

Call for ports to improve efficiency

DOHA: The efficiency of the regional ports needs to be raised to international standards to cope with the challenges of globalisation, according to a senior member of the Qatari shipping trade.

Mohamed Khalifa Al Sada, vice-chairman of the Qatar Shipping Company (Q-Ship), said yesterday that globalisation of production and consumption and the expansion of world trade had led to massive growth in goods flow across borders.

This had prompted the world shipping industry, including ports, to respond and drastically improve their functioning. Apart from cost-efficiency, the focus is also on cutting down on the time consumed in transporting goods.

"There is a port reform the world over and we have to catch up with the trend," he said in remarks to *The Peninsula*.

Mohamed Khalifa described the three-day seminar on ports and shipping that concluded here yesterday in which some 17 internationally acclaimed experts took part, as an important event as it provided crucial insight into the global port and shipping industry.

"The focus of the symposium was not on regional ports and shipping but hearing from experts from across the world on the trade in general was a great experience. It would help us understand the woes that our industry faces," he said.

Lack of infrastructure and skilled manpower, needed especially for loading and unloading, were some of the major problems the port and shipping sector in Qatar faced, he said.

He agreed to a suggestion that the two ports in Dubai (Jebel Ali and Port Rashid) provided examples that were worth emulating in other GCC states.

Infrastructure at the two ports is owned by the state and it is also responsible for planning and policy-making, while a port authority manages and regulates them. The commercial services at the ports are, however, run by private companies.

"I think it would be a good idea to experiment the concept here," said Mohamed Khalifa.



Pictures: ABDUL BASIT

From left: Sunita Mainee Ahmad, Mahin Faghfouri, Mohamed Khalid Al Mana, Federic Sarazzain and Irene Rosberg at a seminar on ports and shipping that concluded in Doha yesterday.

The organisers of the three-day seminar described it a great success. They said they hoped the event would encourage parties to a dispute in the regional shipping industry to approach the GCC Commercial Arbitration Centre for resolution.

The seminar was organised by the Manama-based GCC Arbitration Centre in cooperation with the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) and the Ministry of Economy and Commerce.

Arbitration Centre role

Chairman of the Arbitration Centre's board, Badar Al Darwish, said in remarks to *The Peninsula* yesterday that people in the GCC shipping trade were gradually realising that it was easier and less costly to approach the GCC Arbitration Centre for quick resolution of disputes.

The board has 1,400 arbitrators on its rolls and they draw from different countries from the region and elsewhere in the world. "If a party to a dispute nonetheless insists on appointing an arbitrator of his or her choice who is not listed with us, that would also be

welcome," he said.

Earlier, at the seminar, Irene Rosberg, from the Copenhagen Business School (CBS), while presenting a paper on educational challenges in maritime trade, said that her institution had a master's programme in business management (MBA) in shipping and logistics.

The programme has close links with maritime research and education bodies the world over, she said. The course is ideal for middle-level managers of companies in the shipping and port sectors, she said.

She faced a barrage of questions at the end of the session, especially on tuition fee, which she said was \$25,000 for two years. Among the two other women speakers was Mahin Faghfouri, from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTD), Switzerland.

A doctor in maritime law, Faghfouri spoke on electronic transport documentation in the shipping trade and international convention on the arrest of ships.

Other speakers included Federic Sarazzain, a prominent maritime lawyer from

France, John Emmott, also a London-based shipping solicitor, and James Abbott, from a UAE-based European law firm, Clifford Chance.

Badar Al Darwish and Mohamed Khalid Al Mana, chairman of the QCCI, headed the two sessions.

Paper on arbitration

One of the two papers presented by Sunita Mainee Ahmad, an India-born UK solicitor specialising in maritime law, was on arbitration in Saudi Arabia.

Wife of the Indian Ambassador in Riyadh, Talmiz Ahmad, Sunita has been based in the kingdom for over three years since her husband took up his assignment. She now plans to write a book on arbitration law and practice in Saudi Arabia.

She was into legal practice in the UK from 1980 to 1994 when she shifted to South Africa after marrying Ahmad. She continued her legal consultancy work in South Africa and later in Delhi and hopes to continue once her husband takes over as the Indian envoy to Oman in July this year.