Spurring interest in the sea

The public should be aware of the importance of maritime sector

GREATER awareness of the maritime heritage and the importance of the sea are critical for addressing issues that affect the daily lives of Malaysians.

Towards this, Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA) places great importance on enhancing awareness amongst the public of the significant contributions of the maritime sector in the national economy, its role as the nation’s first line of defence, its potential for national integration, and its place in the nation’s heritage.

As Malaysia’s reliance on the sea increases, the use of the seas will intensify. This will bring about a host of challenges in areas such as safety, security, environmental protection and strategic relations, among others that need astute policy interventions.

Marine ecosystems and resources which are coming under various threats need to be protected and managed well to ensure their sustainability for the benefit of current and future generations. As a policy research institute focusing on matters relating to Malaysia’s interest at sea, MIMA complements the efforts of the various government agencies involved in the maritime sector by national maritime policy planning and implementation while playing a role in public education and information dissemination.

Recently, in conjunction with its World Oceans Week ( WOW) 2012 celebration, MIMA organised a Maritime Career and Awareness Programme with the theme Youth://

**Busy port:** A scene at Port Klang. An estimated 95% of Malaysia’s international trade is carried through the oceans via its international seaports. – Bernama

The next wave for change.

The programme is a public outreach campaign and part of an annual flagship event carried out by the institute to celebrate the importance of the oceans. It serves as a platform for MIMA to enhance the interests of the maritime domain through promoting awareness of the role of oceans in the wellbeing of humans.

“Malaysia is a maritime country, not just in physical terms but also economically,” said MIMA director-general Datuk Noor Aziz Yunan in his welcoming remarks at the launch.

Considering its total sea area being almost twice its landmass, he elaborated that maritime resources contribute substantially to the country’s prosperity.

Petroleum and gas, which are mainly from offshore sources, constitutes Malaysia’s single largest export commodity and together with marine and coastal tourism, fisheries, maritime insurance, and other supporting activities form major revenue earners for the country.

An estimated 95% of the country’s international trade is carried through the oceans via its international seaports. Drawing into the history of trade via maritime routes and looking at the present situation, Noor Aziz emphasised on the potentials of the maritime sector as a significant driver of Malaysia’s economy as the country strives towards becoming a fully developed nation by 2020.

The event received strong support and involvement from various government and non-government agencies. These included the Department of Environment, Department of Marine Park Malaysia, Department of Fisheries Malaysia, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, National Oceanographic Directorate, the Royal Malaysian Navy, Malaysian Maritime Academy, Malaysian Scuba Diving Association, Malaysian Nature Society, Reef Check Malaysia, Canvas of Nature, Scubazoo, World Wide Fund for Nature-Malaysia, and experts from academia, to name a few.

Close to 300 people, mainly students, participated in the programme.

The celebration was held on a larger scale this year and focused on students from universities and secondary schools.

The support and participation received from other agencies in making this programme a success is itself exemplary of the strong emphasis placed on the need to educate youth on the importance of the maritime sector and opportunities within.

Overall, the event provided the opportunity for the exchange of ideas and experiences, best practices to ensure synergy between conservation, management and sustainable use of coastal and marine resources and promoting the maritime field as a viable and long-term career option to the younger generation.

It is hoped that the ideas and insights shared during the programme would trigger greater interest and helpful ideas towards propelling Malaysia’s maritime sector to greater heights.

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