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May 2026 Bring Safe and Fruitful Voyages to All Seafarers

Grand Prize Winner of the Marine Photo Contest, hosted by the Japan Maritime Public Relations Center



Japanese Ship Christening Ceremony and *Shinto* Ritual

The christening ceremony marks the moment when a newbuilding ship first touches the water. In Japan, this event is conducted as a *Shinto* ritual, in which a priest performs purification rites for the vessel and the shipowner formally bestows its name. Before invoking the deities, the priest purifies the altar and the attendees. He then presents the ship's completion to the gods and prays for safe voyages and seafarers' safety. As part of the ritual, the ship itself is purified from three directions.

After rituals such as the shipowner naming the vessel and presenting *saka-ki* branches decorated with offerings to the shrine, the christening ceremony begins. The shipowner, or a designated representative, uses an ax to cut the rope stretching from the ship to the altar. Showered in confetti from the ceremonial paper ball attached to the hull, the ship glides down into the sea, and with its launching, the christening ceremony is complete.

The photograph shows the *Shinto* priest putting on his ceremonial cap and robes in preparation for the christening ceremony.

Can You Spot All the Mistakes?

A



B



Picture A is the correct picture; picture B has seven mistakes. Where are they? See the next issue for the correct answers.

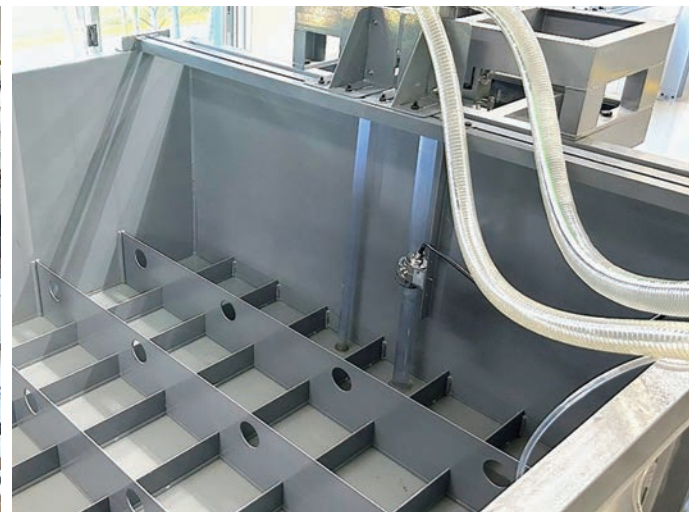
NYK Establishes World's 1st Pipe Visualization Deballasting Training Facility

NYK has established a cutting-edge facility that employs transparent pipes to enhance trainees' proficiency in deballasting operations — the process of discharging water to maintain a ship's balance during cargo loading. The facility was unveiled at the NYK-TDG Maritime Academy's 25th anniversary ceremony on November 26 in the Philippines. It is located at the adjacent seafarer training facility, NYK-Fil Maritime E-Training Inc. (NETI). According to our research, this skeleton-type deballasting training facility is the first of its kind in the world. By allowing trainees to observe water flow within the piping and tanks, the facility enhances understanding of internal structures and improves operational proficiency. This innovative approach aims to reduce errors and improve transport quality.

During cargo operations, efficiently executing deballasting is crucial for maximizing cargo capacity and preventing cargo handling delays. While ballast operations



Deballast Training Facility



Skeleton pipe in the ballast tank

demand advanced knowledge and skill, the lack of replicable training facilities meant crew proficiency relied heavily on on-the-job training (OJT) at sea, making effective shore-based training challenging.

This new facility employs transparent pipes to visualize fluid movement, so trainees can intuitively grasp the impact of their

actions. Furthermore, mechanisms for tilting the tank, along with the placement of valves, piping, pressure gauges, ammeters, and other components, have been carefully designed to closely replicate conditions on an actual ship. This realistic training environment, far surpassing the limitations of computer simulations, aims to prevent is-

sues during deballasting. NETI instructors also supplement hands-on training with basic lectures on the purpose and mechanisms of deballasting operations. They will also provide troubleshooting sessions for common issues like air entrapment.

'K'Line and Yokohama City Fire Bureau Jointly Conduct Japan's 1st Drill Simulating a Fire Aboard a Moored Vessel

Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha, Ltd. ("K" Line) teamed up with the Yokohama City Fire Bureau to conduct a drill simulating a fire on a moored vessel. The exercise, held on November 21, 2025, at Daikoku-futo, Yokohama Port, marked Japan's first full-scale firefighting drill carried out jointly by ship and shore personnel, using a car carrier berthed at the quay. More than 100 personnel were involved, using "K" Line's LNG-fueled car carrier *Tethys Highway*.

The drill simulated an emergency scenario: a fire broke out on board the vessel during cargo handling operations, one crewmember was missing, and the captain was left on board. The comprehensive drill involved coordinated firefighting and rescue operations by land, sea, and air. These included identifying the source of the fire using aerial drones, conducting search-and-rescue activities, spraying water from

fire trucks and fireboats as well as from helicopters in the air, verifying evacuation routes for operators and crewmembers, practicing the use of the immediate notification system with relevant organizations and confirming its operational status, and rescuing people stranded on board the vessel. The entire drill lasted approximately 75 minutes.

The vessel's coordinator and director was Eri Eguchi, "K" Line's first female captain, who is currently assigned to shore-based duties. She used monitor footage to explain conditions and procedures both on-board and ashore, overseeing the entire scene while sharing developments with participants and guiding the training.

"K" Line Executive Officer Hideaki Endo pointed out, "Car carriers are structurally challenging for firefighting and rescue operations, and the risks are further



The drill

increasing with the growing number of EVs." "K" Line emphasized the importance of cooperation with relevant agencies to prevent ship fires and stated its intention

to continue training both domestically and internationally to strengthen its safety management system.

MOL Donates Model of Wind Challenger-equipped Shofu Maru to IMO

Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd. (MOL) presented a model of the coal carrier *Shofu Maru*—the world's first vessel equipped with a Wind Challenger hard sail wind propulsion system—to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) during the Wind Propulsion Reception hosted by the International Windship Association (IWSA) in London on October 22.

The reception included a commemorative ceremony for the model ship donation with over 200 people on hand—representatives of shipping industry stakeholders from various countries who attended the 20th Intersessional Working Group on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships



Presenting the model ship

held at IMO headquarters from October 20-24. MOL also introduced its initiatives to reduce GHG emissions using the Wind Challenger, providing an opportunity to exchange views on wind propulsion technologies.

Starting the Day with a Clean Deck Classic Stories of the Sea By Akinori Sugiura

On Columbus's voyages, the ships were so small that there wasn't even space for the crew to sleep comfortably, let alone room for toilets. Sailors often slept on deck or in cramped corners, exposed to the elements. To relieve themselves, they would hang off the leeward side of the ship, sometimes using the mast's support ropes for balance in the dark. There was little concern about soiling the hull, yet in those devout times, sailors would scrub the deck and hull clean before dawn. This early morning ritual was both practical and spiritual—cleansing the ship and preparing to greet the sunrise with reverence, praying for safety in the day

ahead. Deck cleaning at first light became one of the essential customs aboard sailing ships, blending discipline with devotion. Captain James Cook of the British Navy, who circumnavigated the globe three times in the 18th century, believed that cleanliness aboard ship was essential to crew health. He promoted daily deck scrubbing and encouraged the use of sunlight to disinfect bedding. This emphasis on hygiene helped reduce disease and set a precedent for maritime sanitation. The tradition of early morning deck cleaning, still practiced on modern ships, can be seen as a legacy stretching back to the age of Columbus and beyond.

ASA Shipping Policy Committee Holds 39th Interim Meeting in Hong Kong

The Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) held the 39th Interim Meeting of its Shipping Policy Committee (SPC) in Hong Kong on November 18 during Hong Kong Maritime Week. Chaired by ASA Vice Chairman Masanori Kato, the meeting was attended by 18 representatives from ASA member organizations in ASEAN, China, the Cook Islands, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea, along with 14 observers and guests from ASA associate member organizations and related bodies. A meeting summary is as follows.

1. U.S. Maritime Policy

SPC members took note of the World Shipping Council (WSC) report on recent regulatory and legislative developments, including the U.S. Trade Representative's Section 301 investigation, the presidential order titled "Restoring American Maritime Leadership," and the "SHIPS for America Act." They repeatedly emphasized the importance of upholding the principles of free trade, fair competition, and market access amid intensifying economic rivalries and the rise of protectionism and unilateralism worldwide.

SPC members expressed understanding of the U.S. initiative to enhance the efficiency and competitiveness of its ocean shipping industry through expanded ship-

building capacity, while welcoming the recent decision to suspend the collection of port fees for one year.

On this basis, they reaffirmed that it is essential for the U.S. government to collaborate with stakeholders and make policy decisions to strengthen its shipbuilding and maritime sectors in a manner consistent with the principle of freedom of navigation. In particular, they noted that the collection of port fees could lead to a significant increase in marine transport costs to the U.S. and fuel inflation, ultimately burdening U.S. consumers.

2. Decarbonization of Shipping and Future Insights

Although adoption of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Net Zero Framework (NZF) has been postponed for at least 12 months, the industry's position remains unchanged: international environmental regulations are essential to accelerate green investment and achieve decarbonization of the shipping industry by 2050. Amid prolonged uncertainty surrounding future international regulations, SPC members focused on future IMO scenarios presented by International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) Deputy Secretary General Simon Bennett. They also confirmed the need to work with the Safe Navigation & Environment Committee



(SNEC) to explore what ASA can do to avoid multiple charges being levied on the same CO₂ emissions due to a patchwork of GHG charging systems at regional and national levels, which could have a serious negative impact on the shipping business.

3. Global Competition Law Developments in Liner Shipping

Robert K. Magowan, a lawyer at Cozen O'Connor (SPC Counsel), reported on recent developments in the review of anti-trust exemption regimes for shipping company agreements in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and other jurisdictions.

Following the expiration of the EU and U.K. consortium regulations, the ASA reaffirmed its longstanding position that the exemption regime remains essential to the healthy development of the container-ship industry, improved scheduling, and

enhanced service quality for customers. The ASA will continue to take necessary actions, in cooperation with the ICS, WSC, and local stakeholders, to advocate the need to maintain the regime.

4. Canal Developments and ASA's Possible Actions

SPC members noted the Secretariat's report regarding recent developments in the Panama and Suez Canals. Recognizing the strategic importance of both canals in maintaining smooth international sea logistics, particularly in light of Panama's water shortages and geopolitical tensions in the Red Sea, the SPC Secretariat was instructed to establish communication similar to the dialogue held with the Suez Canal Authority during the 38th Interim Meeting. This aims to ensure that both canals provide safe, fair, reliable, and predictable transit services to users.



Nippon Foundation 'MEGURI2040' Project Update: World's 1st Passenger Ship with Level 4 Autonomous Navigation Enters Commercial Operation

The passenger ship *Olympia Dream Seto*, participating in The Nippon Foundation's unmanned vessel project "MEGURI2040," passed its national vessel inspection on December 5, 2025, becoming Japan's first "autonomous vessel." It is the world's first scheduled passenger ship for general passengers to enter commercial operation utilizing autonomous navigation functions equivalent to Level 4 autonomous driving. This technological stage enables fully automated operation without human intervention in specific areas or under defined conditions. Japan has over 400 inhabited remote islands, and lifeline routes face increasing challenges due to crew shortages. The launch of the *Olympia Dream Seto* is expected to accelerate ship auto-



Autonomous ship navigation functions/equipment

mation, ensuring stable transportation of people and goods to remote islands.

The ship, operated by Kokusai Ryobi Ferry, is a 66-meter-long island route vessel with a passenger capacity of 500. It connects the ports of Shin-Okayama (Okayama City) and Tonosho (Shodoshima, Kagawa Prefecture).

(Photo courtesy: Nippon Foundation)

NS United Kaiun Kaisha President Attends Inauguration Ceremony for Vietnam Maritime University

The inauguration ceremony for Vietnam Maritime University in Haiphong was held on September 23. Special guests included NS United Kaiun Kaisha President and Representative Director Kazuma Yamanaka, along with Vietnam's Deputy Ministers of Construction and other dignitaries, who offered congratulatory remarks to the new students. Yamanaka also expressed congratulations on the university's designation on September 5 under the "National Key University Project" and pledged to strengthen future support. Furthermore, as support for aspiring ship officers and incoming students, a donation of US\$10,000 was presented to the university's scholarship fund. ** In Vietnamese, this ceremony is called "Le Khai Giang" (Opening Ceremony), an important event held at the beginning of each academic year that combines the entrance ceremony with the start of classes.*



President and Representative Director Kazuma Yamanaka (fourth from left) stands to pay respect at the flag-raising ceremony.

Seafarers' Family Event Held in Vietnam

On September 23, the VINIC* Seafarers' Family Social Gathering was held at Mai Hong Phuc Restaurant in Haiphong, with approximately 460 attendees (including 421 family members, guests, and staff). President and Representative Director Kazuma Yamanaka and other executives from NS United Kaiun Kaisha were on hand for the gathering. President Yamanaka expressed gratitude for safe operations and for the long-standing cooperation of the company's staff. Awards were presented to employees with five, 10, 15, and 20 years of service. The event served to honor the seafarers and their families and foster closer mutual ties.

* VINIC: The Company for Training, Labor Supply and Maritime Services



Seafarers' meeting

Captain Jima's Fun Pilot Diary

29 Imoto Lines' Cute Containerships 201107-1356-PC-I-NA-D80

There's an inland container shipping company called Imoto Lines, Ltd., whose vessels are easy to spot: they have light blue hulls, and the crew quarters are built tall so that containers can be stacked as high and as densely as possible. The quarters are also very narrow, resembling walls between the containers.

Since becoming a pilot, I've frequently encountered them in Ise Bay and Nagoya Port. They always yield in a courteous and skillful manner, leaving a favorable impression. All of Imoto's vessels are containerships of less than 10,000 tons.

One morning in early November, as I entered Nagoya Port, I spotted a rather cute containership from Imoto anchored outside the breakwater in Zone 6. I wanted to share this sight with you.

The first photo shows the vessel, the *Natori* (7,390 tons, 136 meters long, 670 TEU [carrying 600 20-foot containers]), featuring a bow bridge. Its bow is unusually top-heavy and rounded.

Futuristic curves are evident throughout the design.

The hull form is a complete departure from any Imoto containership I have seen before, making it highly distinctive. The vessel has an undeniably charming and unique appearance.



The front resembles a "girl with big, round eyes and a bob haircut."



The spherical bow bridge of the *Natori*

After checking Imoto Lines' website, I found the following description: "For the first time in the world, a spherical bow has been adopted for a containership. This design reduces frontal air resistance by 30% while simultaneously improving loading efficiency. The vessel also received the "Ship of the Year 2015" prize in the Small Cargo Ship Division. The website also featured photos of the interior of the *Natori*'s bridge. The design is remarkably clean,



Capt. Masujima



The bridge features a curved front, making it easy to keep watch. The instruments are arranged in a straight line, making them easy to operate.



The *Sagami*'s standard bridge

and with curved lines used across the front of the bridge, the forward view is exceptionally clear and user-friendly. As I browsed the homepage, I found myself nodding in agreement—"Yes, that makes sense, of course."

For comparison, I would also like to share photos of Imoto's conventional containerships so you can see the differences.

(Photos courtesy of Imoto Lines)

CAPTAIN P

By Ame Gemba

A nighttime view of a ship with the skyline in the background...

We can see the ship, huh?

Yeah

Meanwhile, onboard the ship...

Whoa! Looks like they're on a date!

NUMBER PLACE

EASY LEVEL

			5	2	3	9	4	8
8	9	4		7		3		
2	3	5		8	9		6	
		8						
	6		7	1	5		8	
		7	8			6	2	3
		3	1		2			4
						8	3	
7	9	3	6					

This Month's 'Number Place' Puzzle

How to Play

"Number Place" is a puzzle where you fill empty cells with the numbers 1 through 9, ensuring that no number repeats in any row, column, or 3×3 block. Use the given hints to fill every cell consistently and complete the puzzle.

Here it is 2026! Did you know that this puzzle is widely enjoyed in Japan under the name *Nanpure*? Introduced to Japan through overseas puzzle magazines, the puzzle was refined by many enthusiasts into a unique style. Its appeal was soon recognized, and it eventually spread across the globe.

The rules are simple, yet its charm lies in the surprising depth you discover once you start solving. Each number you place sharpens your perspective, and the sense of accomplishment when you fill the last square is truly special.

It's perfect for quickly warming up your brain, making it ideal during breaks from work or study. We hope you'll enjoy casually challenging yourself with this month's puzzle. (Answers will be published in next month's issue.)

Last month's (December issue) answers

The cap on one of the moons was pointing up instead of to the left.

Illustration courtesy: illustAC

Use the Floor For This Easy Stretch!

Try This 'Butterfly Stretch' for Flexible Hips

1. Sit on the floor with your knees bent and legs open. Bring the soles of your feet together and draw your heels as close to your hips as possible.
2. Keep your back straight and gently hold your toes or ankles with both hands.
3. Exhale as you slowly fold your upper body forward from the hips.
4. Avoid rounding your back; instead, imagine bringing your chest toward your toes as you bend forward.
5. Lower your head and hold the stretch for 20–30 seconds in a relaxed position.
6. Inhale as you gradually raise your upper body back to the starting position.

Illustration courtesy: illustAC

Today's Delicious Dish:

Miso-Flavored Vegetable Rice Bowl

■ Ingredients (4 servings)

4 cups cooked rice
2 medium eggplants
1 medium onion
1 zucchini
1 bell pepper
1 tomato
2 tablespoons red *miso* paste
1 teaspoon sugar

Salt to taste
1 tablespoon sesame oil

■ How to cook

1. Cut the vegetables into about 2 cm cubes. Soak the eggplant in water to remove bitterness.
2. Sauté the onion, zucchini, eggplant, and bell pepper in a frying pan until lightly charred in places. Season with salt.
3. Mix the vegetables thoroughly, then add sugar and *miso* paste. Stir well to combine.
4. Add the tomato to the mixture from step 3 and drizzle with sesame oil.
5. Serve rice in bowls and top with the mixture from step 4.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries website (Recipe, perfectly matched for rice)
<https://www.maff.go.jp/j/seisan/kakou/me-zamasi/recipe/index.html>