Global MET takes a call on PIRACY

With piracy taking a turn for the worst the Global Maritime Education & Training Association (GlobalMET) decided to take a call on the various issues and accordingly held a seminar on 28th February at the SCI auditorium in Mumbai on "Piracy – Orchestrating the Response" (conforming with the IMO theme for 2011).

As the past few days saw the brutal killing of four Americans and the ransom amount demanded has been on the way up. So also the number of hijacked vessels, the seafarers taken hostages and the Indians involved. Not waiting for IMO to come up with a lasting solution to the problem of piracy, GlobalMET decided to take the lead by coming up with new a special training and education programme for creating sufficient awareness so that seafarers closely adhere to the Best Management Practices, which can assure safety while in piracy infested waters.

The half-day conference which was well attended was inaugurated by the Director General of Shipping, Dr. S. Agnihotri.

Capt Rod Short, Executive Secretary of GlobalMET said the intention of the seminar was to create awareness on piracy among seafarers. The Standards of Training, Certification & Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention he stated did not have the necessary direction for the seafarers for tackling piracy. The next amendment to the STCW convention was due in 2015 and would be too late to expect any direction from IMO in this regards.

"Many are looking at piracy as a business opportunity," opined Dr. Agnihotri, Director General of Shipping. "It is not something that can be wished away. It reflects similar turn of events that caused the failure of the League of Nations."

He felt this is a problem that needs to be sorted out by the United Nations. He also pointed out the reasons that led to the failure of the League of Nations. The erstwhile body failed because it could not create actions from its words. It could not back diplomacy with the credible threat and, where necessary, the use of force. So small evils went unchecked, tyrants became emboldened then greater evils were unleashed. Then, before their eyes, the evil became too big to challenge.

"Piracy can be solved by the United Nations since it is a multidimensional and multi-national problem," stated Daniel Sheehan Maritime Advisor to the Republic of the Marshall Islands and ex USCG and member of the US delegation to the IMO. "It is a well organized business and involves multiple maritime interests impacting the supply chain and has stressed the already stressed out industry. It is becoming an increasing adaptable business hampered by cumbersome international legal regime."

He informed that the pirates involved in attacking ships and hijacking them, thereafter demanding ransom were passing it on to the big bosses and are mere stooge. It is their bosses who wield immense power as they have a nexus with arm smugglers and other underworld entities besides also with politicians of certain countries. Funds are being electronically transferred arms and ammunition as well as skiffs and speedboats are being supplied through agents in Dubai and other countries. Piracy business is exportable he

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warned. If the piracy issue is not addressed now it will get entrepreneurs across the globe interested in this business.

Cdr J. Suresh the Command Operation officer of the Western Command, Indian Navy warned, “Each successful attack is making the pirates more hi-tech, richer, greedier and bolder. Now that they have tasted blood they will continue to do so with impunity. Because there is no unified political body or international organisation trying to tackle the issue it makes it difficult to put a stop to it.

Taking armed guards on the vessel is not a solution because if you take armed guards you might soon have pirates flaunting missiles. It is better to leave it to the navy to intervene.”