

4/2/72

Speech of Mr. Lim Guan Hoo, Political Secretary,
Ministry of Communications, at the 11th Graduation
Ceremony of Pre-Sea Students of the Singapore
Polytechnic held on Saturday 11.3.72 at 1600 hours.

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It gives me great pleasure to officiate at this 11th graduation ceremony of the Pre-Sea Students of our Polytechnic. As you shall very soon be leaving our shores to embark on an exciting and challenging life at sea, today's occasion is really a graduation-cum-send-off party. I am indeed very glad to be able to share it with you.

You shall be away for about 3 years as Cadet Officers on board various ships, carrying passengers and cargoes from port to port by day or night, in fair weather or foul, altogether a very demanding duty but I can assure you, the rewards will be most gratifying. For some of you this will be your first experience of a long sea voyage, an idea which you may not take kindly to. Initially you will find it discomforting trying to adjust to your new way of life but don't despair. Within a short while you will be taking in your strides, amongst other things, the rolling and pitching of the ship as you find your sea legs. When that happens, life at sea takes on a new dimension, and you would then be very glad to have left behind you the hustle and bustle of life on land.

Then, ~~when calling~~ when calling into a foreign port, you will get to know the customs, language and livelihoods of other people thereby enriching your own. Before the three years are up, you will have a vast store of experiences and stories to regale to your parents, relatives and friends.

Let me now touch on the primary purpose of your sea service. For the past year you have been given basic knowledge and necessary theoretical background by experts in their respective fields. As you step out to sea to continue your course, you will appreciate the usefulness of this knowledge as you attempt to put into practice what you have learnt. You will also find that those on board the ships are well-versed in the ways of the sea. As a first trip cadet officer, you will do well to listen to and learn from the experienced sea-hands who may not be as well-qualified academically as you are. You may resent this at first but acts of humility and diligence will most definitely pay dividends later when you qualify to take command of a ship.

On your return, you will sit for the second Mate's examination conducted by our Marine Department. Your success in this examination will be your first step in establishing your career at sea. The oceans provide us with a medium for the continuous life-stream flow of goods and services. In the wake of this flow will be the great opportunities for young men like you to carve out careers in marine transportation and other associated fields. The Polytechnic has, for the past twelve years, made laudable efforts in providing the ingredients to the young men of our nation to enable them to make full use of these opportunities. Since August, 1960, when the first course commenced, a total of 348 cadets have entered sea service. Some of these graduates are at present on board foreign-going ships as masters or officers, while others can be found in the Maritime Command, Marine Department, the Port of Singapore Authority and elsewhere in the private sector, all holding important positions of authority.

There is now well over 800,000 gross tons of ships in our Registry and it will not be long before we reach the 1 million mark. This growth of Singapore registered tonnage together with increased shipping activities and expansion programmes in shipping and port administration have resulted in an increasing demand for trained personnel at sea and ashore. It is gratifying to observe that all who are concerned with the training of personnel have risen to the occasion and are doing all they can to meet this demand. Special mention must be made of the Staff of the Polytechnic. The task facing them has not been and will not be easy but due to their dedication and excellent work they have managed to keep a high standard of instruction and, I have no doubt, will continue to do so. Let me also express my appreciation to the large numbers of shipowners, both local and foreign, for their willing co-operation and assistance in providing cadetships on board their vessels in the past. I hope more shipowners will step forward and offer berths to our cadet and junior officers. Through the co-operation and generosity of shipowners, we will be in a better position to obtain a pool of qualified and well-trained officers and men.

To the parents of the Pre-Sea students, those who are concerned with our economic progress and national interest, I am sure, will be grateful for their vision, encouragement and support which enable their sons to embark on a challenging career at sea.

In closing, allow me to congratulate the graduates of the eleventh Pre-Sea course. The seas hold out for us immense opportunities which will not only enrich our economic life but will help accelerate the transformation of Singapore as a trading city of Southeast Asia into a global city. It is in the context of this ceaseless progress in modernization and social evolution that we feel proud to set a higher value on your unshakable enterprising spirit and we hope that more young men will come forward to take up the challenge as you have done. Yours is a job to make the world smaller as you widen your horizon. Your prospects are very bright indeed, and with your diligence and integrity, we are sure you will be able to secure for yourself a very bright future.

We wish you "Bon-Voyage", many safe arrivals and every success in your endeavours.

11.3.72.