



Asian Shipowners' Forum

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PRESS RELEASE

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THE ASIAN SHIPOWNERS' FORUM CONDEMNS THE CRIMINALIZATION OF THE *HEBEI SPIRIT* OFFICERS

The Asian Shipowners' Forum joins with other industry partners in expressing its outrage at the sentences handed down by the Daejeon District Court on Capt. Jasprit Singh Chawla and Mr. Syam Chetan.

The two officers have been detained in Korea since the accident in December 2007, and were found innocent by the first court in June 2008. Despite assurances of their continued cooperation and the offer of security, they were not permitted to return home to their families, pending the appeal.

The imposition of criminal penalties on the two officers, who were only attempting to mitigate the effects of a collision of another vessel with their anchored ship, is not the outcome that would be expected of a developed legal system. The outrage at their sentencing from the international shipping community demonstrates that experienced seafarers and all those involved in shipping consider that the two officers went well beyond what would have been expected in such difficult circumstances. Their actions and their mitigation of the effects of the accident have been widely praised. The criminalization of seafarers in such circumstances only reduces the attraction of a seafaring career to both new entrants and experienced officers alike.

The Asian Shipowners' Forum understands that an appeal will be made to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Korea, and urges the Court to hear the appeal as a matter of urgency.

The Asian Shipowners' Forum furthermore urges the Supreme Court to urgently hear and favourably rule on the bail application of the two officers, so that they may be released as soon as possible from their detention.

Editor's note:

The Asian Shipowners' Forum is a voluntary organization of the shipowner associations of Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations comprising shipping associations of ASEAN countries. The aims of the ASF are to promote the interests of the Asian shipowning industries. Between annual ASF meetings, the ongoing work is carried out by the five Standing Committees; the Shipping Economics Review Committee, the Seafarers Committee, the Ship Recycling Committee, the Safe Navigation and Environment Committee, and the Ship Insurance and Liability Committee. It has been estimated that ASF owners and managers control and operate nearly 50% of the world's cargo carrying fleet.