

**SPEECH BY TUN DR MAHATHIR BIN MOHAMAD AT THE SILVER JUBILEE
GALA DINNER INSTITUT KELAUTAN MALAYSIA'S (IKMAL) AT THE
ROYALE CHULAN HOTEL, KUALA LUMPUR ON FRIDAY, 22 APRIL 2011**

1. I would like to thank IKMAL for inviting me to this Silver Jubilee Gala Dinner marking the 25th year of existence of the Institute. Indeed, this is the second time in a year that I have been invited to say a few words at an IKMAL-organised event.
2. The theme that IKMAL has chosen: "25 Years Propelling Maritime Professionalism" is quite appropriate and very relevant to the Institute in particular and our nation in general.
3. IKMAL is the professional body for all those engaged in the maritime industry in Malaysia and its objectives highlight the pristine aspirations of all its members. On this, I, personally offer my total support since, as a medical professional, I, too, would strongly encourage and wish that each and every player in all the professions hold in high esteem the necessity to be highly skilled, dedicated and continuously abreast of the most recent developments in their profession.
4. This is more so in the maritime industry which contributes significantly to Malaysia's economy. I do not need to emphasize how important shipping is to Malaysia. As a maritime and a trading nation, shipping plays a crucial role in transporting our exports and imports. In fact, more than 90% of our overseas trade is transported by sea. Thus, it is only appropriate that Malaysia places high emphasis on not only developing our shipping sector, but, also ensuring that those engaged in it perform their tasks with utmost professionalism and dedication. It is in this regard, I think, that IKMAL can play a significant role.
5. Apart from encouraging investments in maritime infrastructure, the development of human capital in the shipping sector should also be of high priority. I am pleased to note that a majority of IKMAL's members are, basically, mariners in-charge of ships, either sailing at sea or managing them from ashore. Some, I understand, are also serving in foreign companies and in distant lands. This provides ample proof that the focus on education and training of seafarers has been successful.
6. I take this opportunity to acknowledge IKMAL's role in organising various tea-talks, workshops, seminars, lecture series and conferences as well as the publication of a bi-annual journal towards elevating awareness and knowledge of the science and development in the maritime sphere and wish to encourage the Institute to continue with such noble activities.

7. We are fast approaching Year 2020, the target year for which Malaysia is to become a developed nation. One of the components that have been continuously stressed is the development of our own local human resource that will truly enable us to be recognised as a developed nation. It goes without saying that we should have a highly trained, highly skilled, highly competent and highly motivated work force that can drive our nation towards year 2020 and beyond. This is more evident in shipping where Malaysia should strive towards excellence.

8. The Malaysian fleet now has more than 4,700 merchant ships and slightly more than 1,000 of these trade internationally. In terms of ships' tonnage, about 70% of our shipping fleet trade globally. This clearly demonstrates our need for sufficient seafarers to serve on board Malaysian ships. Presently, on record, we have about 20,000 Malaysian seafarers, but, many of them serve the domestic trade. At the same time, our reliance on foreign seafarers continues and this year alone we have more than 9,500 serving on board our ships. The task at hand is quite obvious, that is, to encourage as many Malaysians as possible to pursue a career at sea. In order for this to succeed, the industry must demonstrate that seafaring is indeed a rewarding profession. A professional body such as IKMAL must promote pride in being a professional into the psyche of incumbents and potential recruits. As the most relevant stakeholder, ship owners must ensure that this message is clearly delivered and well received. IKMAL, too, should play its role in clarifying that seafaring is a noble profession with immense potential and numerous career opportunities.

9. I am convinced that the shipping industry provides the perfect chance to fulfil our national aspiration to be a high income economy. The global nature of shipping provides this excellent opportunity for the maritime industry to lead the way in Malaysia's Economic Transformation Programme.

10. I am told that currently, IKMAL's membership strength is approximately 470, of which 70 are corporate members made up of port operators/regulators; shipping companies; maritime logistics entities and other organisations affiliated to the maritime industry. I would strongly urge that many more join this professional body whose primary aims are enhancing the development of the science and practice of this challenging maritime profession and encouraging the pursuit of excellence in all spheres relating to the maritime industry. Nothing is more satisfying than being acknowledged as being a member of a professional body which accords one with the desired respect and esteem by others outside the fraternity.

11. I also wish to acknowledge the generosity of the main sponsors of this gala event that had made it possible. I hope that this sense of corporate social responsibility would continue into the future and that IKMAL will especially benefit from it. Once again, I thank IKMAL for inviting me to this Silver Jubilee Gala Dinner.