Shipping industry conferences are usually pretty tame affairs, with the level of excitement rarely causing raised heartbeats and temperatures. The recent GlobalMet (formerly AMETIAP) Conference however proved an exception; with participants giving vent to thoughts, ideas, and suggestions, rather candidly, and in the process giving generous doses of palpitations to many of the participants.

Fortunately, the rhetoric remained veiled in the usual gentlemanly sugar-coat that the industry has remained long partial to.

At the very start, the self-effacing Executive Secretary of GlobalMet, Capt. Rodney Short, bulleted the questions that lay in the path of this one-day meet in Mumbai.

Is the sea career becoming attractive? Are levels of seagoing competency in decline? Are there wide gaps in training? Is love for the shipping career waning? Do people on ships find lesser breaks in sailing? Is too much paperwork killing their spirit? And, are standards of teachers & teaching declining?

The time available for discussing such lofty and diverse matters indeed fell insufficient, but enthusiasm carried the day.

Earlier, in his welcome address Capt. KN Deboo, chairman of the local organizing committee stressed the need for making GlobalMet a strong and vibrant association, with a consultative status at IMO.

Mr. N Srinivasan, former Director General of CII, Guest of Honour, urged the industry to adopt excellence as its core objective, and that the rest would follow. “Achieving role model status must be the objective if companies desire excellence”, he said. His suggestion was that continuous improvement and constant innovation would create world class models of learning within the shipping industry.

Mr. MP Pinto, former Secretary to the Ministry of Shipping strode to the microphone to spontaneous applause. The industry has by now come to expect Mr. Pinto to proffer valuable advice laced in large dollops of humour.

Underlying the generous mirth however were several solemn suggestions that included: looking beyond mandatory training, having a meaningful competency system, giving distance learning a serious look, enhancing training berths aboard ships, encouraging the upward mobility of ratings, initiating greater mutual recognition of certificates between nations, and finally “listening” to our seafarers.

Capt. Tim Wilson, Director New Zealand Maritime School, Auckland, presented a paper on the current Competency Crisis, in which he felt that the many GlobalMet recommendations regarding operating standards were not finding their way into STW 38. This he felt to be very disappointing, as GlobalMet suggestions had not received the serious attention they deserved. However Wilson remained optimistic that if not immediately, than these would certainly be included in the STCW agenda at a future juncture.

The next paper by Mr. Ajoy Chatterjee, the Chief Surveyor to the Government of India, underlined several elements that would improve the training of seagoing personnel.

Overall, Mr. Chatterjee urged that the STCW subcommittee:

- Retain the structure and goals of the 1995 revision
- Do not down-scale existing standards
- Address inconsistencies, interpretations, outdated provisions, MSC instructions; clarifications already issued and technological advances
- Address requirements for effective communication
- Provide for flexibility in terms of compliance and for required levels of training and certification and watchkeeping in arrangements due to innovation in technology
- Address the special character and circumstances of short sea shipping and the offshore industry, and
- Address security-related issues
- Mr. Chatterjee also took the opportunity to extol the multifarious virtues of “Ship in Campus” Training.
Several papers then followed which included ‘MET Providers’ by Capt. S S Chaudhari, Nautical Officer at LBS College, and ‘Improving MET’, a Shipowner’s perspective by Mr. David Birwadkar, Vice President, Great Eastern Shipping.

Capt. Navin Passey, Managing Director, Wallem India, and Wilco Ship Management Pvt Ltd., put together a MET wish-list. He said, “The creation of uniformity of training standards would be at the top of such a list, followed by a meaningful increase in the shipboard training berths.”

Passey also emphasized “Service end-users (Ship owners) must get more involved. candidates should stop fearing exams and examiners, man management should be taught to senior seagoing officers, and multicultural aspects should be a part of the cadets’ training.” He also urged that a serious view be taken of minimum vs. safe management of ships.

The standards of maritime training notwithstanding, the standards of the conference, despite the raging humidity outside, remained at enviable levels of outspokenness and wit.

The Revalidation Course for Masters and Chief Engineers came in for serious criticism by Capt. Rajendra Pradhan, while his engineering counterpart Rajeshkumar Sunder had a series of suggestions to address the changing technological scenario in the industry.

Self Assessment via a KPI approach was put under the magnifying glass by Mr. B K Saxena, Principal of Tolani Maritime Institute, Induri, Pune. He elaborated the TMSA approach to self assessment, suggesting that similar self assessment which he termed MEMSA, would alleviate the need for external grading by incongruous institutions like Crisil & ICRA.

The rather alarming situation with trainers in India was brought to the attention of the audience by Mr. Pooran Chugani, who analyzed his findings of a mini research; concluding that good teachers were a scarce commodity and their training was indeed of vital importance to the industry. The poor pay conditions of maritime faculty was also duly slammed.

Dubbing the maritime training in India an ‘imbroglio’, Capt K Vivekanand, Director Vels Group of Maritime Colleges, stridently brought to light what he termed “The rather unsatisfactory state of Affairs in Maritime Training in India”. He was particularly critical of the maritime administration which he said was functioning without any connection with ground realities in the sector.

Wagging heads among the audience would lead many to believe that Capt Vivekanand’s outburst perhaps contained many truths.

“Give the industry what it requires, i.e. a mariner”, is what Capt. KJ Miranda, Dean, (Nautical Studies) of Maritime Training Institute, proposed. Suggesting radical changes in the current examination system, Miranda said, “Make it Simple, and change with the times, while deregulating wherever possible.”

The panel discussion chaired by Capt. M M Saggi, Nautical Advisor, allowed the candidates to speak their minds with candor on a host of issues; indeed allowing many to rebuke some of the more unsavory allegations made during the earlier presentations.


The Session Moderators included Capt. M. C. Yadav, Director (Training) FOSMA, Mrs. Naomi Rewari, Director, Applied Research International, Capt. N. Peshimam, Captain Superintendent, T. S. Rahman, and Capt. S. S. Jairam, Chairman - MASSA.

While Capt. S S Manjeshwar of Wallem Maritime Training Centre delivered the Vote of Thanks, Capt. Short concluded succinctly that although there remain a number of problems in MET, the introduction of technology, computers, and learning, classroom as well as web-based, will lead to a brighter future for the industry.
A highlight of the conference was the honors bestowed on some of the more worthy teachers the industry has ever known.

**Seven Stars of Indian MET**

Capt. Indrajit Singh - former Captain Superintendent, T.S. Bhadra, T. S. Dufferin, T.S. Rajendra.

Capt. T. K. Joseph - former Captain Superintendent T.S. Rajendra and Principal LBS CAMSAR. (Capt. A. Chattopadhyay seen receiving the award)

Capt. A. P. Kothurkar - Secretary, MASSA, ex. Captain Superintendent T. S. Bhadra and T. S. Rajendra.

Mr. D. K. Sanyal - formerly DMET, Principal Lecturer of Maritime Academy, Malaysia, author of a very popular book on Diesel Engines. (Mr. S. K. Sarkar seen receiving the award)

Capt. H. Subramaniam - former Captain Superintendent T. S. Chanakya, and Principal, LBS CAMSAR

Mr. B. N. Bera - former Director, Marine Engineering and Research Institute.

Capt. T. D Hazari - former Principal, Maritime Training Institute, Shipping Corporation of India.

GLOBALMET

an association formed of 106 Maritime Education and Training Institutions through the world, held an international conference in Mumbai on the 9th of June 2007. This was the 7th such conference, held annually since the year 2001. The Association was formed as AMETIP (Association of Maritime Education and Training Institutions in Asia-Pacific) in the year 1995. Last year it went global and now forms the largest single voice of Maritime Training Institutions throughout the world.

The theme for this years conference was “Improving MET through review of STCW and Training Policies”, and was held in the Textiles Committee Auditorium, Prabhadevi, Mumbai, attracting over 150 participants. The conference was organized by the GLOBALMET members in Mumbai.

GlobalMet Membership

- Academy of Maritime Education and Training
- Anglo Eastern Maritime Training Centre
- Applied Research International Pvt. Ltd
- Don Bosco Maritime Academy
- Fosma Maritime Institute and Research Organisation
- Hindustan Institute of Maritime Training
- International Maritime Training Centre
- LBS College of Advanced Maritime Studies & Research
- Ocean Education and Research Centre Pvt. Ltd
- Pentagon Maritime Training & Research Institute
- RL Institute of Nautical Studies
- Shipping Corporation of India, Maritime Training Institute
- Tolani Maritime Institute
- Training Ship Rahaman
- Vel's Academy of Maritime Studies
- Wallem Ship Management Pvt. Ltd.