led to a larger and wider client base.

Cost can be a big barrier to adopting a standard and gaining accreditation, says Mr Tay.

He says: "For all standards, when a new version comes out - every three to five years - we have to upgrade by getting new equipment."

He notes that to upgrade to the Advanced ISO/IEC 17025 Non-Destructive Testing equipment, for example, would cost up to about \$500,000.

He notes that the company is

now facing one consequence of strict accreditation criteria.

He explains that accreditation is specific to a laboratory's location and if it were to move its machines to other premises it voids the accreditation.

Hence, CAST Laboratories will have to go through the process of re-gaining accreditation when it vacates its Defu industrial estate premises some years from now.

This is because the estate is slated for redevelopment and the industries there will have to move out by 2019.

However, Mr Tay says, CAST Laboratories will still go for accreditation.

"We are 30 years in the business and making money; so getting accreditation must be worth-

while."

He adds: "Spring helps with support, too. For example, it helped cover the costs of flying in a trainer from New Zealand to train staff in an upgraded standard in June this year."

## ISO/IEC 17025: 2012

■ **What it is:** Requirements for organisations conducting testing and calibration; to ensure they develop a management system for quality, administrative and technical operations.