

CAREERS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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Ms Joy Boo Jia Wen, assistant director, Europe directorate, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
PHOTO: JOY BOO JIA WEN



Dedicated
to the nation

A terror attack that hit close to home motivated Ms Joy Boo Jia Wen to join MFA

BY RATNA RAMLI

With her interest and academic background in foreign policy and international affairs, one would probably expect Ms Joy Boo Jia Wen to be sure of her career pursuits.

But it was not until the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks — which left 166 people dead, including a Singaporean — that she became clear of what she wanted to pursue.

That dark period was also when she graduated with a Political Science and International Relations degree from the University of British Columbia in Canada. As she followed the news coverage closely, she noticed how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) handled the situation and played an important and meaningful role. This inspired her to join the ministry to contribute to Singapore.

Ms Boo, 34, now an assistant director in the Europe directorate, has been with MFA for 10 years.

She says: “The experience has been varied and dynamic. The job has taken me to places — Kenya, Greece, Timor-Leste, Switzerland and more. I have had the opportunity to meet and befriend people from all over the world.”

Representing the nation

Ms Boo’s work involves much bilateral work with diplomats and non-resident ambassadors across the European Union and other countries. There are a lot of briefs and preparation work on the ground to deal with before every high-level visit.

The tiniest detail could mean the difference between a good, substantive discussion and an awkward, fruitless one. However, she relishes every challenge that comes her way.

“We should always challenge ourselves to do things with intent — to think of the best and most beneficial way to resolve an issue, rather than simply following precedent,” she says.

Ms Boo is proud to represent Singapore at various overseas summits and meetings.

In 2015, she interviewed several heads of international organisations to gather their birthday wishes for Singapore’s SG50 celebrations. Hearing them speak highly of Singapore’s policies and achievements made her swell with pride and realise the significance of representing the nation.

Career growth

The working hours can be long and unpredictable due to the nature of her job, but Ms Boo finds that she has grown a lot professionally with the opportunities offered by MFA.

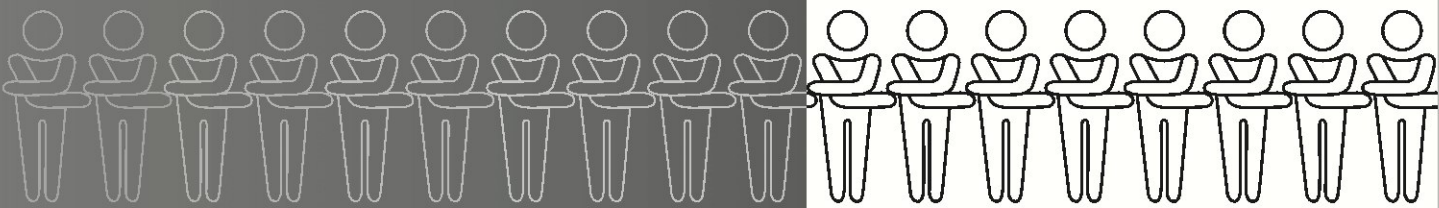
She explains: “I attended the Foreign Service Basic Programme and was on a month-long attachment to our Consulate General in Chennai, India. That shed light on what it’s like to be on a posting.

“And before I was posted as the Permanent Missions of Singapore to the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, from 2014 to 2017, I was also given language training to prepare for life there.”

Ms Boo has since returned to Singapore and is based at MFA headquarters. Most recently, she was sent on a three-week training course on the UN Convention Law of the Sea in Greece.

To aspiring candidates, she advises: “An MFA officer needs to be resilient and resourceful. We work in dynamic situations amid high pressure, so you need to be quick on your feet when it comes to problem solving. In this line, be prepared for an extraordinary and exciting journey ahead.”

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