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Webinar brings Bridge to Boardroom



24th July 2020, UAE: When TMS held the latest in its Covid-19: A Leadership Perspective webinar on Wednesday 22nd July it tried something new and bold, for the first time giving a voice to seafarers during the current pandemic. Over the past few months the plight of the world's seafarers, many of whom have faced extended periods at sea, has been a common theme of the TMS Webinar series, but the 'Live from



Boardroom to Bridge' Webinar gave a global audience of over 800 a chance to hear direct from the front line.

Four distinguished and experienced captains, Capt. Kiran Krishnaji Joshi, on The Shipping Corporation of India's Dosh Vibhor was joined by Capt. Roman Morgun, onboard Tomini Shipping's Tomini Dynasty; and Captain Wael Fares and Captain Marcel Leon Aranha, on KOTC's Gas Al Mubarakiah and Bubyan respectively. Also taking part in the Webinar was the chairperson and managing director of The Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), Mrs HK Joshi, Tomini Group's Chairman, Imtiaz Shaikh, and Kuwait Oil Tanker Company's CEO, Ali Shehab.

Before the Webinar got under way, one of the leading figures in the regional maritime sector, Captain Mohamed Juma Al Shamisi, group chief executive of Abu Dhabi Ports gave a cameo presentation in which he praised the contribution of seafarers and expressed heartfelt thanks for their contribution. "Over the past six months, the coronavirus pandemic has given us the opportunity to take pause and consider the remarkable work of the world's 1.6 million seafarers," he said. "Throughout the crisis, and amid the challenges, their efforts have ensured that the global supply chain can keep the flow of essential food and medicines running smoothly."

Captain Shamisi also officially launched the new TMS UAE Yearbook for 2020/21, which he welcomed as an important way of highlighting and promoting the contribution of the UAE maritime sector.

After an introduction by TMS managing director, Trevor Pereira, and moderator, TMS editor, Clive Woodbridge, there was a chance for the captains to explain directly to the audience what life had been like on their ships during the pandemic. While accepting that the situation had been 'challenging' Captain Joshi struck an upbeat note. "We have made an important contribution as without seafarers half the world would starve, and the other half would freeze. I am proud of my crew and the way they have coped," he stated.

Captain Leon said it had been hard for the crew, some of whom had been onboard now for a year, but they were holding up. The seafarer is not an average person. A seafarer is beyond average," he declared.

Captain Morgun highlighted the fact that crew waiting to join ships were also suffering hardships. He added, "Life onboard is always challenging and the pandemic has added more complexity to it. There are of course a number of issues for crews and we hope that those in power will listen and can address them."



Captain Wael said the crew of his vessel were 'coping'. He added, "The pressure is tough, but we are getting through by taking care of ourselves and of each other. We are proud of ourselves and that is helping us see this through."

The executives shared their challenges as shore-based business leaders with Mrs. Joshi describing some of the measures she had taken, both to protect head office staff in Mumbai and crew onboard. "We have had no casualties, all vessels are Covid free, and we have been successful in managing our offices as well. I am lucky that at SCI we have a team that is motivated to succeed, as that is the key," she said.

Imtiaz Shaikh acknowledged that the pandemic is affecting crew and he said part of his role is to reflect this publicly. He added, "We have to make sure their voices are heard and help to bring an end to their ordeal."

Finally, Ali Shehab spoke for all of the executives, when he said, "It is tough. We are tired and exhausted. But we keep going and we are learning all the time." He pointed out that the average time officers were spending onboard was now 7 months rather than 4 months usually, while crew members were spending an average of 11 months at sea rather than 8. "This is having a domino effect and if not addressed will lead to a crisis," he suggested.

Clive Woodbridge ended the Webinar by asking the captains to pass on the thanks of everyone taking part and the hundreds listening globally to their crews for their hard work and sacrifice. "There is no doubt that seafarers are key workers and it is a real disappointment that many governments have not given them that recognition which they fully deserve," said Clive. "The webinar today has highlighted some of the challenges they faced but also the remarkable robustness and positivity of seafarers who are proud of their service to the global economy."

Preparations are now underway for the next TMS Webinar which takes place on August 5th. The focus of this event will be the impact on the oil, gas and energy sector, including offshore shipping.