

FLAGSHIP

NEWS FROM THE LIBERIAN REGISTRY

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Registry appoints new Japan executive

The Liberian Registry has appointed Shigeki Fukuda to head up its dedicated office in Tokyo as increasing numbers of Japanese shipowners and operators elect to flag their vessels with Liberia. Mr. Fukuda's appointment is an important part of Liberia's decision to further its investment in the Japanese shipping community.

Shigeki Fukuda is a vastly experienced and knowledgeable shipping executive. He spent 37 years with Japanese shipowner Daiichi Chuo Kisen Kaisha, part of the Sumitomo group of companies, and subsequently served as a director on the boards of a number of Daiichi subsidiary companies.

Shigeki Fukuda brings to the Liberian Registry a wealth of practical shipowning and operating experience, as well as the accumulated wisdom of almost forty years working in the marine industries. As such, he will become an important part of the registry's key management team,

which is dedicated to keeping Liberia at the very top of the ship registry league.

Registry Chief Operating Officer Scott Bergeron says, "Liberia is fortunate to appoint someone of Mr Fukuda's stature and reputation and we are honoured by his acceptance. Mr Fukuda's appointment is the first of several significant steps that the Liberian Registry will make to invest in Japan and renew the relationships that are necessary for Liberia to become the Japanese open registry market leader it was thirty years ago.

"With so many Japanese owners currently considering their flag selection policies, we believe it is that level of service, together with Liberia's widely acknowledged focus on safety and its quality reputation, which makes the registry an attractive proposition for their consideration. In commenting about his appointment Shigeki Fukuda stated, "I am excited about the new challenges offered to me by the



Shigeki Fukuda

Liberian Registry. I believe that my international experience and long-established relationships in the shipping industry will serve the registry well in its endeavours to provide local quality service and to re-establish robust associations with Japanese shipowners, many of which date back more than thirty-five years."

As one of the world's largest shipowning countries and with its high quality standards, Japan is a very important market for Liberia, the world's second largest ship registry. The leaders of the Liberian registry respect the vast experience which is so prevalent in Japanese shipping. The registry's ongoing investment in Japan and Mr. Fukuda's appointment are a large part of Liberia's strategy to be close to the owners and managers in order to offer the very highest and most responsive levels of service possible.



The "Ice Explorer", a Suezmax newbuilding owned by Fletching Corp and built by Universal TSU Shipyard, Japan, joined the Liberian Flag Administration on September 19, 2006.



Liberia meets the CSR challenge

Never before have shipping companies been under such critical scrutiny regarding the way in which they conduct business. Over the last decade there has been a significant increase in the expectations of a wide range of interests - including governments, shipowners, charterers, seafarers, institutional investors, port state control, non-governmental organisations and the public at large.

As expectations have increased, business operating philosophies have evolved. For the last several years, multinational shipping corporations, and forward-thinking flag state administrations, have increasingly adopted a proactive approach to social and environmental issues arising in their global markets. That approach has often been categorised as Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR.

CSR is most often defined as the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development working with employees, their families, the local community, and society at large to improve their quality of life in ways that are both good for business and good for development. These social and environmental issues are often defined and addressed in formal CSR policies.

CSR development has been driven by a growing concern among the shipowning community, flag states/registries, and other key interests over how social and environmental issues related to the maritime industry have an impact on both a global and a local level. And the standard that the Liberian Registry has set for its shipowners regarding crew competency, safety, and protection of the environment is critical to the success that the Liberian flag has enjoyed over the last five years.

The Liberian Registry's concern for CSR has evidenced itself in many ways in the maritime world, including: ratification of international treaties;



Auditors class VA 2006

pragmatic support for ship lifecycle management; technical review of newbuilding designs; promotion of ISO 14001-certified operations; participation in the development of ILO labour conventions; and the development and support of enhanced training regimes. Liberia has been working with its shipowners in all these areas, promoting a forward-thinking approach, because it simply makes good business sense.

A number of Liberia's owners and shipmanagers have been at the forefront of the maritime CSR initiative. Leading operators such as Tsakos Shipping and Trading, Reederei Claus-Peter Offen and Mitsui OSK Lines (MOL) are addressing these issues by developing and implementing strategies which address CSR. These include -

- Tsakos's comprehensive senior officer seminars covering a wide range of topics such as minimisation of environmental aspects and impacts as well as onboard health and safety reviews.
- Offen's progressive seafarer training programme for life, presenting the seafarer with a clear path forward to greater skill competencies and advancement; and
- MOL's establishment of a CSR and Environment Office in June 2004 to enhance its group-wide approach to corporate social responsibility.

Understanding the drivers of CSR and the risk means evaluating the potential impacts, identifying

vulnerabilities, and integrating a programme throughout an organisation, including the company's relationship with third party suppliers and vendors.

As part of the Liberian Registry's ongoing support of CSR initiatives, Captain Jim Walsh, head of Liberia's Seafarer Certification and Documentation department, moderated a panel discussion on CSR at the recent 7th Annual Asian Manning and Training conference in Manila. In addition to identifying risks, the panel discussed how to measure corporate social responsibility performance.

Auditor training continues

THE Liberian Registry is proud of the proactive, industry-leading role it has taken in conducting ISM and ISPS audits. Its initiative to harmonise ISM and ISPS Code audits has received overwhelming support from shipowners, operators and managers.

Liberia has set up a global network of specially trained ISM/ISPS auditors, which now reaches a total of 140 in major ports throughout the world. Most recently, eighteen more auditors went through the Registry training programme during a two-week course in Virginia, from which they emerged certified to conduct external ISM (SMC and DOC) and ISPS audits.

Each auditor has to complete a rigorous training course, including two final examinations and a personal assessment. Professional lecturers and presenters are flown in from around the world to contribute to the quality of the course.

Liberia can harmonise audits and conduct ISPS, ISM, SSAS and Annual Safety Inspections in one visit, thereby saving owners and operators time and money, with significant savings in both categories compared with industry averages. The Liberian Registry believes that harmonisation is the way forward. It offers owners a flexible, efficient and cost-effective solution using the Registry's worldwide resources and qualified and professional audit staff. And it sees this is part of what a responsible ship registry should be doing for shipowners and operators.



Safety under discussion at class meeting

LISCR hosted a Liberian Recognised Organisation (Class Societies) meeting on September 21, which discussed a number of important topical safety issues.

Delegates were welcomed by Anthony Dupree, Jr, VP Technical matters, the registry's liaison to the Classification Societies. Capt David Pascoe, Senior Vice President of Maritime Operations and Standards, provided the attendees with a review of the recent developments at the Liberian Registry. Capt Mike Karr, Chief of the US Coast Guard's Office of Vessel Activities, presented an overview of the USCG's recent initiatives on maritime security, pollution prevention, port state control and safety initiatives. He provided information on the USCG Marine Information System for Law Enforcement (MISLE), dissemination of information by the USCG to the maritime industry and the USCG training of its own port state control officers. Capt Karr also provided an overview of the status of US vessel and port facilities compliance, including the 2005 USCG port state control activity report. He noted that the issue of the testing and certification of US-built diesel engines in accordance with Annex VI of MARPOL had not yet been resolved with the US EPA.

David Bradley, Group After-Sales & Service Manager of Umoe-Schat-Harding (USH), the world's leading supplier of lifeboats and davits, was invited to make a presentation to the meeting on, among other things, the recent IMO Circular MSC1206 in connection with required servicing of lifesaving equipment by the manufacturers. Anthony Dupree of LISCR presented an overview of Liberia's policy and procedures regarding the implementation of MSC 1206. He explained that, due to the lack of adequate manufacturer service facilities and capabilities worldwide, Liberia will recognise non-manufacturer-certified service facilities to conduct annual examinations and to authorise short-term Safety Equipment Certificates when necessary.

The invitation to Schat-Harding was part of the Liberian Registry's



David Bradley

ongoing proactive efforts to maintain and improve maritime safety.

LISCR's Tim Keegan, meanwhile, made a presentation on Liberia's Marine Operations Note covering implementation of amended SOLAS Regulation III/32, requiring immersion suits for every person on board a cargo ship by the first Safety Equipment Survey after July 1, 2006. The regulation permits an exemption for cargo ships, other than bulk carriers, engaged in voyages in warm climates where, in the opinion of the Registry, immersion suits are not required.

Also under discussion at the RO meeting was Liberia's interpretation of the revised Annex II and IBC Code, and possible exemptions. LISCR provided examples of exemption and interpretation requests being received from shipowners in connection with the carriage of dedicated cargoes, vegoil cargoes, the use of flanged piping, the stowage of cargo samples, and foam fire-fighting systems. The meeting was told that Liberia would grant exemptions under MARPOL Annex II Regulations 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 with regard to the carriage of specific cargoes in dedicated trades and under Regulation 4.1.3 with regard to the carriage of identified vegoils.

The meeting also discussed the issue of Liberia becoming a party to Annex IV of MARPOL and the procedures to be implemented to bring Liberian ships into compliance with it. A copy of Marine Operation Note 6/2006 regarding Liberia's acceptance of Annex IV was provided to delegates.

LISCR and IADC launch new offshore standards

The Liberian Registry has launched a new examination and training standards initiative for the offshore industry which will help develop new business training models, create transparency in the examination process, and streamline the documentation and processing of offshore personnel.

Working with the US-based International Association of Drilling Contractors, the Liberian Registry has developed an Exam and Training Standards Initiative (ETS 2010). The key objectives of ETS 2010 are to bring the Liberian examination system up-to-date with current industry practice, to identify new categories of certification for industry-specific positions, and to research and propose alternative fast-tracking career options for shore-based, degree-level engineers seeking employment offshore.

For companies participating in ETS 2010, Liberia has agreed to process documentation for existing personnel regardless of flag affiliation, although companies registered in Liberia will qualify for LISCR's platinum service, which features same-day response and a central problem resolution point.

James Walsh, vice-president of seafarer certification and documentation at LISCR, says, "Participation in ETS 2010 will reduce operating costs because Liberia has agreed to process existing personnel regardless of flag and MoU affiliation. Liberia's web-based personnel documentation system is currently processing over 600 documents a day, with a turn-round time of less than two business weeks.

"Liberia and IADC will be reviewing current manning and training methods and the certification and documentation procedures now being used. The offshore market is engaged in a search for not only more oil and more gas, but also for more properly qualified people. ETS 2010 will help the industry achieve those objectives."



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On the register



Vijay Khilani is vice-president of Information Technology at LISCR. He graduated with a first-class honours degree in computer science from the University of Bombay in 1993, and worked briefly in India before being offered a job in the United States.

Prior to joining LISCR, Vijay worked for six years as a senior manager at Oracle Corporation, where he helped build an online sales application for CRM (customer relationship management) software.

Now, at LISCR, Vijay is enjoying working on projects to streamline ship registration procedures. He says, "I enjoy the diverse nature of my job at LISCR, and the opportunity it affords me to work with people from all over the world.

"It has made me a better manager, since it brings me in contact with issues outside the world of IT – an opportunity which comparatively few IT specialists enjoy.

"I get a great deal of satisfaction out of building software and watching it being used in the shipping industry. I regard LISCR's SEA Information System as the central nervous system of the Liberian Registry, and my ambition is to help make Liberia the most technologically advanced registry in the world. In fact, I think we are very close to achieving that, already."

Vijay says, "It is fascinating to have the opportunity to work with so many former professional seafarers at LISCR. It makes me wish that I had spent some time at sea myself, but of course my ability lies in other areas.

"One day, I hope to have my own boat, and there has been no shortage of offers of sailing lessons from the LISCR staff."

When he isn't building IT systems, Vijay enjoys listening to music and watching English and Hindi films. He relishes a challenging game of tennis, and plays USTA matches in the summer months. He also enjoys rollerblading, and spending as much time as possible with his young daughter.

