

ISWAN Seminar 2024 in India- Seafarers: *Supported, Empowered, Connected*

The ISWAN Seminar 2024 in India, hosted at the Maritime Training Institute (SCI) in Mumbai, brought together key maritime stakeholders to address pressing challenges affecting seafarers and their families. Over 150 participants, including maritime leaders, policymakers, shipping executives, welfare organizations, seafarers, their families and academics, convened to explore topics ranging from discussions on family support, fraudulent crewing agents, and the impact of decarbonization on seafarers' well-being, alongside key launches and collaborative announcements.

The seminar started with a welcome address by **Mr. Deepak Shetty, IRS (Retd.)**, *Former Secretary to the Government of India, Director General of Shipping, and ISWAN Trustee*, who emphasized the significance of industry collaboration in enhancing welfare initiatives. This was followed by addresses from distinguished guests:

Prof. (Dr.) Tanuja Kaushik, Dean of Academic Affairs, Gujarat Maritime University (GMU), emphasized the importance of addressing legal complexities in the maritime sector, particularly those concerning fraudulent crewing practices. She highlighted GMU's pivotal role in advancing maritime welfare research through initiatives like the GMU-ISWAN survey on fraudulent crewing agents. Prof. Kaushik also underscored the university's commitment to fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and welfare organizations to create robust legal frameworks and promote ethical practices in the maritime domain.

Capt. J. C. Anand, Chairman Emeritus, the Indian Register of Shipping, and the senior-most member of the Indian maritime industry at 103 years of age, captivated the audience with his address. He stressed the importance of training seafarers and upholding ethical practices in maritime operations and reflected on the industry's evolving landscape over the decades.

Mr. Rene Anderson, CEO, Sea Health and Welfare, spoke about the significance of holistic welfare approaches for seafarers. He highlighted the parallels between ISWAN's work and Sea Health's initiatives, emphasizing collaboration for the well-being of maritime professionals.

Mr. Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, Director General of Shipping, India, delivered the Chief Guest's address, focusing on regulatory measures designed to support seafarers. He spoke about the Directorate's commitment to digitizing grievance redressal mechanisms and simplifying processes to ensure timely assistance for seafarers in need. He also

mentioned the MOU with ISWAN as a testament to this effort.

Capt. Daniel Joseph, Nautical Surveyor-cum-DDG (Tech), Directorate General of Shipping, reinforced the Director General's vision, commending ISWAN for its welfare programs. He emphasized India's proactive approach to ensuring maritime safety and support for its seafarers.

Commander Abeer Sharma, representing the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (Indian Navy), provided an operational perspective on maritime security. He addressed geopolitical challenges in West Asia, maritime threats, and the importance of collaborative knowledge sharing between the Navy and the maritime industry. The session concluded with an engaging Q&A, offering deeper insights into India's maritime preparedness.

Panel Discussions-

Family Support in Seafaring

This panel explored the importance of families in bolstering seafarers' mental well-being and resilience. **Moderated by Mr. Simon Grainge**, Chief Executive at ISWAN, the discussion covered strategies to strengthen family systems and the industry's role in addressing challenges faced by seafarers' loved ones.

Panellists:

Dr. Harish Shetty, Senior Psychiatrist

Ms. Saleha Shaikh, Founder & Head, MUI Women's Wing

Capt. Karan Kochhar, Managing Director, Maersk

Capt. Sharad Kishore, Master Mariner

The Impact of Recruitment Fraud on Indian Seafarers

Based on the GMU-ISWAN survey findings, this panel focused on the prevalence and consequences of fraudulent recruitment practices, featuring the testimony of Sumeet Vishwakarma, who shared his experience as a victim of such practices. **Moderated by Mr. Alexander Held**, Head of Commercial Turtle, the session highlighted legal, regulatory, and educational interventions to protect seafarers from exploitation.

Panellists:

Capt. Manish Kumar, Nautical Surveyor, Directorate General of Shipping

Dr. Mohit Gupta, Assistant Professor, Gujarat Maritime University

Mr. Marville Espago, Regional Manager, ISWAN Philippines

Mr. Sumeet Vishwakarma, Seafarer

The Impact of Decarbonisation on the Welfare of Seafarers

This discussion addressed the complex challenges posed by the industry's shift towards decarbonization. **Moderated by Mr. Rajeev Nayyar**, President of the Institute of Marine

Engineers (India), panellists reflected on the balance between achieving environmental goals and ensuring the well-being and preparedness of seafarers.

Panellists:

Ms. Louise Hall, Director of Loss Prevention, Corporate Responsibility, and Marketing, The Shipowners' Club

Mr. Kaushik Seal, Director, Slabs Consultancy Pvt Ltd

Mr. Karan Ahuja, Chief Engineer

Mr. Chirag Bahri, International Operations Manager, ISWAN

Launches and Partnerships-

- ◆ **Family Outreach Programme (FOP):** ISWAN marked a milestone with the launch of the FOP in India, building on its success in the Philippines. After a trial phase in September 2024, the program is now officially live and forms an integral part of ISWAN's Seafarers' Education and Awareness Session (SEAS) project. The FOP aims to provide comprehensive support to seafarers' families, recognizing their critical role in the seafaring community.
- ◆ **GMU-ISWAN Research Report:** In collaboration with Gujarat Maritime University, ISWAN launched a research report addressing the pressing issue of fraudulent crewing agents in India. The report provides actionable insights and recommendations to protect seafarers from exploitation, spotlighting the importance of ethical recruitment practices in the maritime industry.
- ◆ **MoU Signing with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS):** ISWAN and TISS formalized a significant partnership aimed at enhancing the mental well-being of seafarers and their families. The collaboration leverages TISS's expertise, including its iCall helpline—a free mental health support service available to all. This MoU underscores a commitment to creating meaningful mental health interventions for the maritime community.

Concluding Remarks by Mr. Simon Grainge

Mr. Simon Grainge, Chief Executive at ISWAN, delivered the closing remarks, summarizing the seminar's impactful discussions. He highlighted key takeaways from the day, including the focus on mental health, maritime security, decarbonization's impact on welfare, and the urgent need to address fraudulent recruitment practices. He appreciated the contributions of esteemed speakers for providing actionable insights. Mr. Grainge reiterated ISWAN's commitment to working collaboratively with industry leaders, government bodies, and academic institutions to drive meaningful changes for seafarers and their families.

Vote of Thanks by Mr. Chirag Bahri

In his vote of thanks, Mr. Chirag Bahri, International Operations Manager at ISWAN,

expressed gratitude to all participants, including esteemed guests for their invaluable contributions. He acknowledged the efforts of moderators and panellists from the day's sessions for fostering constructive dialogue. Mr. Bahri also extended heartfelt thanks to the sponsors and supporting organisations for their support and emphasized the importance of collective efforts in advancing seafarer welfare initiatives.

The seminar also featured an interactive app-based contest, with the winner receiving a Marshall Kilburn II Bluetooth speaker sponsored by Sailor Today Radio.

Acknowledgements

ISWAN extends its heartfelt gratitude to the sponsors, whose generous support made the ISWAN Seminar 2024 a resounding success:

- ◆ **Platinum Sponsor:** Gujarat Maritime University
- ◆ **Gold Sponsors:** Fleet Management, Kandla Seafarers Welfare Association, Maersk
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Additionally, ISWAN acknowledges the contributions of the **Supporting Organizations**, which included: The Company of Master Mariners of India, NAUGHTICA-Offing Group, FOSMA, Institute of Marine Engineers (India), INSA, MASSA, Maritime Training Institute (SCI), TURTLE, and The Shipowners' Club.

This collective effort demonstrates the maritime community's shared commitment to enhancing the welfare of seafarers and their families.

Looking Ahead

The ISWAN Seminar 2024 offered valuable insights into enhancing welfare programs amidst the ongoing challenges faced by the industry. As we continue to drive positive change, stay informed with the latest updates at: www.iswan.org.uk/