

**ADDRESS BY THIRU BANWARILAL PUROHIT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
TAMIL NADU AT THE ISWOT – 18 – DAY OF THE SEAFARERS AT
SEAFARERS CLUB, CHENNAI ON 25/06/2018 AT 6.00 PM**

Anaivarukkum Maalai Vanakkam

**Thiru. K. Pandiarajan
Minister for Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture Archaeology**

**Dr. A. Babu Mailan
Chairman, ISWOT**

**Thiru. Cyril C. George
Deputy Chairman, Chennai Port Trust**

**Father B. Antony
Vice Chairman, Iswot**

**Thiru S. Muthuraj
Commissioner, Tamil Nadu Information Commissioner**

**Thiru. G.M. Krishnamurthi
General Secretary, MOTEU, Chairman, Port Welfare Committee**

**Thiru. D. Suriyanarayanan
Addl Governement Pleader**

Distinguished invitees

Ladies & Gentlemen

I am happy to be here at ISWOT-18 - Day of the Seafarers to mark the special event being celebrated in honour of the Seafarers. The day was instituted by the International Maritime Organisation in 2010 to emphasize the importance of seafarers and to raise awareness about life at sea and the problems faced by the Seafarers.

The theme for the year, 2018 is "Seafarers' wellbeing". Any sailor, seaman, mariner, or a person who navigates waterborne vessels or assists as a crewmember in their operation and maintenance is defined as a Seafarer.

Seafarers perform an admirable task of navigating different types of ships and thus transport a variety of cargo from one port to another all over the World.

Owing to the nature of their work Seafarers sometimes face cramped, noisy and dangerous conditions at sea. Those who work at sea also invariably confront social isolation. This is probably the reason why the International Maritime Organization has given a call to care for the seafarers' wellbeing when celebrating seafarers' Day.

According to recent figures, the number of Indian seafarers employed on Indian and foreign-flagged ships has crossed 1,50,000 for the first time, with 37,259 of them getting jobs in the last three years alone. Of the 1,54,349 seafarers, 71,177 are officers while 83,172 are ratings or general-purpose staff. The division of seafarers between the nautical side and the engineering side is 97,937 and 56,412 persons respectively.

Indian Maritime history has its own ancient tradition. '*Thirai kadal odiyum thiraviam thedu*' (Seek your fortune even by venturing overseas) is a saying of the great Tamil poet Avvaiyar. Sangam literature is a rich repository of information on the ancient Tamil way of living. Amidst its chapters that vividly describe the beauty of nature, lifestyle and social structure of the old Tamil country, the Purananuru elaborates on the nature of the flourishing sea trade of those times. From ships, sea routes, daring maritime voyages to the merchandise that were traded and the experiences of the Tamil seafarers, it talks in detail of the mighty ocean and the strong bond the people shared with it.

It is therefore quite clear that the adventurous seafarers of the past maintained trade links with Europe in the west and upto the Far East,".

In fact, more than a 1000 years ago, the Tamil Chola empire possessed the largest naval force of the Indian subcontinent at that time and represented the zenith of ancient Indian sea power.

Rajendra Chola annexed during his overseas conquests Sri Lanka, Maldives, islands of Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep, parts of the Malay

peninsula and the Indonesian group of island. By defeating the Srivijaya empire the Cholas also secured the sea trade route to China.

The significance of sea transport for trade continues till the present day. According to International Maritime Organization's (IMO's) estimates, ships transport almost 90 percent of the world's goods trade. Behind such a huge maritime industry are the seafarers who are often described as the heart of the shipping industry trade. Commercial commodities such as general cargo, industrial goods, Crude Oil, Chemicals livestock and a host of other items are transported by sea-going ships on International waters between various countries of the world.

The maritime industry therefore offers a tremendous employment opportunity to the youth of India. According to a worldwide report, there is a global shortfall of about 16,500 officers in the maritime industry at present. There will be need for an additional 1,47,500 officers by 2025 to service the world merchant fleet.

The Government has unveiled a host of initiatives aimed to develop and then sustain growth of the sector. As a part of the Governments push to fast-track investment in the maritime sector, a host of business-friendly policies have been introduced. These range from modernising existing port infrastructure and creating new ones, and linking up ports under the Sagar Mala Scheme. Skilling talent to sustain maritime operations is another area of focus for the Government of India. Development of Inland Waterways & Coastal Shipping development is also being focussed upon using the public-private partnership mode. All this provides vibrancy to the sector.

I am informed that nearly 75% of the Seafarers who provide the backing for Maritime growth lack job security and work on fixed term contracts. Possibilities for shore leave are also restricted and seafarers spend most of their time in sea. Cabin dimensions, cloistered facilities and amenities also make working conditions uncomfortable for Seafarers. All this needs change in the form of better design and architecture of ships and improved communication arrangements between ships and land.

The Central government has recently included sailors' recruitment on foreign ships under the online recruitment system. This has ensured that their minimum wages and other rights are protected.

The Central government has also taken another helpful step by simplifying the rules for issuing a Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC)-cum - Seafarers' Identity Document. Without a CDC, a person is not eligible to work on ships. The move would benefit thousands of Indians looking to work on board cruise-liners and other ships as house-keeping staff, laundrymen, bartenders, and various other capacities.

India is already one of the top seafaring nations of the world. The share of India in global trade growing at a rapid pace every year. The stage is set for an expansion of employment opportunities for Indians in the maritime sector. Modern safety management procedures, advanced emergency communications, and effective international rescue systems have placed modern mariners in a safer position, compared to earlier times. A seafarer's job also provides an opportunity to visit various countries of the world while on duty. Youth who are attitudinally inclined to join the maritime sector should focus on the appropriate courses and training to realise their dream. There are few hand picked winners today who are being recognized for their hard work and contribution. I wish them well and appreciate their services.

Let me conclude by saying that the Seafarers' Day has made people in society to be aware of the merits of the maritime industry. Let us use this awareness to focus on providing more employment opportunities to our youth. At the same time it is the duty of organizations such as Indian Seafarers Welfare Organization to work towards providing better working conditions for seafarers so as to ensure their wellbeing and comfort. I wish them all success in their earnest endeavours.

Nandri Vanakkam
Jai Hind.