



PRESS RELEASE

LAUNCHING OF THE SINGAPORE MARITIME TRAINING FUND

Singapore, 07 July 2006 – Singapore’s maritime industry welcomed the new Singapore Maritime Training Fund (SMTF), an initiative of the Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union (SMOU), at its official launch this morning at the Swissotel The Stamford.

The launch excited more than 160 leaders of the maritime sector from more than 50 organisations who attended, with the knowledge that the SMTF will encourage seafarers to be continually equipped and trained to face the future needs and challenges as quality officers on board Singapore ships.

Officiating at the event, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Minister of State for Finance and Transport, who commended the SMOU and the industry for the collaboration said, “the launch of the SMTF signals that SMOU, the industry and stakeholders are united in investing for the future. It is also an important demonstration of our joint commitment to enhancing the manpower that is crucial to Singapore’s development as an International Maritime Centre

An SMOU initiative which was mooted more than 3 years ago, SMOU’s General Secretary, Mr Thomas Tay said that the SMTF would help seafaring officers to upgrade their skills while attracting new entrants to take up seafaring as a career.

“The SMTF would promote seafaring as a rewarding career, provide Singapore Flag ships with quality seafarers, help shipping companies become more competitive and play a part in bringing Singapore closer to its vision of a leading International Maritime Centre (IMC).”

Currently with about S\$2.3 million, the fund was raised through direct contributions from the SMOU, agreements with shipping companies and fund raising events organised by the union.

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During the launch, 3 seafaring members of SMOU received subsidies of up to S\$11,000 each from the SMTF for their Bachelor programme in Maritime Operations offered by the Netherlands Maritime Institute Willem Barentsz (MIWB) in collaboration with the Singapore Maritime Academy (SMA). Another 3 SMOU members from Qingdao in China, pursuing their training at the SMA received their training grants worth up to S\$2,500 per annum. All 6 members, the first recipients of the SMTF training grant, received a total of more than S\$40,000.

The Chairman of the SMTF Advisory Committee, Mr Teh Kong Leong, also the Executive Director of the Singapore Maritime Foundation (SMF) described the SMTF as an interesting initiative with significant potential saying “Most people if not all, will agree that training is important; more so for shipping companies where it could also be required by law, customers or by prudent management. Ultimately all will gain, even Singapore’s position as an IMC”.

With modern day vessels being more sophisticated, seafarers would require higher levels of training and skills upgrading to become more employable and to help their employers (ie. shipmanagers and shipowners) become more competitive.

About SMOU

The **Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union** (SMOU) was established in 1951 to safeguard the interest and well-being of seafaring officers. The primary role of the organisation is to promote good industrial relations between members and their employers, improve the working conditions of members in the maritime industry through the terms and conditions of collective bargaining agreements negotiated on behalf of members and signed with shipping companies which employ them and to advance the cultural, recreational and educational aspirations of its members.

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