

## **Call for 'immediate action' over officer crisis**

By Marcus Hand in Singapore - Friday 7 September 2007

BOTH shipowners and managers are calling for immediate action to train more seafarers with a warning that the shortage of officers is set to get worse in the next couple of years.

Speaking at Maritime Manpower Singapore 2007, Kenichi Kuroya, managing director of K Line Pte Ltd, stressed the need to act while the industry was making money.

“While the market is good, many owners can afford to provide money and cadet berths. This is a golden opportunity for us to take action,” he told the conference organised by the Singapore Maritime Officers Union.

“When the market place is down, maybe it’s not the opportune time. We would like to see action today simply because education takes a long time,” he added.

Pradeep Chawla, director of quality assurance & training for Anglo-Eastern Ship Management, lashed out at shipowners for having failed to provide cadet berths in the past.

“All these years we’ve been shouting we need cadet berths. How do we put the people for training if you don’t give us the berths?” he questioned.

“Two cadets per ship is the minimum intake required to sustain the supply of human resources in the maritime industry and perhaps, the only way to prevent future shortages is to make two cadets a mandatory requirement in the manning scales for ships.”

According to Capt Pradeep the failure to train cadets in the 1980’s and 90’s meant; “Now the crisis is very much around us.”

Painting a grim picture for the next couple of years, he said, “The availability of officers I can guarantee is going down.”

He predicted that the worldwide shortage would continue in 2008 and 2009 even though crew supplying nations kept increasing the number of trainees being inducted into the seafaring profession.

For shipowners this will mean having to pay even more for crew next year with Capt Pradeep predicting wage rates will rise 15%.

For senior officers on gas carrier sector, rises are expected to be higher and he described getting crew for LNG and LPG as being like “an auction” with seafarers simply moving to the highest bidder.