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Seafarers Have No Nationality

In Covid-19 pandemic, when there was a lock-down, on one hand, people on streets were wearing masks, trying to hoard items in their homes and so forth. On the other hand, the seafarers, the keyworkers were working 24x7 to keep the world economy moving. This scenario was unfolding when trade wars are going around the world and many economies are decoupling from each other creating more problems for seafarers as many ships are stuck at many ports around the world.

Many shipping centres around the world were too late in looking after the seafarers and many were interested in protecting their domestic populace. Now 7-8 months later, people around the world are talking about seafarers, though it is a good sign, but it is not enough. Many companies made seafarers work on the ship for months without relieving them or it took months for many seafarers to reach their better-halves. However, still seafarers were not part of thinking of decision makers. Like hospital workers and doctors were awarded, I request that seafarers around the world in every economy are rewarded for their heroism and sacrifice for humanity during pandemic. When I say awards, I do not mean a few awards in Oscar-awards like ceremonies for a few captains or chief engineers or ship managers from shore offices. I mean proper welfare and awards for cooks, able seamen, fitters and so forth, who have sacrificed a way more, when they were already on meagre salaries.

Also, it has been observed based on politics and nationality of seafarers, they are still appallingly treated at many ports. If countries that are involved in such practices, then they should realise it will start the vicious circle around the world and ultimately all seafarers would be affected for sure and increased freight rates will be passed to their consumers. Nobody will be able to put the Geanie back in the bottle. Please remember when **seafarers are on the vessels, they have no nationality** and they are working for humanity. What better example can be of the seafarers keeping the world economy running while people were hiding inside their homes to escape pandemic.

I think it's time to move from lip service to actually consider welfare of seafarers. The regulators in crew supplying countries should assist in that as they are already benefitting by foreign currency remittances and they are not doing any favour to the seafarers by providing such welfare. This mind-set must be changed by all stakeholders. The seafarers are net contributor to the society and they do not deserve the regulators apathy.

Any policy maker reading this post must ponder on what I have commented upon before Genie escapes the bottle for good.

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