

## Our Past, Present & Future

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Going back to the past, almost 14 years of my sea carrier from 1983 until 1996, I never came to Singapore and it is very rare that seamen never touched down Singapore during their entire sea carrier. Looking back in December 1996, almost 18 years back when I first arrive Singapore & that was the very first time in my life, I can count from our present database, at that time there were about only 20 Mariners' families living here in Singapore & I was the junior most to be settled here in Singapore. After working quite a bit with HK & mainland Chinese, I felt myself like I was onboard a BSC ship as a Cadet Engineer at least for the first few months & I was so lucky to be surrounded by all my respected senior brothers.



During those days we were communicating with each other through our individual emails. Days passed by & our Marine Community started growing. We realized that we need to have a virtual common platform, we all need to be connected with each other, primarily sharing our professional knowledge & exchange professional ideas, then on 06 July 2009, we created our "Yahoo Groups forum" & since then we are all connected together through our common "Yahoo Groups". Later we have formed our "Working Committee" & we were guided by our Road Map. No matter whatever we can do or try to do for ourselves but it is really great to see that we have developed a very strong means to keep all of us in touch, share our feelings & remain bonded together as a big family and this is our great achievement. For the last few years, our Marine Community grew rapidly. Now we are total more than 200 Mariners' family living here in Singapore, we have submitted for registration to Registry of Societies (ROS) & waiting for the authority's approval.

We wish all of us to enjoy this forum & all the topics from our beloved members will keep all of us onboard intact. Every single member to continue sharing all their meaningful thoughts. All our members are expected some sort of self-censorship mechanism for sensitive issues which may disturb community and social harmony or can undermine our professional dignity and merchant navy traditions. Members will avoid political topics & controversial religious topics considering that we have members of different religion groups.

We are not any group of politicians, all our members are surely fortunate and lucky top professionals, for which we all should be proud of.

What is our role as an individual & community as a whole? As a member & stakeholder of our Marine Community, irrespective of academic back ground, one is responsible to maintain & uphold our Community bondage. Every single member is very important & shoulder's huge responsibility for our Community's pride. We all will surely have the freedom of expression & interacting benefits but with a high level of ethical practices. We will always have respect for each other. Our interest must be common, we may have conflict of opinions but our conflict of opinion cannot be at the cost of our community bondage. The bondage that we all have created & achieved together over all these years of our friendship, our brotherly & cordial relations, and our hard work cannot be vanished. We have to keep this bondage strong. We all have long way to go forward together & not a single member will fall behind from this long journey, we all are in the same boat now & we all will sail together. We will not think what

Community can give us, rather we will always think what we can contribute for our Community. Let's hold each other & uphold our Community, high.

As a community, our members responded to many humanitarian calls. Our financial assistance extended beyond our Singapore Marine Community, our help even extended to non-mariners Bangladeshi family as well. In recent years, we raised fund for C/E Hashim, late Capt Nasim (16), late Anwar's (25) Son Ahnaf, Ehtesham's (32) Son Faihat, late Capt Rajib's (14C) daughter's education, Non-mariner Yaedul (Bangladesh Navy), donating Blankets to the poor Bangladeshi victims and many more. It's very sure that all our members felt great & proud to be part of all these extraordinary humanitarian calls.

This is fact that being here in Singapore, we will have to face similar humanitarian calls again & again. These are not our first calls, neither will be the last ones. Our overseas brothers will come here for medical treatment & may request for financial help. Our members did their very best, we have done within our capability & limitations to go beyond our primary target to look after the interest of our own Singapore Marine Community members.

Over the last few years we lost many of our Mariners' members. To name few, we lost Fakhruddin Sir (05th Batch), Pradeep Anwar Sir (09C), Nazrul Kamal Sir (10), Rajib Vai (14C), Rahmat Ali Vai (15C), Nasim Vai (16), Shahidul Vai (17), Tir Thankar (19), Akhtar (22), Anwar (25), Shakil (25), Mofzol (28), Farhad Kabir (39) & Murad Vabi (25), we also lost 4 brothers from MV Hope, Captain Rajib, C/E Saifuddin, C/O Morshed & 2/E Nazam.

Among those, our real life shock was on 23 January 2011 when we lost our beloved brother Anwar. What have we learned from this great loss? We need to think & realize if same thing is going to happen with any one of us. We need to ask this question to ourselves, what we have done to protect & secure our family's future. There is no doubt that we all must think of our family's future, we need to protect & secure our families tomorrow. It is not an honest request for me to ask our Community to support my family if tomorrow I'm no longer in this beautiful world. More prudent way is to build our own future which will support our family in real life scenario. This is hard truth that majority of us are not prepared for our tomorrow, we really do not know our status. We all feel for our family, but this feeling is not enough if we do not take any actions, our actions must be as per our best ability. We all wish that all our members including all the family members stay fine, healthy & secured.

Let's recall few basis tasks which we all should do:

Maintain healthy life style with healthy diet/exercise. Self-awareness of Health screening, complete medical check-up at regular intervals. Personal Medical insurance policy, in addition to company policy. Personal life insurance policy as maximum one can afford, in addition to company policy. A saving for your children's future education.

Prepare one Emergency Contact list & post at your home and teach your family members how to use, this to help our family members to call in case of emergencies like Ambulance, Fire, Police, etc. Every individual to prepare his own "Confidential Data Bank" with all valuable confidential information including all your joint bank account numbers & keep with your wife. List of Assets & Liabilities. Legal documents to Make sure all assets goes to you wife and family, prefer to have "will".

Looking at the future, I strongly believe that not only in Singapore, we all professional Mariner brothers need to be connected Globally. Until now only Mariners in Singapore are connected in this forum, our

overseas brothers are not connected with our forum. With our success story, we are receiving calls from our overseas brothers willing to join our forum, we can stitch this missing link by bringing all professional Mariners around the globe. It will be good if we can create the platform here in Singapore, we can promote this via our yahoo groups & all the available websites for this cause. We will invite all professional Mariners around the globe to join our forum. We can share which are common for all the professional Mariners around the globe. To start with, we may have representatives from around the globe, one from each region like Australia, Canada, USA, UK, Bangladesh, etc. so that we can share our views beyond our Singapore which are intended for the entire Marine Community. We can make our Singapore as our Mariners' Global Hub. We all definitely need to help each other during our needs. To respond overseas humanitarian calls, as well as to support our Singapore Mariners' family in extreme scenario, we may build a "Global Emergency Fund" which may also be based here in Singapore. To execute our plan, not necessarily that we need to form a global organization, our main focus shall be our Mariners' family's welfare which can be achieved by keeping entire Marine Community around the globe connected together through a single forum.

All our real life dream is to look after ourselves, our family members & all our Marine Community members including their family members.

This was our past, this is our present & this will remain in our future to endeavor.

*[M.A. Baten from 18th Batch Marine Academy; School & College education from Faujdarhat Cadet College; COC from U.K.; Residing in Singapore since 1996 & now serving Ocean Tankers as Technical Manager]*

