

***“Fostering Strategic Partnerships for Maritime Logistics”***

Maritime logistics has been traditionally regarded as the primary means of transporting parts and finished goods on a global scale and has recently attracted considerable attention from academics and practitioners alike. On one hand, maritime transport (i.e. shipping and ports) is clearly concerned with the transportation of goods and/or passengers between two or more ports by sea; on the other hand, logistics is the function responsible for the flow of materials from suppliers into an organization, through operations within the organization and then out to customers. A supply chain is composed of a series of activities and organizations that move materials (i.e. raw materials and information) through their journey from initial suppliers to final customers.

Sri Lanka is strategically located in the Indian Ocean with modern infrastructure, customs and human capital availability of higher quality. The country offers many opportunities for investors to set up regional businesses. Geographical position of Sri Lanka availed a unique opportunity in history, where all sea trade passed near the Island, making Sri Lanka a major shipping hub and its own development depended on maritime trade. The importance of Sri Lanka's ports in international trade as well as linking the East-West shipping route has created much interest among global industry & academia. The significance of Sri Lanka's maritime location and as a gateway destination to Asia is seen by many major industry players and are now focusing on relocating logistics and shipping to the Indian Ocean Island where great opportunities are available to speedily connect many continents, such as Asia and Africa.

The rapid increase of world trade in the past decade has restructured the global maritime industry, having brought about new developments, deregulation, liberalization and increased competition. There have been dramatic changes in the mode of world trade and cargo transportation, characterized by the prevalence of business-to-business and integrated supply chains. These changes have been embodied in the increasing demand for value-added logistics services and the integration of various transportation modes. As a consequence, high-quality logistics services and the effective and efficient integration of transport and logistics systems offered by a maritime operator (i.e. a shipping company or port/terminal operator) has become an important issue.

The Government of Sri Lanka believes that it is one of the prime objectives to make the island nation a strong economic and technological hub in the Indian Ocean region extending necessary support for naval, air, communication, logistics and business operations. Since no Government is able to achieve the said objective alone due to its vastness, complexity, threats and challenges, a collective effort may result in a multiplying outcome. Accordingly, awareness, contribution and partnership of relevant government organizations, corporate sector agencies as well as neighboring countries can play a vital role.

Therefore, this year's "Logistics Conference, Trincomalee - 2017" theme being ***“Fostering Strategic Partnership for Maritime Logistics”*** reflects the concept, that achieving the status of a Maritime Logistic Hub in the Indian Ocean is necessarily a partnership oriented process. It is expected that the deliberations will promote the concept of partnership for maritime logistics and the potential that such collaboration has, in achieving common goals to ensure National Strategy.