

## BUILDING CAPABILITIES, CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

"Today, Singapore is a global leader in jack-up rig building and FPSO conversion, and a premier ship repair and conversion centre. It has maintained these pole positions for the last few decades. This would not have been possible without building capabilities within the industry and creating opportunities for growth," said ASMI President, Mr Michael Chia. He was speaking to industry players attending ASMI 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner on 19 October at the Ritz-Carlton.

Mr Chia said that over the years, the industry had weathered many storms and re-invented itself a number of times to respond to the challenges brought about by Singapore's rapid industrialization, and her transformation from third world to first world as well as the intense global competition and changes in market conditions.

"The marine and offshore industry remains today, a basic industry for Singapore, essential to her economic well-being," Mr Chia iterated. He added that this fact was alluded to by Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew during his speech on at the inaugural Singapore Maritime Lecture held in September this year.

Mr Chia commented that the industry has grown in diversity and sophistication over the last four decades. It "could now be described by a set of new '3D's - Diverse, Developed and Dynamic." The evening's theme, Building Capabilities, Creating Opportunities" was chosen to reflect the industry's effort to maintain the niche areas that Singapore commands in the global market.

"The constant attention and resources devoted to developing capabilities by our industry players in various areas such as manpower, technology, research and development, and others, have created more and new business opportunities for these companies. With higher capabilities, these companies had been better able to offer more efficient solutions, quality work, higher value added products and services to their customers to bring us to where we are today."

The President reminded industry players of the need to continuously keep themselves abreast of new technologies and development,



Mr Michael Chia, ASMI President, delivering his speech at ASMI's 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration function.

and innovation to further build up their capabilities. Companies must build up or continue to develop their internal capabilities to strengthen their competitiveness and create more opportunities for growth. "There is no better time for us to accelerate the development of new capabilities and strengthen existing ones than now, whilst the global marine and offshore industry continues to experience robust growth," he emphasised.

ASMI recognised the need to groom talents and retain trained manpower in the marine industry as part of building capabilities. Mr Chia highlighted the ASMI Scholarship Scheme where the Association had been offering scholarships collectively with some members to polytechnic students since 1987. The industry would need to continue to invest in potential talents and build up a capable team with relevant expertise, to take over the helm and lead the industry in the years to come.

The ASMI Scholarship scheme was expanded to include undergraduates in Nanyang Technological University besides diploma students in Ngee Ann and Singapore Polytechnics. The industry had awarded a total of 515 ASMI scholarships amounting to almost S\$6.25 million to date. In 2007 alone, industry members collectively awarded 53 ASMI scholarships totalling some S\$870,000 to polytechnic students and undergraduates.

Mr Chia was heartened to note that various government agencies were complementing the industry's efforts to grow the human resource pool for the marine and offshore sector. He also acknowledged the importance of technology to the marine and offshore industry. Technology "has provided us the competitive edge in staying ahead of the competition these past decades. We must not lose this edge. Therefore, we need to continue to invest in technology and in research and development, and to continue to innovate to stay in the lead."

Ending his speech on a positive note, Mr Chia remarked, "The marine and offshore industry is an important part of the larger maritime Singapore. Together with the hub port, we are part of the total package as an international maritime centre providing a full suite of services. The growth and transformation of Singapore as an International Maritime Centre thus augurs well for the marine and offshore sector."



## STAYING TECHNOLOGICALLY AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION

Minister of State for Finance and Transport, Mrs Lim Hwee Hwa said "Our marine industry must continually raise its games to stay ahead. It must maintain technological leadership and win the battle for talent." Mrs Lim was speaking at the ASMI's 39<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration dinner where she was the guest-of-honour.

In her speech, the Minister affirmed that the Singapore marine and offshore industry, with a history of more than 40 years, "is a pioneer in the industrialisation of Singapore and remains a bedrock of the economy. The industry has experienced strong growth over the years and today contributes about 1 percent to Singapore's GDP or about S\$2.5 billion in value-added."

Mrs Lim remarked that with global demand for oil continuing to rise despite efforts to become more energy-efficient, the outlook for the marine and offshore sector remained good. However, while the boom in demand was good for the industry, it had also drawn in many new competitors in lower-cost countries. She reminded industry members on the need to invent and innovate to remain technologically ahead as competitors climb up the learning curve. "In the rush to capture the growing business volumes, we must not forget to build our capabilities for the long term," she added.

The Minister said that "The government stands ready to help." To this end, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), Agency for Science, Technology and Research, Economic Development Board and National University of Singapore had come together earlier this year to contribute more than S\$15 million to establish the Technology Research Programme under the Centre for Offshore Research and Engineering.

Mrs Lim added that SPRING Singapore and International Enterprise Singapore had also provided S\$1.25 million to ASMI for projects to upgrade the capabilities and competitiveness



Mrs Lim Hwee Hwa, Minister of State for Finance and Transport, addressing the industry at the ASMI's anniversary dinner.

of the small-and-medium-sized enterprises in the industry. She urged that, "While such government support can help seed R&D and spur upgrading, the industry must step up and devote the necessary funds and talent to raise its capabilities to the next level." There is no better time than now when earnings are healthy to invest in the future.

Another challenge for the industry was to attract and nurture the managers and engineers necessary to support its growth. Mrs Lim mentioned the MediaCorp Mandarin television drama serial 'The Peak', telecasted on prime time in January this year. She noted that the serial which featured the marine and offshore industry, had raised interest in the industry among students and graduates. She asserted that the industry should build on this interest.

The Minister noted that ASMI, in partnership with MPA, Singapore Maritime Foundation and Singapore Shipping Association, is promoting careers in the maritime industry through the Maritime Outreach Network (MaritimeONE) initiative. She encouraged the industry to work with ASMI through MaritimeONE to offer scholarships and student internships as well as to participate in other student outreach activities.

Mrs Lim also credited ASMI for serving its membership well over the years, through the facilitation of collaboration and information sharing in the industry. Nonetheless, she reminded ASMI not to slow down, even as it approaches 'middle age' with its 39<sup>th</sup> years as there were still much work to be done. She said that ASMI would continue to have an important role working with the industry to meet the new challenges facing the industry.

The Association celebrated its 39<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner in the Grand Ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton, Millenia Singapore on 19 October 2007. Dubbed as the annual highlight of the Association, the event saw a strong turnout of some 1,000 guests from the marine fraternity. Response for the annual event was overwhelming and some members were unable to join in the celebrations as the ballroom was filled to maximum capacity.

The celebration ambience started to build up as guests streamed into the foyer for the pre-dinner cocktail reception. In no time, the foyer was filled with chatter and laughter as guests exchanged greetings and news. The occasion provided an opportunity for friends, business associates and clients to meet.

Gracing the occasion was Guest of Honour (GOH), Minister of Transport and Finance, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua. Mrs Lim was introduced to ASMI Council members on arrival before making her entrance into the ballroom where she was warmly received by the guests present.

The entire ballroom was dimmed for the opening segment. A colourful display of lights soon dazzled up the room dancing to the good old tunes of "Hawaii-5-0". The evening's celebration kicked-off with the show host, Eddie Singh making his entrance on stage to greet the guests with a burst of confetti.

ASMI President, Mr Michael Chia, then took to the stage to deliver his Welcome Address which focussed on the evening's theme 'Building Capabilities, Creating Opportunities'. Following his address, the GOH, Mrs Lim was invited to speak to industry members. In her speech, Mrs Lim reminded the industry on the need to maintain technological leadership to stay ahead of global competition.

The speeches were followed by presentations of the ASMI Awards and Certified Marine Supervisors Awards. With the formalities completed, it was time for all in the ballroom to relax and revel with the line-up of good food and company.



## ASMI 39<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY DINNER

As guests tucked into the sumptuous 8-course dinner, they were serenaded by a jazz quartet playing soothing jazzy pop repertoire.

The entertainment continued with local artiste, Rita Chua belting out her renditions of English and Mandarin oldies, filling the atmosphere with a sense of nostalgia. The evening reached its height with a rousing performance by *Drumatic*, an Argentina trio of percussion entertainers. The audience was wowed by their amazing, synchronised moves with the 'boleadoras' and foot stomping rhythm.

Throughout the evening, the show host kept the guests entertained with his stage antics, linguistic skills and hilarious games. The latter perked up the party mood as guests 'volunteered' to play out the games, charmed their way into the hearts of the audience with their spontaneity and sportsmanship.

The celebrations drew to a close with the grand lucky draw. Keppel Offshore & Marine and SembCorp Marine sponsored the first and second prizes of a \$1,500 travel voucher and mobile personal computer respectively. The function was a resounding success judging by the positive comments received. It was an evening of good food, light-hearted entertainment and fabulous company in a relaxing ambience filled with warmth and laughter.

