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Call for ways to build up manpower of marine sector

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday urged the maritime community to concurrently look at other complementary solutions to build up the pool of trained human resources to take up marine-related jobs.

One option worth looking into is making the maritime industry less labour-intensive, he said when opening Malaysia's first International Maritime Conference onboard the MV Star Pieces docked at Tanjung Malai in Langkawi.

The industry, he said, should look into the possibility of incorporating more information technology (IT)-based technology and automation.

Dr Mahathir said growth in the maritime industry implies a tremendous pressure on the limited human resources in the industry. Not only in recruiting the right candidate is a problem, but retaining trained personnel in sea-related careers is even more problematic.

"Though we were once renowned seafarers, as portrayed by men like Panglima Awang or Henry the Black who, along with Magellan circumnavigated the globe, unfortunately we have somehow lost this trait.

"The long years under colonial rule have perhaps made us landlubbers with a distinct dislike for being away from home for any length of time," he added.

The Prime Minister said as it is not possible to force people to take up maritime related careers, the Government is reviving the nation's seafaring culture.

This includes inculcating maritime values among schoolchildren through extra curricular activities like sea cadet corps. For the youths, there is the "Tunas Samudera" sailing programme run by the navy.

"I am glad to note that the navy is now seriously looking into the "Smart Ship" concept. As proven by some advanced navies, this concept has enabled it to reduce annual operation costs about 10 per cent through a reduction in manpower by more than 30 per cent," he said.

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