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Festive Care and Share



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CELEBRATING NEW YEAR WITH A SPIRIT OF CARE AND SHARE

he doors of Fairmont Hotel Stamford Ballroom at Raffles City Convention Centre threw open, as a lion dance troupe brought tidings of prosperity at the SOS/Seacare Hong Bao Presentation and Lunar New Year Celebration. Graced by NTUC Assistant Secretary-General and Nee Soon GRC (Nee Soon East) Member of Parliament (MP) Patrick Tay, the members' exclusive SOS/Seacare Hong Bao Presentation and Lunar New Year Celebration on 27 February 2015 ushered in the year of the Goat, with a big bang.

The members, who earlier engaged in the pre-event activities of Rainbow Calligraphy, Chinese paper-cutting and instant photo booth, were kept on their toes by celebrityemcee Desmond Lim and high-energy performances such as Costume Quick Change artistry and acrobatic acts.

SOS President Mohamed Idris Mohamed Ibrahim announced that SOS gained over 1,000 members in the past year and thanked all the members for their hard work and dedication. He urged members to spend time with their family members using the five nights complimentary hotel stays at Citin Seacare Pudu Hotel in Kuala Lumpur. Mr Mohamed also presented the 15-Year and 30-Year Long Membership Awards to 24 SOS members for their unwavering support to the union's activities and initiatives throughout the decades. Hong bao was also given to 287 seamen who have retired from the seafaring life.



EMBRACING A SPIRIT OF CARE AND SHARE



Among those present at the Lunar New Year Celebration were residents from Asian Women Welfare Association (AWWA) Community Home for Senior Citizens, Jamiyah Home for the Aged and Sree Narayana Mission Home for the Aged Sick. Mr Patrick Tay, SOS General Secretary Kam Soon Huat and SOS Vice President Mohamad Abu Bakar distributed Hong Bao and festive gifts to the residents. Twenty attractive prizes were given away by SOS Treasurer David Sim during the Lucky Draw.

The audience also took photographs with six God of Fortunes who came around to distribute door gifts. Some of them even touched the heads of the God of Fortunes, a gesture believed to bring good luck.

May the Year of the Goat bring greater success and good luck!























I am heartened to see SOS also paying special attention to their retired members. Seacare as a co-operative has also been doing well through its many sound investments and businesses. This also meant SOS/Seacare can do even more for members and the community at large.

– Mr Patrick Tay, MP, Nee Soon GRC (Nee Soon East)

SOS has come a long way since it was formed 44 years ago. Without the hard work and contribution of our pioneer members, we would not have come this far.

– Mr Mohamed Idris Mohamed Ibrahim, President, SOS



SOS LONG MEMBERSHIP AWARDS 2015



chieving 15 and 30 years of membership is no mean feat. As many as 24 members received the SOS Long Membership Award (LMA) this year in recognition of their tireless support to the union. Six members received the 15-year LMA while the other 18 received the 30-year LMA. The awards were presented by Mr Patrick Tay, NTUC Assistant Secretary-General and Nee Soon GRC (Nee Soon East) Member of Parliament (MP) at the SOS / Seacare Hong Bao Presentation and Lunar New Year Celebration held on 27 February 2015 at Stamford Ballroom, Raffles City Convention Centre.



At SOS, there are plenty of opportunities to upgrade ourselves. SOS sponsors courses and gives grants for various maritime-related courses and programmes so I can keep up with the changing times and learn new skills. I'm thankful for the union's support and welfare for all these years. I know that the union will be there to help me whenever I encounter any problems.

– Mr Foo Sei Quan, 65, 30-Year LMA recipient

I am glad that SOS recognises and appreciates the contributions of the older generation. Thank you for giving me this award. SOS not only looks after the members, but also takes care of our families. I have six kids and the study grant offered by the union is very helpful in alleviating my financial burden.









Long Membership Award Recipients

15 years:

- 1. Samsidi Baderi
- 2. Mohd Salleh Mohd
- 3. Jumahat Juli
- 4. Tan Meng Chiang
- 5. Amran Matsom
- 6. Salehuddin Khalil

30 years:

- 1. Zaini Buang
- 2. Mohd Salleh Hamsi
- 3. Teo Chik Kheng
- 4. Yong Sian Teck Calvin
- 5. Abu Mudjin Abdullah
- 6. Su'aini Ahman
- 7. Hamzah Paradi
- 8. Abd Rahman Ahmad
- 9. Selamat Seman

- 10. Goh See Teng
- 11. Kwan Siew Cheong
- 12. Boh Hai Kok
- 13. Liang Jip Men
- 14. Foo Kok Chan
- 15. Foo Sei Quan
- 16. Wong Ngiap Wee
- 17. Mohd Hisham Hassan
- 18. Chor Meow Yam

ACTIVE MEMBERS MAKE STRONGER UNIONS

elegates called it a positive, empowering and energetic conference.

The 2015 Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) West Coast State Conference, 'Active Members make Stronger Union' held from 24 to 27 February in Fremantle, Australia gave global maritime unions a common ground for upholding and sustaining their core values.

The four-day conference has attracted hundreds of unionists and delegates from the international maritime community. These delegates came from as far as the United States of America, United Kingdom and the Asia Pacific regions such as New Zealand, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea.

SOS Executive Secretary Daniel Tan and Industrial Relations Senior Executive Chen Chuanyi who attended the conference shared that it provided ample opportunities for delegates to exchange their views of events on the maritime front.

At the conference, MUA Western Australia Branch Secretary Christy Cain spoke about the virtues of solidarity and internationalism, such as how working together with international unions was mutually beneficial.



Following his presentation, Mr Tan shared SOS's perspective on internationalism and the union's dedication in improving ties with fraternal unions - which is a cornerstone of SOS's policy.

As one of the panellists in the discussion on internationalism and local activism, Mr Tan discussed Industrial and Union relations on the international scene and shared the advantages of strong local and regional solidarity among fraternal unions.

It was a productive and fruitful conference which ended with a spectacular Gala Ball.

APSRC, APRC MEETINGS IN MANILA

he International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Asia Pacific Seafarers' Regional Committee Meeting (APSRC) took place in Manila, Philippines on 10 February 2015. The meeting was attended by seafarers' unions from other regional countries such as Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Korea and Japan.

SOS General Secretary Kam Soon Huat was joined by four other SOS officials, ExCo member Shena Foo, Assistant Director Sharon Li, Executive Secretary Daniel Tan and Assistant Secretary David Shoo, at the APSRC 2015, chaired by Mr Yasumi Morita, President of All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU).

This year, the committee adopted resolutions which included Shipboard workload fatigue and manning; Fair treatment of seafarers; and Employment scams. The committee also discussed the implementation of the Congress Resolutions and considered some of the issues under the Section Work Programme.

Other items on the agenda included maritime projects and activities in the Asia Pacific region as well as enhancing the affiliates and Secretariat cooperation in the implementation, monitoring and reporting stages of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) in Asia Pacific.

APRC

The SOS officials also attended a two-day ITF Asia/ Pacific Regional Committee Meeting (APRC) held on 11 and 12 February 2015. The meeting, chaired by Mr Hanafi Rustandi, President of Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia (KPI), allowed transport unions from different sectors in the region to highlight the challenges they faced and discuss solutions to improve the effectiveness of the trade union movement as a whole in the region.

Discussions on the APRC agenda this year included Regional Projects and Priorities, maintaining and supporting sub-regional programmes to deliver the four-year work program, and strengthening regional participation and membership.

At the meeting, Ms Sharon Li, co-chair of ITF Young Transport Workers Committee gave the participants an update on the progress and development of youth programmes and ongoing initiatives under the ITF Young Transport Workers.





At APRC 2015: (from left) SOS ExCo member Shena Foo, Assistant Director Sharon Li, ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton, SOS General Secretary Kam Soon Huat, Executive Secretary Daniel Tan, and Assistant Secretary David Shoo.



DEVELOPING A ROADMAP FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT



he National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Membership Seminar 2015 saw 162 unionists from 60 NTUC affiliated unions and associations jointly discussing and creating a roadmap for implementing the 4Ps (Protection, Placement, Progression, and Privileges) for every worker.

SOS General Secretary Kam Soon Huat, Treasurer David Sim and Assistant Secretary David Shoo, were among the gathering of union leaders who met in Shenzhen, China. Held from 12 to 15 March 2015, the seminar's agenda encompassed brainstorm sessions and activities that would help unions reach out to a new group of workers - the Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technicians (PMETs). Unions will have greater PMETs representation when the changes to the Industrial Relations Act take effect from 1 April 2015.

The main feature of the seminar was a dialogue session chaired by NTUC senior management that examined diverse issues encountered by affiliated unions and associations. Ideas and feedback were gathered from the participants. The spirit of camaraderie and solidarity among the union leaders was further strengthened through bonding activities and collaborative discussions. All united for the good of the unionists and workers!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2015 - APPRECIATING HER



n conjunction with International Women's Day, National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Women's Development Secretariat (WDS) organised a series of events and activities to recognise the many roles and contribution of women in society. The celebrations commenced with a pre-teaser event held at Raffles Place Park on 3 March 2015 where members of the public were invited to come forward and pen notes of appreciation on postcards to the women in their lives. After dropping the cards into a special red post box, WDS mailed the cards out for them. This tiny gesture



conveyed a heartfelt appreciation of the women who wear multiple hats to fill different roles in our society.

The celebration of International Women's Day 2015 - "Appreciating Her" snowballed to other major events happening that weekend. Some 2,000 union members and their families gathered at Downtown East on 8 March for a day of fun and bonding. NTUC President Diana Chia, then NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say and current Secretary-General Chan Chun Sing joined the celebrations to give special recognition to 64 women who had contributed and excelled in their respective workplaces. SOS ExCo Member Shena Foo served as a chaperon for women from the education sector who were honoured at the ceremony.



NTUC WDS expressed their dedication to helping mature women workers return back to the workforce. Around 17 employers from sectors such as food and beverage, education, healthcare, hospitality and retail were invited to set up booths at the first large-scale job fair of the year.

"Many women job seekers who have been out of the workforce for some time, are worried that they may not be able to fit into their new workplaces or are unable to perform new tasks. To enhance their employability, we will be supporting them with pre-training to refresh or acquire new knowledge and regain their confidence to return to the workforce," said Ms Sylvia Choo, Director of NTUC WDS.

Other fun activities at the Downtown East which included mass dancing, singing and contest for best decorated hats, had all the participants on their feet for a good laugh. In support of the event, The Seacare Hotel also sponsored a 3D2N stay at its Ocean Suite, including breakfast for two as one of the lucky draw prizes.



ACHIEVING COMPETENCE IN THE GALLEY



new batch of Ship's Cooks was affirmed of their competence to work onboard in the galley, after completing a string of theoretical training and stringent assessments under the Seacare Thrift Certified Cooks Training Course on 7-8 April 2015.

Under the instruction of former Executive Chef Maximillian Theodore, the 10 cooks from Ocean Tankers learned the different aspects of food handling onboard vessels as stipulated by the Maritime Labour Conventions (MLC) 2006, which include sanitary food practices, dietary nutrition and personal hygiene.

The Indonesian Ship's Cooks likewise reinforced their understanding of basic cooking techniques, food storage, menu planning and the ordering of stores, among the topics listed under the guidelines of the MLC.





"They now have a stronger grasp of food handling onboard and what is required of them as professional and competent Ship's Cooks," said Maximillian Theodore.

"We covered a lot of topics during this two-day intensive training. The pictures, videos, quizzes, discussions and role-plays kept the trainees engaged throughout, which also made the lesson fun and interesting.

"I'm glad that they are more confident Ship's Cooks now, especially after clarifying many of the common problems they face in the galley," he added.

Trainee Agus Wardani, a 24-year-old AB-Cook agreed: "I now understand about safe food preparation and the different ways of cooking and thawing food. I also learnt about virus and bacteria... Previously, I had no such knowledge."

According to International Labour Organization's guideline on the training of Ship's Cooks, it is important that galley personnel are trained not only on cooking and nutrition, but also in areas such as food storage menu planning, sanitary food practices, and personal hygiene.



Maximillian shares ways to thaw meat safely

- Put raw meats on the bottom shelf away from ready-to-eat food and thaw it overnight.
- Hold the food under cool, running water (21°C or less); never put it under warm, hot or standing water.
- If left to thaw in still water, remember to change the water after every 20 minutes.
- Defrost in a microwave oven. But once defrosted, you must proceed to cook and serve it right away.





Seacare Thrift is an approved training school recognised by the Director of Marine, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA).

Its Certified Cooks Training Course for new and existing Ship's Cooks complies with the requirements of the Maritime Labour Convention, Regulation 3.2 Standard A3.2 for the training of Ship's Cooks.

Find out more about the different courses provided by Seacare Thrift Tel : (65) 6379 5666 or email : thrift@seacare.com.sg

SOS SOCIAL & WELFARE ACTIVITIES FOR FY 2015/2016 (MEMBERS RELATED EVENTS)





* Please note that the date / event / venues as tabled herein are subjected to changes.

SEAFARING - AN IMPORTANT CHAPTER IN SINGAPORE'S HISTORY

Ex-Bosun, Nazarudin Nandok shares his life experience at sea.

or a young nation plagued by scarcity of job and resources in the early 1960's, seafaring was then a popular career choice among able-bodied young men, especially those who resolved to improve their living conditions.

The opportunity to sail across the globe and experience what the world had in store for them was equally enticing for this demographic of Singaporeans, known as Post-war Baby Boomers, or what is known today as the Pioneer Generation.

"Back then, to be able to see the world, discover bizarre places and meet people from different countries and cultures suited me very well," said Mr Nazarudin Nandok, a former Bosun, who started sailing when he was 18.

"Many of my friends told me to go sailing, they said it's good money. The newspapers also featured seafaring careers. Life was tough, so I went ahead. Our household income





was only \$190, there were 10 siblings to feed at home and they needed money to go to school," said Nazarudin.

Providentially, seafaring and harbour jobs were prevalent and were encouraged by the government, given Singapore's potential to be a regional maritime hub with its geostrategic location and deep waters.

"In those days, we enjoyed the currency conversion from working onboard foreign-flag vessels, just like how migrant workers today enjoy our strong currency. There was always enough money to send back home every month," he recalled with a smile.

The Unsung Heroes

From a larger economic context, seafarers, like Nazarudin, play an important role in shaping Singapore's success as a regional maritime and trading hub. With its port among the largest in the world today, the republic is also one of the world's largest importers and exporters.

"More than 90 percent of the world's cargo is transported by sea, so it is fair to say that seafarers play a pivotal role in facilitating international trade," said SOS General Secretary Kam Soon Huat.

"Seafarers are often the unsung heroes. They face harsh weather conditions and sometimes undergo long working hours with little rest. Many have been denied their wages or were left stranded onboard when shipowners decided to abandon their ships," Mr Kam explained.

"Of course, the working and living conditions onboard have improved drastically in recent years, with the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention, but the prospect of spending months at sea and away from their loved ones is still a challenge for many today," he added.



A Global Experience

Trying circumstances like these have moulded Nazarudin into the man he is today.

"Many people said seafarers are typically easy-going and humorous, and at the same time, possess a quiet inner strength, which I believe is true, because we are always determined to get things done, however difficult the tasks."

"You need time and life experience to cultivate such strength," he said, and jokingly added that time is never an issue for seafarers "especially when you are stuck in the middle of the Pacific Ocean."

"Having sailed around the world three times, when you see the diversity out there, you naturally feel humbled and small. All these change your perspective on life and make you wiser and more forgiving."

On being a Bosun

Nazarudin attended a threemonth training school which he described as "an old steamship, Marudu, anchored near the old Clifford pier", before he was officially recruited as a Deck Boy.

"After one year of experience, I became a Sailor. I had to learn the ropes fast, be hardworking and learn to deal with different people, foreigners, their cultures, and how they lived," he recalled. It took him another four years to become an AB (Able Bodied Seamen) and a lot of experience and hard work before he was eventually promoted to the position of a Bosun, a responsibility that required multiple skills, such as wire splicing, supervising the Ratings, and reporting crew-related concerns to the Chief Mate.

In addition to handling the different aspects of seamanship, Nazarudin had to learn navigation, cooking, signalling and engineering; in short, "Everything under the sun," as he puts it.

Vivid Memories

During his lull period which usually lasted a week or two, before embarking on another 6 to 8 months of seafaring, Nazarudin would share his fascinating encounters at sea with his family and friends.

Some of his most vivid memories included narrowly escaping a fire that engulfed cruise ship Rasa Sayang in 1977 which killed five of his fellow ratings; as well as being compelled to sing the revolutionary workers' anthem at Chinese ports, during the Great Cultural Revolution.

Now in his late 60's and a grandfather of two, he still keeps the stack of photos he took with his seafaring 'brothers' in their younger days, their 'travel footprints' covering the Louvres of Paris to the Rio de Janeiro Carnival in Brazil.

A True Love for the Sea

According to Nazarudin, many veteran and retired seafarers still miss the beauty and the tranquility of the ocean. It's an inexpressible charm, which non-seafarers would "have difficulty understanding."

"Because we love everything about the sea, from the smell of the salt to the curve of the waves after so many years of sailing, we prefer to work in marine-related jobs, like Harbour pilot, Helmsmen or Barge Cooks," he said.

Now a captain of a small vessel, Nazarudin said he thoroughly enjoys his current job, steering small vessels on rotational shifts despite being sought after for many shore-based services.

"You can always take a seafarer out of the sea, but you can never take the sea out of a seafarer," he said with a chuckle.

Nazarudin is currently serving as a Trustee of SOS. Last year, he was honoured by the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) as one of Singapore's Pioneer Generation union leaders who played a pivotal role in tackling fractious labour issues during Singapore's post-war years.

Read our next issue for an interview with Brother Bon Sheun Ping on his life experience at sea.





SHIP FAMILIARISATION TO COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

Mr Jeffrey Chew surveying the surroundings from the Bridge



OS Standing Committee members Khoo Kai Meng and Jeffrey Chew Thiam Chye went onboard Colombo-bound container ship, APL Chongqing, from 17 to 24 March 2015, as part of the union's Ship Familiarisation Programme.

The duo, who were former seafarers, had the opportunity to observe the various duties and practices of the crew during their week-long trip, which allowed them to stay current with the latest industry practices and developments.

"This trip to Colombo was a good refresher for both of us. We learnt about the daily operations and responsibilities of the crew, and we had a wonderful time sharing experiences and exchanging pointers with the young seafarers. I'm sure the non-seafaring staff of SOS will like the experience and find it useful in their different areas of work," said Mr Chew.

Mr Khoo agreed that such opportunity is hard to come by for ex-seafarers, who often reminisce about the old days at sea.

Organised in collaboration with Neptune Shipmanagement Services Pte Ltd (NSSPL), the SOS Ship Familiarisation Programme is an ongoing effort to allow staff, ExCo and Standing Committee members to familiarise themselves with shipboard operations, latest maritime technology and working conditions of seafarers onboard.

S E A C A R E F O C U S

SEACAREFOCU







TOSS FOR GOOD HEALTH WITH JALAN KUKOH RESIDENTS









The atmosphere at The Red Star Restaurant was filled with abundance and joy with SOS/Seacare and Seacare Seafarers Club (SSC) celebrating Lunar New Year with the senior citizens of Jalan Kukoh on 3 March 2015. Around 270 senior citizens from Jalan Kukoh, Residents' Committee members, and Seniors Activity Centre members joined the annual Lunar New Year celebration this year.

Ms Kathryn Ang (bottom left), Chairperson of the Organising Committee gave the guests a warm welcome and reaffirmed SOS and Seacare's commitment to strengthen their relationship and involvement with the community.

At noon, the lunch commenced with the traditional lo hei 'tossing up' of good health and happiness to the residents. Veteran singers Lin Ru Ping, Bao Bei Sisters, Jenny, Chen Jian Bing and Wang Lei then took the stage and captivated the audience with a medley of timeless oldies and energetic dances.













Mr Allan Hui Kok Hong, Chairman of Seacare Hospitality, Mr Leow Ching Chuan, Executive Chairman of Seacare Cooperative Ltd and Mr Lee Van Chong, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer of Seacare Co-operative Ltd handed out hong bao to all the senior citizens. Thirty lucky draw prizes were also given away by Ms Jacquelyn Lam, General Manager of SSC and Mr David Shoo, Assistant Secretary of SOS. The Jalan Kukoh residents went home with red packets, mandarin oranges and goodie bags from Hockhua Wines containing honey and abalone.









GETTING A HANDLE ON SERVICE TRIGGERS

o you have the skills and knowledge to interact, follow-up and handle customers' feedback and needs? Are your skills sufficiently updated to handle challenging and difficult situations?

In order to add value to clients, Seacare Manpower Services organised a free service excellence workshop – Handling Service Triggers Effectively, which equipped participants with current and relevant skills on customer service. A total of 33 participants from over 20 schools attended the two-day workshop at Orchard Plaza that was organised over two weekends in March.

The trainer, Ms Nancy Yoong from Impact Management Seminars taught the participants through examples, case studies and role-playing in order to facilitate maximum understanding of service principles and customer satisfaction. It was time well-spent as they picked up skills that boosted their competence in handling service triggers effectively at work.



Highlights of the workshop:

- Recognise service triggers in the service environment
- Understand potential service challenges in customer interactions
- Minimise triggers in service delivery
- Use service recovery procedures effectively
- Escalate unresolved service challenges





I enjoyed this fantastic class with warm friends and trainer. No doubt a short period of two days it seems to me that all of them are my old friends. Thank you Nancy for brightening up the class.

– Luna Quek Chay Huang, Fuchun Primary School Most training programmes focus on how to handle complaints, but we focus on nipping the problem in the bud - handling the triggers to prevent complaints. It helps the participants to be more confident in handling the parents. It also enables them to be more tactful in communicating with not just parents but also students, teachers and principals.

- Nancy Yoong, workshop trainer

Nice learning journey for us in the last two days, we learnt a lot of soft skills and the trainer shared real examples which were very useful. Thank you so much!

- Kaliyamurthy Ambika, Methodist Primary Girls' School



Workshop Title: **Getting a Handle on Service Triggers** Date: **13 -14 March 2015**

Participants who have completed the workshop:

Bedok Green Pri Sch	Giam Swee Wan
Chij St Nicholas Girls' Sch (Sec)	Law Kia Lan
Fuchun Primary Sch	Alemalay D/O Vellasamy
	Quek Chay Huang
	Foong Sui Kum
Guangyang Sec Sch	Slabiah Binti Hussein
	Wong Mei Chan
Methodist Girls' Sch (Pri)	Subaidah Bte Motea
Pioneer Sec Sch	Letchimi D/O Ayasamy Letchimi Ravesadran
Seng Kang Pri Sch	Tan Pheck Tiang Amy
Telok Kurau Pri Sch	Chan Sock Fang Julie
	Juriah Bte M Yusof
Yew Tee Pri Sch	Aishamal D/O Abdul Razak
Yusof Ishak Sec Sch	Lum Chui Yoke



Workshop Title: Getting a Handle on Service Triggers Date: 20 -21 March 2015

Participants who have completed the workshop:

Beatty Sec Sch	Chan Mei Mei
	Rohayah Bte Mohamed
Blangah Rise Pri Sch	Lissy Kozhikottu
Bukit Panjang Pri Sch	Quah Koh Kheng
Chij Pri (Toa Payoh)	Teo Beng Suan Jenny
Dunearn Sec Sch	Asliyah Binte Jumadi
Fuhua Pri Sch	Ho Ai Ling
	Patricia Tan Chor Luan
Guangyang Sec Sch	Phua Meow Ling
Holy Innocents' Pri Sch	Chong Pei Ping

Kong Hwa Sch	Neo Yam Hoon
Marymount Convent Sch	Chow Mei Yeng
	Lim Siok Eng
Methodist Girls' Sch (Pri)	Kaliyamurthy Ambika
Queenstown Pri SCH	Ying Yick Ngoh
Seng Kang Pri Sch	Sam Kwai Kheng
Swiss Cottage Sec Sch	Jamila Binte Saim
Tampines Sec Sch	Mohamad Bin Syed Ali
	Sum Kwai Ling



WELCOME TO SEACARE SAILORS' HOMANILA

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Roscar Bidg

R MRT-3 Boni

Keep Yourself Safe From

The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) is a viral respiratory disease caused by a coronavirus (MERS-CoV). First identified in Saudi Arabia in 2012, it is a large family of viruses that can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The following countries have reported cases of MERS: Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (Middle East); Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (Europe); Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt (Africa); China, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Thailand and the Philippines (Asia); and the United States of America (Americas).

The Ministry of Health (MOH) Singapore advises the following health precautions when overseas:

Observe good personal hygiene at all times;

- *Practise frequent hand washing (e.g. before handling food or eating, after going to toilet, or when hands are soiled);*
- You may consider wearing a surgical mask in crowded places and avoid close contact with persons suffering from acute respiratory infections (e.g. someone who is coughing);
- Avoid contact with camels and other live farm or wild animals, including not visiting camel farms. If contact is made, thoroughly wash hands with soap.
- Adopt good food safety and hygiene practices and avoid consuming unpasteurised milk, undercooked meats, raw fruits and vegetables (unless they have been peeled), or unsafe water.
- Avoid visiting healthcare institutions in the Middle East and South Korea, unless it is necessary to do so.

