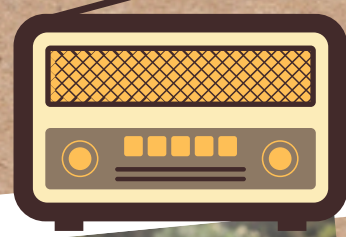


Sailor Today

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A Seafarer's Evening



Under the Open Sky, The Sea Came Ashore

Sailor Today

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From Editor's desk Under Open Skies In Full Pride

Reflections on Identity, Continuity and the Visible Spirit of Our Maritime Fraternity

Earlier this month, beneath open Mumbai skies, the Annual Dinner of the The Company of Master Mariners of India was held on expansive lawns. It was an evening that brought together masters, senior maritime leaders, young officers and their families in a celebration of command, continuity and fellowship. Awards honoured distinguished service, conversations revisited voyages past, and laughter flowed as freely as the sea stories. The presence of wives and children added warmth and perspective, reminding us that command at sea is always supported by strength at home.

A few days later, I attended the function of the Institute of Marine Engineers (India), also conducted under the open sky. The focus here was on technical excellence, professional growth and the evolving demands of marine engineering. Young professionals engaged earnestly with seniors, reflecting a culture of learning and responsibility that continues to define our industry.

Attending both gatherings in close succession offered a meaningful perspective. One evening celebrated leadership at sea. The other reaffirmed the technical foundation that makes every safe voyage possible. Together, they represented the complete character of our maritime fraternity.

A comprehensive report on the CMMI Annual Dinner is presented by Pallavi Sehgal in this issue. Owing to space constraints, a detailed account of the IMEI function will be carried in our forthcoming edition. For the past eight years, I have consistently advocated wearing our uniform with pride beyond ceremonial occasions. At both events, I chose to attend in full blues. A uniform is not mere fabric. It is identity earned through examination, experience and accountability. Encouragingly, that sentiment is finding resonance across generations. Under the same sky that guides us across oceans, our fraternity gathered, reflected and quietly reaffirmed its enduring pride.



IMO FATIGUE TALKS RENEW CALL FOR REALISTIC MANNING LEVELS

As the IMO prepares for the 12th session of its Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping, MarinePALS CEO Captain Pradeep Chawla is calling for a realistic reassessment of safe manning levels. He argues that ship schedules are busier, administrative burdens heavier, and inspections stricter, yet crew numbers have steadily declined.

Captain Chawla noted that while safety frameworks such as SOLAS, MARPOL, STCW and the Maritime Labour Convention have strengthened standards, each new requirement adds logbooks, records, and checklists. "Individually reasonable, together they create a workload that fewer hands must carry," he said, echoing seafarers' growing frustration.

With five decades of industry experience, including participation in IMO discussions and accident investigations, Captain Chawla warned against another cycle of debate without progress. "If we are serious about fatigue, we must be serious about manning," he stressed.

Rather than a blanket crew increase, he proposes practical reforms: a firm global minimum manning baseline, including a Master and three navigation watchkeepers; stricter requirements in congested and coastal waters; manning levels linked to port-call intensity; recognition of differences between ship types and trades; active flag-state monitoring using modern tracking and AI tools; and tighter control of exemptions.



He concluded that consistent global enforcement is essential to ensure fairness and prevent commercial advantage from undermining safety. Unless workload and fatigue are addressed honestly, he warned, the industry risks repeating the same conversation after every major accident.



Navigating The Mind @ Sea

Part Seven

By Capt Nangia

The Inner Voyage: From Steady Command to
the Helm Within

Over the past six editions, our dialogue with Capt. Amresh has steadily deepened. What began as a discussion on managing stress at sea evolved into reflections on emotional balance, leadership composure and the practical value of meditation onboard. Each part has revealed a simple but powerful truth. Seamanship is not only about charts, machinery and compliance. It is equally about the state of the mind that interprets situations and the heart that responds to them.

In this seventh instalment, the conversation moves beyond stability toward evolution. We explore the Six Spiritual Attainments and the four states of consciousness described in ancient wisdom, not as distant philosophy, but as living principles relevant to every watchkeeper and Master.

If earlier discussions were about steadying the vessel, this one is about steadying the helm within.

Capt. Nangia

**HAPPY
HOLI**

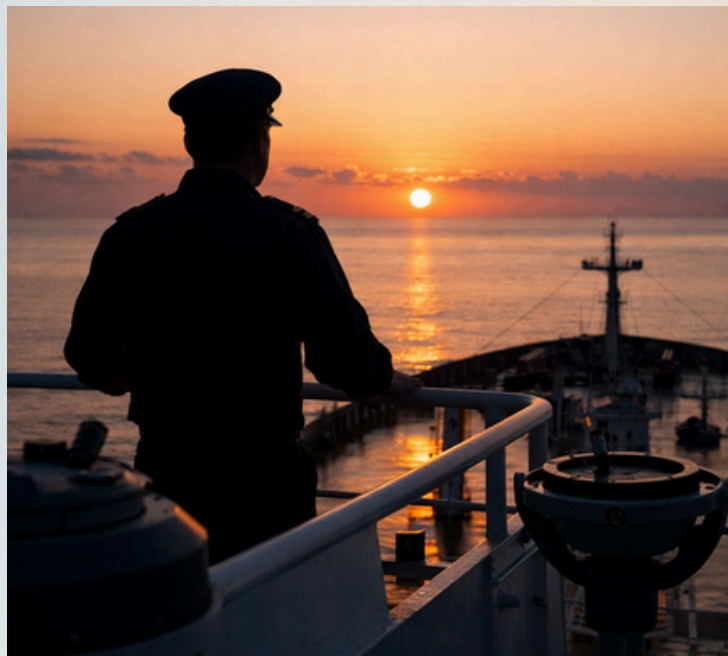
The coffee had grown cold before the conversation turned deeper.

“We have spoken about stress, leadership and emotional balance,” I began. “But let me ask you directly. Is meditation simply a coping mechanism for seafarers? Or is there something more?”

Capt. Amresh smiled, as if preparing to unfold a larger chart.

“If it were only stress management,” he replied, “Yoga would not have endured for thousands of years. It is not just about calming the mind. It is about refining consciousness.”

That word lingered. “Our officers want practicality,” I said. “They want to know what difference this makes on a bridge at 0300 hours.” “It makes all the difference,” he answered quietly.



The Strengths Every Seafarer Already Knows

“Take Shama,” he began.
“Regulation of the mind. Picture a congested traffic separation scheme at night. Radar alarms are sounding. Visibility fluctuates. One officer reacts sharply. Another remains composed. The conditions are identical. The difference lies in the state of the mind.”
“So Shama is the foundation of situational awareness?” I asked.
“Yes. A calm mind reflects truth clearly, like calm waters reflect the horizon.”
He continued.
“Dama, control of the senses, is equally critical at sea. Months onboard scatter attention. Screens, fatigue, monotony and minor irritations constantly pull energy outward. When the senses are disciplined, energy gathers instead of drifting. Focus strengthens.”
“And Uparati?” I asked.
“Promotions, comparisons, expectations.”
“Uparati is freedom from dependency. Perform your duty fully, but do not let your balance depend on outcomes. Attachment creates agitation. Balance creates clarity.”
These were not distant spiritual ideals. They sounded like refined operational strengths.



Command and the Invisible Weight

We moved naturally to command.
“Every Master carries invisible weight,” I observed. “Cargo value, crew welfare, compliance, commercial pressure.”
“That is where Titiksha comes in,” he replied. “Endurance. Life presents dualities constantly. Smooth passages and heavy weather. Praise and criticism. Profit and delay. Forbearance keeps the heart steady amid both.”
“And Shraddha?”
“Living faith. Trust in the path and in disciplined practice. During isolation or uncertainty, faith prevents inner drift.”
“And Samadhana?”
He paused briefly.
“Inner settledness. You have met Masters whose very presence calms the bridge. That composure is not personality alone. It is the result of holding a true inner course.”
The six qualities he described, Shama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Shraddha and Samadhana, are known collectively as the Six Spiritual Attainments. In essence, they prepare the mind and heart for higher awareness.

Beyond Efficiency

“But where does this lead?” I asked. “If we stabilise the mind and refine behaviour, what lies beyond?”
He leaned forward slightly.
“The Mandukya wisdom describes four states of consciousness. In the waking state, you engage with charts, engines and crew. In the dream state, unresolved impressions replay internally. In deep sleep, there is rest without awareness.”
“And beyond these?”
“Turiya. Pure witnessing consciousness.”
“That sounds abstract.”
“It is closer than you think,” he said. “Have you stood alone on a dawn watch, when the horizon slowly widens and for a moment the mind becomes silent?” I nodded. Every seafarer knows that quiet hour.
“That stillness is not created,” he continued softly. “It is revealed when the inner waters settle. Meditation supported by Yogic Transmission gently cleans accumulated impressions stored near the heart. As they dissolve, reactions reduce. Awareness expands naturally. You function fully, yet inwardly remain steady.”
“So this is not escape from maritime life,” I said.
“Quite the opposite. It is evolution within it.”



The Deeper Seamanship

Shipping measures growth in rank and responsibility. Yoga measures growth in the widening horizon of awareness. One is stitched onto the epaulettes. The other is anchored quietly within.

As we rose from the table, the thought remained with me. The sea already trains us well. It teaches endurance in heavy weather, vigilance in narrow channels and discipline across long passages. But it also mirrors us. When the inner tide is unsettled, even calm seas feel demanding. When the inner current runs steady, even headwinds can be navigated with composure.

“The ocean tests a vessel’s build,” Capt. Amresh said as we decided to take small stroll . “Life tests the build of our consciousness.”

Perhaps that is the deeper seamanship we rarely discuss. Not just holding course across shifting currents, but keeping the inner compass true. Not just commanding steel and cargo, but steering thought, emotion and intention with the same precision we demand from our helm.

A ship sails from port to port. A seafarer can sail from restlessness to steadiness, and from steadiness to quiet radiance.

And in the end, the finest command is not only over the bridge, but over the helm within.



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Shipping will need more self-regulation and safe haven partnerships

Shipping will have little choice but to strengthen self-regulation and carefully select trusted “safe haven” partners as geopolitical and regulatory fragmentation intensifies, according to Mark O’Neil, President and CEO of Columbia Group.

He warned that the erosion of the international rules-based order is creating competing spheres of influence and overlapping regional regulations. In this environment, shipping companies, particularly small and medium-sized operators, will need reliable, scalable partners to provide certainty amid growing instability. O’Neil noted that long-standing UN institutions are weakening, while new power blocs emerge. He suggested that even established bodies such as the IMO have faced challenges in maintaining authority. As a result, global regulatory consistency can no longer be taken for granted.

Despite this uncertainty, he emphasised that shipping has traditionally been agile and capable of self-regulation. “We will self-regulate on safety. We will look after our seafarers and ensure compliance with environmental and moral standards onboard our ships, regardless of which global regulations ultimately prevail,” he said.



O’Neil also urged companies to scrutinise contractual relationships carefully. In a fragmented legal landscape, enforcing contracts across jurisdictions may become increasingly complex. He stressed the importance of working only with trusted, blue-chip partners with strong ethical foundations who will stand by their commitments when challenges arise.

An advertisement for the International Maritime Radio app. The background is blue and white with diagonal stripes. On the left, text reads: "CONNECTING SEAFARERS SINCE 1991 FROM MAGAZINE TO TV, FROM AWARDS TO AIRWAVES", "PRESENTING WORLD'S FIRST MARITIME RADIO STATION", and "NOW ONE POWERFUL VOICE FOR SEAFARERS, SHORE TEAMS AND MARITIME PROFESSIONALS WORLDWIDE." Below this is a "DOWNLOAD THE FREE APP" button with icons for Google Play and the App Store. On the right, there is a circular logo for "INTERNATIONAL MARITIME RADIO" featuring a sailor in a white uniform and a ship. The logo also includes the text "Sailor Today" and "YOUR UNMISSABLE DOSE OF VITAMINSEA".

Happy Holi

Under the Open Sky Sea Came Ashore

By Pallavi Sehgal

It did not arrive with a pilot boat or sound three prolonged blasts. It arrived in polished shoes, pressed uniforms, old sea stories, and that unmistakable posture only a Master Mariner carries. The venue was The Club in Andheri West, but by 1900 hours the lawns felt less like Mumbai and more like an anchorage of experience.

Hosted by The Company of Master Mariners of India, the Annual Dinner Function 2026 unfolded under an open sky that seemed almost deliberately expansive, as if nature itself understood that seafarers do not gather well under ceilings.

Because if there is one thing a mariner is not used to, it is being indoors without a reason.



**A Seafarer's Evening
at CMMI Annual
Dinner 2026**

**On 21 February
2026 Sea decided to
dock in Mumbai.**

When Time Slows Down Ashore

There is something about maritime gatherings that immediately alters the atmosphere. The handshakes are firmer. Eye contact is longer. Conversations begin without small talk.

“How long was your last contract?”

“Which run are you on these days?”

“Still sailing tankers or moved to gas?”

Within minutes, the lawns were alive. Senior Masters who once commanded ships larger than city blocks greeted each other like cadets reunited after shore leave. Young officers stood slightly straighter, absorbing mannerisms as much as advice. Retired captains walked with that quiet assurance which says, I have seen weather that would make this pleasant Mumbai breeze feel like a compliment.

There is something unique about an open gathering of Master Mariners. No one needs to explain accountability. No one needs to explain what it means to make a call at 0200 hours when radar and instinct must agree.

And yet, on this evening, the weight lifted. The rank stripes mattered less than the shared horizon.



“The sea teaches many things.
The first is responsibility.
The second is humility.”



A Tradition That Outlives Voyages

Founded in 1957 by 54 Master Mariners and incorporated on 22 August that year, CMMI has been the profession's steady compass for nearly seven decades. It has hosted lectures, Extra Master programmes, seminars, academic initiatives, and published Command magazine long before social media thought it could explain shipping in 60 seconds. But the Annual Dinner is different.



It is the one evening when charts are replaced with conversations, and bridge wings are replaced with banquet lawns. It is where stories surface. And in maritime culture, stories are currency.

The Uniform That Refuses to Retire

Somewhere between greetings and group photographs, one familiar sight stood out. Capt Nangia, Editor of Sailor Today, moved across the gathering in full blues uniform, immaculate as always. For eight years now, he has quietly but consistently advocated something simple: wear the uniform. Wear it with pride.

On a night where many had chosen sharp suits and formal attire, his presence in full blues felt both traditional and quietly rebellious. It was not about display. It was about identity. The uniform, after all, is not fabric. It is memory. It carries storms weathered, watches stood, responsibilities borne. It reminds us that even ashore, we represent a profession built on discipline. One suspects that if given the opportunity, he might convince half the lawn to report in uniform next year. And perhaps he just might. Consistency, as any good captain will tell you, eventually changes course.



Applause That Carries Decades



The evening's awards ceremony was not merely a segment in the programme. It was the emotional tide of the night.

When Capt. Virendra Nath Aindley rose to receive his Lifetime Achievement Award, the applause felt layered. Master FG in 1968. Extra Master UK in 1970. SOLAS surveys. Examiner for Masters and Mates. Twenty four years as elected Warden of the Court. Those are credentials on paper.

In reality, they represent thousands of days at sea, countless decisions, and a generation that built Indian maritime credibility from the bridge outward.

For younger officers present, his career timeline reads like living history. For peers, it reads like shared memory.

Recognition in shipping is different. It is not about performance metrics. It is about endurance.

Dr Capt K Vivekananda's Lifetime Achievement Award honoured another pillar of maritime strength. A DSc and Fellow of The Nautical Institute London, and senior academic leader at AMET University and VELS University, he has shaped minds before they ever stepped on deck.

Every calm voice on a bridge today once belonged to a nervous cadet. Educators like him transform hesitation into competence. That evening, the profession paused to acknowledge that command begins long before one wears four stripes.





CMMI Evolution

Karma Group Opens Villas to Stranded Seafarers and Travellers in Dubai

In a timely gesture of solidarity, the Karma Group has opened its doors to stranded seafarers and members of the public facing accommodation challenges in Dubai.

With airport disruptions leading to heavy congestion and hotels operating at near full capacity, many travelers have found themselves without immediate lodging options. Taking to social media, Capt. Pradeep Singh said coordinated efforts are underway to ensure no one is left unsupported. “We understand that quite a few people are currently stranded at the airport and outside, and hotel capacities are nearly full. The authorities have assured that no one will be left without support and necessary expenses are being taken care of,” Capt. Singh said.

He added that the Karma Group is stepping in to supplement official efforts. “On our part, we are arranging a few villas and apartments with basic furnishings to temporarily accommodate those in need. We are working on this as quickly as possible.”



The initiative is aimed at providing immediate, short-term relief to stranded seafarers and other affected individuals until regular accommodation and travel arrangements are restored.

We at Sailor Today sincerely thank Capt. Pradeep Singh and the Karma Group for this thoughtful and timely gesture. In moments of uncertainty, such acts of leadership and compassion reinforce the maritime community’s enduring spirit of solidarity and care.

Leadership That Finds New Oceans



The Founder's Leadership Award 2026, presented to Capt BVJK Sharma, told a story that many in the audience understood deeply. From the Merchant Navy to port development, including Mundra Port, from corporate leadership at Essar Steel and JSW Infrastructure to now leading Navi Mumbai International Airport, his journey demonstrates a truth seasoned officers know well. The sea does not just produce navigators. It produces leaders. If you can manage a vessel in rough weather, you can manage almost anything ashore.



The Founder's Innovation Award, presented to Capt Pravesh Diwan, highlighted the profession's forward movement. The Exemplary Action Award by Sailing Master, presented to Capt Biby Chacko and Capt Rajat Trehan, along with recognitions awarded to Capt V K Gaikwad, Capt K P Rajagopal, and Capt R Venakataraman Iyer, reminded everyone of something beautifully simple. Bravery rarely announces itself. Often, it is just a calm decision made at the right moment. Seafarers understand that heroism does not always look dramatic. Sometimes it looks like steady hands and measured judgement.





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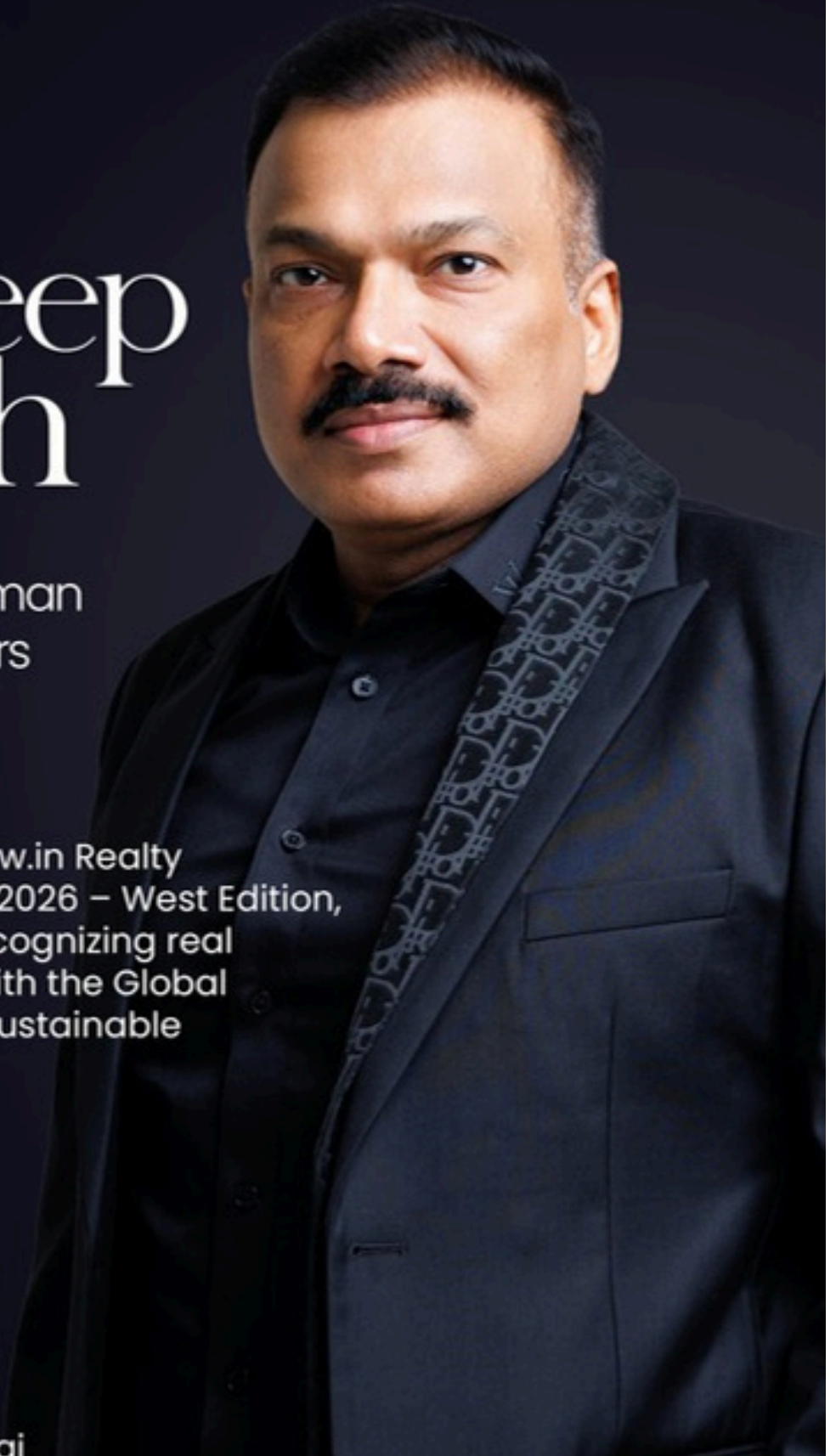
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Sea and Shore in Conversation

Special felicitations were presented to Shri Deepak Shetty, Shri Sushil Khopde, Shri Shyam Jagannathan, and Shri B. K. Tyagi of The Shipping Corporation of India Ltd. For seafarers, regulations are not theoretical. They influence certifications, safety audits, compliance frameworks, and career progression. Seeing regulators and industry leaders sharing the same stage as Master Mariners symbolised something essential. Maritime progress requires partnership. Sea and shore must trust each other.



The Real Magic Happens After Dessert



Long after the formalities concluded, the real spirit of the evening unfolded. Young second mates sought advice about command pathways. Engineers discussed alternative fuels with animated gestures. Retired captains debated whether celestial navigation built better instincts than GPS ever could.



Someone laughed about a port state inspection that nearly became a legend. Someone else quietly spoke about crew welfare and the emotional toll of long contracts. The profession is changing rapidly. Automation is accelerating. Sustainability targets are tightening. Digitalisation is transforming operations. Yet one truth remains untouched. A ship at sea depends on competence and character.



To the Officer Reading This at Sea

When the Indian tricolour flies at the stern, it carries generations of pride that evenings like this reinforce.

The CMMI Annual Dinner 2026 was not nostalgia. It was continuity.

Under the open Mumbai sky, Indian If you are reading this mid voyage, perhaps during a quiet watch or before turning in, know this.

Evenings like this are about you.

Your discipline.

Your sacrifice.

Your professionalism.

seafarers were reminded of who they are.

We may sail different routes.

We may stand watch at different hours.

We may command different ships.

But once a year, under an open sky, we gather as one profession.

And the sea, for a few hours, feels very close indeed.



Technostress among crews

Mental health experts are urging crewing managers to watch for signs of technostress arising from the growing digital demands placed on seafarers at sea. As vessels become smarter, more connected and increasingly automated, a new layer of pressure is emerging, warns Mental Health Support Solutions. From fatigue monitoring systems to AI assisted navigation, shipping is evolving rapidly. While these advances enhance safety and efficiency, they can also place additional strain on crew members expected to quickly adapt to new digital systems. Mental Health Support Solutions, a member of the OneCare Group, is encouraging shipowners to take a proactive approach to reducing digital stress by promoting digital literacy and involving crews in the transition process.



“Technostress can wear crews down, making day to day tasks feel harder and affecting their focus and wellbeing,” said Charles Watkins, Director of Clinical Operations at Mental Health Support Solutions.

Every technological rollout should be paired with psychological safety training and clear communication to ensure crews remain the priority, not an afterthought,” he added.

The impact of new technology can vary across ranks and age groups. Senior crew members may feel uneasy adapting to unfamiliar digital systems, while younger seafarers can experience frustration when joining vessels operating with outdated equipment.

“Practical training and ongoing support are essential,” Watkins said.

When seafarers feel included and properly supported through digital transformation, technology becomes a tool that enhances performance rather than a source of pressure.

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RE -IMAGINING MARITIME COMPETENCE

RISQ Series | Article 26
Author: Capt. Robert Vaz, Chief
Operating Officer, Navguide Solutions

“No Job is finished until the paperwork is done.”

When the vessels receive news of an inspection or audit at the next port, many seafarers and managers focus on ensuring the paperwork is in order. So much so that many have their own checklist, which could include, but not be limited to

Did Master /Chief Engineer sign the log books, ORB, night orders, etc.?

- Is the pilot card and passage plan complete all details available?
- Hours of work upto date?
- Management meeting and replies upto date?
- Last safety checks, drills and inspections up to date?

And finally, you will have ship staff scrambling to fill in all these details just a day before the inspection, just to ensure the inspector doesn't report a finding on documentation.

On the other hand, in audits, it is a sampling process; the auditor randomly checks 2 or 3 documents, and if they are fine, they must move on. However, some just sit and flip through all the checklists or other documents till they manage to find an error, probably a missing initial or date, or something to that effect, and write a finding. The question is, will this type of attitude, just focusing on paperwork and documentation, prevent accidents and incidents? Experience shows that the answer is 'NO'. In fact, in several instances, despite all the paperwork being intact, there has been a rise in accidents and incidents, possibly because only the paperwork was intact and not actual operational readiness.



Re -Imagining Maritime Competence

But here is the paradigm shift in ship inspections, whether it is Sire 2.0 or RISQ 3.2. It is no longer just about paperwork or procedures. The key is that ship staff must be aware of the procedures and be able to explain them. "Inspections are carried out to ensure all safety barriers are in place and not to target ships' crews, as the ship crew is the final barrier."

As we are aware, Rightship's RISQ3.2 will officially come into effect on 25th February 2026. Going by the Rightship deep dive trend from Jan to Nov 2025, there are no surprises. The high-risk findings include:

- Enclosed space entry procedures
- Lifeboats, rescue boats, equipment and launching arrangements
- Hatchcovers and maintenance
- Mooring lines and brake testing
- Mooring lines and brake testing
- Machinery space auxiliary boiler and emergency generators
- Pilot ladder condition and inspection

Hence, we see a shift in inspections. The focus is more human-centric and more practical. The inspectors have spent a lot of time learning, upgrading, and focusing on practical and operational issues rather than just ticking boxes.

Now, what can we do as experienced seafarers onboard who have been selected after strict scrutiny and interviews, have passed the psychometric test, hold a COC, hold all the STCW certifications, have completed several value-added courses, attended several safety seminars, and undergone several inspections ourselves, and most importantly, have a lot of experience at sea? What can we do to make a difference?

I feel that, as seafarers, we develop shortcuts or adopt informal practices to suit our convenience, either because the equipment design is poor or the alarm system is poorly configured, or simply because we don't fully understand the complex procedures in the SMS and end up creating our own version. When we do this, once it works, we keep doing it, and over time, it becomes normal. In fact, when questioned, we say it's always been done this way. Also, the last crew did it this way, and no vetting inspector or PSC inspector ever brought up this issue. We get defensive.

I think the need of the hour is to improve our safety culture, not just by doing it in front of an inspector or auditora habit.

If you see something that needs improvement or a change, you must flag it and bring it to the attention of the seniors. The seniors, depending on the urgency of the matter, must either prioritise it or include it in the Master's review.

As superintendents in the office, when we receive these Master's reviews, we must take action and deep-dive into the root cause, and, if required, implement the change. The Master's review is not just to show the TMSA auditor or an external auditor that our paperwork is in order, and that we receive Master's reviews, but that action is taken and implemented as required. It must be effective.

When this happens, the seafarers feel valued and become more vigilant. You will actually see a shift, resulting in seafarers being more proactive, better communication, and a more positive atmosphere on board.



Re -Imagining Maritime Competence

Coming back to RISQ 3.2, which is being implemented on 25th February 2026, Rightship has implemented these changes based on feedback from various industry stakeholders, and RISQ 3.2 is now more concise and better aligned with operational readiness. Some highlights include

- Ironed out some issues in the previous version that were ambiguous
- Have deleted or amalgamated the questions, and nothing is left to doubt
- Made some guidelines clearer
- A more practical approach with a focus on day-to-day ship operations
- Reduced ambiguity and interpretation differences
- Addresses high-risk areas by setting clearer expectations for the crew
- Vessel readiness, aligning inspection focus on trends of incidents most commonly observed



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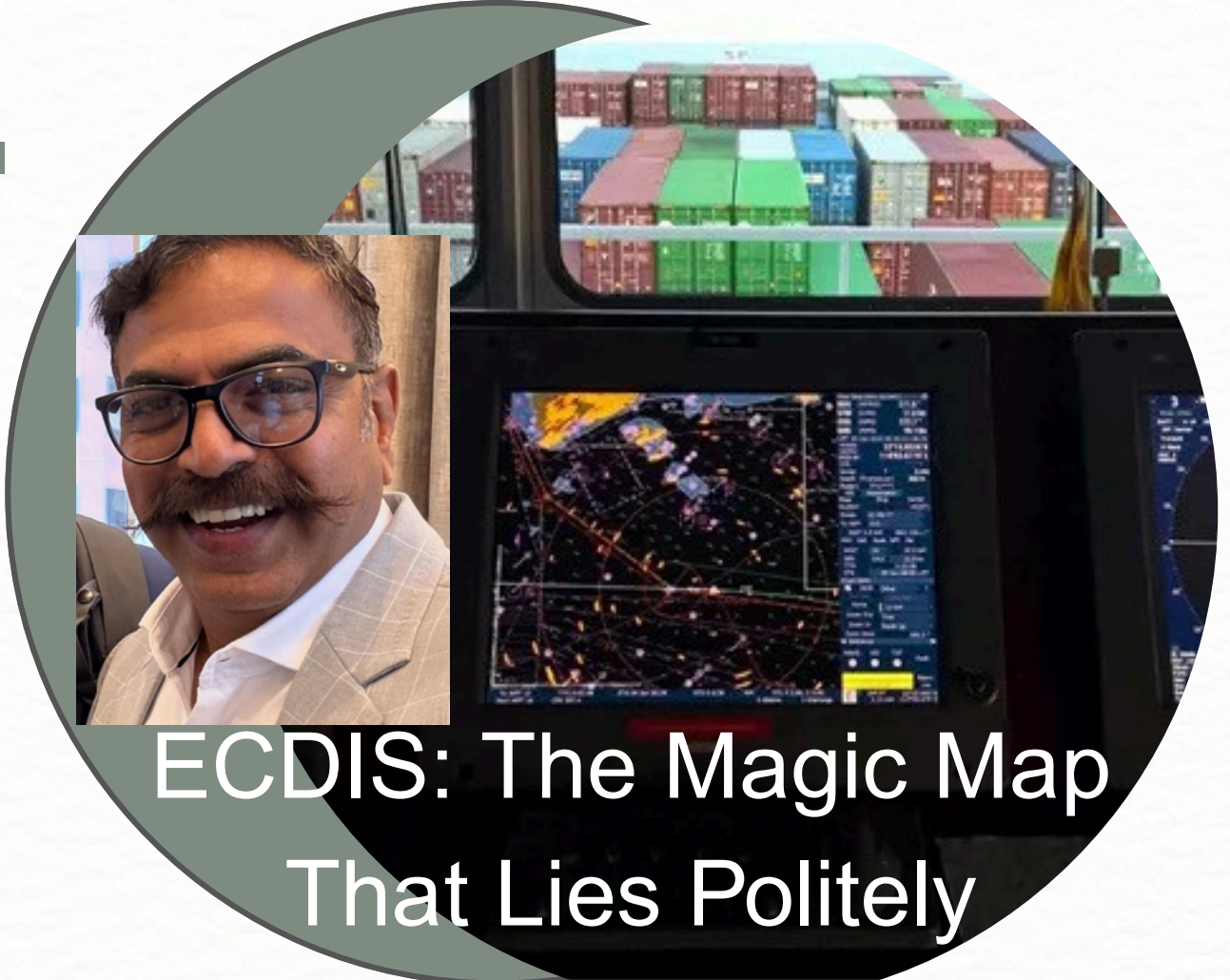
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Conclusion

Yes, paperwork is important. However, it must be relevant, practical, and valuable, and it must not be in place merely as an apparent tick-box exercise. Checklists and procedures are very important. However, they could be made more appealing to ship staff by, for example, a short 3-minute micro-clip video explaining the enclosed space company procedures, which could be better than a 6-page document. By the end of the second page, the crew member sometimes just skims the document rather than reading and understanding the procedures. So yes, a checklist cannot sail a ship. However, it provides cues and prompts for the most critical and important steps, so nothing

is left to chance. If this checklist could be made more engaging using digital technology, including gamification, it could hold seafarers' attention longer.

To conclude, I think each of us must make safety a personal choice. Let's ensure we don't try to cheat the system or fool the inspectors just to avoid findings. At the end of the day, inspections are conducted to protect seafarers and cargo, so we can successfully complete our contracts and return to our loved ones, who are eagerly waiting for our arrival. All the best. Safety first.



ECDIS: The Magic Map That Lies Politely

At 0213, the bridge was a soft aquarium: dim screens, whispering fans, a mug of coffee trying not to be cold. OOW Rhea was mid-watch on the MV Pixel Princess, steering along a traffic lane that ECDIS rendered as a royal blue carpet to destiny. The ship hummed. The sea was boring (the correct setting for any sea), and the Electronic Chart Display and Information System, our beloved ECDIS, purred like a cat who had eaten the canary and was now considering your goldfish. And then it happened. BONG-BONG-BONG.

ECDIS declared “Shallow Contour Ahead.” A minute later: “Look-ahead Anti-Grounding: Obstruction.” Two breaths on, the alarm list gained “Cross Track Error,” “Route Not Monitored,” and the oddly personal “You haven’t slept in 19 hours” (all right, that one was in her head). Rhea hit Ack like a percussionist, but not before checking the conning display, visually confirming the buoy line, and verifying the ship was exactly where sensible mariners put ships: in safe water. Five false alarms later, she smiled the weary smile of anyone who’s ever trusted ECDIS: the magic map is brilliant, but it lies politely. It lies in outdated settings, misconfigured layers, incorrect safety values, incorrect ENC editions, and the greatest liar of all, human wishfulness.

This is your bedtime story about how to make ECDIS tell the truth often enough, how to tame alarms without muting safety, and how to keep backup plotting alive so you never appear in an incident report titled “Over-Reliance on a Screen, Chapter 94.”



■ ✓
The First Spell
Alarm
Sanity
(or Which
Bong
Deserves
Your Soul)



ECDIS can be a symphony or a smoke alarm next to a toaster. The trick is signal-to-noise. Too few alerts and you'll learn about the reef the expensive way. Too many, and you'll become a professional Acknowledger of Things.

Golden rules for alarm sanity

- Route-dependent, not route-independent.
- Alarms should reflect this ship, on this voyage, at this draught, not last month's coastal run. Before departure, run an Alarm Design Pass:
 - Switch on mandatory alerts (anti-grounding/look-ahead, safety contour crossings, EBL/VRM guard rings if integrated).
 - Review optional alerts: turn off "novelty bong" that add noise (e.g., cosmetic chart-layer warnings) while keeping CPA/TCPA from radar/ARPA if integrated.
 - Confirm bridge policy on audible vs. visual alerts, and log what you did.
- Make the look-ahead box your friend.
- Set time-based AND distance-based look-ahead (e.g., 2-3 ship lengths and 6-12 minutes) so the system warns in time to be useful. Too short = jump scare. Too long = endless false anxiety.
- Own the route monitor.
- Only one route should be "monitored" at a time. If your alarm list says "Route Not Monitored" and you are on the planned route, it means you loaded the plan but forgot to arm it. That's not an alarm; that's a relationship problem.
- Tune the cross-track error (XTE).
- Set XTE limits to the lane width and pilotage reality, not the optimistic width drawn by someone in a swivel chair. "±0.1 nm" sounds professional until the first set of tugs arrives and your ECDIS begins screaming about a crime you didn't commit.
- Don't gag the smoke alarm.
- If an alarm is consistently junk, don't just mute it; fix the cause (often a wrong layer, wrong value, wrong ENC, wrong sensor priority, or an over-zealous guard). Muted alarms have a way of being right on the night fate chooses drama.

The Second Spell

Safety
Values
That
Actually
Keep You
Safe



ECDIS draws three invisible fences around your ship's pride:

- Safety Depth - a depth value that renders soundings equal/greater than in bold (encouraging you to aim for the bold bits).
- Safety Contour - the line between "safe" and "maybe not safe"; often the single most important value for coastal navigation.
- Shallow/Deep Contours - for colour shading ("dangerous blue," "comfort blue," "smug white").

How to set them like a grown-up

- Work backwards from "Under Keel Clearance."
- Start with UKC policy (e.g., 10% of draught open sea, 15% coastal, 20-30% confined). Add squat, heel, pitch, tide uncertainty, and chart datum margin. Convert the UKC requirement at your worst point to a Safety Contour value.


Example: Draught 12.0 m; UKC policy 15% → 1.8 m; squat 0.7; heel/pitch 0.3; tidal/ADQ fudge 0.5 ⇒ Safety Margin ≈ 3.3 m.

If charted depths inside a lane are 14-16 m, set Safety Contour 15 m (not 30 m because it "looks tidy," and not 10 m because optimism is not a seamanship technique).

- Safety Depth = what you'd be happy to aim for.
- Pick Safety Depth equal to Safety Contour (or just below) so bold soundings mark the water you prefer to keep under you.
- Colour with intent.
- A shallow contour (e.g., 5-7 m) gives the "do not touch" blue. Deep contour (e.g., 30-50 m in coastal routes) gives you the white comfort zone. Avoid all-blue screens that make the world look like a bathtub of doom.
- Re-calc at draught change.
- After bunkering or ballast moves that materially change draught, update safety values and re-arm the route. Many groundings were born from yesterday's numbers in today's estuary.

The Third Spell

Layers, Licenses, and the ENC Goblin



Bedtime moral: If the ENC is stale or mis-layered, ECDIS will lie, politely, consistently, and with legal stationery.

ECDIS is only as wise as the charts you feed it. The ENC goblin steals reliability through out-of-date cells, wrong usage bands, and half-baked display settings.

Tame the goblin

- Update discipline: Keep PERM (permanent changes) + TEMP/PROT (temporary/provisional) up to date. Many “surprises” were NOTAMs you didn’t invite to the party.
- Usage band awareness: Coastal route? Prioritize usage bands 4-5 (coastal/approach). Deep sea? 1-2 (overview/general) plus planned approach packs.
- Display base vs. standard vs. all-the-things: Standard display is your friend. Add additional layers (e.g., spot soundings, isolated dangers) per phase. All layers all the time equals a Christmas tree you can’t interpret.
- CATZOC respect: Treat CATZOC (Zone of Confidence) grades seriously. C/D means survey quality is meh; pad your UKC and slow your ego.

A Pocket Poster for the Bridge (tear here, tape there)

- ALARM SANITY Arm one route only.
- Look-ahead: 2-3L + 6-12 min.
- Keep mandatory alerts on; kill only cosmetic noise.
- XTE fits the lane, not a wish.
- SAFETY VALUES Derive from UKC + squat/heel/tide/ADQ.
- Safety Contour = bold boundary.
- Safety Depth \approx contour; bold soundings = aim points.
- Recalculate after draught change.
- ENC DISCIPLINE Update PERM + T&P.
- Use proper usage bands; Standard Display + needed layers.
- Respect CATZOC: C/D means slow brains, slow ship.
- POSITION & BACKUP Sensor priority set; test loss-of-GNSS alarm.
- Radar overlay: align or question life choices.
- PI lines and window pelorus live on the bridge.
- DR during gaps; log how you fixed, not just that you fixed.
- HUMAN FACTORS “Set now, not later.”
- “Fewer, better alarms.”
- “Confirm, don’t assume.”
- “If your settings aren’t written, they don’t exist.”

The Fourth Spell

Position Sources and the Dance of Priorities



Bedtime moral: ECDIS is best when it dances with radar, eyes, and common sense.

Two ECDIS sins lead to many casualty reports: single-sensor reliance and incorrect sensor priority.

- Prioritize sensors (primary GNSS, secondary GNSS, Loran/ECDIS DR if fitted, radar overlay in restricted waters). Test alarms on the source switch so the watchkeeper knows the sound of “we just lost primary GPS.”
- Use radar overlay like a lie detector. In coastal waters, the radar raster on the ECDIS should kiss the shoreline and buoys. If it’s offset, either tune the radar, check the offset, or question your position.
- Cross-check with the outside world. Parallel index lines, bearings to conspicuous lights, ranges to buoys, paper skills on glass.

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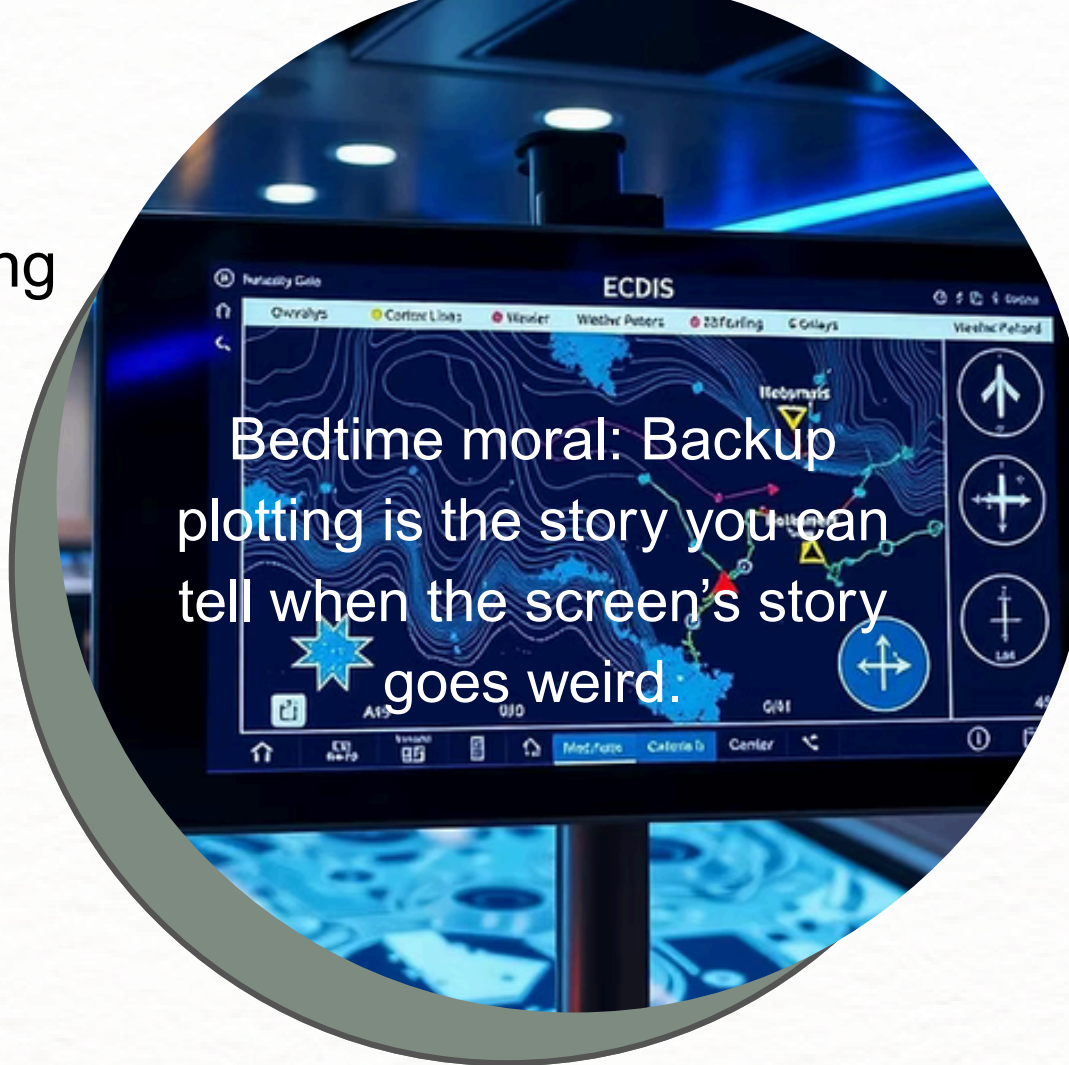
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Backup Plotting

The Art We Forgot to Frame



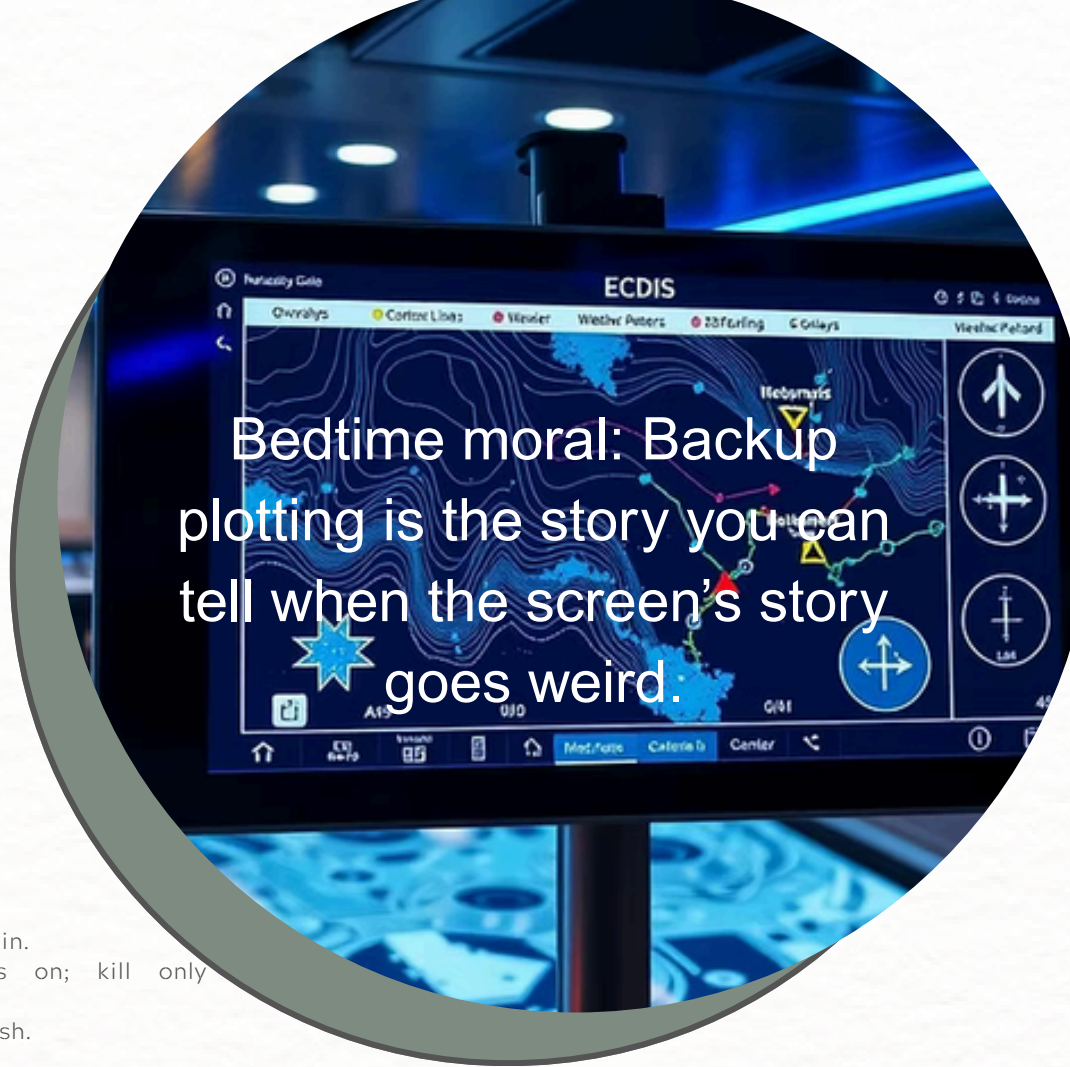
Every “over-reliance” finding had a sibling line: “No effective backup plotting.” The COLREGs won’t save you from a wrong chart layer; backup plotting will save you from believing it.

Make backup real, not ceremonial

- Paper-lite, not paper-less, habits.
- Even on paperless ships, keep position lines every 3-6 minutes in pilotage using PI lines, transits, or bearing/range from radar. Use a bridge window pelorus (two tape marks) to watch constant bearing risks.
- Parallel indexing (PI) that lives on the conning display.
- Pre-draw PI lines for legs with crosswinds/currents. Everyone on the bridge should know which tangent on the radar equals “we’re on the line”.
- The Litmus Log.
- Enter fix method (“GNSS+RADAR PI,” “2 bearings + range”), safety values, CATZOC state, and last ENC update date at the start of the watch. If something later feels wrong, your past self left breadcrumbs.
- Dead reckoning is not dead.
- When GNSS sulks, put down DRs at intervals and mark set/drift. DR + PI will carry you through the short darkness between fixes.

HAPPY HOLI

A Pocket Poster for the Bridge (tear here, tape there)



Bedtime moral: Backup plotting is the story you can tell when the screen's story goes weird.

ALARM SANITY

- Arm one route only.
- Look-ahead: 2-3L + 6-12 min.
- Keep mandatory alerts on; kill only cosmetic noise.
- XTE fits the lane, not a wish.

SAFETY VALUES

- Derive from UKC + squat/heel/tide/ADQ.
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- Recalculate after draught change.

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- Update PERM + T&P.
- Use proper usage bands; Standard Display + needed layers.
- Respect CATZOC: C/D means slow brains, slow ship.

POSITION & BACKUP

- Sensor priority set; test loss-of-GNSS alarm.
- Radar overlay: align or question life choices.
- PI lines and window pelorus live on the bridge.
- DR during gaps; log how you fixed, not just that you fixed.

HUMAN FACTORS

- "Set now, not later."
- "Fewer, better alarms."
- "Confirm, don't assume."
- "If your settings aren't written, they don't exist."

Final Lullaby

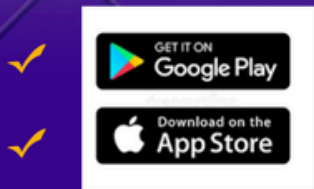
ECDIS is the best storyteller on the bridge: fast, colourful, persuasive, and occasionally wrong with great confidence. Your job is to edit the story: tune the alarms so warnings mean something, set safety contours that reflect today's ship in today's water, and keep backup plotting alive so you remain the final source of truth.

Sail long enough, and you'll collect your own nocturnal bongos, polite lies, and the sweet silence that comes after you fix them. May your screens be honest, your charts current, your PI lines straight, and your midnights gloriously dull.



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