Intâ€™l Co-operation in Hydrographic Training

When I was asked to write an Insiderâ€™s View article for this issue, in my mind I thought that it might benefit a lot of institutions planning to offer hydrographic courses if I shared my experiences in setting up a training centre, and later hydrographic courses, at the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

This article might also have some bearing on the views expressed by Professor Dr Ing Sjamsir Mira regarding his ideas on establishing an international hydrographic school. Dr Sjamsir Miraâ€™s suggestion will take a lot of effort and commitment from many people. When one looks at the effort in establishing a hydrographic training institution, for example, this is indeed a difficult task. However, my experience shows that if generosity and commitment from certain individuals (both locally and abroad), together with the national focal point of hydrography - survey society, established hydrographic institutions abroad, etc. - the task will be easier. If these parties can join hands to support this effort, it can be realised.

Looking at the role of the FIG/IHO/ICA International Advisory Board on Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers, one will immediately realise that there are actually two types of training courses offered at present worldwide. Although hydrographic training has been in existence for many years, nautical cartographic training is actually still new (as far as the course that meets the proposed standards). The draft syllabus itself is still under review and will be finalised by June next year. As far as hydrographic training is concerned, those institutions which have been accredited to run Category A and/or B courses will continue to offer these courses. Every year there are new submissions being reviewed by the Advisory Board. Those courses that meet the standards have no problem in being approved by the Advisory Board.

Most of the established institutions running these courses are well equipped with their own instructors, equipment and facilities. But for those new training institutions, perhaps they can explore some co-operation locally or abroad to facilitate their lectures and field training. For instance, these institutions can always discuss ways of bringing their expertise to teach in these courses. This will add to the international co-operation and give more exposure to the students attending the course. Apart from individual expertise, perhaps other established hydrographic institutions and hydrographic societies can also be approached to assist in running the course. Another effort that can also be made is to bring manufacturers of hydrographic equipment such as the multibeam system, into the course. Probably some of the institutions running the course do not have their own multibeam systems. Usually they have to borrow the systems or co-operate with other local agencies. Bringing the multibeam manufacturer to contribute to classroom instruction and field training for one or two weeks, is a very worthwhile opportunity for students. They will be able to try and involve themselves with a system which is operational and can already deliver useful results. In conclusion, our own training courses at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia will not be possible without this international co-operation in hydrographic training.

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