

From the Editor's Desk



By virtue of my long rich experience in the service and reputed manufacturing industries and associated with long period of membership with various professional institutions. Having been attending many industrial and maritime business related talks. What strikes me over the years is that seafarers are the only professionals who have been left in the lurch without any after service benefits. There are many marine luminaries in many disciplines with their specialized experience i.e. with long rich active sea-experience, ship repair and construction experience, long rich-teaching experience, long rich ship management experience, etc. We need them to share their rich experience, to be passed on to the budding marine engineers and navigating officers, with deliberations as guest lecturers in their good line of experience. All of them are the crucial element in shipping. Slowly the

Shipping industry is beginning to realize the central importance of seafarers. We often refer to "recruitment and retention" of seafarers while there is shortage of qualified mariners to man ships, of global demand. This crunch has arrived with the need for involving more specialized professionals i.e. H.R. Management, Social Scientists, Environmentalists and Maritime Lawyers. The industry is awakening to the fact that it must deal with the human element in its business "recruitment and retention" of quality professionals who are knowledgeable, willing to work hard and sincere and be loyal to their employer for increased productivity making optimum use of men materials and machines, thereby transporting cargo and men onboard safely, timely, efficiently and cost-effectively, with application of the Code of Professional Ethics. Time has therefore come for the stakeholders to share seafarer's real and main needs and how to improve their living and working conditions unlike earlier the control of Safety at Sea, has traditionally been limited to an inspection of the hull, machinery and equipment. Control has been mainly focused on hardware. Legislation in this field has gradually become more and more detailed and comprehensive. Today, it must seem an almost insurmountable task to those onboard, to have a complete overview of all the requirements that are formally to be satisfied at all times. This may be a difficult job even for the qualified surveyors. Reports usually therefore short-sightedly concluded, by the findings of ill-conceived old timer surveyors as " human error " without the requisite detailed investigation or a class of professional touch.

Port Based Welfare Services include, international seafarers calling in ports/ harbours, counseling by Port Chaplain:- Outlining the profound needs of seafarers and the gaps in services which reflects upon the importance they attach to these Services:- Local Guide: Transport to Shopping, International Phone, Transport to City Centers, Cheap Phone Cards, Internet & Email to contact their wards, Counseling etc. Clearly from this survey, Technology has become a major factor with the advent of phone cards, Internet and email - all unheard of or unavailable in 1990's.

What does the maritime industry provide to seafarers as welfare? There is a mud and sky below difference between Port employees & Seafarer's working, and their service conditions. Due thought be given, prior to clubbing them together, for welfare measures.

Why ?

- *Restrict medical attention to the genuinely sick, during the vessel's port stay.*
- *Shipping Companies surveyed have no welfare budget for their ships.*
- *Many (Unions/Associations etc.) debit seafarer's salaries for welfare/ entertainment services - all without their consent/permission.*
- *Very few ships have email services for their crews.*
- *Many owners and captains need a change in their attitude towards seafarers. Live and Let live others. They "ought to know what is best" for their crews. Avoid internal politics within the crew, however they should not be allowed to grow but controlled, for maintaining " high morale of each crew ". Why would anyone, want to serve out at sea but for primarily money, with all the risks and sacrifices and the increasing piracy.*

If at all to improve the productivity of Indian ports, we need to replace the existing bureaucrats holding Chairman / Deputy chairman posts by qualified marine professionals, but not with those with ill-conceived knowledge, by virtue of unregulated old Certificate Of Competency of professional trade, relevant to operation and maintenance of ships, the upgrading examination eligibility was practically then given by govt. clerks of MMD. Hence, the MMD Clerks were the writers of mariner's fate, whether it was for Engineers Exam. or for Navigating Officers Exam. No one could then raise his eye-brows against them; since they were totally backed by Mariners who were inducted into MMD, they have no time to deal with the seafarers but for finding their own ways to fill their own coffers, comparing the earnings of the hard-working seafarers, with risks and sacrifice. Examination & Viva Voce was conducted within the MMD office, question papers were taken back, answer papers could also be manipulated, it was a big racket suiting to the unqualified entries. Viva- Voce never conducted in the scheduled date and time, the candidates had to keep trying their luck, coming and going to the convenience of the surveyors. Only the qualified brave souls could take bold, fair and unbiased decisions. It's high time the Viva Voce be dispensed with and only the best on merit be inducted into the National Shipping Administration. Secondly, the need to corporatise the existing port management structure from the Trust to Corporate structure will do more good. I am of the opinion that the coastal region be safe guarded by the Indian Coastguard, who should be empowered with more responsibilities and rights to protect the nation from external threats through sea, similar to protection of our national border on land.

"Corrupted people have a good network and they are united." pkc.

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