

**Speech by Mr S. S.Teo,
Chairman, Singapore Maritime Foundation
at the Opening Ceremony of Sea Asia 2009, on 21 April 2009,
Tuesday, Level 2 Auditorium, Suntec Singapore**

Professor S. Jayakumar
Senior Minister of State and Co-ordinating Minister for National Security,

Mr Raymond Lim
Minister for Transport and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs,

Mrs Lim Hwee Hua
Minister, Prime Minister's Office
Second Minister for Finance and Transport,

Rear Admiral Lui Tuck Yew, Acting Minister for Information, Communication and the Arts,

Your Excellencies

Friends and colleagues from overseas and Singapore,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

1. First, I would like to thank Professor S. Jayakumar, Senior Minister and Co-ordinating Minister for National Security for gracing this occasion as our Guest-of-Honour. We are honoured by your presence.
2. The inaugural *Sea Asia* held in April 2007 had received overwhelming support from the international and local maritime community. Immediately after the first show, the organisers, the Singapore Maritime Foundation, SMF and Seatrade started planning for the second show.

3. For the first time, the Singapore Maritime Week organised by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, MPA, is held in April this year to coincide with *Sea Asia*. This signifies the close partnership between MPA and the SMF and reinforces the importance of *Sea Asia* as an iconic event to position Singapore as a leading International Maritime Centre.
4. When the economic crisis hit us late last year, we were worried about its impact on *Sea Asia 2009*. However, we decided that we would brace ourselves and work even harder and smarter to stage the show as planned. We faced tough challenges - possible cancellations of booths and smaller number of overseas delegates - but we persisted. We believed that the show must go on, regardless of the times and during a downturn, the more we need credible information sharing which a forum like *Sea Asia 2009* can provide.
5. Today, I'm happy to say that we have made the right decision to proceed with the show. The positive response received for the show and the strong attendance for the conference speak for themselves. The *Sea Asia 2009* exhibition is 60% larger than the inaugural show with 7 country pavilions. We have also successfully gathered over 68 speakers from 19 countries, participants from over 50 countries for the three-day event.
6. In challenging times like this, many companies are reducing their travel expenses and have become very selective in their participation in overseas

trade shows. Yet it is during such *tough times*, that makes it even more critical for maritime leaders to come together to discuss pertinent issues. We are very much encouraged by the great turnout this morning and the strong support for three-day event. Thank you everyone for your support.

7. While the economic situation may worsen before it gets better, we must remain optimistic, confident and take a long-term view. Shipping plays a critical role in our world trade. As we know, over 90 per cent of trade in the world is moved via seas. Among the merchant shipping fleet, Asian owners control over 40 per cent of the total. Among the top container ports in the world, eight out of 10 are in Asia, of which Singapore is the world's number one container port. It is therefore as much a global issue as it is Asian for us to optimise this lull period to strengthen our processes and capabilities which do include investing, retaining and re-skilling, and retraining our collective workforces for the upturn.

8. *Sea Asia 2009* is also a concerted effort by the Singapore maritime community, together with the organisers, to provide a conducive platform for business networking and discussions. At the same time, the *Sea Asia 2009* Exhibition showcases the latest equipment and services in our industry. The *Sea Asia 2009* Conference, which spans three full days, has been carefully mapped out to project the Asian voice in a stronger manner, with the current business climate in mind. I am therefore deeply grateful to the many distinguished speakers and experts in their fields, who have stepped

forward to lead in the various discussions on the issues faced by our industry and to see how best we can circumvent the challenges. In addition, I would like to thank our distinguished *Sea Asia 2009* International Advisory Panel for their guidance.

9. A billion dollar question out there is when will the economy recover. Markets are rife with speculation. Some say that the economy will see a gradual recovery in the first quarter of 2010 while others say 2012. By nature, I am an optimist. Volumes at PSA Singapore have been improving weekly in recent months. The 2.14 million TEUs recorded in March 2009 represent a daily average higher than that of February 2009. If this trend continues, there will be more smiles all round as Singapore is indeed one of the mirrors of world trade. Let's hope that this upward movement in container volumes continues.

10. On a humble note, I am confident that with the determination and hard work put in by everyone, recovery surely will and must come. Shipping lines and ports that seize the opportunities to strengthen their position in current times will be rewarded commensurately in the near future. Let us forge new ways to work smarter and better, to grow even closer alliances, and together, ride out this storm of recession.

11. When the world economy recovers, I am confident that the Asian powerhouses such as China and India will be among the first to bounce

back and systemically stir up the global economy. Given our sound fundamentals and perseverance, pro-active government, close partnership between the private and public sectors and the experience gained from previous crisis, Singapore will be one of the first in the region to recover. Many of us have suffered cuts and abrasions along the way, but with co-ordinated efforts between the private and the public sector, we would survive and emerge from this turbulent phase, wiser, clearer and stronger. It is important for Singapore as one of the leading international maritime centres to gear ourselves to be at the forefront of change, of a better tomorrow.

12. In closing, to all *Sea Asia 2009* sponsors and participants, I encourage each of you to make use of this opportune time to draw upon our collective strengths, knowledge and wisdom to chart the waters ahead for our industry. To our overseas visitors and their families, do take in the sights of our garden city in Singapore and enjoy our hospitality.

Thank you.