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MEDIA RELEASE

Maritime Union launches S\$1.1 million Care Fund

The Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU) has set up S\$1.1 million "SMOU Care Fund" (新加坡高级海员联合会关爱基金) to provide various assistance schemes to support needy members and their children's education in case of financial difficulties or unforeseen medical conditions.

At the SMOU 65th Anniversary Lunar New Year Luncheon and Hong Bao Presentation at Raffles City Convention Centre (RCCC) on 11 February where Mr Chan Chun Sing, Secretary-General for National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) was the Guest-of-Honour, close to 1,000 SMOU senior members and corporate guests, the highest attendance to date, were present to hear this announcement.

As the global maritime industry experiences a slowdown, such measures by the Union are a much welcomed gesture. For a start, the S\$1.1 million SMOU Care Fund will provide four types of assistance – (i) Transport Assistance; (ii) Subsidies for Assistive Devices, (iii) Bursaries for Deceased Members' Children and (iv) Caregiver Training or Subsidies.

"The SMOU Care Fund is to give our needy members a helping hand in the event of critical needs. And this fund is especially practical with an ageing population. With age, members may be more susceptible to various health problems that may affect their mobility. The funding will help alleviate their financial burden and give them an assurance that they can still continue to lead their lives as normal," said SMOU General-Secretary, Mary Liew (雷家英).

Mr Leo Boon Hui who is 77 years old this year, has been a member of SMOU for 32 years. He used to work as a Marine Chief Engineer but suffered a stroke in 1989 and has been wheelchair bound ever since. His wife is the only caregiver. With this new funding, Mr Leo can benefit from the transport assistance and assistive device subsidies to aid his day-to-day living. His wife can also benefit from the Care-giver Training. This event is Mr Leo's first attendance in 26 years ever since his stroke.



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The late 52 year old Captain Ian Chan, who had been a member of SMOU for 27 years, passed away in November 2014 due to a heart attack while working onboard a ship. He left behind his wife, an elderly mother who is wheelchair bound, and two school-going children. His wife is not working and this new Care Fund will benefit his children and give his wife some peace of mind knowing that the children's education can still continue without disruption.

As a first this year, SMOU is also providing transportation for such wheel-chair bound members or those who have physical difficulties in attending the annual Lunar New Year Luncheon and Hong Bao Presentation. Senior members aged 62 and above will receive \$65 worth of Ang Baos this year which tie in with the Union's 65th Anniversary.

Living up to the Union's core values of "Care and Share", the annual Lunar New Year celebrations are one of the many ways which the Officers' Union wear their heart on their sleeves by appreciating the elderly. More than 6,000 senior citizens have benefitted from close to half a million contributed by SMOU for more than a decade at their annual Lunar New Year celebrations. This year, some 530 senior citizens will receive more than \$30,000 in the form of Ang Baos and food aid over a series of Lunar New Year celebrations.

Contributing S\$1.5 million to members and CBA companies

Besides launching the S\$1.1 million SMOU Care Fund, the Union recognises the current challenges faced by the shipping industry such as the low freight rate and oversupply of vessels that inevitably has a trickle-down effect on our members. To cushion this impact as well as promote good labour management relations, SMOU will be contributing S\$1.5 million to the members and shipping companies. This is to encourage the shipping companies that have Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with SMOU to have training and better welfare on board the vessels. The initiative will help ensure that members continue to receive adequate welfare and training despite the economic uncertainty and it is also a gesture to thank the CBA companies for their support as a tripartite partner and tide them over the slowdown.

The Union has also named an orchid hybrid called "Dendrobium SMOU" to commemorate its 65 years of journey in the maritime industry. Guest-of-Honour, Mr Chan Chun Sing and SMOU's tripartite partners were present to unveil the unique orchid hybrid. The Dendrobium breed was chosen as it can grow in swampy



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areas, desert-like environments or even at altitudes of 10,000 feet. Its highly adaptable characteristics to break out into life wherever it goes describe the nature of SMOU. The “Dendrobium SMOU” orchid bloom is also colourful, unique and exudes a vibrancy similar to the Union, which is why it was chosen to be named after SMOU.

The “Dendrobium SMOU” is a unique ‘antelope’ or ‘horn’ orchid characterised by a strong yellow base colour with a rich brown tone, purple spatula-lip, a thick waxy texture accompanied by a light fragrance and twisting petals. The hybrid, which took four years to cultivate has won several medals at local and international orchid shows such as Silver (Red Ribbon) Award at the “Big Box-SOGA Orchid Appreciation” event in 2015, Silver Medal at the 21st World Orchid Conference in 2014; Bronze Award at the 9th China (Sanya) International Orchid Show in 2015.



Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union (SMOU)

Established since 1951, SMOU has grown from a membership base of about 400 in the 1970s to more than 29,000 members currently. SMOU plays a pivotal role in promoting good industrial relations between seafarers (members) and their employers, the ship-owners and ship-management companies, and the governments through its strong tripartite relationships with the local, regional and international maritime community. It seeks to improve the wages and working conditions of members in the maritime industry through collective bargaining agreements with shipping companies which employ them.

Since 1993, SMOU has helped distressed seafarers claim more than US\$19 million of unpaid wages. SMOU is an affiliate of NTUC and the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF). Visit www.smou.org.sg



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