

SINGAPORE MARITIME FOUNDATION

# STEERING TOWARDS AN EXCITING VOYAGE AHEAD

by wendy ng

Attracted by the opportunity to work in a dynamic sector that offers a myriad of exciting career opportunities, two MaritimeONE scholars overcame stereotypes and devoted themselves to become experts in their own fields.

**Trade and shipping** were the twin pillars upon which Singapore's humble beginnings were built.

Being a strategically located entrepôt helped to turn Singapore from a sleepy town into a bustling centre by the 19th century.

Currently, Singapore is home to one of the busiest ports in the world and the maritime industry contributes about 7 per cent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

## Making the acquaintance

TORM-MaritimeONE scholar, Sandar Koh, did not know what to expect when she signed up for the Maritime Studies degree course in Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

"It was a relatively new course. Unlike engineering or accountancy, where Physics and Mathematics are covered in the 'A' level curriculum respectively, no subject taught in junior college is able to equip me with maritime knowledge," she shares.

Her move to pursue a maritime education was incidental.

"Back then, like most of my peers, I did not know what I want as a career. However, I knew that I wanted to acquire an expertise in a field and would not be satisfied with a general degree. I wanted to major in a discipline which will open doors and lead me to a varied range of career opportunities," Sandar reveals.

"Then one day, I received a leaflet from NTU's Maritime Studies programme which highlighted the broad and diverse range of shore-based jobs that graduates from this discipline can expect to work in upon graduation. It just seemed right and without any hesitation, I applied for the course."

## Learning beyond our shores

During her third year of studies, Sandar travelled to Norway to complete a semester at the Norwegian School of Management (BI).

"Unlike undergraduates from other faculties who have to apply and go through rounds of interviews to be selected for an overseas exchange programme, all maritime

studies undergraduates need not go through these hassles and would still be able to go for a six-month overseas exchange programme as part of the course."

It came as no surprise when Sandar shared that her overseas exchange programme was her most treasured memory as an undergraduate.

"The Norwegian lecturers challenged our brains with highly interactive tutorials, such as case studies, which helped to stimulate my creative thinking. In turn, this has taught me that there is no single solution to a problem," Sandar illustrates.

"I also had the opportunity to learn and work with people of different nationalities. Bridging cultural differences is not easy and I believe life lessons learnt will be useful in the global work environment in the future."

The financial expenditure for an overseas exchange programme can be quite taxing. Fortunately for Sandar, her scholarship helped to relieve this financial burden and even allowed her to travel after her exchange programme.





**KOH HWEE KOON**  
**SANDAR**  
**TORM-MARITIMEONE**  
**SCHOLAR**

**Studying:**  
BSc in Maritime Studies,  
Nanyang Technological University

### Not your typical scholar

Unlike Sandar, Mohamed Afiq Bin Mohamed Salim knew at a young age that he wanted to carve a niche for himself in the maritime industry.

The first-year student from Singapore Maritime Academy (SMA) at Singapore Polytechnic comes from a family that is no stranger to the maritime field.

Afiq's uncle was a captain, while his grandfather worked in a maritime-related company founded by his great-grandfather.

The 17-year-old, who is a recipient of the SMA-MaritimeONE Scholarship for National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets, says, "My family members are very supportive of my decision to venture into the maritime industry. My uncle further affirmed my decision by elaborating on the diversity of exciting careers that this industry has to offer."

Afiq divulges that he has never thought of himself as "scholarship material" and was initially hesitant to apply for the scholarship

as he was from an "ordinary neighbourhood school".

"I remembered feeling disheartened when the lecturer mentioned that only five students will be awarded the scholarship. I don't have a 'Raffle-sian' background. Thus, what are the odds of getting it?"

When Afiq was shortlisted for the interview rounds, he casted his self-doubts aside, determined to make a lasting impression with the interviewers.

"I figured that grades can only carry me to as far as the interview room. But after that, it is all up to me to prove to the panel that I am worthy of the scholarship."

This strong sense of perseverance, coupled with his active involvement in the NCC, paid off and Afiq managed to bag the coveted scholarship.

### Flexibility to envision a future

Unlike traditional scholarships which come with a bond or sponsoring companies, both Sandar's and Afiq's scholarships are much more flexible.

The only requirement is for them to work in the Singapore maritime industry for a minimum of three years. MaritimeONE scholars are given the freedom to choose the companies they wish to work for upon their graduation.

This flexibility is very attractive to both Sandar and Afiq.

"Even if the job seems attractive to me when I was 18, exposure gained during university may change my mind. Being bond-free from my sponsor allows me to make a better assessment as to which career path I wish to embark on," Sandar explains.

Even though many people view the maritime industry as a niche sector, there are many career opportunities to choose from, ranging from engineering and ship financing to maritime legal and arbitration services.

### More than the naked eye can see

To those who have reservations about the maritime industry, the duo recommends doing more research before rejecting the

thought of working in the sector.

"People often associate this industry to laborious jobs at dockyards. But that's because they only see the workers in hard-hats toiling under the sun. They are not aware of the modernity and the diverse career opportunities that the sector has to offer. There are many maritime professionals who work in the comforts of air-conditioned offices," Afiq says in amusement.

Sandar chirps in, "Most people question my choice of study because they feel that the maritime industry is male-dominated. I beg to differ. Many are not aware that there is a commercial sector within the maritime industry and it is not all about building ships! In fact, most of my classmates are girls."

Ending off, Sandar advises, "There are so many varied specialisations in the industry and this provides a lifetime of interesting career options. If you want to devote all your resources and energy to become an expert in a field, the maritime industry is definitely a field you should consider." ▴



**MOHAMED AFIQ BIN**  
**MOHAMED SALIM**  
**SMA-MARITIMEONE**  
**SCHOLAR**

**Studying:**  
Diploma in Maritime Business,  
Singapore Polytechnic