

From the Editor's Desk



The concept of bringing out a free INTERNATIONAL MARITIME NEWSLETTER to and for the maritime fraternity for free browsing and nominal charge for print copy, was conceived after twenty long years of my rich sea service, gathering memories of the deficiencies, defects and loopholes in the system, exposition of systemic failures, most importantly to empower the SEAFARERS of their basic rights and privileges which they are deprived off, as against the shore-staff, who make tall claims and achieve owing to their ability to get together and raise their voice for redressal of grievances . To keep them enlightened of the international maritime scenario. An insight of the seafarer's role - working and living conditions onboard in hazardous situations out at sea. The Mariners, therefore expect a better recognition within their country and after service benefits.

Merchant Navy is a second line of defence. The high salary drawn while in service is in consideration of their professional risk and sacrificial prime human life, making a career in the early ages as a youth, living away from their close and near dear ones. While, they pump in (earning) considerable foreign exchange to their country of origin. Hence, the National Maritime Administration needs to focus on "Professional Ethics and Human Values" viewing their legitimate welfare, with natural justice of human touch. Mariners inducted into national maritime administration, be without bias and prejudice, who need to prove their supremacy by their better qualification and rich practical experience, commanding respect from the seafarers afloat and ashore, by their attitude and keeping pace with the rapid surge of developments in their respective field as the shipping is international. If the nation's autonomous body, UPSC is not able to attract the best but accept what comes by inducting only on the strength of the COC - Certificate of Competency held for the operation and maintenance of the vessels (ships) with a trade apprenticeship background, as in the past, then it would continue to be doing injustice to mariners who can't influence. Best alternative would therefore be outsourcing. Suggest examinations of Crew and Petty Officers with the Maritime Academies and Institutions and unless fully equipped with qualified staff and modern infrastructure Officers and Marine Engineers be rested with Institutions of higher learning with Research facilities, or else bring down the course fees reasonably lower to benefit a large section of the community on pure merit entry, with physical and mental fitness, which would boost our national image abroad and as well as our national exchequer with foreign exchange.

More particularly, the authorities of the National and the International level, regulating Shipping and Maritime administration, and those inducted into them exhibit their supremacy, with a sound, theoretical, practical and a pragmatic approach keeping abreast to the realistic situations, not remain mere paper tigers to protect a section of their near ones without a fair practice. Every maritime nation should boost their image, to be a role model and not merely follow the outdated rules and regulations without changing to the times, rather than adopting the minimum standards achieved by the trial and error methods. Differences between the maritime nations should be sorted out then and then by the apex body IMO (U.N. agency) and not allowed to grow, needing a common language of expression and action or else it would lead to chaos and could actually increase the risk in the number of accidents and casualties i.e. at the cost of irreparable loss of our precious human souls(mariners). I.M.O. (International Maritime Organisation) have yet to go a long way to establish its capability and expertise, to bring the maritime nations of the world.

We are able to communicate loud and clear faster, far and wide these days owing to computer/communication age and hence our aim to implement the best, giving scope for future development as well. Invite open page constructive criticisms in websites. For which, the need to have competent mariners in Maritime administration to respond/inter-act. "Safety of the innocent souls of seafarers" cannot be compromised, hence not mere learning from mistakes alone but farsighted foresight that is needed by qualified National Maritime Administrators, during this RTI (Right to information) Age.

Managing the uncertainties in marine profession with a pursuit to excellence in safety, needs to be the watchword and the priority for real time development in maritime administration. This would generate an influential body of theoretically and practically backed professionals through an open forum with wider inter-action within the maritime world. This international maritime newsletter brings to your doorstep, action packed news and information of the Maritime world dealing with issues in shipping, onboard and shore-based seafarers, their working conditions in different situations, exposing the occupational hazards towards their welfare.

Its high time, we come up with a framework that is significantly better from what we have been seeing so far in the governance framework of maritime administration.

Transparency supported by varied section of professional veterans: Mariners includes navigators, marine engineers, senior retired ratings, marine associated doctors on Rigs, afloat as on SCI research and passenger vessels, engineers based in shipyards and repair yards. Logistic executives, Port handling executives etc. Management Representatives of Shipping Companies, Maritime Institutions, Shipyards, Ports, Educationists, Editors, Publishers etc.

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India on maritime body's high table:

India has been elected to the executive council or governing body of the International Maritime Organisation for the term 2008 - 2009, signalling a change in international perception of India as an emerging maritime trade power. India polled 127 votes, more than the traditional European colonial maritime powers like France, the Netherlands and Germany.

This time an election was held for the ten seats on the IMO's high table. Belgium, a new entrant and one of the 11 contenders for the 10 seats, forced the elections, challenging the monopoly of more recognized maritime trading nations.

At a time when 98 per cent of global trade is conducted by sea, this victory will

ensure India pays closer interest to commercial shipping and the navy, which helps patrol sea-lanes along which trade is conducted.

The significance of India's election, according to diplomatic sources, is that it reflects the gradual shift of global attention in maritime affairs away from Europe, to the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean region. It also signifies the emergence of countries like India and Brazil (which polled the highest number of votes; 130) as maritime trade powers ahead of traditional colonial maritime nations of Western Europe. A specialized agency of the United Nations with 167 Member States and three Associate Members, the IMO is based in the United Kingdom.

In an interesting turn of events, elections this year to the IMO, also known as 'the rich man's club', has seen three claimants

for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, India, Brazil and Germany, poll more votes than a permanent UNSC member, France.

When IMO began operations in 1959 shipping was still dominated by a relatively small number of countries, nearly all of them located in the northern hemisphere. IMO tended to reflect this. But as the balance of power in the shipping industry began to change so did IMO.

The Titanic disaster of 1912 spawned the first international safety of life at sea (SOLAS) convention, which is still the most important treaty addressing maritime safety. The Convention establishing the IMO was adopted in Geneva in 1948 and the IMO first met in 1959. Its main task has been to develop and maintain a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping.

World Info Desk

Gulf shipping companies beset by financing problems:

Dubai: When Sharjah-based marine offshore services firm Whitesea Shipping and Supply ordered six new vessels from Argentina in September, it arranged funds from London.

In a country where banks are lending billions of dollars for all kinds of projects, it should have been easy to source \$120 million, but Whitesea chief executive officer Seraj Alali says he found that local banks could not finance the deal because of their "internal policies and a lack of capability."

Also, there are not many banks in the region which provide finance to the shipping industry. "There is a lack of knowledge about marine financing in the region. It was cheaper to get money in London," he adds.

Christian Mouchbahani, the Middle East head of investment bank Jefferies International, which has a strong global shipping portfolio, says banks in the region remain "uncomfortable" about shipping finance as it is not a familiar area for them.

"They are conservative about certain asset classes. I think that is the main reason," says Mouchbahani, Jefferies' Middle East and North Africa chief executive officer.

Even in a city like Dubai that has ambitions of becoming a global maritime hub, the shipping finance industry leaves a lot to be desired.

Lack of interest: "Banks in Dubai and other places in the GCC have not tried to find out how much money they can make by giving loans for ships. They do not have trained personnel to handle this business," says Satish Mapara, a shipping and legal consultant.

Even big foreign banks operating in the region have not paid attention to this area of lending.

"These are the same foreign banks that have good experience of shipping finance outside the region, but in this part of the world they have not even looked at the industry's requirements," Mapara adds.

At the recent Dubai-Hamburg business forum, shipping finance was a recurring theme. Germany accounts for about 45 per cent of global shipping finance and Hamburg's share of that is more than 80 per cent.

While large companies are able to finance their purchases both inside and outside the region, smaller shipping operators are seen in bigger need of reliable local sources of funding. Saleh Al Shamekh, president of the National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia (NSCSA) in Dubai, says banks in the

region will take time to develop shipping finance expertise.

"In Europe they have a long history of shipping, they even have banks that only do shipping finance," he adds.

Changing scenario: The burgeoning Islamic financing sector in the Gulf is also encouraging banks to take a plunge into the vital shipping segment.

"Islamic financing is more suited to asset-based deals and that makes sectors like shipping and aviation more attractive to [Sharia-compliant] banks," Al Shamekh adds.

Regional banks are getting more interested in shipping, Mouchbahani agrees, pointing out that Dubai Islamic Bank has set up a shipping fund.

In Saudi Arabia, things are also changing.

"Five or six years ago we used to finance our purchases through a consortium of banks in London. Now we do our deals through Saudi banks that are interested in shipping," Al Shamekh said.

30 Philippine sailors saved, 50 still missing:

BEIJING -- Thirty sailors have been saved but some 50 were still missing after a Philippine fishing boat capsized in the South China Sea on Thursday morning, according to the China Maritime Search and Rescue Center.