



National Seafarers’ Day is observed on 21 March each year in recognition of the invaluable contribution made by Sri Lankan seafarers to global maritime trade and to the national economy. On this occasion, the nation proudly pays tribute to Sri Lankan seafarers in appreciation of their professionalism, dedication, and the vital services they render across the world’s oceans.

In keeping with the National Seafarers’ Day 2026, the Merchant Shipping Secretariat, together with industry stakeholders, will launch a series of programmes aimed at enhancing the services provided to Sri Lankan seafarers and promoting their wellbeing and professional development.

Message from His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka

Hon. Anura Kumara Dissanayake



significant portion of the workforce that earns foreign exchange for the country, makes a substantial contribution to the national economy.

We firmly believe that, in order to respond successfully to the evolving trends in the global maritime industry, human resources must also be developed in a systematic and effective manner. Accordingly, the Government has already planned and begun implementing a number of programmes aimed at increasing both the number and the professionalism of Sri Lankan seafarers. These initiatives seek not only to enhance the inflow of foreign exchange to the country but also to create high-reward employment opportunities for the youth of Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, Sri Lanka occupies a strategically important position at the crossroads of the main East-West maritime routes of the world, enabling it to play a significant role in the global maritime sector. Each year, vessels passing close to our shores transport millions of tonnes of cargo. In order to overcome existing global competition, the merchant maritime sector must inevitably be modernised. The Government therefore intends to develop the Port of Colombo, situated in a geographically advantageous location,

into a central hub for maritime traffic in this region, while also introducing modern technological systems, including artificial intelligence, to enhance the efficiency of its operational activities.

Alongside port development, the Government is also focusing on the improvement of supporting infrastructure. Through such modernisation, our objective is to elevate Sri Lanka's port system to a prominent global position within the coming years. In achieving these aspirations, the contribution of various stakeholders, including ports, shipping companies and industry experts, will be of exceptional importance.

As the Government advances its programme to build "A Thriving Nation - A Beautiful Life" by transforming Sri Lanka into a leading global maritime hub, I invite the entire maritime community to join hands with renewed strength in this endeavour. On the occasion of National Seafarers' Day, I extend my best wishes for the complete success of the series of programmes organised in its commemoration.

Anura Kumara Dissanayake
President
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Message from Minister of Ports & Civil Aviation

Hon. Anura Karunathilake



transported daily to keep the global economy running. It is understood that two million professionals operate cargo vessels and tankers, ensuring safety and security through their expertise in navigation and maintenance of the global shipping fleet. They play a vital role to keep global supply chains remain functional and efficient.

Seafarers bring professionalism, leadership, and commitment onboard ships that carry the lifelines of global trade and are considered as one of the most respected professions that support economic stability.

This year as per the International Maritime Organization, day of the Seafarer is taking inspiration from the World Maritime Day theme “From Policy to Practice: Powering Maritime Excellence”. The 2026 observance highlights how those working at sea

put rules into action, with dedication and skill to ensure cargo security. The theme reflects the decisions made on board ships, often in challenging conditions, and in actions that directly affect safety, wellbeing, and working lives at sea.

As the Minister, I take this opportunity to salute the Seafarers for their services on this day, as Sri Lanka national seafarers day that falls on the 21st of March and the international seafarers’ day that fall on June 25th. The Ministry will continue our support to uplift the industry that brings in a valuable contribution to the national economy and the global economy.

Anura Karunathilake
Minister of Ports & Civil Aviation

Message from Deputy Minister of Ports & Civil Aviation

Hon. Janitha Ruwan Kodithuwakku



industrial goods across continents. Their work ensures the continuity of global commerce and the stability of international supply chains.

In recent years, seafarers have endured extraordinary challenges. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many seafarers were stranded at sea for months due to travel restrictions and port limitations, yet they continued to perform their duties to keep global trade moving. In addition, ongoing conflicts and unstable geopolitical situations in certain regions have created further risks for those working in the maritime sector.

Despite these difficulties, Sri Lankan seafarers have continued to demonstrate exceptional professionalism and resilience. Their service has strengthened Sri Lanka’s reputation within the international maritime community while contributing valuable foreign exchange earnings to our national economy.

The Ministry of Ports and Civil Aviation remains committed to supporting maritime education, enhancing training opportunities, and encouraging more young Sri Lankans to pursue careers in the global shipping industry.

As a fellow seafarer, I take this opportunity to express my deepest respect and gratitude to all Sri Lankan seafarers who serve with dedication and pride.

I wish all seafarers safe voyages and continued success in their professional journeys.

Janitha Ruwan Kodithuwakku
Deputy Minister of Ports & Civil Aviation

Message from Secretary, Ministry of Ports & Civil Aviation

Mr. W.W.S.Mangala



As the Secretary in charge of the subject of the Ministry of Ports and Civil Aviation I am pleased to feel privileged to issue a message of good wishes on the National Maritime Day at a time where crucial policies have been made and a number of essential decisions taken with a view to placing Sri Lanka in the forefront of the maritime sector in the world.

Sri Lanka is, at present, receiving approximately US\$ 300 million annually as foreign exchange and accordingly, it is with immense future aspirations I mention that a policy plan is now being in progress which will enable to increase the number of seafarers from 16,000 to 50,000 and to earn a foreign exchange income of approximately one billion US Dollars.

The dedication and the efforts of our excellent seafarers who sail at

sea for the upliftment of Sri Lanka plays a vital role to support the economic stability of the country and to support this task, all necessary steps have already been taken to timely streamline the procedures, improve training facilities and to work in collaboration with the sectors' stakeholders to ensure to equip our seafarers with the necessary skills to display their talents in an international level. The maritime sector is being transformed rapidly at present to align with the digitalization and environment friendly sustainable green marine technology in parallel to this.

Further, all infrastructure are being developed to provide a continuous, innovative education and training to suit with the future challenging situations. A wide National Marine Human Resource policy has been prepared which will soon be used as a road map in the recruitment of new seafarers, training them and for their career development. We will have the potentiality to create a continuous provision of high calibre professionals through adoption of solidarity with the Government, training institutes and shipping lines.

It has also to be noted proudly that the discipline, excellence, skills and performance of the Sri Lankan seafarers are being appreciated and evaluated by marine sectors throughout the world. Their career development and achievements directly effect on the economy of Sri Lanka.

Finally, I take this opportunity to express my respectful gratitude to all those in the marine sector for their valuable services.

W.W.S.Mangala
Secretary
Ministry of Ports & Civil Aviation

Message from Director General of Merchant Shipping

Mr. T.H.B Asanga Deshapriya



It is with great pride that I extend my warmest wishes to all Sri Lankan seafarers on the occasion of National Seafarers' Day. Sri Lankan seafarers have long upheld a reputation for professionalism, resilience, and dedication, serving aboard vessels

across the world and making a significant contribution to global maritime trade as well as to the national economy.

This day provides an important opportunity for our nation to recognize and appreciate the invaluable role played by seafarers. Their commitment, often carried out far from home and family, deserves greater recognition and respect within our society.

The Merchant Shipping Secretariat remains committed to improving the services provided to seafarers through enhanced digitalization and more efficient administrative processes. Together with industry stakeholders, we will also continue to promote programmes focused on seafarers' mental wellbeing, professional skills development, and financial management, ensuring their long-term welfare and career advancement.

On this special occasion, I convey my sincere appreciation to all Sri Lankan seafarers and wish them fair winds, following seas, and safe voyages.

T.H.B Asanga Deshapriya
Director General of Merchant Shipping



Merchant Shipping Secretariat- Sri Lanka

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