

Engineered for success

SMRT ground engineer Ratna Yanti gets to develop various engineering skills that will help the national transport system to run smoothly

BY JOLENE LIMUCO

Ensuring that millions of people get from place to place smoothly is the mammoth task that Ms Ratna Yanti plays a part in daily.

The 29-year-old is a section manager in the Signal & Communications, Maintenance, Field Service department at SMRT Trains. In her on-the-ground engineering role, she and her team mates are responsible for the maintenance of signalling equipment that enables the trains to communicate with other trains, equipment at the stations and on the track.

The work can be challenging but Ms Ratna gets a sense of satisfaction when she is able to solve problems with her team so that train services run smoothly.

She says: "I like that the work is dynamic — it is not only limited to technical engineering. It also involves a lot of communication, planning and people management and team work."

Following her dream

The mother-of-one believes that women can do equally well in the engineering industry, which has far more men than women. In her team of 126, there are 123 men and only three women.

She says: "At the beginning, I had to keep reassuring my male colleagues not to worry about me as we were constantly doing frontline maintenance work. It was necessary to gain their trust by letting them know that I was able to assist them and address their issues when they needed help."

Yet Ms Ratna knows that nothing can stop her from following her dream if she puts her mind to it. Her interest in maths and science from young led her to pursue engineering studies when she grew up. In fact, she already knew early on that she wanted to work in the engineering field.

After graduating with a Diploma in Biomedical Engineering from Ngee Ann Polytechnic in 2012, she enrolled in the Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical Engineering) programme at the National

University of Singapore. She switched her area of specialisation in order to study something that could be applied across different industries.

In 2015, she joined SMRT as a management trainee under the Engineering & Management Associates (EMA) Programme, starting at the Signal Workshops Services at Bishan Depot. There, she managed the renovation of the mechanical workshop and worked with the Integrated Electronics Workshop to streamline work processes in the department.

After 10 months, she was posted to the Tanah Merah Signal Maintenance Office as an engineering maintenance manager. Part of her work there involved the planning and launch of the Communications-Based Train Control (CBTC) operation on the East-West Line (EWL). The CBTC system, which uses a signalling system that communicates real-time location and speed data with trackside operations, was rolled out on the North-South Line in May 2017, the Tuas West Extension in June 2017 and the EWL in May 2018.

After almost two-and-a-half years, she moved to her current position as a section manager for Signal & Communications, Maintenance, Field Service.

Continuous development

The many opportunities to be exposed to a variety of job roles appealed to Ms Ratna — and motivated her to join SMRT. The EMA Programme provides distinct tracks in engineering and management through a structured two-month foundation journey, followed by continuous training and development, and job rotations.

There is another major reason she is working at SMRT: Joining the public transport operator offers her a chance to contribute to a larger purpose. She says: "Being with SMRT gives me a chance to be a part of the team that can make an impact on the lives of people in Singapore through the smooth and reliable operations of our transport system."



PHOTO: TED CHEN

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MS RATNA YANTI, section manager, Signal & Communications, Maintenance, Field Service, SMRT Trains



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