

SEAFARERS DAY CELEBRATIONS ON 25 JUN 16

Mr. Yoshiaki Ito, Consul General, Japan

Shri. Deepak Shetty, Director General Shipping

Capt K Devadas, Chairman Seminar Committee of National Maritime Day Celebrations

Distinguished members of the Shipping Industry

Members of the Seafarers Union

Ladies and Gentlemen

A Very good afternoon to all of you

It is indeed a singular honour for me to address this august gathering on the occasion of seafarers day celebrations.

Efthymious Mitropoulous a former Secretary General of the IMO said and, I quote **“without shipping half the world would freeze and the other half will starve”**.

This famous quote assumes great significance for the nation as it directly underscores the importance of seafarers.

Ladies and Gentlemen, India's maritime environment is geographically fashioned by the contours of the Indian Ocean as the shores of some thirty odd countries are washed by its waters. **Further, as India's highly anticipated economic growth is directly linked to seaborne trade, the nation would certainly look towards the contribution of seafarers to fuel this growth. I am confident that the Indian seafarers will rise tall and compliment national development as maritime trade and national development depend on each other and are virtually two sides of the same coin of economic prosperity of a nation.**

This distinguished gathering would be aware that approximately 95 percent of trade by volume and 70 percent by value is moved by maritime transport. **It is therefore understandable that 95 percent of mankind's needs are being served directly or indirectly by seafarers.**

Furthermore, the civil society is generally unaware of the important role played by the shipping industry in their day to day lives and are also unaware that without shipping there would be no international commerce.

Here, I would like to recall that the "Maritime Agenda 2010-2020" launched in 2011 called for an ambitious investment of 1,65,000 crores in the shipping sector over the decade for various purposes which included the all-important goal of increasing the percentage of Indian seafarers in the global shipping industry from between 6-7 percent to at least 9 percent. **With the vast human resources available at our disposal, we certainly have an edge in shaping the growth of our shipping sector and we should not miss a single opportunity to raise the profile of shipping as a vibrant industry because, while a carrier at sea is challenging, it is also extremely rewarding.**

Having said that, let me also touch upon the important aspect of the men and women manning the ships and who form the backbone of the shipping industry, the Indian seafarers have come to be recognized as amongst the best seafaring communities in the world, much sought after for their superior skills and enviable professional competence. **The nation is aware of the sacrifices you all make and the countless perils you encounter at sea.** The menace of piracy which used to haunt us has been wiped out because of the efforts of the maritime forces and **equally important were the efforts of Mr Deepak Shetty in mobilizing the issue of High Risk Area (HRA) and in moving it westwards of 65 degrees East. This has in turn helped the fishing industry to a great extent. The maritime community will forever remember the contribution of Mr Deepak Shetty towards this important issue.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, given the ever increasing demand for Indian seafarers, our DG Shipping remains continually engaged in the momentous task of maintaining a

healthy supply of seafarers, by facilitating the creation of additional infrastructure, and imbibing traditional Indian seafaring culture.

At this juncture, it would be apt to mention that the Merchant Shipping (Recruitment and Placement of Seafarers) Rules, 2005 have gone a long way in recognizing the seafarers of India as a national asset which needs to be nurtured, protected and preserved in the international arena. The Governments strong commitment to the cause of Indian shipping is facilitating our seafarers growth in the international arena.

There have been a plethora of commendable initiatives, on part of the Government of India last year. In August 2015, the Government notified new rules for NRI status, and ushered tax concessions for our seafarers. This move not only ended the singular anomaly, which was causing an acute shortage of sailors to man home trade vessels, but also brought seafarers working on Indian registered ships, on par, with those working on foreign ships.

India is well on its way to realizing its true potential as a major hub for seafarers. I must say that the private sector too has shown a high level of commitment to India seafarers by substantial investment in training and recruitment of cadets from India, as well as enhancement of professional and leadership skills of Indian seafarers.

Before I conclude, I would like to make a point or two, in support of my seafarer friends. Out of India's population of 1.2 billion, India's current pool of seafarers stands at a mere one and a half lakh, a vast majority of whom, if I am not mistaken, choose to work on foreign flag vessels. I am sure, we can rectify the situation, if we carefully draw our seafarer cadets, from areas of society, where there is an incentive, to choose shipping as a long term career option. We have better chances of achieving this by looking at our hinterlands, as these youth are less likely to be attracted by alternate career options available in the cities and large towns.

I am sure our committed approach in building India as a global hub for quality seafarers, our sustained focus on improving the attractiveness of a career at sea,

selection from the right employment areas, and the continued emphasis on our training competence will ensure that the Indian seafarer remains world class.

We have nautical miles to sail, with favourable winds, and with Government firmly committed to the cause of the Indian seafarer.

I would like to say that, it is an opportune time to celebrate the Indian seafarer who has been enduring all odds and bravely facing the vagaries of the sea. On behalf of the Indian Coast Guard, and on my personal behalf I can assure you all that the Indian Coast Guard is standing by 24x7, 365 days a year to reach out to those in distress at sea. A fleet of over 120 ships and 60 aircraft are at your service across port cities, and beyond the remotest locations, from Jakhau to Frazergunj, from Kamorta to Campbell Bay. We have been faithfully discharging our noble duty of saving lives in an area of responsibility of 4.6 million square kilometers. **Regardless of raging storm, or surging seas, Indian Coast Guard ships will be out there at sea, enduring the elements, attending to the call of duty.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are the fourth largest Coast Guard in the world in terms of resources; larger than many navies; but second to none, in terms of professionalism and competence. My heart swells with pride to recall that one of my sailors was awarded with the IMO Bravery Award in 2014.

Last but not the least, it is my strong personal belief that the hardships and perils faced by our seafarers **are no less than** those endured by the personnel from the maritime forces. The theme for this year's celebrations "**AT SEA FOR ALL**" rightly captures the sentiment regarding seafarers doing a great service to the nation. They are our **true Brand Ambassadors** and I **salute their indomitable spirit.**

Thank you once again for giving me this opportunity to address this august gathering.

Vayam Rakshamah. Jai Hind.