

From the Editor's Desk

"MARINE WAVES" URGES FRESH THINKING IN ENSURING G O O D G O V E R N A N C E .



RTI Act involves all the people in nation building. Hence, "Citizens have the right to know what their government is doing". (RTI) Act was introduced, because people should not only have the right to information but could also share and cooperate with their government-machinery, interacting for the good. Similarly, our government need to encourage the people for the good, of its own country in common, to involve in nation building. By using RTI Act, in the right manner, a good culture of social revolution can be then brought about.

Media came into existence to expose truly and fairly, the reality of the situation, for general awareness and early corrective development action. The Regulatory framework is imperative to be put in place in shipping, to resolve all disputes and differences, then and then in a fair and just manner, before it grows into an alarming level. "Mariners inducted into the department are too good, generally for their own good". Some of them stoop too low, not maintaining their decency and decorum of their office held, availing seafarer's accommodation, instead of making their own accommodation, unlike other government officers. "Room Tariffs" in Seafarers club, made to suit their own convenience. All of this, owing to absence of a common regulatory philosophy, guiding the evolution of regulatory institution, in infrastructural sectors. The Retired bureaucrats favored with elite positions while relinquishing from their active service, in order to keep to Gandhi an ways, keeping their eyes, ears and mouth shut. Grouping their own men of vested interests, as committee members, to safeguard their own personal interests. As a Corporate Member of the Chennai Press Club, and Managing Editor & Publisher of "Marine Waves" an accredited monthly maritime newsletter, self not invited for the National Maritime Day Celebrations programmed, despite prior query nor called for the arranged PRESS Meet, apparently shows lack of transparency in the dealings. Expressed my protest to the Secretary, NMDC Chennai, on the 5th April 2007, National Maritime Day.

It's hard to move forward while looking backward, but without looking backward we fail to give gratitude for accomplishment or to learn from failure - both necessary for future success. "Keep taking steps in a certain direction and you're going to end up where you're headed." Though disasters have a way of ignoring your well laid plans. Change your Plan... if disasters make it necessary. I assure you... life's a lot more fun and disasters are a lot less disastrous!

I have long believed during my sailing days that in shipping - the real cause of accidents were generally covered up, to please the vested interests, by not exposing the real facts, to get away by cheap manner of expression "Human Error". Of course, to err is human. Just because we all make errors, mistakes and slips and hence bound for deficiencies and defects, the same should not be mercilessly done, for the criminals to get away scot-free and giving no room for appropriate corrective action, expresses morally incapable of effective self-regulation, owing to the advent of communication-age, with pagers, mobile phone, satellite, computers etc. Nowadays, surveyors find the situation scary to yield under pressures or be easily purchased as before. enlightened surveyors and the media made the difference, to build respect and credibility within the very same sectors.

"Everyone knows that India will be a knowledge superpower; but, for it to become a superpower in economy, our curriculum should not only be job-oriented, but made research oriented. Only then can we stop borrowing technology from the West".

The need to address status of Teachers and so called Trainers, in Maritime Institutions. They should be motivated by their Managements to enhance their qualification. Only when good pay packages are paid to the qualified, we can expect the best out of them, to produce C O C's of upgraded quality standards, with modern theory, and practice oriented courses, to meet the specific job assignments out at sea, for optimized efficiency and to be of high class international standards. Seafarers - out at sea pay-packages are more governed for their personal risks and sacrifice, living away from their close and near dear ones. One should not compare this and corrupt themselves, for illegal means of earning fast money. Management of Maritime Institutions, to be in constant touch with the industry, for bringing about changes in the curriculum. Guest lectures to be invited from veterans out at sea, to share their long rich sea experience, as good rich experience is more valuable than a research degree, and also from those with long rich teaching experience, rather than depending only on the half-baked, ill conceived teaching faculty of mariners, more as marketers. Theory and practice need to go hand in hand, for the continuous upgrading of skills, to meet the changing and challenging times, attracting high caliber people into the fast growing and high tech shipping industry. Shri. R. Radhakrishnan, Vice Chancellor of Anna University rightly said that "we can rectify the dearth in manpower, only by upgrading the qualification and skills of our people, both in the fields of education and industry". "A maritime-related career does not necessarily mean a sea-going one. There are abundant job opportunities in technology, design, manufacturing, logistics, financial services and other fields". Many do not have a clear picture of what life in the maritime sector is all about.

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(Contd. from page 2)

operates off the Iraqi coast along with British forces, said the Britons did not appear to have been harmed and that Iran's Revolutionary Guard naval forces were responsible.

Britain's Defence Ministry said the Royal Navy personnel were "engaged in routine boarding operations of merchant shipping in Iraqi territorial waters," and had completed a ship inspection when they were accosted by Iranian vessels. "We are urgently pursuing this matter with the Iranian authorities at the highest level," the ministry said. No one could be immediately reached for comment at either government offices in Iran or at the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad. An Iranian official at the UN mission in New York said he was not aware of the report and could not immediately comment. Iran is in the middle of its New Year holiday when almost all government offices close.

The U.S. navy said the incident occurred just outside a long-disputed waterway called the Shatt al-Arab dividing Iraq and Iran. It came as the UN Security Council is debating further sanctions against Iran over its disputed nuclear program, and amid U.S. allegations that Iran is arming Shiite militias in Iraq. Cmdr. Kevin Aandahl of the U.S. navy's Fifth Fleet, currently operating out of Bahrain, said a "very limited exchange of communication" occurred between the Iranian Revolutionary Guards navy after it had intercepted the Royal Navy service members saying "that no harm had come to any personnel and that they were being taken to a place of safety."

The Iranians said they had captured the sailors and marines because they were operating inside Iranian territorial waters. "The Royal Navy replied that they were well inside Iraqi territorial waters (and) that was the end of the conversation," Aandahl said. The United States, Britain's chief ally, has built up its naval forces in the Gulf in a show of strength directed at Iran. Two American carriers, including the USS John C. Stennis - backed by a strike group with more than 6,500 sailors and marines and with additional

minesweeping ships - have arrived in the region in recent months, ratcheting up tensions with Iran. There has been concern that with that much military hardware concentrated in the Persian Gulf, a small incident could spiral out of control and trigger a major confrontation. Rhetoric between western countries and Iran has escalated in recent months. In February, President George W. Bush accused the Iranian government of being "belligerent, loud, noisy, threatening - a government which is in defiance of the rest of the world and says, 'We want a nuclear weapon.' "

Earlier this week, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, whose government says it wants to develop nuclear technology for purely peaceful purposes, said if western countries "want to treat us with threats and enforcement of coercion and violence, undoubtedly they must know that the Iranian nation and authorities will use all their capacities to strike enemies that attack." The British Defence Ministry said the Royal Navy personnel were in two inflatable boats from the frigate HMS Cornwall during a routine smuggling investigation. A statement from the U.S. navy's Fifth Fleet said the British sailors had just finished inspecting the merchant ship about 10:30 a.m. Friday "when they and their two boats were surrounded and escorted by Iranian vessels into Iranian territorial waters." Aandahl said the British crew members were intercepted by several larger patrol boats operated by Iranian sailors belonging to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy, a force that operates separately from the country's regular navy.

The Iranian boats normally carry bow-mounted machine-guns, while the British boarding party carried only sidearms, Aandahl said. No shots were fired and there appeared to be no physical harm done to any personnel involved or their vessels, Aandahl said. The seizure of the British vessels, two rigid inflatable boats known as RIBs, took place in long-disputed waters just outside of the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab waterway that divides Iraq from Iran, Aandahl said. A 1975 treaty gave the

waters to Iraq and U.S. and British ships commonly operate there, but Aandahl said Iran disputes Iraq's jurisdiction over the waters. "It's been in dispute for some time," Aandahl said. "We've been operating there for a couple of years and we know the lines very well. This was a compliant boarding, this happens routinely. What's out of the ordinary is the Iranian response." Aandahl said the U.S.-led task force has touchier relations with the Revolutionary Guard - which often ignores normal maritime operating traditions - than with the regular Iranian navy. A fisherman who, asked not to be identified, said he was with a group of Iraqis from the southern city of Basra fishing in Iraqi waters in the northern area of the Gulf said he saw the Iranian seizure.

"Two boats, each with a crew of six to eight multinational forces, were searching Iraqi and Iranian boats Friday morning in Ras al-Beesha area in the northern entrance of the Arab Gulf, but big Iranian boats came and took the two boats with their crews to the Iranian waters," said the fisherman, contacted by telephone by an AP reporter in Basra. The Cornwall's commander, Commodore Nick Lambert, said the frigate lost communication with the boarding party, but a helicopter crew saw the Iranian vessels approach. "I've got 15 sailors and marines who have been arrested by the Iranians and my immediate concern is their safety," Lambert told British Broadcasting Corp. television. In June 2004, six British marines and two sailors were seized by Iran in the Shatt al-Arab. They were presented blindfolded on Iranian television and admitted entering Iranian waters illegally, then released unharmed after three days.

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