

# Seafaring career highly lucrative: Capt Chawla





**C**omplacency has been an issue not only in shipping but in almost all industries and it needs to be tackled on a war-footing. Most of the mishaps that occur are due to apathy. Introspection will result in remaining ever-alert and vigilant which will avoid untoward happenings said Capt. Pradeep Chawla, Managing Director, QA & Training, AESM-Hongkong, in an interview with *Marine Logistics & Trade Link*. Speaking about Piracy, he felt that this was a professional risk which was prevalent in maritime profession since ancient days and it needs a political solution. In the meantime it should not be blown out of proportion as it takes time to solve such issues internationally. He stated that seafaring career offered immense opportunities and it was the only profession which offered one an annual salary of a senior manager by working for only six months, and not being as highly qualified as a senior manager.

**Why was 'complacency' chosen as the subject of the seminar?**

This subject was specifically selected because of the two accidents that we had that were not due to lack of knowledge and experience. The people on board had been with us for a long time, over the same run. During investigation it was found that the main cause of this mishap was complacency. Taking this into consideration I looked at the research that had been undertaken in the human complacency factor. I found that very little research had been done on this topic in the maritime industry worldwide. So I thought this would be the right subject for the seminar.

Like I said in my presentation, everybody – NASA, airline industry, even marriage and cricket team – has problems due to complacency.

We went through over a dozen books on complacency, had meetings with the classification society, behavioral experts, psychologists; only to discover that none of them really had any solutions to provide us to enable us to tackle the issue. So we decided to make the seafarers aware of the problem of laxity. Once you have made people aware of the problem they think about the subject and come up with solutions. My personal experience is that once you involve people who are connected with the problem, they come up with the best solutions.

The topic has been put on the agenda of the company including the top management as well as our clients

**This will prove beneficial for other companies too?**

When I made a thorough study I found that it affected all the industries. Thus it would be beneficial for all companies to have a look at this issue. I am sure there wouldn't be any company which could rightly say that they had never seen any complacency in their company.

As an individual everyone has to do self-introspection as to whether they are becoming complacent and as a company we have to look at whether we are contributing any negative elements to the company's working. Both the individual and the organization has to examine the issue at the same time.

**What were the other issues taken up at the seminar?**

Basically it was complacency. We also looked at the PSC performance. Anglo Eastern has had a good PSC performance. We are probably one of the best ship managers in terms of PSC records. We also discussed about MARPOL, the importance of which has been, time and again, drilled into our manpower. I think we also had a good interaction with our clients on all these issues.

**Do you feel that the seafarers should receive training in dealing**

**with piracy?**

I think the risk is much smaller than the perception of the risk. If you compare the number of transits with the number of ships captures, the percentage is pretty low. It is less than one per cent.

All that is needed is for the people to be mentally prepared and alert in that area. I think to be scared of the piracy issue and then not join the







seafaring career would be tantamount to getting scared to cross the road and remaining on the same side. The chances of getting hit by a car while crossing the street are far higher than a ship getting hijacked.

So far the pirates have not hurt the seafarers. It is a mental game. This is a professional risk. There is risk in every profession. Journalists too have to take risks. The risk is not higher than for any individual travelling to any other country for business where he could be hijacked and picked up for ransom.

**Previously when people joined**

**the sea one of reason used to be of adventure. Today that concept has changed. Why?**

Today that term is not valid because the ship stays in port for a very short time and there is immense regulatory pressure. Previously ship used to halt at the port for several weeks so the seafarers could explore the port. It used to be a glamorous life. That glamour is now gone especially on tankers etc. But in terms of salary, in India it has doubled over the last about four years, and is comparable to any other field. A master aboard an oil tanker makes about \$9000 annually – taxfree. And he works only about 6-7 months in a year.

This is comparable to the salary of a senior manager in most countries. This message has to go to all seafarers – that with their qualifications the profession offers a commendable compensatory package.

**What should be the role of the training institutes?**

They should play an active role in inculcating safety rules in them.

**Would you like to say something about the Indian seafarers and the officers?**

I think the Indian seafarers deserve praise for a job well done. They are still expanding the market share for India. Indian officers are still popular. But they have to keep their expectations realistic, in terms of salary and contract so that they don't become uncompetitive. It is a globalised industry and they have to make themselves competitive to maintain and increase the market share.

I think if India plays the game right, the Indian market share could be doubled in five years.

**Considering the recent recession and the situation in Middle East, has the growth been up to your expectations?**

Well with the help of Anglo Eastern we have achieved beyond expectations. In 1992 we had about 40 ships out of India. Today we have about 280-290 ships fully manned with Indian officers. So I would say that Anglo Eastern's dreams of a training centre and a college have become a reality. We will put more money in India and go up to a capacity of 360 as soon as we can. We want to make this college the best in the world. Unlike the other tiny or commercially run institutes, we are trying to do it differently.- not run it merely to make money. We want to hire the best faculty in India and impart the best training in India. If we are given encouragement and support by the Indian administration we will do it.

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