

## From the Editor's Desk



*Shipping is perhaps the most international of the world's industries, serving more than 90 per cent of the global trade by carrying huge quantities of cargo, cost effectively, cleanly and safely. We need to also view the feasibility of shifting more and more cargo from Rail, Road & Air to ships for transportation, overall carbon emissions can therefore be drastically reduced; besides the traffic congestion. Healthier inhaling by those on land and green technology can be improvised. Like other industries spread world-wide, shipping is also facing increasingly tough international challenges to achieve emission reductions. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions can be significantly reduced by as much as 40-50% by religiously following proper periodical and preventive maintenance of main and auxiliary engines, right actions of operational and administrative functions on vessels. Man power onboard "Can do" will to work efficiently with sincere burning desire, thus achieving the optimized output, all this should come from within the employees at sea and the fullest cooperation from the relevant shore based staff. "Sincere thoughts to improve fuel consumption, avoid wastage, use of redesigned fuel-valves and fuel-system, propellers and hulls; use of best paints that make ships less 'sticky' through the water to attract sea-weeds, barnacles; greater flexibility in shipping lanes to allow ships to by-pass storms rather than cruise through them resulting in burning more fuel, while facing avoidable resistances in movement. Support and cooperation from shore-management to ensure supply and use of the right Fuel and lubricants (bunker), emissions and green technology are one of the crucial areas. The International Maritime Organisation, the UN agency responsible for maritime safety and preventing pollution from ships, says all vessels more than 20 years old must be withdrawn from service, its not the ageing alone that matters but for the timely periodical preventive quality maintenance. IMO's expectancy that all single-hull vessels have to be replaced by double-hull ones by 2010. The Marine Affairs Department of the UAE National Transport Authority recently made it clear no single-hull tankers will be allowed to trade in the UAE after the 2010 deadline. But does not ask for shifting and employing single hull vessels on any other sector of the ocean jeopardizing safety of human souls elsewhere. What is best to be adopted universally not compromising the lives of the innocent souls at work onboard. EAE adopts, "Marine safety as a top priority for ship registration in the UAE and vessels that do not meet safety requirements cannot operate here," a UAE statement said.*

*Scarcity of marine professionals: The need to attract the best, those who are mentally and physically fit with professional competency in their activity based profession on vessels with a mindset to work, owing to lean skeleton strength manning onboard. Higher crew wages is therefore a bound necessity for Seafarer's sacrifices and risks involved in their profession, besides they are over-worked. They do not drive up the operating costs. Investing on the right human capital could help cutting-down on wastages, downtime etc. Instead bring down the wages of shore-based shipping staff in civil peace area, comparing others working ashore, not comparing with that of the wages of seafarers, who are on hazardous working conditions.*

*The growing incidents of "PIRACY" causes concern for preparedness: Seafarers are worried that more and more, join the pirates to hijack the ships because of its return being very lucrative and there is no deterrent. "Somalia has no central administrative government machinery" for smooth maintenance of law and order. "The United Nations is the only agency that can stop this menace. The international community has to agree to find ways to solve this worsening problem. That is the only way forward for its 3,025km coastline -- the longest in Africa - SOMALIAN WATERS remains virtually un-policed. Seafarers venturing out at sea therefore need to be sober, physically and mentally fit and disciplined at all times, calls for alertness and activeness to meet the eventualities. Captains (MASTER) of vessels should always be cautious and take the necessary safety measures to avoid risk of Pirate attacks. These pirates are not law-abiding people. Though we have International Laws, how are we going to enforce it? "We have to consider the practicalities of doing so." Vessels are to maintain 24-hour radar and visual watch for any suspicious activities, while out at sea". Early detection will help prevent boarding's by pirates. "Mariners in such prone area should take more responsibility for their own safety. Why, a remedial action not taken as yet, for the Marine Piracy menace? The professional seafarers out at sea, leading a life of sacrifice and risks in their day/night-duty out at sea, is surmounted with marine piracy menace these days. They are already over-worked and tired, expected to be vigilant with scary mindset. What is the world body doing about this? Owing to the increasing piracy, considerable seafarers are giving serious thought to quit their service at sea and seek shore based employment. Those old-timer mariners who were academically poor (school drop-outs), under-graduates, with trade apprenticeship have easily forgotten their hard life at sea, being self-centered with their plum jobs held, on the strength of the unregulated COC's issued during the past, working parallel with the IAS bureaucrats, HOD's, Deans in Maritime Colleges, Academies and as well as Vice Chancellor of Maritime Universities with exception to a few like Capt. K. Vivekanandan. Are they competent to talk about the wages drawn by the present seafarers out at sea, to be high. The management of "MARINE WAVES" feels that the seafarers out at sea, should be treated much far better, as they work on quicker turnaround vessels, unlike our old days on ocean going vessels. To solve global problems we need global solutions, and we must work together even when there are differences in our political systems.*

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(contd. from page 2)

was last sighted heading towards Somalia and MISC is working with the relevant authorities in monitoring the situation. "We would like to reassure all concerned that the safety and lives of our crew members are of utmost priority to us." "We have contacted the Malaysian and Philippine family members of the affected crew and we will provide all necessary assistance and support to them in this trying period," Pereira said in a statement yesterday

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian shipping firm MISC Bhd had established communications with its hijacked tanker on Thursday and was informed of a "casualty" onboard. In a statement released yesterday, MISC said communications with the MT Bunga Melati Dua chemical/palm oil tanker had been established at 5.05pm Malaysian time. It said the company had been informed that there was one casualty among the vessel's Filipino crew during the boarding of the vessel by hijackers, but did not elaborate. "We are unable to confirm this incident. We are informed the rest of the crew are safe," the statement read. Malaysian MT Bunga Melati Dua tanker was seized by pirates off the coast of Somalia on Tuesday, with 29 Malaysians and 10 Filipinos on board. The 32,025-tonne tanker was attacked in the Gulf of Aden between Somalia and Yemen, one of the world's most dangerous shipping lanes. Meanwhile, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement agency has advised Malaysian vessels to use the furthest route from the Somalia shoreline. Its director, Admiral Datuk Mohd Amdan Kurish, said captains of vessels should always be cautious and take the necessary safety measures to avoid risk of pirate attacks.

The International Maritime Bureau, when contacted by the New Straits Times, refused to comment. Head of the Piracy Reporting Centre in Malaysia Noel Choong said he could not say anything for the sake of the "safety of the crew". However, Choong told the Associated Press a warship from an international naval force had been deployed to track three vessels and their 57 crew that were hijacked in an unprecedented spate of attacks by pirates off the coast of Somalia. However, the Bunga Melati Dua was not one of those mentioned by Choong.

The hijacked vessels mentioned were from Iran, Japan and Germany, all of

which were seized on Thursday, two days after the Malaysian ship. Like the Bunga Melati Dua, they were hijacked in the Gulf of Aden. "All the three ships are still moving and appear to be heading toward Somali territorial water. A warship has been despatched to monitor and track the vessels," he said. The naval force includes the United States, France, Germany, Pakistan, Britain and Canada, which currently holds the rotating command. No other details were immediately available.

"Somalia has no central government. We are worried that more may join the pirates to hijack ships because it's very lucrative and there is no deterrent," Choong said. "The United Nations is the only agency that can stop this menace. The international community has to agree to find ways to solve this worsening problem. That is the only way forward." It's 3,025km coastline -- the longest in Africa -- remains virtually unpoliced.

KUALA LUMPUR: In war-ravaged, bitterly poor Somalia, there are many men living in palatial beachfront villas and driving luxury cars. Their wealth is not from preying on the abject poor, or from ingenuity in exploiting the desperate situation in their country. These filthy rich men are pirates, who have turned lawless Somalia into a pirates' paradise. Heavily armed, they prey on passing ships in the Gulf of Aden, one of the world's busiest sea routes, with impunity.

The ships -- including oil tankers -- are worth millions each. Their cargoes are also worth millions. But these are not what the pirates are after. They hijack the ships and hold the crew hostage for something better -- cold hard cash in US currency. Shipowners buckle under the need to get back their vessels and the pressure to get their crew safely out. So lucrative is the piracy business that at least 30 ships have been hijacked off the coast of Somalia so far this year, including two belonging to Malaysian International Shipping Corporation.

"The pirates with money to burn appear to have become beacons of hope for many young men who are desperate for work in one of the planet's poorest countries," a source said, warning that with each ransom payment, the lure of piracy becomes more and more difficult to resist for Somali youth. "These youths, who used to work as bodyguards or in the government militia, see the lucrative rewards which are available at sea and decide to enlist in the pirate gangs. A vicious cycle is born."

Another disturbing factor is the funnelling of ransom money to Somali insurgents, who are mounting an increasing number of assaults in the anarchic Horn of Africa nation. Piracy has been rife off Somalia since warlords overthrew dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. Piracy attacks hit unprecedented levels last month. Malaysian tanker Bunga Melati Lima was the latest vessel to fall victim when it was taken over last Friday night. Until now, authorities are tightlipped about the vessel and its sister ship Bunga Melati Dua, hijacked on Aug 19.

MISC's Bunga Melati Lima was attacked by pirates off the coast of Yemen on Friday night. The vessel has a crew of 36 Malaysians and five Philippine temporary maintenance crew. Bunga Melati Dua was seized off the coast of Somalia. It has 29 Malaysian and 10 Filipino crew members.

A coalition of warships and aircraft from several Western countries has set up a Maritime Security Patrol Area to avert piracy and hijacking. However, commercial ships plying the gulf have been warned that this is no guarantee of safe passage. Vessels are advised to maintain 24-hour radar and visual watch for any suspicious activities. Early detection will help prevent boardings by pirates. Sources said negotiations to free hijacked ships and kidnapped crews could take up to a month.

"The pirates' favourite choice of currency is US dollars and the method of payment is normally in cash. Deposits into bank accounts are discouraged as paperwork and records mean a trail will be left behind," a source said. "The first and immediate priority during negotiations is the safety of the hostages." However, the pirates are known to treat hostages well -- as any deaths could affect the amount of ransom paid.

The pirates are normally armed with automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenade launchers, easily available as Somalia has not had a functioning government since 1991.

The recent piracy figures released by the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre indicate a recent spike in incidents. While the 114 incidents reported in the first six months of this year are slightly fewer than the 126 reported in the corresponding period last year, the number of incidents recorded in the second quarter of this year totalled 62, against the 52 accounted for in the first quarter.