

Speech by Prime Minister  
At the Inauguration Ceremony of the IONS Technical Seminar  
On 21<sup>st</sup> May 2009.

I am pleased to be here at the inauguration ceremony of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium – Technical Seminar, hosted by the Sri Lanka Navy.

The Indian Ocean occupies a prominent position in world's geopolitical and trade sphere and this forum is an ideal opportunity to promote a shared understanding of the maritime issues facing the littoral nation states of the Indian Ocean and to formulate a common set of strategies designed to enhance regional maritime security.

In today's context, there are many challenges in the maritime domain that require increased maritime cooperation and interaction among Navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region, so that regional Naval capacities can be synergized for speedy and effective response. Safety, stability and security are an indivisible part of mankind's endeavor to achieve physical, economic and even spiritual well-being and prosperity. The fact that the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region too realize this and understand its implications is clearly evident from your presence here at the launch of the 'IONS' Technical Seminar initiative. The brain storming sessions that will be conducted during the seminar will provide valuable insights and lay the foundation to seek fresh solutions to the challenges that lie ahead.

I find IONS to be a uniquely consultative and cooperative initiative, one that hold so much promise for the future that transcends narrow national moorings and the earlier thinking on security, which used to be limited to military and competitive constructs alone. IONS is a robust sign of a paradigm shift from competitive security to cooperative security within the maritime domain. It encourages us all to view the oceanic expanses of our region, not as obstacles that isolate, but rather, as bridges that integrate nation-states.

On this landmark occasion, my good wishes are for the successful conduct of the technical seminar in order to achieve the desired objectives.

May the blessings of the Noblest Triple Gem and the Gods be with you all!