

## From the Editor's Desk



Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost.  
— THOMAS JEFFERSON, former US President.

*"In an age where communication is considered matching almost the speed of light, the means of communication is not therefore as important as the content of our communication. Some of the content of our communication can sometimes create animosity and hatred between communities, as in the recent incident in Maharashtra state. The need therefore for a wider spectrum of thinking, in broader sense. What we need to focus on is "content that can empower the people of this country", "Information Empowers", with Empowerment there is progress. "The Right to Know is inherent to the freedom of expression" "The RTI Act has proved to be a progressive instrument of democracy, empowering citizens to obtain official documents with ease and have access to government record without having to pay bribe, and to ensure accountability on the part of the government official."*

*there was a dire need to implement the RTI in letter and the spirit, if the country is to be saved from corruption and tyranny. "Media accountability must encourage true democratic participation of social responsibility". Media must use and sustain human community in different sections, in a broader spectrum of thinking, such as economic, political, cultural, educational and religious. The information provided by the media is at the service of common good". Press Reporters should not blindly rely on the text provided in the PRESS MEET for publishing. Generally the same are biased/lopsided. "Information about assets and liabilities, criminal and career records of public servants and politicians must be made public on a website". One should learn to be knowledgeable, keeping abreast with their relevant subjects.*

*The Media has a tremendous role to play. They should publish policies given by the government, for general awareness, for better and quick implementation and paving the way to national progress and development. This will induce the citizens to raise legitimate rights and privilege issues. It will not only awaken the locals but also the officials, to be more productive and not lead a lethargic life. Media must play a positive role without bias and prejudice, since it is a vehicle for bringing in good and better governance. Seafarers are exploited and deprived of their basic civil rights, they need to be enlightened. Major portion of their life cut off, from the human world. Replacement issue of lost certificate, to a survivor of a sunken vessel, unduly delayed resulting in his un-employment of over six long months, on loss of pay and hence family falling into debts, same taken up by MARINE WAVES with the directorate, and alas COC delivered on the 30th May 2008, said NCV 2nd Engineer presently employed and now sailing, thank god. Dy. Chief Surveyor informs that the delay was owing to formalities in the process of issuing certificate. Seamen without good contacts or influence have to suffer with such unworthy discrimination and unfairness, depriving of their citizen rights.*

- While an active seafarer on his hard-earned leave, suppose to be with his near and dear ones ashore, has to plan and prioritise his essential needs, to run to various offices i.e.
- Passport Office - for renewal of passport Agency can be availed.
- R.T.O. for renewal of his Motor Driving Licence - do -
- U.S.Embassy for US Visa Systematic, well organised.
- M.M.D.Services: Is it a seafarer friendly service?

*For renewal of CDC, revalidation of certificates, etc. it is truly a harrowing experience. When a seafarer, is constrained to call at MMD office. Chennai, where the private security deployed, sitting inside the Air Conditioned office, at the entrance (unknown as to whether private security guard officially employed in Govt. MMD offices, to do clerical and reception duties?), said Security Guard turns back the seamen calling at MMD office authoritatively, saying it's Deck Day - only deck personnel will be attended and not Engine Day and vice versa, or TIME is over for the day, all this in the 5 day week work-culture. When asked, as to why security guard performs such jobs? Informs that they are instructed to perform such duty, as per P.O.'s instruction and no one else can enter the department without entering the said register. When asked why that person has not entered the register, pointing out to a person, informs he is a known person to Surveyors, who regularly visits. Please note that this type of security arrangement noticed after the CBI's crackdown and suspension of Office Superintendent And clerk of MMD, having been caught red-handed for bribery and corruption.*

*Lean/skeleton strength observed in the beginning and end of the 5 day work- culture, cause of serious concern, since seafarers calling for MMD services, coming from far-off places incurring time and valued money on their travel, boarding, lodging and incidental expenses, more painful when they get stuck during the week-end (being away from their family, during their hard-earned leave period on land), no accommodation in Seafarers Club which is being mis-used, worst of all is when the MMD services not offered after the collection of fees, incurring time, effort and money. Hopes shattered with disappointment.*

*Undue delay in MMD Services hence doesn't value seafarers' time ashore, therefore the exodus of Indian seafarers preferring to appear for Certificate Of Competency overseas. Undue delay with unwanted unreasonable queries, non-refundable fees, with uncertainties for their reasonable expectations, all this during the count down of hard-earned leave period, is a cause of serious concern. Therefore it is requested that DG Shipping website entertains seafarers grievances, similar to that of the Dept. of Public Grievances, acknowledging complaint with reference number, followed by timely corrective action to flaws, deficiencies, discriminated injustices etc. By this, the directorate can also feel the real pulse of their foreign-exchange earners,(Indian seafarers) mindset.*

*Having been invited to attend a seamen's welfare meeting, noticed non-mariners and Fr. Anthony and his followers, are committee members. While, Seafarers are not constituting from any particular caste, creed, religion etc. Hence. suggested to P.O. MMD Chennai, to draw attention of all mariners in the city of Greater Chennai and suburbs to join as members of Seafarers Club, with a nominal annual subscription and such association members could make it a great success by inter-acting, manage and produce better results, viewing seafarer's real welfare. Progresses do not just come by itself by offering varied assignments to anybody whom one likes, Middlemen's corrupt. Only authorized Govt. staff, need to handle the seafarers and authorised faculty staff in Maritime Institutions, not any Tom, Dick and Harry.*

*I am paused to think, while surveyors claim shortage and being overworked, why they should be more inclined upon direct management of Seafarer's Club? while it is a house-keeping discipline? Surveyor's should have better assignments to do, for their existence in national maritime administration, attending to the voice of the seafarer's, crying for justice, as in the case of 2nd Engineer Gopal Chandra Paul, who got his COC alas on 30th May 2008, after this office intervening for a just cause, with the directorate. There are countless cases of trauma, nervous breakdowns, suicides amongst seafarer's family-members, many getting cheated owing to not knowing the prevalence of cheating in city and suburbs etc. "We have no intention to defame anybody directly nor indirectly, as we have no animosity with any specific person or of any department" but for exposing the grievances of seafarers and the probable causes, for early redressal. If at all unknowingly hurts beyond our knowledge and reach as "err is human", kindly accept our apologies.*

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## Conference could mark start of Arctic power struggle:

ILULISSAT, Greenland - An Arctic Ocean summit aimed at easing territorial tensions among the five nations bordering the northern sea - including Canada - appeared to evolve Wednesday into something more substantial: a kind of Arctic G-5 with ambitious plans for overseeing polar oil and mineral exploration, maritime security, transportation and environmental regulation.

"The Arctic Ocean stands at the threshold of significant changes," the countries' Ilulissat Declaration stated. "Climate change and the melting of ice have a potential impact on vulnerable ecosystems, the livelihoods of local inhabitants and indigenous communities, and the potential exploitation of natural resources.

"By virtue of their sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in large areas of the Arctic Ocean, the five coastal states are in a unique position to address these possibilities and challenges."

But the conference, which was organized by Denmark's Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller and also included the U.S., Russia and Norway, could well mark the beginning of an international power struggle over the future governance of the rapidly warming and increasingly accessible polar region.

Chief among the goals laid out in the declaration was to block any "new comprehensive international legal regime to govern the Arctic Ocean" - a clear shot across the bow of some European politicians and other Arctic observers who see the region as a largely unspoiled seascape best governed, like Antarctica, as an international trust.

They have pushed for the adoption of a broader legal framework - perhaps even an "Arctic Treaty" under the auspices of the United Nations - to regulate commercial activity, environmental threats and scientific research in the extreme north.

The summit was initially billed as an attempt to cool the rhetoric between the five polar neighbours following Russia's controversial dive to the North

Pole seabed last year, an ongoing Danish-Canadian feud over tiny Hans Island and several other jurisdictional disputes.

And the final declaration did promise "the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims."

But in his opening remarks at the conference, Moeller made clear the chief purpose of the gathering by targeting "the assumption by some that there is a need for a new legal regime for the Arctic Ocean. I do not see such a need, as we have international law, we have the Law of the Sea, which already provide us with a comprehensive legal regime."

A proposal is before the European Parliament to adopt an Arctic policy to assert greater influence over environmental protection and other spheres of activity in the polar region.

The Arctic Council - an eight-country coalition of northern nations which includes the five coastal states plus Sweden, Finland, Iceland and various Arctic indigenous peoples - has also been working to develop rules for managing Arctic resources and environmental threats.

While the delegation leaders - including Canada's Minister of Natural Resources, Gary Lunn - expressed a desire to continue working through the Arctic Council and other international bodies on polar issues, they said the new coastal coalition is merited because those nations have unique opportunities and responsibilities.

"We are states that border the Arctic Ocean, and we have a responsibility to ensure that we put in the safeguards to ensure transportation and environmental protection, search and rescue, and so on - that we co-operate," said Lunn, whose ministry is overseeing Arctic seabed research aimed at securing vast extensions to Canada's continental shelf in the polar north.

The five-nation pact also envisions greater co-operation among the coastal nations in search-and-rescue operations, environmental crisis management and the regulation of oil tankers that could soon be routinely cruising through an ice-free Northwest Passage.

"Everybody, of course, wants to avoid a Titanic or an Exxon Valdez in the Arctic Ocean," Moeller said. "New possibilities of transport in and through the region increase the risk of accidents. More cruises than ever before reach even up to Thule (in far northern Greenland). As responsible coastal states we must strive to minimize this risk."

There is one notable hitch in the five-state strategy to rely on the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, a treaty designed largely to resolve jurisdictional disputes in coastal regions and govern ocean shipping, as the chief guide to governing Arctic waters.

The most powerful of the five nations at the summit - the United States - hasn't ratified the accord.

John Negroponte, the U.S. deputy secretary of state and head of the American delegation, took pains to express the Bush administration's strong support for signing UNCLOS and predicted U.S. ratification soon.

Adoption of the convention has been blocked by Congress in recent years, largely by conservative legislators concerned about surrendering U.S. power to international legal frameworks.

"We certainly believe it's in the interests of the United States to ratify the Law of the Sea treaty, not the least of which would be for the impact it would have on our Arctic policy, where it's very important," Negroponte told reporters.

Two opposition MPs from northern Canada who attended the conference as observers - the NDP's Western Arctic MP Dennis Bevington and Yukon Liberal MP Larry Bagnell - applauded the agreement reached between the five countries.

Two Canadian experts on polar issues offered contrasting opinions on the outcome of the summit.

University of Calgary political scientist Rob Huebert said the five-country plan to manage the ocean's affairs means "Arctic issues will be dealt with on an ad hoc, piecemeal, bilateral basis. The Arctic is much too complicated to deal with in this manner today."