

Richard Wins Worldwide Gold From ICS

By Roy Silva

A Sri Lankan has won the Gold Award in the Port Agency Foundation Diploma course conducted by the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers UK from among over a 1,000 participants from all over the world. In an exclusive interview with *The Sunday Leader*, the 22-year-old Richard Rodrigo speaks about his achievement and his views on the industry.

Richard studied in S. Thomas' College Prep School in Kollupitiya and was at S. Thomas' Mount Lavinia for his Advanced Levels. Thereafter he did the Business Management Post Graduate Diploma at Association of Business Executives (ABE) United Kingdom, which had a duration of 1 ½ years. His first job was at Ceylinco Insurance in 2011 and he next joined GAC Shipping in October 2012.

Asked what inspired him to join the shipping sector, Richard said that the shipping industry was a lucrative sector which would not die out. "It's something that's always on the go, very interesting and I got the opportunity to work for GAC as an Operations Executive," said Richard.

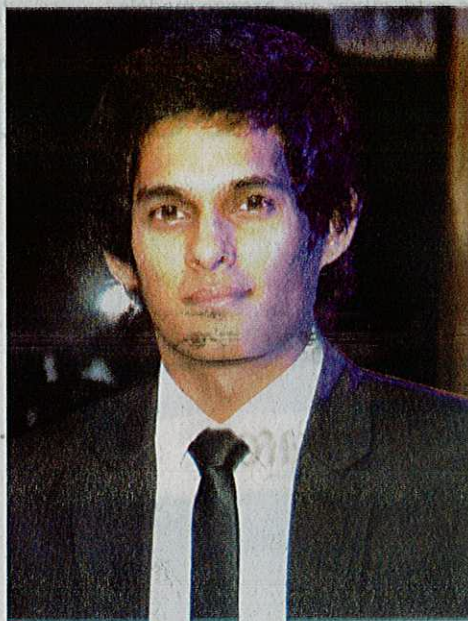
A lot of persons who had done this Port Agency Foundation Diploma were of the view that it's one of the best courses in the world to follow, said Richard in response to the question as to why he chose the course conducted by the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers (ICS). "Personally, I believe that ICS is one of the most recognised courses and also I received the support of my company to go ahead with the course.

"Extremely Interesting," is how Richard described the Port Agency Diploma Course. Basically, while at work handling the ships you don't have much of a radar on the whole scene. But once you get into studying the course, all sectors in the shipping industry, such as history, accounts, law operations, and the list goes on. There's so much to learn. On the job, we certainly do learn a lot. But during the six-month course, you are exposed to a whole lot more, including the geography, the leading ports, etc. etc.

Asked about the time factor involved in the study of the course, Richard responded, "Actually, I don't study a lot. I'm more of a person who gets up at 1am on the day of the exam and study for about seven hours. Maybe I actually studied for about seven days prior to the exam," said Richard. "Even at my O/Levels and A/Levels, I only studied on that morning," added Richard.

For the Port Agency Foundation Diploma, 40 students took part from Sri Lanka and only nine got through. "My target of course was to become number one in Sri Lanka, but this Gold Prize is God's Blessing," said Richard.

The ceremony to award the prizes will take place in London on October 23.



Richard Rodrigo

"I'm extremely proud about this achievement and I'm thankful to God because without Him this would not be possible," said the Gold Winner from Sri Lanka.

Commenting on the conduct of the course itself, Richard said the whole process was very interesting, especially because of the quality of lecturers numbering about 10. The course was conducted for three hours every Sunday. The eligibility to follow the course is two GCE A/Level passes or one year's experience in the shipping and logistics sector with GCE O/Level.

On the next step, Richard said now that he had got through Stage One, there's also Stage Two and Three. "I want to do both together, all the five subjects. Once successful, I'd be a member of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers," said Richard.

Once completing the ICS courses, Richard plans to go through with his degree of Business Management.

Richard does encourage others in the port and shipping field to undertake the ICS course, stressing the fact that such learning would definitely improve their careers, if they intend to stick to the sector. "Education is the one thing that will stay with you and take you up in life and ICS will definitely assist in traversing the path of the shipping industry," said Richard.

The Gold Medal Winner also paid tribute to the S. Thomas' Prep and S. Thomas' Mount Lavinia, saying, "Without them, my family and most of all, God I wouldn't be who I am today.

Asked to comment on the industry itself, Richard said that there was a lot of competition in Sri Lanka. From the point of view of a vessel agent, the market is rising, specially in the area that he is in. "Of course with the problems faced by Europe, of course there are some concerns. But apart from that, the maritime industry will

always grow," said Richard.

Richard too agreed that there were concerns with regard to ship owners as there was an excess of supply rather than demand. So that is one issue," he pointed out and added that as an agent, GAC is doing well around the world.

Commenting on their operations in Sri Lanka, Richard said that they were operating in all four ports in Sri Lanka. In Colombo we undertake husbandry services.

In Galle, the ships don't come into the port and our operations there are SSS (Ship Supply Services) operations, such as crew changes, deliveries, and mainly Sea Marshall operations. Most of the shipping companies use Galle for their sea marshall operations because it is one of the most strategic locations in the East-West trade.

Commenting on the number of ships served through Galle, Richard said GAC Shipping served about 300 ships per month and added that among the 20-odd companies in that particular trade, GAC is 'No. One.

According to Richard, GAC has been involved in this operation since 1991, more than two decades. "In fact GAC is the first shipping company to venture into this business," said Richard.

GAC has similar operations in Hambantota as well as Trincomalee. In Trincomalee, with ships coming inside the port the operations are mainly husbandry services.

Commenting further on Galle, Richard said the port is being developed as a leisure port to attract more and more passenger cruisers and ferries as the depth in that harbour is not as deep as in Colombo.

The depth is about 7 metres and as such bigger ships requiring a deep draft cannot be accommodated. However, yachts have been calling the southern port for quite some time.

The new South Port is one of the biggest things that could be done for Sri Lanka, said Richard commenting on the new Colombo Port Expansion Project. "It's one of the best and biggest developments taking place in Sri Lanka, because through this Sri Lanka can serve the biggest container vessels in the world, which can carry about 18,000 containers. It can even handle bigger ships of 25,000 TEU capacity that would be built in the future.

The new port is one of the great initiatives, thinking about the future and planned well ahead. It will certainly bring in considerable income to Sri Lanka as a whole and also Colombo will become a maritime hub in the region.

A lot of development is in progress in Hambantota and the port is at present handling car carriers. It's only a few days ago that the 100th such vessel arrived in Sri Lanka.

The port, according to the demand, will certainly develop, said Richard making his observations on the Hambantota port.