

Operatives for Off-Shore and Deep-Sea Fishing Vessels

By

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The need for operatives for the off-shore and deep-sea fishing vessels has never been felt as at present. Ever since the introduction of the larger vessels for deep sea fishing, immediately after the second world war by the Department of Fisheries and the private sector, the officers mainly the skippers, had been foreigners and ex-Navy personnel. The skippers and Engineers of the vessels belonging to the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation had been either ex-Navy personnel or with the exception of a few, those who possessed the coastwise Skippers and Engineers Certificates issued by the Colombo Port Commission. With the recent increase in prospects for personnel in foreign shipping lines, large number of experienced personnel have left the island, particularly to the Middle-East countries. Hence the owners of the few deep-sea fishing vessels that have begun operating now also find it difficult to get sufficient number of trained officers to man their vessels satisfactorily.

The crew members such as deck hands and engine room assistants have always been local men who have been found to be very capable. About 900 trainees in fishing course and about 300 trainees in engine course have passed out from the Fisheries Training Centres. These numbers, together with efficient young fishermen available in the country, show that this class of worker is readily available.

The importance of fisheries training has long been recognised by the Department of Fisheries and some training facilities for the coastal sector, which has hitherto made the largest contribution to the country's fish production, were provided in a small way from about the early fifties. But fisheries training on an organised basis commenced in this country in the year 1962 with the setting up of a Fisheries Training Centre in Negombo, with the assistance of the Government of Japan. This facility was multiplied in the year 1972 with the establishment of three more Fisheries Training Centres in Tangalle, Jaffna and Batticaloa.

Meanwhile, in view of the Government's programme to introduce larger fishing vessels, it became necessary to provide training facilities for off-shore and deep-sea fisheries. Initially the idea was to raise the level of the Negombo Fisheries Training Centre to that of an advanced Fisheries Training Centre and with this end in view, the assistance of the Government of Japan was sought. A Japanese mission arrived in early 1972 and on its recommendations it was decided to set up a Fisheries Training Institute in Colombo.

Thus the Sri Lanka Fisheries Training Institute was established with Japanese aid under an agreement signed between the Governments of Sri Lanka and Japan on 16th April, 1974. In terms of this agreement Japan has provided a training vessel, the equipment for the institute as well as the services of Japanese advisers. The Japanese Government has also made provision for training the Sri Lanka technical staff associated with the institute, in Japan for four years duration and though it is due to terminate on 15th April, 1978, a request has been made to the Government of Japan to extend his period of co-operation.

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Purpose and Functions of the Sri Lanka Fisheries Training Institute

- (1) The objective of the Government is to develop fisheries as a major industry in view of the importance of fish in the diet of the people and its considerable potential as a valuable foreign exchange earner ;

The Sri Lanka Fisheries Training Institute has been established to contribute to this objective by serving as an advanced level fisheries educational institution for the improvement and development of the fishing industry with special reference to the off-shore and deep-sea fishing ;

- (2) The quality and standard of education and training imparted in the institute is approximately at the same level as in a Junior University. It is expected that the standard will be gradually raised to university level and that ultimately the Institute will become the nucleus of a Faculty of Fisheries in the National University ;
- (3) The functions of the institute will be to equip the pioneering personnel required for the needs of the fisheries development programme with the essential technological knowledge and skills with particular reference to modern fishing techniques and fishing vessel engineering that will enable them to play a leading part in fulfilling the objectives of the development programme ;
- (4) The institute will qualify persons to work as officers in off-shore and deep-sea fishing vessels, and in relevant technical post in the Department of Fisheries and in fishing companies.

Courses, Diplomas and Certificates and Admission Requirements are given in Annex 1.

The Ceylon Fisheries Corporation operated a fleet of 11-ton boats commencing in about the year 1966. Many of those who manned these boats were ex-trainees of the Negombo Fisheries Training Centre. But the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation had to get them trained especially in navigation, through the Sri Lanka Navy. Although these boats were meant to have an endurance of about three days they really functioned as day boats. This I believe was due to the inexperience of those who manned these boats and their training in navigation was not sufficient to venture far out. The academic standard of most of these fishermen was very low, i.e. have studied up to the 8th Grade only and hence were not capable of learning advanced navigation.

At about the same time that the Sri Lanka Fisheries Training Institute was established, the Sri Lanka Fisheries Project, financed by the Asian Development Bank was also started. Concerned with finding people to man these boats the Fisheries Department started a special training course in the Negombo Fisheries Training Centre for some of the ex-trainees of the Fisheries Training Centres. The training was mainly in navigation and seamanship. This training had to be suspended after conducting 3 courses due to the lack of interest shown by the ex-trainees for the following reasons :-

- (1) The ex-trainees selected were engaged in fishing, and were not prepared to follow a course of training for about 4 months with a paltry payment of Rs. 4 per day ;
- (2) Whenever they heard of good catches in their fishing villages they abandoned the course to rush back to their village to do fishing ;
- (3) There was no immediate prospect of any benefit by this training ;

(4) Most of them found it difficult to grasp what was being taught. The particulars of these courses are as follows :—

<i>Course commenced on</i>	<i>Course terminated on</i>	<i>Number that followed the Course</i>
22.07.1974	28.11.1974	14
20.01.1975	30.05.1975	5
14.07.1975	28.11.1975	14

With some of the boats of this project becoming operational there were complaints from some of these ex-trainees that they are not employed by the owners of these boats. My personal opinion is that while most of these young men are capable fishermen, they are not efficient navigators and do not possess sufficient knowledge to operate the electronic equipment fitted to these boats.

First batch of Trainees of the S.L.F.T.I.

The first batch of trainees of the Sri Lanka Fisheries Training Institute completed their two-year training courses in June this year. Eight trainees following the fishing course and six following the engine course successfully completed their training. They are now expected to obtain practical experience and seetime required for obtaining the relevant certificates. This has not been possible so far as large vessels to obtain the required sea time are not available. The conditions required for candidates sitting for the second-hand fishing vessels examination conducted by the Mercantile Marine Department, Bombay is given in Annex II. Anticipating this difficulty, action was taken by the Department in 1975 to get a 28-ton fishing vessel. Due to difficulties in obtaining the FRP materials, the construction of the hull commenced only this year. The main engine, the electronic equipment and other fixtures for the vessels have been gifted by Japan. All the equipment have been received and delivered to the boat yard. It will however, take a few more months for the boat yard to deliver this boat.

The students would therefore invariably have to look for seetime and experience after completing the course if they are to be eligible for certificates. This would not be satisfactory in the sense that it will be difficult to keep the students in the fisheries sector if, when they come out of the Training Institute they will still not be in a position to find employment in the sector itself.

The certificates as such will, I presume have to be obtained not from the Fisheries Training Institute but elsewhere. If, on the other hand, this certificate could also be issued by the institute, then those certificates will have to be recognised by the relevant authorities in terms of the Merchant Shipping Act, No. 52 of 1971. If the institute is to ensure that the students gain the necessary sea-time experience before such certificates are issued.

Part IV of the Merchant Shipping Act provides for—

- (i) requiring officers and seamen and other persons performing prescribed functions in relation to the operation and maintenance of ships to be holders of competency etc.;
- (ii) the holding and conduct of examination for such certificates etc.;
- (iii) exemption of persons with prescribed qualifications etc.;
- (iv) the recognition of specified certificates of competency issued by other countries etc.

This part is applicable to fishing vessels as well. It would therefore be necessary on the part of those who man these vessels, to have certificates which are acceptable in terms of the Merchant Shipping Act.

At present the Master Attendant is authorised to issue the Coastwise Masters' Certificate which enables a person to take vessel up to 3,000 tons. This certificate, however, requires that the vessel will be on a coastal operation. This means that a person having this certificate in Colombo could take a vessel and sail between Karachchi and Rangoon. Five years' seetime is required to obtain this certificate. In certain countries, I am told that four years is considered sufficient.

It could be presumed that to take out a 500-ton vessel a certain amount of sea time will definitely be necessary. If we are to overcome the problem of students passing out of the Training Institute not being qualified to take out vessels on their own, we will have to determine the experience and sea-time required to enable them to get the required certificates. These certificates could either be issued by the Institute and be recognised by the authorities in terms of the Merchant Shipping Act or be issued in the alternative by authorities prescribed in the Merchant Shipping Act. What is however, important is that facilities for the students to obtain the necessary experience and seetime be provided concurrently while they are following the course at the institute. If this is not done, the students will have to be looking for experience and sea-time in order to obtain the necessary certificates even after they leave the institute.

Getting proper training in fisheries in developing countries is a very difficult task. Fisheries training development and fishing industry development should go hand in hand. If one progresses rapidly or slowly in relation to the other, there will be very little benefit. This is happening in many of the developing countries. In some countries the training of more efficient fisheries personnel is carried out but the industry is not in a position to absorb them and therefore both activities should go parallel. Only then the purpose of the training institute becomes fulfilled. As far as I know, the only successful fisheries training centre, considering only the developing countries, is the UNDP funded Pusan Tuna Fisheries Training Centre. This was started in time to meet the development of a modern tuna fishing industry established in Korea. Once the government decides on the specific development targets such as for tuna fishing or trawling, the institution can be geared to meet the needs. It is not expected that full fledged officers will be produced but that basic training will be given at the institute and later on they can be given enough practical training on the boats of the proposed project. A new 80-ton training boat equipped with facilities for training in tuna long-line and skipjack, pole and line fishing is available. When it is necessary the 2 tuna boats belonging to the Ceylon Fisheries Corporation also can be used for this training purpose.

There is, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, a scarcity of skippers to man the large-sized fishing vessels. A company operating some trawlers has had to extend the contracts of the foreign skippers as all efforts to obtain skippers locally have failed. It will take another three years or more before the first batch of trainees of the Sri Lanka Fisheries Training Institute could obtain the minimum certificates of competency.

ANNEXE I

Courses

1. *Regular courses :*

- (a) Fishing course of two years' duration ;
- (b) Engineering course of two years' duration.

2. *Post-graduate course :*

The post graduate course of one year's duration will be conducted if eligible students are available ;

Alternate courses will be conducted in Sinhala and Tamil.

Diplomas and Certificates

Trainees who successfully complete the regular course will be awarded a Diploma by the Department of Fisheries.

Trainees who successfully complete the post-graduate course will be awarded a Higher Diploma by the Department of Fisheries.

Diploma holders will be required to acquire the necessary sea time to qualify for the Certificates for Navigation and Engineering.

Admission Requirements

(a) Regular courses

(1) Qualifications for applicants—

(a) G.C.E. (Advanced Level) in Mathematics and any one of the following subjects :-
Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology/Biology, Geography.

In addition, a pass in the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) in six subjects including Mathematics, Physics and any two of the following :—

Sinhala/Tamil, Zoology/Biology, Chemistry, English, Geography ;

OR

(b) Successful completion of a Fishermen's Training Course of Repair Mechanics Training Course at a Fisheries Training Centre *and* a pass in the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) within a minimum of six subjects including Mathematics and Physics ;

OR

(c) Not less than 1 year's sea time in a vessel of not less than 100 tons and a pass in the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) with a minimum of six subjects including Mathematics and Physics.

Age limit

Below twenty five (25) years of age.

Sex

Male.

(b) Post-graduate course

Successful completion of a regular course of the institute or a science degree of a recognised University.

Selection

Applications will be invited by a notice published in the *Government Gazette*. Applications which should be made in the form or to the effect of the specimen form set out in the notice should be addressed to the Principal, Sri Lanka Fisheries Training Institute, Crow Island, Colombo 15, to reach him on or before the date specified in the notice. Eligible applicants will be required to sit a written examination in the following subjects :—

Mathematics, Physics and General Knowledge.

Applicants who pass the written examination will be required to present themselves for an interview, at their own expenses.

Selected applicants will be required to furnish a medical report from a government medical officer in proof of their physical fitness.

Trainees will be required to make a deposit of Rs. 100 on admission against the issue of stores and equipment by the Institute. The deposit will be refunded after deduction of dues, if any, to the Institute.

Number of Admissions

The number of admissions will be as follows :

	<i>First and second years 1975-1976</i>	<i>From third years 1977</i>	<i>From fifth year 1979</i>
(a) Fishing course	10	12	15
(b) Engine course	10	12	15
(c) Post-graduate course	—	02	02

The post-graduate course will not be conducted if eligible trainees are not available.

ANNEXE II

The conditions required for candidates sitting the second hand fishing vessels examination conducted by the Mercantile Marine Department, Bombay District, is given below :—

- (a) Should not be less than 19 years of age at the time of appearing for the examination ;
- (b) Either have served at least three years on deck on board a sea-going fishing vessel of not less than 25 tons gross ;

OR

- (c) Have served at least three years and a half at sea on deck of which one year must have been on board a sea-going vessel of not less than 25 tons gross ;
- (d) The candidate should also appear for their sight test and first-aid course while they are in Bombay ;
- (e) Every candidate has to pay a fee of Rs. 10 for the above examination.

DISCUSSION

- Mr. Godwin Fernando** I want to know the nature and standard of training provided at the Sri Lanka Fisheries Training Institute.
- Mr. V. L. C. Pietersz** The idea of the Institute is to provide internationally valid certificates for operation of fishing vessels. Due to non-availability of large vessels for trainees etc. the Institute has not yet been able to fulfil this.
- Mr. K. M. Joseph** As the size of the boat increases, the quality of the man-power required to run it also higher. Skippers, engineers, master fishermen etc. are needed. Both institutional and sea training is essential to turn out this type of operative. Besides there should be organizations, which can provide necessary technology. For instance in order to operate 38' ADB boats crew should come from the Training Institute — while suggestions for any improvement in the fishing methods etc., should come from the UNDP Fisheries Development Project.
- Dr. K. Sivasubramaniam** UNDP/Sri Lanka Fisheries Development Project can provide further training to the trainees. The project conducts experimental fishing. About 120 trainees have been accommodated in batches for fishing trials and about 70% of them are competent enough to handle fishing boats of 23' size.
- Mr. Nizam** Training facilities can be obtained in Norway without spending our money. Countries like Norway, Sweden, Denmark are willing to take our trainees and they can return to Sri Lanka after acquiring further knowledge about fishing.
- Mr. Peter de Mel** So far about 600 students have been trained at Fisheries Training Centre and half of them followed the engine course. Many of them are available for employment on 38' boats.