

SPEECH BY MRS JOSEPHINE TEO, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AT THE DAY OF THE SEAFARER CELEBRATIONS & LAUNCH OF SKILLSFUTURE EARN AND LEARN PROGRAMMES FOR THE MARITIME SECTOR ON 24 JUNE 2016 AT PSA BUILDING, 11.30AM

Friends from the maritime industry,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you today in celebrating the Day of the Seafarer.

Appreciation to Seafarers

2. A few months ago, during the Singapore Maritime Week, I met two young seafarers – Lay Ying and Aaron. Lay Ying has been sailing for over ten years and is now a Master Mariner for an offshore supply vessel, while Aaron is a third officer on bulk carriers and is currently pursuing his Class 1 and 2 Certificates of Competency (CoC).

3. Both Lay Ying and Aaron struck me as being very enthusiastic about seafaring. To be sure, I asked them what they would say to fellow Singaporeans who were deciding what careers to pursue. They promoted the maritime experience with passion and Lay Ying made a special shout out to the ladies to join the offshore sector.

4. Seafaring careers are not very well known but in fact, they offer many good opportunities. Over 90 per cent of world trade is carried by sea. If you pause for a minute to look at the things around you, including our food, clothing, furniture, the equipment we use for our work - almost everything or parts of it has been through a ship. This is true not just in port cities like Singapore but even in remote parts of the world.

5. Without shipping, the movement of goods on the scale necessary for the modern world would not be possible. Seafarers play a key role in sustaining this lifeline. The theme of this year's Day of the Seafarer – "At Sea For All" – is therefore not an exaggeration. The work of seafarers brings benefit to *all* of us.

6. As a global hub port, Singapore welcomes some 12,000 seafarers daily to our shores. Over the years, the Government, together with industry partners and unions, have put in place various facilities, programmes and year-round recreational activities to ensure your well-being. I am glad to know that the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) contributes \$150,000 annually to improve the welfare services for seafarers calling in Singapore.

SkillsFuture Earn and Learn Programmes for the Maritime Sector

7. As many of you know, the Port of Singapore is the world's busiest container transshipment hub with connectivity to 600 ports globally. Among other accolades, our port is widely recognised for its consistent service quality, innovation and reliability.

Earlier this month, we were awarded the 'Best Seaport in Asia' for the 28th time. For Singapore to stay ahead as a leading hub port, it is vital that we invest in our youth and attract them to join the maritime workforce.

8. I am therefore pleased to announce that MPA has worked with the Singapore Workforce Development Agency and other partners to develop three new SkillsFuture Earn and Learn Programmes, or ELPs. These ELPs will grow a local core of port operations officers, deck officers and marine engineers, and let more Singaporeans like Lay Ying and Aaron take up good careers in the maritime sector.

9. The ELPs will give fresh polytechnic graduates a head start in their careers, by putting them through facilitated training and mentorship programmes. The trainees will deepen their skills and acquire relevant work experience valuable to the industry, and receive a competitive starting salary and full-time employment with participating companies. The employers also benefit from being able to groom talents suited to their needs.

10. There are 30 trainees in this inaugural batch of SkillsFuture ELPs, and I had the opportunity to speak to several of them earlier today. Christina Tan, currently a junior officer with PIL, was inspired by her elder sister to become a seafarer. Christina believes that the structured on-the-job-training and mentorship the programme provides will better equip her for an exciting and rewarding career at sea, and hopes to one day captain her own ship.

11. I also met Muhammad Dinie Abdul Aziz, one of the trainees in port operations. Dinie shared with me that he is confident that the programme will help bridge the gap between what was learnt in school and what will be required on the job. I am heartened by the enthusiasm of the trainees and wish them every success in their maritime careers.

12. We will continue to invest in developing manpower for the maritime industry. The three new SkillsFuture ELPs complement the various manpower initiatives I announced for the sea transport sector during my Ministry's Committee of Supply debate in April this year. The Government will be developing more manpower programmes under the sectoral manpower plan for sea transport.

Conclusion

13. Once again, let me thank our seafarers as we celebrate the Day of the Seafarer. As a small gesture of our appreciation to all seafarers, MPA, together with the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU) and Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS), will be presenting some 600 hampers to ships that call at our port today. We hope the goodies and travel tools in the hampers will add some comfort during your voyages.

14. Have a great Day of the Seafarer!