

# For duty's sake, navy officer spends CNY at sea

By GERYL OGILVY  
 geryl@thestar.com.my

**KUCHING:** Duty and country come first for Second Lieutenant Soong Wen Hui who spent Chinese New Year braving the rough seas away from her family.

The 24-year-old Royal Malaysian Navy officer was offered the chance to fly home to Batu Gajah, Perak, for the festival but opted to continue her six-month stint on board the *Gagah Samudera*, currently on its maiden voyage to Sabah and Sarawak.

She is among 17 officers, including eight other women, on a familiarisation trip to ports in the two states as part of their training programme.

Soong said spending Chinese New Year at sea did not bother her because it was part of the job.

She did not even apply for leave as another officer would have to take over her duties, she added.

"This is my first Chinese New Year on board a ship at sea, (though) I spent the second day sightseeing in Kundasang (Sabah) before we embarked on a three-day trip to Kuching.

"It was rough seas and bad weather all the way but I'm glad I made it through.

"Our commander asked me twice



**Part of the job:**  
 Soong decided not to leave her post and burden another officer with carrying out her duties.

added that joining the navy enabled her to see the world.

She has also been to Vietnam, Thailand and Brunei.

Soong encouraged people of all races to give the armed forces, especially the navy, a try.

Contrary to what some people believe, she said she had not experienced any discrimination in the navy.

with the navy since 2012.

"I developed a fondness for the armed forces during my National Service training stint.

"Living in the jungle might prove too much for me, and the idea of flying a plane is a bit terrifying.

"So, the army and air force were a no-go," she said when asked why she had picked the navy.

Soong, the eldest of four siblings,