The oft-mentioned “Y-Generation”—the “Young-Generation” in the maritime industry—may be bold and brave but they are not something of an unmixed blessing, as they need to understand the psychological aspect of being seafarers in the real perspective.

During the day-long discussion of Globalmet (the Global Maritime Education and Training Association) on the very pertinent theme “Training to Meet the Needs of the Y-Generation” that took place at the auditorium of Tolani Maritime Institute (TMI) here today, the speakers dealt at length on many aspects of modern day shipping, its scientific progress, specific needs befitting the change of the tides and the special roles that young seafarers can play. The entire programme was divided into two lively sessions.

Capt. K. N. Deboo, Director and Principal of Anglo Eastern Maritime Training Centre welcomed the gathering.

Opening the session, Dr. B. K. Saxena, the Principal of TMI, stressed on the prime importance of saving the pristine oceanic ecology across the world by forestalling and preventing oil spills and pollution and maintaining the overall ecology of the seas. Dr. Saxena said that as the maritime industry needed to be more efficient, secure, safe and clean, the role of young seafarers was rather critical.

In his thought-provoking opening address, Capt. Rod Short, Executive Secretary of Globalmet, said that technology would continue to impact on ship design and operations, but it could lead to increased complacency and higher risks of accident, something that education and training must address. Citing a number of cases of critical ship accidents (collisions, sinkings, groundings and oil spills), Capt. Short said “...it is likely that a new ship in the 2015-20 period will be extensively automated with extensive use of electro-technology for all critical operations and be more efficient, economic and environmentally friendly”, so it is of prime importance that young seafarers also equip themselves with all the knowledge required to handle those vessels.

To substantiate his argument, Capt. Short referred to the importance of STCW 2010 by saying that while the Manila Amendments provided for more “soft skills” - application of leadership and team-working skills and use of leadership and managerial skills - more attention needed to be paid to ensuring adequate situational awareness and the dangers associated with complacency arising from an unjustifiably high level of trust.

Speaking on the occasion as Chief Guest, Mr. Amitava Banerjee, the Chief Surveyor with the Government of India, said laconically, “The Y-Generation faces a large number of challenges that the future of navigational history may pose for them”. Mr. Banerjee provoked the thoughts of those attending the Globalmet by very aptly saying that “ship training must not be paper training...a passion for training is necessary to create zealous young seafarers.”
UNERRSTANDING THE PAST TO TAKE ON THE FUTURE

The Guest of Honour at the Globalmet, Commodore Rajan Vir, President of the Indian Maritime Foundation, traced the glorious maritime history of India; his speech aimed at conveying the message to the Y-Generation that they must understand the past to shoulder the onus of maintaining a glorious tradition. Saying that marine archaeology and oceanic climatic studies must attract the Y-Generation, Commodore Vir said that the time had now opened when maritime education should focus on 3allast Water Management for protecting the health of the oceans.

Stressing the prime importance of stress management for the Y-generation coming into the shipping world, Ms. Naomi Rewari, Director of Applied Research International, said that young seafarers must shun their current tendency of looking for short term gains”. Ms. Rewari, daughter of a seafarer, daughter-in-law of a seafarer and wife of a seafarer too, said through stress management and change in their psychic patterns, young seafarers could avoid being restless. “Restlessness is growing fast among the Y-Generation,” she said and added that it needed to be addressed for their own good, the good of the society, good of the nation, and good of the world.

During the first session, Mr. Shantanu Paul, Dean (ES) of Maritime Training Institute coordinated a question-answer session that touched upon a large number of vitally important matters related to shipping industry.

In the second session, the audience listened with rapt attention to the scholarly presentation of Mr. Steven Gosling, Training and Quality Manager at The Nautical Institute, who stressed the need for “Continuing Professional Development (CPD)” as an essential tool to meet the needs of the Y-Generation. Saying that in a maritime context, the competence and skills of a mariner are acquired through work experience at sea and underpinned by specialised training on shore, Mr. Gosling posed a very pertinent question “...but what about five or ten years late?” To answer this, he said in this age-old industry, mariners had traditionally been expected to know what to do to maintain their competence, advance their knowledge and seize career opportunities of their choice.

Mr. Gosling very intelligently said the maritime sector has long been criticized for lacking any formal framework that has enabled mariners to know what it is they should do to develop their careers. To buttress this, he said a modern maritime career that is likely to feature several changes of role, employers and sectors demands that the professional be able to demonstrate competence at any time. He said that this was now being realised by mariners.

Presenting his thoughts on the young generation, Mr. Pooran P. Chugani, CEO of the Board of Examination for Seafarers Trust, said very vividly that those born between 1976-95 and 1988-2001 require some tips. These tips are: develop opportunities for experiential learning, student centered learning, small group activities, hands-on activities in the classroom and make use of technology. Quoting from a scholarly article entitled “Generational Learning Styles” by Julie Coates, Mr. Chugani said “It is a generation of readers, so written information works well with them” and they “want to know anything and everything.”


The last session was very interesting with Capt. Kapil Dev Bahl, an accredited OCIMF and SIRE inspector anchoring the discussion forum. The young cadets and officers brought out their intentions and future career expectations. During the discussions the youngsters mentioned that 80% of their college mates would like to sail only for 8 to 10 years and then come back ashore for further career options.