



A Sea Of Opportunities



By **Naseema Banu Maideen**

“I love the sea. And I am beginning to love my job too,” said Mr Nur Muhammad Khayzan Abas, 28, a trainee harbourcraft steersman with Tian San Shipping (Private) Limited.

Since his first day of work on 1 October 2009, the former auxiliary police officer has been learning marine navigation techniques, mastering chart work and studying routes in local waters. When asked if he finds it tough to be at the helm of his assigned vessel over a 12-hour shift, he said: “Challenging? Which job is not? It’s all about how you manage it.”

It may have helped that his father was formerly a helmsman in the harbourcraft trade, which had Mr Nur turning up at the job fair jointly organised by NTUC’s e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) and Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.

There are 200 job vacancies for harbourcraft trainee steersman available over the next two years, but unlike Mr Nur, many Singaporeans do not come forward to take on these jobs. They usually shun this profession as it is pegged with long working hours and a demanding work environment.

During the job fair, e2i sized up the jobseekers, shortlisting those who look strong and are willing to work long hours at sea. Over two recruitment phases, 73 jobseekers were offered placements, filling 60 per cent of the 120 vacancies available this year.

Uncovering Jobs

“Harbourcraft steersman is one of those job positions that have been there, with quite attractive terms, but not many Singaporeans know about. I am glad with the support of agencies like the Singapore Workforce Development Agency and MPA, the industry is now making an effort to reach out to Singaporeans to take up these jobs.”

Ong Ye Kung, NTUC Assistant Secretary-General and Chairman of NTUC’s e2i (Employment and Employability Institute)

Rising Demand

“MPA will continue to work closely with our partners to attract more people to the harbourcraft industry. The harbourcraft industry is an integral part of Maritime Singapore and is expected to continue to see demand for quality steersmen over the next two years.”

Lam Li Young, Chief Executive, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore

Mr Patrick Chua, 38, is among those who have been successfully placed with Tian San Shipping (Private) Limited, a company affiliated with the National Transport Workers’ Union.

“I was open to all options when I attended the job fair at e2i. Career prospects in the

marine industry made me take up this offer,” he said.

A trainee steersman can earn a starting monthly salary of \$1,000 and can expect to earn about \$1,500 to \$2,000 upon qualifying as a steersman in three to six months.



A Thriving Trade

“This collaboration with NTUC’s e2i has shortened our recruitment process. We have eight trainees onboard now. More importantly, this tie-up provided an opportunity to create better awareness of the opportunities available for Singaporeans in this trade. Our trainees are exposed to work on various marine transport systems like vehicular carriers, work boats and passenger vessels and with good performance over time, they can advance to becoming helmsmen on commercial ships, as well as supervisors and trainers. We welcome more Singaporeans to come onboard as we always face an acute shortage of qualified steersmen.”

Chin Tze Chung, Senior Manager (Operations), Tian San Shipping (Private) Limited

U Fighters At Work

A “U Fighter” is a member of the Labour Movement who puts in exceptional efforts to uplift the lives of workers. Jamie Tan, an Employability Coach at NTUC’s e2i (Employment and Employability Institute), has been preparing workers for the economic upturn. In a recent posting on Facebook, a social networking website, she shares about a colleague’s encounter with a retail sales staff who has undergone training – and is proud of it.

