

Middle East shipping in buoyant mood

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International and regional shipping operators and financiers are gathering in Dubai today to assess the impact of the global downturn and discuss the technical challenges faced by the Middle East maritime industry.

'While the global downturn may dampen overall activity, the fundamentals of shipping remain in place. Strategies may need to be adjusted for the new financial era we are entering but the maritime industry will continue to be the lifeline of the global and regional business community,' said Christopher Hayman, Chairman of Seatrade, organisers of Seatrade Middle East Maritime 2008 which opens today at Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Christopher Hayman, Chairman of Seatrade.

Seatrade Middle East Maritime which runs until Tuesday 16 December is under the patronage of HH Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai. The Dubai event is held every two years and is one of the world's fastest-growing maritime events, ranked among the industry's Top 10 largest

The crucial debate on shipping economics takes place at the Middle East Money and Ships conference which runs alongside the exhibition. The keynote introductory address on the state of the industry throughout the region will be given by Jamal Majid bin Thaniah, Group Chief Executive Officer - Port & Free Zone World and Executive Vice Chairman, DP World.

The region plays an important role in world shipping with the Arabian Gulf one of the most active international maritime centres in the world. As well as being pivotal in global energy-related transport, economic growth across the region has driven record volumes of containers and increasing bulk cargo.

In addition a maritime piracy debate will also take place with contributions from maritime security and legal specialists as well as the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners and The Mission to Seafarers.

Hayman said recently that the level of hijackings had reached 'an intolerable level' and presented an enormous challenge for ship operators in the region. The maritime piracy debate will address in particular the risk of injury to crew, the damage or loss of vessels or cargo as well as loss of earnings.

Further topical issues to be debated at Money and Ships conference include fuel, emissions and green technology; the challenge of manning; regional port and trade development; along with shipbuilding and repair.

The 6th Seatrade Middle East Cruise Conference will take place on Monday 15 December. The region's cruise tourism has expanded at a rapid rate and the conference will assess the potential for the future. Among speakers will be Manfred Ursprunger, CEO of QE2 Enterprises of Nakheel, the company that brought the former cruise liner to Dubai to be converted into a floating hotel.

On Tuesday 16 December the SuperYacht Solutions Conference will be held. The Arabian Gulf has one of the biggest concentrations of super yacht ownership in the world. As a region has also become a world leader in waterfront and marina development, say the organisers.

Seatrade Middle East Maritime 2008 is the largest maritime event of its kind in the region with a record number of exhibitors and stands. With national pavilions including China, France, Germany, Holland, India, Singapore and the United Kingdom, more than 250 companies will be participating. In 2006 the event had record attendance of 6,000 trade participants from 63 countries. In 2008, the organisers expect attendance to increase by at least 20%.

Principal sponsors of Seatrade Middle East Maritime 2008 include Det Norske Veritas, GEM, Dubai Maritime City Authority, NITC and Gulf Marine. Other sponsors are: ABS, BP Marine, ClassNK, Drydocks World, Emarat Maritime, Ince Al Jallaf & Co, Lloyd's Register, Topaz Energy & Marine, Rais Hassan Saadi Group, SAIFEE Trading, Royal Caribbean Cruises Line, Cloud Cruises and the Ministry of Tourism for the Sultanate of Oman.

The event is supported by Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, DP World, Dubai Shipping Agents Association, Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, the International Association of Ports and Harbours, the Nautical Institute, the Royal Institute of Naval Architects, ImarEST, the UAE Ship Owners Association and the Supply Chain & Logistics Group.

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