



▲ Simulators help seafarers sharpen their manoeuvring skills [photo: Ravi Kamble]

Innovation online at Anglo-Eastern

by Ramadas Rao

Even as the global economic recession deepens and cost-cutting is high on the agenda of shipowners and managers, those with a long-term perspective are continuing to focus on bolstering crew training.

"Of course, we have to be cost-conscious, but I hope the downturn will not lead to a repeal of all the quality initiatives," Peter Cremers, CEO of Anglo-Eastern Group, told SASI as 2008 drew to a close. Cremers pointed out that despite all the safety measures the industry has introduced in recent years, accidents continue to happen. "There is still room for improvement," he stressed. "We need all those professionals."

Cremers continues to spend liberally on training. The Anglo-Eastern training centre – spread over 1,860m² in Mumbai – has been equipped with state-of-the-art simulators, which quality and training director Pradeep Chawla considers to be excellent tools.

A powerful role of simulation is improving responses during emergencies, said Chawla, who is an enthusiastic proponent of this method of training. Simulators, he explained, can provide graphic demonstrations of how a poor decision made in the early stages of an emergency can lead to a catastrophe: "If you were trained to handle the first few minutes of an emergency well you could prevent a major disaster."

The significance of simulators is well recognised in the shipping industry. They will

be made compulsory in the next comprehensive revision of IMO-STCW requirements, said Chawla, who until late last year served as chairman of the Global Maritime Education & Training Association (GlobalMET).

Thanks to technology reducing their cost, simulators have become more affordable, allowing many more countries to install the equipment in training centres. In particular, simulators can help seafarers sharpen their manoeuvring skills in the world's increasingly crowded sea lanes, Chawla believes. Nevertheless, he recognises that simulators cannot yet replicate the entire range of rolling, pitching, strong winds and cold weather experienced in real time by



Chemical cargo tank at Anglo-Eastern Maritime Training Centre in Mumbai about to be unveiled [photo: Ravi Kamble]

mariners at sea. "You cannot necessarily get the adrenalin flowing the same way," he conceded, "yet they provide a very good intermediate solution and one more tool in the bag of the teacher."

Proficiency-building courses

Anglo-Eastern's Mumbai centre is equipped with a GMDSS simulator, a full-mission navigation simulator, a full-mission liquid cargo handling simulator and a full-mission engine simulator. The full-mission simulators are operated by trainees via hardware controls at the front end while the software runs at the rear. "This gives complete realism to the operation," said Capt K N Deboo, director and principal of the centre. The centre is the first in India (and only the fifth in the world) to be certified by risk-management specialist Det Norske Veritas, he pointed out. "The area of focus has been not so much the mandatory STCW training, but the advanced level of proficiency-building courses," said Deboo.

Ship managers have been active in running fully fledged training establishments, but the dedicated training institutions supported by governments remain central to maintaining the pool of trained and qualified on-board personnel. Executive secretary of GlobalMET Rod Short has called for a unified approach to maritime training. "For too long, maritime education and training providers have not worked together globally to influence developments for the benefit of the shipping industry," Short declared in a note to the GlobalMET conference in Mumbai last November. "Working with our members and other industry organisations can help address common issues," he argued.

Increasingly, the internet is being tapped to extend the reach of training to both aspiring and existing seafarers. In 2008 Anglo-Eastern introduced a web-based online test before recruiting deck and engine cadets. The ship manager recruits about 400 deck and engine cadets worldwide to man more than 200 ships, and the system has helped ease the testing process, while opening up the recruitment base. "This is intended to allow applicants to take the test from any part of the world, sitting at home or even in a cyber-café," Chawla explained.

Anglo-Eastern receives more than 1,500 applications every year. The system provides results instantly and also compares scores achieved by applicants in different countries. The testing platform has been developed by Indian company Core Competency Marine Training, which produces computer and web-based training material. Cremers sees the tests as yet another way to tap more crew sources as competition heats up for quality on-board personnel.

Whatever the short-term economic climate, it seems that Anglo-Eastern, at least, will not be lacking a well-trained workforce.