

Capt Sayed Looking forward to community service

Article by Mr Gert Witbooi, photo supplied

CAPT Mehmood Sayed, former Human Resource Manager Naval Base Simon's Town, who retired at the end of February, says he looks forward to launching a programme that will get newly qualified graduates into the job market or help them become successful entrepreneurs.

Born in Mayville, Durban, on 3 February 1962, he lived in various suburbs within Durban and was forcibly moved to Chatsworth in 1972 due to the Group Areas Act. He attended various primary schools in Durban and matriculated from the Apollo High School in Umhlatuzana Township in December 1979.

He applied to teacher training colleges and the SA Navy. Eventually he was given the nod in January 1980 as a Voluntary National Serviceman. He says he always wondered what he would have done if he had not been selected by the Navy.

In the early 1980s there were only four Indians (including himself) who had been appointed as Officers. He completed his Officers' Course at the Naval College in Gordon's Bay during June 1982. He has served at Unit, Command and Naval Headquarters level as an Officer and says he always strived to achieve the best possible pass on all courses that he attended. "My promotions up to the rank of Commander occurred in the prescribed periods. My motto has always been "to get the job done," he declares.

Other educational qualifications included a Certificate in Labour Law from the University of Pretoria, B Com (Honours) in Business Management from the University of the Western Cape (1999) and the Naval Command and Staff course (2000).

He participated in the integration of the Non-Statutory Forces into the SA Navy with the original groups, said Capt Sayed. He chose to follow a career in Human Resources (originally Called Personnel Branch) to fulfil his personal goals of helping others.

He was serving as a Protection Force member when a Commodore was arrested as a spy for Russia (then called the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics) in 1983. "When the Commodore was arrested, my colleagues and I were shocked as this Officer was very strict and seemed very security conscious. We were also glad that a spy had been caught as we all believed at that time that all communists were a threat to our country," says Capt Sayed of the episode.

Recalling other aspects of his career, he revealed that he was unable to serve on board ships due to the religious restriction of his dietary requirements (to only consume halaal meals), which the Navy was unable to provide at the time. Capt Sayed says it is "regretful" that the Navy has still not reached the stage where it can provide a reliable and regular source of halaal meals for Muslim Sailors.

He regards his biggest challenges in the Navy as the need to convince others to always do their best to assist fellow servicemen and women. He has received many rewards, including opportunities to improve his educational qualifications, overseas travel and the opportunity to serve, train and empower several fellow members and see them flourish in their personal and service environments.

Capt Sayed says he was very fortunate to participate in staff talks between the SA Navy and the Indian Navy in Delhi, India. The leader of the delegation was R Adm R.A.S. Hauter.



Capt Sayed (left) with his sons, (then) Cdr Abdul Sayed and Mid (then Seaman) Abdul-Qadir Sayed

"We conducted very fruitful talks with a major Navy, which had an aircraft carrier in its Fleet and was in the process of building an additional aircraft carrier in India. The delegation's guided tour of the Taj Mahal in Agra was a most memorable experience," he recalled.

He says Naval members must remember that they are not in a "job" but have volunteered to serve the country. "My motto is and always will be 'Pay it forward'. There will be times that you are upset or disappointed but remember you joined the SA Navy to serve."

He considers Capt Dirk Smit (Ret), with whom he served at Naval Headquarters and at Naval Base Simon's Town, as a great inspiration and mentor in his career. He also mentioned others, including R Adm B.H. Teuteberg and the late Cdr Yegan Moodley.

When asked about his legacy, he humbly replies that he could not speak about any of the "minor achievements" that he may have accomplished.

Asked about his retirement plans, Capt Sayed says that he has a keen interest in hydroponics and had grown lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, strawberries and mint at his house without soil and added: "I look forward to teaching those interested in this form of gardening how to grow healthy and pest free fruits and vegetables."

He has been married for more than 37 years and has three children and a grandchild. He comes from a Naval family as both his father-in-law, CPO A. Baker, and brother-in-law, CPO Z. Baker, served almost 40 years each in the Navy and Naval Dockyard.

His eldest son, Cdr Abdul Rahaman Sayed, served 18 years before leaving the Navy in 2021 whilst serving as Executive Officer of SAS AMATOLA. His daughter-in-law, Lt Cdr Yumna Sayed, is currently serving at Fleet Command and his second son, Mid Abdul-Qadir Sayed, completed his Officers' course in 2021 and is currently enrolled at the Military Academy.

Asked for final comments, he pleaded for naval members to get involved in society, saying: "There are so many causes we can help with, including poverty alleviation, environmental protection, animal welfare, etc. If you don't help, then who will?"