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Ian Mak Wei

From Government to People

● Words ZHOU MEI AN
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How can a government ensure that its citizens are engaged and connected? The **Ministry of Communications and Information** is continually looking for new and innovative ways to reach out to Singaporeans, with its scholars excited to contribute fresh ideas and solutions.

The Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) is the bridge connecting the government to its people, working towards the vision of "An Engaged and Connected Singapore". MCI plays an important role in driving public communications and citizen engagement. From listening to citizens to explaining government policies, MCI ensures that Singaporeans are heard, connected, and engaged.

MCI Information Service Scholar Mak Wei Ian is at the forefront of MCI's public communications efforts, while Information Service (Translation) Scholar Noor Kamilia studies how to bridge the language barrier and communicate better to different audience groups.

CHOOSING THE PUBLIC SERVICE

"At the point of application, two things stood out," Ian recalled, thinking back to why he chose the Information Service scholarship. "The first was that the public service plays an important role in the day-to-day running of Singapore, from public transport to economic policy. The opportunity to contribute in a small way to a project bigger than myself was quite compelling."

"I also thought government communications was an interesting 'two-way street' – what makes it both challenging but meaningful at the same time is that we really have to listen to what people are saying on the ground and consciously make an effort to incorporate public feedback into our policy and communications."

LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE

Wanting to make a difference, Ian undertook a Bachelor of Arts in Human, Social and Political Science and a Master of Art in Political Science which were sponsored by MCI under the

Information Service Scholarship. He came away with a deeper understanding of the multifaceted world of government and public policy communications. "University challenged me to think more deeply about opposing viewpoints, about the reasons behind why people disagree, and hopefully come up with nuanced answers to difficult questions," said the scholar.

His studies provided him with a firm foundation to start his career at MCI, an organisation which wrestles the nuances of viewpoints and interpretations to promote understanding amongst citizens.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Upon graduation, Ian joined MCI as an Assistant Manager at the Campaigns and Production Department in MCI to be part of the Digital Communications Unit which manages the Gov.sg and other digital platforms for more effective public communications. He has recently taken on a new role at the Media Analytics and Operations Department, a team that does media sensing, analysis, cultivation, facilitation and management.

"I've had the opportunity to be involved in several marcomms campaigns and projects like the Project Youth Team, Digital First team and the Jobsgohere microsite."

His work on the jobs microsite (www.jobsgohere.gov.sg), is especially close to his heart, as some of his friends were struggling in their job search. The microsite, which was launched in 2020 and highlights sectors and job roles that are in demand, has become an excellent resource for those looking for a new career. In turn, Ian's role in increasing awareness and usage of the job portal has made a difference in the lives of many Singaporeans who are at their career crossroads.

"I think of my job scope as part writer, part social media manager and also civil servant," described Ian.

AN OPEN CALL FOR TALENT

On that note, he hopes that like-minded individuals who enjoy being challenged at work would be interested in joining MCI as well. "There is media relations work, public communications initiatives, research and policy, among others. The work at MCI is very varied and it keeps us engaged every single day!"

A CAREER LOVING LANGUAGE

FROM BEDTIME STORIES TO GOVERNMENT MESSAGES

Noor Kamilia had always loved her mother tongue. Where others saw Malay as simply one more subject in school, she was attracted by the poetic beauty and subtly ingrained in this ancient language.

It was a talk by the MCI Translation Department at her Junior College that showed her how she could turn her love of a language into a career with a purpose.

"The scholarship was appealing after I learned how using languages was going to be an important part of the job. Another aspect which spoke to me was how I was able to work for and with the community," she explained.

The interviews and tests were gruelling, but Kamilia persevered.

Her love for languages and keen interest in translation was evident to the interview panel, and she was offered the MCI Information Service (Translation) Scholarship which sponsored her Bachelor of Arts and Social Sciences at NUS.

TRANSLATING DIVERSITY INTO LEARNING

For Kamilia, diversity is crucial to her study experience. Taking a wide breadth of modules has given her the opportunity to deliberate societal issues from various points of view, while

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interactions with peers from various backgrounds have helped to develop her sense of empathy towards others.

All this will be vital to her future work as an Information Officer. "In MCI, actively communicating and being receptive to the issues faced by the citizens and other various stakeholders are crucial aspects of the job."

Additionally, as Kamilia is a Translation Scholar, she will be at the frontline of reaching out to different groups of citizens through multilingual government communications.

Now, she truly appreciates the importance of effective government communications and is eager to make a difference with MCI.

"I hope to contribute actively to increasing two-way communication between government and citizens to facilitate improvements and serve the needs of society."

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When asked about joining MCI, Kamilia emphasised having a positive attitude and an inquisitive mind. "The selection process will really give you ample opportunity to reflect on your purpose and aim in making this decision."

"Hence, have a firm personal belief in what you wish to achieve and always have a positive attitude to learn and try new things!"



Noor Kamilia Binte Junaidi

is a MCI Information Service (Translation) Scholar currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts and Social Sciences at NUS.

SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION



PROFILE

Ian Mak Wei

is a MCI Information Service Scholar who holds a Bachelor of Arts in Human, Social and Political Science from Cambridge University and a Master of Art in Political Science from Columbia University. He is currently Assistant Manager (Media Analytics and Operations) in the Media Division at MCI.