

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC/MAY/33/74 (COBIS)

SPEECH BY MR YONG NYUK LIN, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS
AT THE 21ST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE SINGAPORE
SHIPPING ASSOCIATION AT THE GALLERY, MANDARIN HOTEL ON
SATURDAY 25 MAY 74 AT 2000 HOURS

Let me begin by saying how delighted and honoured my wife and I are to be able to accept your kind invitation to be your guests for tonight - being the auspicious occasion of celebrating the 21st Anniversary of the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA).

2 From a modest beginning of only 7 founder members, SSA now has 26 member companies with a combined fleet of 300 ships totalling 666,000 Gross Registered Tons (GRT). I am further pleased to learn that two-thirds of the combined fleet of SSA fly our Singapore flag.

3 It is opportune for me to disclose tonight the progress of our Registry of Ships. We had only 357 ships totalling a little more than a quarter million GRT when we decided to establish an open Registry in January 1969. By July 72, our Registry reached the first million GRT mark. In April 73 the second million GRT mark was reached. Today, our Registry has 1,057 ships with 2.99m GRT i.e. we shall be breaching the 3 million GRT mark any moment now! Over the last 5 years, the number of ships on our Registry have increased threefold and tonnage twelve-fold. Such progress can be said to be most gratifying indeed!

4 I am also given to understand that members of your Association employ about 2,000 local seamen on board your Singapore Registered ships. This represents about a quarter of those on our Seamen's registry. You are therefore a very large employer of our seamen. In this situation, may I suggest that your Association do take on a more active role in popularising sea-going careers for our young people? Singapore may have the reputation of being the 4th busiest port in the world and that we are "a port that never sleeps" - because we work 24 hours a day (round the clock) and 365 days a year

(all the year round) but unfortunately, it cannot be said that we are a maritime nation like the Scandinavian countries, because far too few Singaporeans make their living from the sea. Your Association can do much to attract more of our young Singaporeans to take up a rewarding career, at sea. You should provide more training opportunities on board your ships for both engine and deck cadets. As there is also a world-wide shortage of sea-going personnel, especially officers, creating and maintaining a pool of well-trained and disciplined officers and crew would contribute greatly towards establishing Singapore as a maritime nation of international standing. You should shoulder the responsibility with open arms and to make it a reality!

5 Although current talk is of excessive tonnage of tankers in the world, your fleet of vessels are performing an essential and irreplaceable transportation service for the rich and populous region of South East Asia of which Singapore is its hub. This is not the time for members of your Association to sit back and rest on your laurels but to close your ranks and plan new strategies of seizing new opportunities and meeting fresh challenges ahead. To maintain the competitive edge over your foreign competitors, you must continue to increase productivity. The dramatic increase in fuel oil prices over the last half year brings home the fact that we must operate on basis of high fuel costs. You have no alternative but to make optimum use of the fleet, at your disposal. I do not need to say more because I am confident that you know the waters and the shoals better than I do and that you will continue to steer your ships safely to port, to deliver the goods and thus derive your well-earned income and prosperity.

6 It is on this happy note that I will now conclude my short speech and to wish the SSA and its members every good wish and success for the years ahead.

Date: 25 May, 1974.