

SPEECH BY: DATO' SERI DR. MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD  
( PRIME MINISTER )

EVENT: THE NAMING CEREMONY FOR BUNGA MELOR TIGA AND BUNGA MELOR EMPAT

VENUE: OSHIMA SHIPYARD, JAPAN

DATE: 20 MAY 1995

TIME:

I am delighted to be with you today on the occasion of this naming ceremony for two new bulk carriers of the Malaysian International Shipping Corporation (MISC). I would like to thank the Chairman and Board of MISC for inviting my wife and I to officiate at this function.

2. While the addition of a new ship to the fleet of the national shipping line is always a significant occasion, the addition of two new ships at the same ceremony is indeed a red-letter day for MISC and for Malaysia.

3. I am pleased to note that the Board of MISC is maintaining a bold policy of fleet expansion in response to calls by the Government to increase growth in the number of Malaysian-owned and operated ocean-going ships. This is vital if Malaysia is to become a maritime nation.

4. I therefore would like to congratulate the Board for their courage to invest in these expensive new ships, an indication of their commitment to the national interest.

5. Shipping, particularly international shipping, is marked by intense competition, and subject to cyclical highs and troughs. As shipping is also capital-intensive, there is a need to periodically invest in new ships to provide and maintain a level of service that shippers have come to expect. And this is obviously not an area for the faint-hearted to venture into.

6. Malaysia has undergone and is undergoing dramatic changes in its economic activity. From a largely agricultural economy which was heavily dependent on the production and export of primary commodities in the raw with practically no added value, we have now developed into an economy where industrial manufacturing activity is now a major source of national income. Industrialisation in Malaysia is gathering pace at a very satisfying rate and we are now faced with a situation where we need to quickly increase our shipping capacity in order not to be too dependent on foreign shipping with the consequent loss of earnings.

7. In order to assist Malaysian shipowners, the Government has established a Shipping Fund of RM800 million which has recently been increased to RM1.1 billion. The Fund is intended to encourage new participants and expansion in the Malaysian shipping industry. The fund will enable eligible local shipping companies to expand and raise the national sea-borne carrying capacity to meet the growth of exports following the rapid pace of industrialisation.

8. The two ships we are naming at today's ceremony are bulk carriers. Bulk carriers by their very nature are intended to engage in cross-trading. They carry goods to and from different parts of the globe and may not call at Malaysian ports on a regular basis or even for long periods of time.

9. The bulk trade is an area of shipping which does not generally receive much publicity. Bulk carriers may be termed as the work-horses of the shipping industry and due to the nature of the trade, they usually do not present a glamorous image. However, these ships are the most efficient and economical mode of transporting iron ore, coal, steel and other minerals in bulk between nations for their industrial activities. While bulk ships may not be directly involved in supporting industrial activity in Malaysia, they serve a very important function as the income they earn can help to off-set the growing current account deficit in the service industry and so contribute to national earnings.

10. I understand that with the delivery of these two bulk carriers, MISC will achieve an important milestone as its fleet tonnage reaches 2 million deadweight tons. This represents approximately 70 per cent of the national deadweight tonnage.

11. I hope that MISC will continue to grow and play a leading role in the development of the national fleet to meet the goals and aspirations of Malaysia's vision to achieve developed nation status by the year 2020.

12. The timely completion of Bunga Melor Tiga and Bunga Melor Empat is, of course, indicative of the skills of Oshima Shipyard. At the same time it may also be regarded as yet another illustration of the efficiency of the Japanese shipbuilding industry which has come to be widely recognised and appreciated for its fine quality work and high standards of construction.

13. I have been told that the establishment of a shipyard in this island was the result of a Government programme to eradicate poverty in the region. The obvious success of Oshima Shipyard is a clear indication that deliberate planning together with cooperation by the people can bring about prosperity to a region. This must be a source of much satisfaction to all those involved in the project.

14. I would like to thank the Board of MISC once again for their kind invitation and for according my wife the honour of naming Bunga Melor Tiga and Bunga Melor Empat. I would also like to thank the Chairmen and Presidents of Oshima Shipbuilding Company and Sumitomo Corporation for the warm hospitality extended to me and my wife during our stay here.

15. I wish all who sail in Bunga Melor Tiga and Bunga Melor Empat a safe voyage.

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