

ADVERTORIAL



Charting their way forward

After switching careers, Ms Nurfaezah Ithnin and Ms Gho Sze Kee are now making waves in the maritime industry

BY HAZEL TAN
SPH Content Lab

Singapore is well known as a maritime hub, playing host to more than 130 of the world's top shipping groups. Although Singapore does not produce any oil, it is the top bunkering port in the world and one of the world's busiest global hub ports.

Career initiatives

Given the diverse nature of the maritime industry, Singaporeans can choose to pursue courses and careers in seafaring, shipbroking, marine insurance, as well as maritime law and arbitration, to name a few. The wide range of options in the maritime industry means that both fresh graduates and mid-career professionals can find a job that is the right fit for them.

Agencies such as Workforce Singapore (WSG) and the Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) collaborate with the maritime industry to organise regular industry talks and career fairs.

In 2013, Ms Nurfaezah Ithnin attended such a talk by e2i, which opened her eyes to the possibilities of a seafaring career.

Today, the 25-year-old is a seafaring Deck Cadet at Pacific International Lines (PIL), a shipowner and operator that offers container and multi-purpose services at more than 500 locations in 100 countries. Within two years, she has already called on ports in Brazil, China, Seoul, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Bangladesh.

On shore-based jobs, Ms Gho Sze Kee left a decade-long career practising law to join the maritime sector. Ms Gho is now the Deputy Claims Manager at The Shipowners' Club, providing expertise in maritime law and marine insurance claims handling.

These two women are among the many now seeking new horizons, dispelling the notion that a maritime career is more suited for men. From embarking on seafaring careers to lending their expertise in maritime law, they are making waves in the maritime industry.

Tripartite Nautical Training Award

In her previous job as a bartender, Ms Nurfaezah felt that her job prospects were limited. After she attended a maritime talk organised by e2i, she was hooked.

In 2014, she enrolled in the Tripartite Nautical Training Award (TNTA) initiative and began training towards her Certificate of Competency (CoC) 3 to be a Class 3 seafaring Deck Officer.

The TNTA is a train-and-place programme with an intention to hire deck officers. The programme is funded and supported by WSG, e2i, Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU), Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) and shipping companies.

Ms Nurfaezah recalls: "Originally I thought the programme would be very theoretical, but it is actually very hands-on. For example, when you are on cargo watch, you have to look out for cargo that is coming on board and check if there is any damage – these are not things you learn in a textbook."

Earn as you learn

The TNTA consists of three phases: 6-month pre-sea classroom training, 18-month on-the-job training onboard a ship, and a 7-month classroom examination preparatory course.

Participants will receive a monthly stipend of between \$1,200 (Phase 1) and \$1,400 (Phase 2 and 3) as part of their training allowances. Ninety per cent of the programme's fee is

funded by WSG, e2i and SMOU. Trainees only pay the remaining 10 per cent.

Ms Nurfaezah, a chemical engineering graduate from Temasek Polytechnic, was the recipient of the Most Outstanding Cadet (second runner-up) in 2014. She won the award for academic excellence, good conduct, leadership, teamwork, initiative and responsibility.

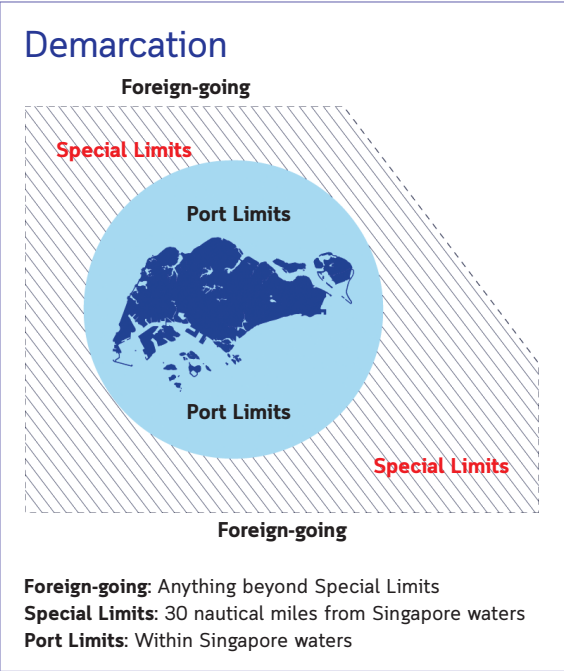
Shortly after completing her 6-month pre-sea classroom training in 2014, she had her first voyage on one of PIL's vessels for six months, learning the ropes on the open seas.

On why she loves the job, she says: "I like always being on the move, and the job is not repetitive. I am not the type who can sit in an office doing office work. Plus, I was being paid as I was studying, how many people get to do that?"

Being able to sail and visit countries around the world is a bonus, she adds, although the vessels do not always dock for long at the foreign ports.

So far, she has clocked 18 months on deck, serving on PIL's M/V KOTA LUKIS and M/V KOTA HARUM.

Another programme that others can also consider is the CoC (Special Limits) Deck Officer course. This is an intensive 24.5-month training programme which comprises 4 training phases and provides a new route for locals to work as a deck officer on board vessels plying within Special Limits.



Making waves

As a seafaring Deck Cadet, Ms Nurfaezah works with a multinational crew on board and is responsible for keeping watch on navigation and cargo, as well as maintaining the ship structure.

Being one of two female cadets admitted into the TNTA in 2014, Ms Nurfaezah is among a handful of women who have taken on a seafaring career in a largely male-dominated industry.

"At times, it is still a culture shock for the crew to see a woman working on a ship. In the past, there were some who would tell me that this was a man's job.

"But I believe I have convinced them and proven that a woman can do the job as well," says Ms Nurfaezah, who is preparing to pursue the next phase of her studies at the Singapore Maritime Academy to achieve her CoC as a 3rd Officer.

Her ambition is to be a Ship Captain. Her advice to other women who aspire to a maritime career is to be strong, both mentally and physically.

"Know your ability and your limits, there will be people who will help you. On the vessel, officers and the crew members must work together. You have to rely on one another, so it is important that you build good relationships with the team," she says.

Switching careers

When Ms Gho Sze Kee decided to make a career switch to spend more time with her family, her instinct led her to pursue her interest in maritime affairs.

Now, as Deputy Claims Manager at The Shipowners' Club, the mother of two young children aged eight and five couldn't be happier.

"One of the reasons I left legal practice was due to a lack of work-life balance," says Ms Gho, who holds a law degree from King's College London in the United Kingdom.

She had interned previously at Messrs Ang & Partners, a boutique maritime law firm, and found maritime law fascinating.

In 2012, she embarked on a new career in marine insurance, taking up the role of a claims handler at The Shipowners' Club, a mutual insurance association with more than 6,500 members operating over 32,000 vessels.

The club offers protection and indemnity, legal assistance and defence cover, as well as associated insurances to smaller, specialist vessel owners, operators and charterers around the world.

Constantly evolving

"I like the fact that the maritime industry is constantly evolving. This means that my job is never boring," says Ms Gho.

"There are always new case laws, as well as legislations and conventions to learn about. It is interesting to see how maritime laws continue to develop and evolve to deal with issues," she adds.

While she did not have to undergo much specialised training, Ms Gho says she had to keep up with the evolving trends influencing the global maritime industry, and understand the risks and liabilities club members face when operating their fleets in different jurisdictions.

"I took the plunge because I was certain that I would be able to utilise my past experience as a maritime lawyer to assist the members of The Shipowners' Club," she says.

“I like the fact that the maritime industry is constantly evolving. This means that my job is never boring.”



MS GHO SZE KEE
Deputy Claims Manager
The Shipowners' Club

The club's members are typically ship owners or demise charterers.

"Being a claims handler in the club means that I would have greater access to shipowners, and this, in turn, gives me more opportunities to interact with them and assist them in handling third-party claims such as crew, passenger cargo, collision, wreck removal and pollution claims," adds Ms Gho, who was promoted in 2013, after a year in her role.

Opportunity to travel

In her current role, Ms Gho works more stable hours. But the nature of her job requires her to be on standby 24/7 and to deal with casualties and claims immediately when needed.

She also has the opportunity to travel around the region to meet members and insurance brokers and learn about their business and operations.

Although previous experience and a basic grounding in maritime law would help aspiring job applicants, Ms Gho encourages women to give the industry a try.

"Recently, I have noticed a marked increase in the number of women working in the maritime industry.

"For example, the Singapore claims team of The Shipowners' Club is dominated by women, and in the near future, I foresee more females making greater headway in the maritime industry," she says.

“Know your ability and your limits, there will be people who will help you. On the vessel, officers and the crew members must work together. You have to rely on one another, so it is important that you build good relationships with the team.”



MS NURFAEZAH ITHNIN
Seafaring Deck Cadet
Pacific International Lines



MARITIME
SINGAPORE
CONNECT

The Maritime Singapore Connect (MSC) Office is part of a SkillsFuture initiative by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore. The unit under the Singapore Maritime Foundation works closely with maritime employers, schools and the relevant government agencies and industry associations to profile the maritime industry and connect students and jobseekers to opportunities in maritime.

Visit www.maritimesgconnect.com for more information.