



Questioning the status quo

It's always good to be a little more reflective at the beginning and end of a year. This year we ponder 18 questions relating to the maritime space on the continent and you can ponder along with us on pages six and seven of this issue.

One question, however, that we did not get too much time to ponder here in South Africa was the impact that a new president would have. February has been a politically eventful month. Guided by significant pressure from his party, Jacob Zuma stepped down - making way for Cyril Ramaphosa to step onto the bridge.

A State of the Nation Address followed which highlighted the course that Ramaphosa seems ready to navigate. His journey will not be easy as he aims to venture into some of stormy seas including land appropriation without compensation.

And, as we were going to print, we learned more about the crew he believes will step on board to help him deliver on promises. Blade Nzimande has been put at the helm of the Department of Transport. The new Minister of Transport was slightly marinated last year at the South African Maritime Industry Conference (SAMIC) where he participated as the then Minister of Higher Education.

Speaking at the conference, Nzimande commented on the country's ability to participate in the maritime economy and the need for an integrated human resource plan to address skills. He made special mention of the opportunities to supply the industry with seafarers and suggested that the maritime sector should remain a key priority for the government. Here's hoping that he continues to see the need to prioritise this sector in his new position.

In a particularly bold move, the new president replaced Minister of Public Enterprises, Lynne Brown with Pravin Gordhan. If his no-nonsense approach to questioning some of the Eskom executives during the recent public hearings are anything to go by - we can certainly hope that Transnet and the rest of the State Owned Enterprises will be held to account going forward.

It seems that the maritime industry can take comfort in

knowing that the bridge is currently occupied by a team with some interest in the opportunities that exist within the maritime space.

Replying to the debate on his SONA address, Ramaphosa singled out the national cadet programme and acknowledged the presence of two cadets in the audience.

The challenges associated with the cadet programme should not be forgotten amidst our new found optimistic outlook, however. As I read the comments on many of the continent's social media sites that speak to this topic - I am struck by the vast sense of unhappiness that continues to erode the good efforts to skill young Africans for a career at sea.

Many hopefuls continue to sit at home waiting for a berth and we have to be realistic about why this is the case. Speaking at a conference on training hosted by the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI) last year, Klaveness Shipping Management's head of crewing, Torbjørn Eide said that the youth need to relinquish their attitude of entitlement.

Keen to source their next generation of sea staff from South Africa, he warned that low trainee retention rates and a culture of entitlement could force Klaveness to re-evaluate its position within the next two years.

Klaveness has signed a development agreement with the South African Maritime Training Academy, in partnership with SAIMI, and Klaveness has invested heavily in the country's national cadetship programme.

From our side we are making a few changes to our own team this year in an effort to streamline our interaction with industry. We are also working towards the important Maritime Industry Awards which are still scheduled to take place in 2018.

As always we look forward to hearing from you and your team.

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