

Worldwide Ferry Safety and Technology Conference
2016
Panel on Weather: Global Maritime Hyperlocal Real Time
Moderator Nurur Rahman's Opening Remarks

Distinguished audience. Good morning.

We all are aware that ever since sailing boats transported people and cargoes across oceans, the skippers of such boats looked out for good weather. Weather always played an important role in making a voyage either successful or delaying the shipment of a cargo or in extreme cases, voyage being frustrated!

When we read news of a ferry disaster somewhere in a developing country, we always try to find out what has gone wrong! Invariably, you will see that the weather factor contributes to a major percentage in shipping casualties, in particular those small ferries which transport people and ro-ro cargoes in a domestic transportation system.

Let us take the example of Bangladesh – the country of my birth. Every year, we hear about sinking of launches along the riverine routes. The statistics for the years from 2010 to 2015 shows that cyclones and major storms were responsible for 43% of sinkings. WFSA study shows the percentage at 53%. We note every time when a ferry casualty occurs in the Philippines, adverse weather has to play a part somewhere there.

Over the centuries prudent seafarers had to learn to respect 'weather'. They, 'necessity is the mother of invention' researchers and scientists have worked continuously to develop new equipment and systems to learn about forecasting – synopsis and prognosis of weather patterns, etc. Many commercial organizations came into existence which did 'ocean routing' for ships, taking into consideration elements including weather conditions to be expected during a voyage. As a navigator, I was pleased that someone else was doing my job....

Things in this front have not changed much even today... only that more emphasis is being put to understand the effects of weather on shipping. Today we have three distinguished experts who will enlighten us on the latest tools a mariner has in hand to understand weather.