

22 MAY 2002

Mahathir-Shipping

BUILD UP CAPABILITY IN SHIPPING INDUSTRY, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

By: Siti Hawa Othman

NAGASAKI, May 22 (Bernama) -- Malaysian shipowners and operators should build up local capability and expertise required by the shipping industry, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Wednesday.

As a country aspiring to play a greater role in the global maritime industry, Malaysia needed to have a substantial indigenous merchant fleet owned and fully operated by its own nationals, he said after officially naming Malaysia International Shipping Corporation Bhd's (MISC) 14th and newest Liquefied Natural Gas tanker, Puteri Intan Satu, here.

The ceremony was held at the Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd (MHI)'s Koyagi Shipyard.

Puteri Intan Satu is the first of six new Puteri Satu Class LNG tankers ordered by the national shipping company as part of its fleet expansion programme.

In his address at a luncheon to commemorate the naming of the ship, Dr Mahathir commended MISC and urged other Malaysian shipowners and operators to emulate the company and build up local capability.

He said: "In this regard, I would like to commend MISC for the successful implementation of its cadet training programmes which has produced a pool of skilled Malaysian personnel to ensure the smooth, efficient and safe operations of its ships."

Dr Mahathir said it was also gratifying to note that some Malaysian-made materials had been used in the construction of Puteri Intan Satu.

A company under the partial supervision of MHI has been set up in Malaysia to specially undertake the production of the vessel's cargo tank insulated boxes. Made from Malaysian plywood, these are critical and specialised components of the LNG tanks.

Although this constituted a small percentage of the total content of the tanker, the experience gained from this project would bring about far-reaching benefits for Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister said the MISC had come a long way since its delivery of the first shipment of LNG from Bintulu to Tokyo Gas's Sodegaura Terminal in February 1983.

From an initial fleet of only five vessels under the Tenaga series, MISC has now expanded its LNG tanker fleet to 13 with a gross capacity of 1.36 million cubic metres.

The Tenaga series refers to a class of ships, namely the B4 Puteri Class. This makes MISC the single largest LNG fleet owner and operator in the world, representing about 10 per cent of the total world capacity.

-- BERNAMA

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