

Lack of on-board training berths posing a concern for maritime industry

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The unavailability of sufficient on-board training berths has put the seafaring population in the country in the dock, posing a concern for the maritime industry.

It is mandatory for an entry level Indian seafarer who passes out from a recognized pre-sea maritime training institute to undergo an apprenticeship or on-the-job training aboard a cargo ship as a trainee. A trainee or an engine cadet who intends to serve merchant navy as a marine engineer needs to undergo an apprenticeship for at least 6 months compulsorily.

Vineet Gupta, managing director of Anglo Eastern Ship Management India, the Indian subsidiary of Hong-Kong headquartered Anglo Eastern Group – one of the largest employers of Indian seafarers said apprenticeship is a shipboard training programme which is a planned and structured to assist a prospective seafarer candidate to achieve the standard of competence under 'International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers' benchmark set by International Maritime Organization.

Unfortunately, the maritime recruitment firms operating in India want only trained and experienced seafarers, and only very few companies invest in trainees or entry level seafarers, he said.

The annual demand for such 'on board training berths' for Indian seafarers is almost double considering the huge churn out of trainees or pass outs of deck and engine cadets from various maritime training institutes operating in the country. It is estimated that about 5,000-5,500, entry level Indian seafarers get placed as trainees every year aboard Indian and foreign flag vessels, he said.

The Indian maritime industry, according to him, is grappling with the demand supply disparity of on board training berths for seafarers. He urged the Government to act and control this mismatch by finding avenues to create more training berths on-board ships.

He went on to add that Anglo-Eastern Group's India-based Anglo Eastern Maritime Academy guarantees placement to all pass outs on 'on board training berths'. The academy places over 750 deck and engine cadets of Indian nationality as trainees on cargo vessels every year and assure jobs to them subject to performance results, he added.

Sources in the maritime fraternity agree that most shipping companies are reluctant to take the effort to train officers and prefer to recruit already trained and certified officers. It is only bigger companies that provide training slots on their ships for the trainees to complete their training.

After undergoing pre-sea training, the trainees have to do a period on board ships to complete their training (apprenticeship) and qualify for the competency examinations. It requires the Director General of Shipping to make it mandatory for all companies that recruit Indian officers to provide these training slots, the sources said.