

Sea of Opportunities

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IT'S KNOWN as the 3D's: 'Dirty', 'Demanding' and 'Dangerous'. Think of Singapore's maritime industry and inevitably these words spring to mind.

"In Singapore we always look to our ports as a reflection of the maritime industry. Most Singaporeans think the industry is just about container shipping," says Robin Chan, First Vice President of the Corporate Banking Department, Shipping, Offshore and Logistics with DnB NOR Bank.

In sharp contrast to these misconceptions about the physical nature of the industry, the 34-year-old spends most of his time managing regional clients from Japan and Korea.

Mr Chan, a graduate of Monash University in Melbourne with a Major in Banking and Finance, had no training in maritime studies before joining the Norwegian shipping bank five and a half years ago.

He says, "The bank would prefer to take someone with banking experience and then teach them shipping knowledge."

During his years in the bank, Mr Chan has come to enjoy the challenges posed by the maritime industry and plans to remain in this sector.

"I'm always learning here. What I like best about the work is the cyclical nature of the shipping industry which makes it a really dynamic experience," he says.

Naval Architect Haniza Binte Mustaffa has her fair share of dirt and grime over at the shipyard.

The 31-year-old project manager with Keppel Singmarine, a local company specializing in the construction of offshore support vessels and harbour tugs, is one of the rare female naval architects in Singapore.

Her current responsibilities are her 'babies': Two 65 metres long ships for Russian and Middle-eastern clients.

"As a woman, it can sometimes be difficult but I need to show power and confidence in my work," says Ms Haniza, who has been with the company for 10 years.

Her odyssey with shipbuilding began with a lifelong ambition to be an architect, where she pursued a Diploma in Shipbuilding & Offshore at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

After showing promise at her initial post at Keppel Singmarine as a junior Naval Architect, the company offered her a scholarship which covered her Advanced Diploma, Bachelor degree in the University of Glasgow and Masters of Science at the Newcastle University.

She says with a smile, "My family and friends are proud of me in that I can handle the building of a vessel."

Her contributions to the industry are crucial in establishing Singapore's

position as one of the world's leading international maritime centres.

Locally, the industry has over 5,000 companies employing more than 100,000 people. This is not surprising, given that Singapore receives over 120,000 vessel calls to our shores each year.

A big plus in the maritime industry, Mr Chan and Ms Haniza say, is the opportunity to travel.

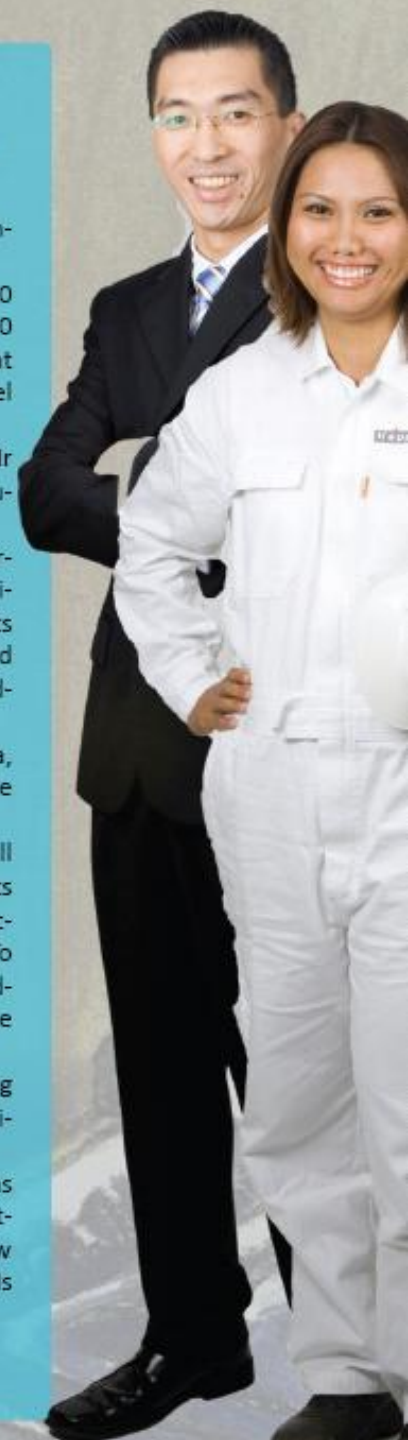
"As we handle more than just local corporate clients, there are more opportunities to travel," says Mr Chan, who visits Korea and Japan up to 10 times a year, and makes an annual trip to the Bank headquarters in Norway.

Sharing his opportunities is Ms Haniza, who recently flew to Germany to see the factory test of engines for her ships.

"After vessels are commissioned, I will go for sea trials along the Malacca Straits on the ship. It really gives me the satisfaction that it can perform as required. To top it off, I enjoyed the sea breeze and admired the peacefulness we feel along the journey," she enthuses.

But her specialization in ship-building has not narrowed her career opportunities.

"This industry has so many divisions and sections, I can choose to be in marketing, purchasing, or even research on new technologies for the future," says Ms Haniza.



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