

RNI 53380/91

December 2020

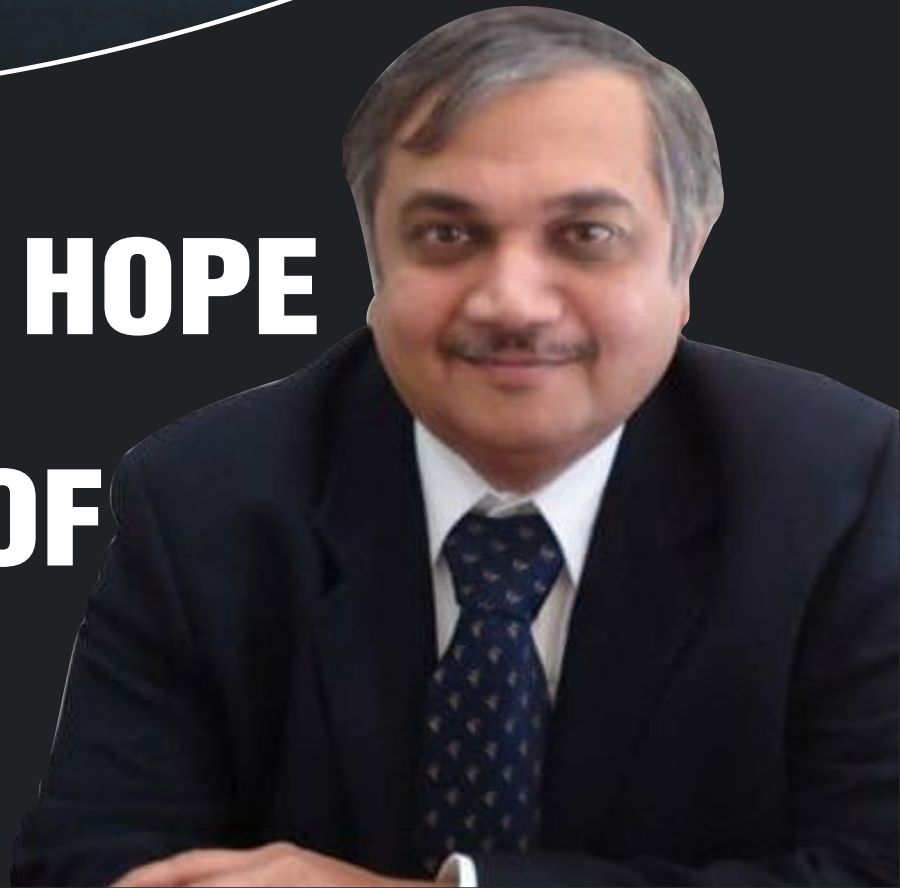
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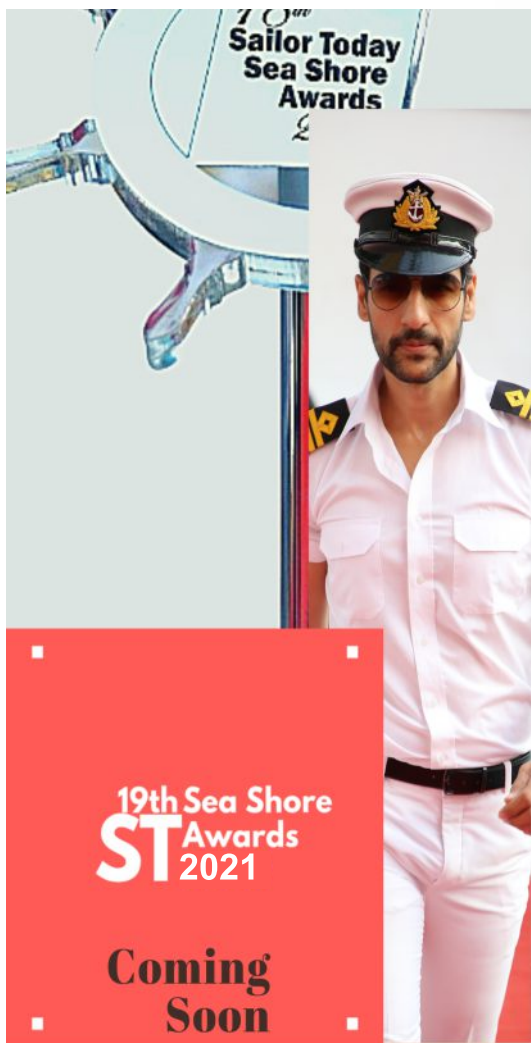
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**It is the worst of times,
it is the season of Darkness,
but it could be the Spring of hope,
and not a winter of despair.**

Capt Ramji Krishnan

Sloan Fellow

Capt Ramji Krishnan has worked extensively in Europe for 10 years, in Africa, U.A.E and in India at various senior level positions. He holds a Master's Degree from London Business School and is a Sloan Fellow. He is a Master



Mariner and has completed the course requirements for Extra Masters and an MPhil degree in System Dynamics, University of Bergen, Norway

The best piece of news this year has been 48 Indian seafarers stranded in Chinese waters are heading towards Japan where crew change was expected. So, things are moving in the right direction albeit extremely slow.

We take a brief look at what is being done and some of the challenges being faced by various parties who need to work together for crew change. It is imperative that we understand each party's

constraints and work on their willingness to speed things up.

The challenges faced by owners when faced with different options of ports where relief can take place are the following – reducing crew fatigue, which port is faster to reach, is there more certainty about relief, does it have a smaller deviation/costs and whether they have more time to prepare for repatriation. Furthermore,

SAFEGUARDING CREW FIRST

Charterers' "no crew change" clauses aggravate the ongoing crew change crisis and further threaten safety of navigation, says IMO Secretary-General.

IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim has spoken out against "no crew change" clauses in charterparties, pointing out that such clauses exacerbate the dire situation of stranded seafarers and undermine the efforts undertaken to resolve the ongoing crew change crisis.

So-called "no crew change" clauses, which are demanded by certain charterers, state that no crew changes can occur whilst the charterer's cargo is onboard – hence not allowing the ship to deviate to ports where crew changes could take place. IMO's Seafarer Crisis Action Team



Owners are pouring over their Charterparty to figure out whether they have the liberty to deviate, whether “reasonable deviations” are permitted, or should they seek Charterers’ consent. Moreover, they are concerned about the length. If they make a wrong choice as it can result in off-hire and Indemnity claims.

A Charterer on the other hand is in a difficult situation as having a fatigued crew does not help anyone. They need to balance desire to help the crew against potential losses of both time and money. They are concerned about length of delay and consequential claims by cargo receivers. Moreover, a Charterer is concerned about his vessel

missing a berthing window in case of deviation. Late delivery of cargo could generate claims under sales contract particularly in a falling market. They are also worried about whether they can refuse a crew change and the risks associated with it if they do refuse. As we know Safety of the ship and crew is paramount. Everyone in the system wants a ship to be seaworthy and cargo worthy. Thus Charterers do not want to refuse but also do not want to bear the financial consequences!

Port Authority’s willingness to permit crew change varies. Permissions from various national authorities needed. Approximately 17% of Ports allow Crew change without

(SCAT) has been made aware of this worrying development in recent weeks.

In a strong statement (issued via circular letter on 18 December), supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), Mr Lim called upon all charterers to refrain from requesting to include “no crew change” clauses in charterparties, and further called upon shipowners and operators to reject them if they are demanded.

“Such clauses exacerbate the mental and physical fatigue among exhausted seafarers, undermine compliance with the provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006) and further threaten the safety of navigation”, Mr Lim said. He added that alternative contractual clauses that do allow for crew changes during the pandemic are available and should be utilized.

“Resolving the crew change crisis requires the best efforts of all stakeholders. The elimination of the use of “no

major restraints. Another 24% permit no crew change. About 59% allow crew change subject to screening / other conditions, quarantine requirements, restrictions on certain nationalities.

Thus crew change permission could be on a Case by case basis. As an example they may be more willing to let onboard crew sign-off but may not permit on-signers! To make things worse, ports opens and closes for crew changes without any warning. Each port has its own set of quarantine rules/durations/routines for transit to and from vessels. Further, they also have

varying demands for PCR testing, hotel stays, and to make matters worse- different requirements for different crew nationalities! Flight availability to and from hubs is very different from pre-COVID times thereby making expensive private charters a common solution. Needless to add, all these require extensive paperwork and in-depth real-time overview of evolving restrictions at major ports around the world. The last thing you want to do is leave someone somewhere without adequate support.

And yes, all of these needs an extraordinary amount of collaboration and

crew change” clauses is just one of those efforts”, the Secretary-General said, reaffirming the commitment of the Organisation to assist all Member States, the industry and seafarers in this regard.

International organizations made statements at the latest meeting of IMO's Legal Committee, LEG 107, to condemn the use of “no crew change” clauses in charterparties. The Committee invited submissions on the matter to its 108th session, scheduled to take place in July 2021.

As the crew change crisis now enters its tenth month, hundreds of thousands of seafarers remain onboard ships well beyond the expiration of their seafarer employment agreements, some not being paid and all unable to be repatriated. A similar number remain unable to join ships, and as a result find themselves unable to begin their contracts and earn a living.

“The situation continues to





coordination amongst various parties even if we forget about the prohibitive costs.

Further, insurance companies have been concerned with increased risks due to crew fatigue, but so far have not seen an increase in incident frequency compared to previous years. Claims data usually takes a long time to come in. However, there have been a few high severity claims but these may or may not be related to the crew change crisis.

There have been several vessel detentions around the

world due to crew members being on board for an extended period of time. However, vessel detention in these ports does not mean that the port states permit crew change and this leads to more complications!

Countries like Sri Lanka and Singapore have dedicated routes for crew change (for off shore passenger vessel).

However, Singapore and a few other countries require 14 days advance notice for crew change and have other restrictions such as a vessel cannot sail out until the crew

constitute a humanitarian crisis that threatens not only seafarers' health and wellbeing but also the safety of navigation and the uninterrupted flow of the global supply chain", Mr Lim insisted, adding: "policies or practices that prevent or inhibit safe, regular crew changes should be revised or eliminated."

As of 18 December, 46 IMO Member States and one Associate Member* have designated seafarers as key workers. This is essential to exempt these professionals from specific COVID-related travel restrictions, allowing them to travel between their country of residence and ships, and to be repatriated at the end of their contracts. There have also been some encouraging signs of progress in the application of the industry-developed framework of protocols for ensuring safe crew changes and travel during the pandemic, which were endorsed by the Maritime Safety Committee and circulated as MSC.1/Circ.1636.

The plight of stranded



flight has departed. This rule creates additional challenges for crew exchange.

Furthermore, countries such as China have prohibited crew changes. More importantly, if a vessel has a member who has spent fewer than 14 days on board, that

vessel will not be permitted to enter. In some ports, this restrictions applies for crew who have spent 30 days or less.

Where is the spring of hope so this does not become a winter of despair?

seafarers is highlighted in an IMO video featuring seafarers who describe the challenges they have faced due to the pandemic, and the impacts of the ongoing crew change crisis on their physical and mental health.

-With inputs from IMO

Meanwhile, the Indian maritime industry understands the gravity of the situation and there were many reactions on social media concerning it.

Capt Saggi Ex NAGOH shared



his earnest views saying that "all parties including India, who are party to a resolution to accept seafarers as essential workers, need to issue directives to all their flag ships, not to enter into any such charter party which negates seafarers' basic right to get relief or join ship. In fact, seafarers' associations worldwide also need to deal with ships which enter into

The UN Global Compact (UNGC) published a set of recommendations and guidelines to assist port states around the world to recognise seafarers as “key workers”. Other Port states have taken a cautious approach in adopting the protocols as they are concerned about any outbreaks due to crew change. The rate of adoption is still slow. A total of 47 countries including India have signed off on this. For implementation of key worker status, logistical issues require cooperation with various stakeholders such as Airlines, Port authorities, health authorities, environmental agencies and governments. The sheer number of agencies involved means it will take some more time.

Governments and relevant national authorities are being asked to acknowledge the crucial role played by seafarers, through exemptions for restricting movements for seafarers and ensuring means of transport are made available between ports and airports and homes

of the seafarers. A relaxation of documentation requirements for the seafarers is also being worked upon. A recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel, proposed by a broad cross-section of global industry associations has been drawn up and the same has been endorsed by the IMO. P&I Clubs are collecting data continuously regarding which Ports permit crew changes, restrictions in doing so, whether sick or injured crew permitted to be disembarked etc.

IMO has recently concluded an agreement for the development of a Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS) module on ports facilitating crew changes; has developed guidelines for port State and flag State authorities on how to deal with seafarer abandonment cases and has spoken out against “no crew change clauses” in Charter Parties. National Focal Points on Crew Change and Repatriation of Seafarers in a total of 31 countries have been established. IMO has

such contracts. All such charter parties, which prevent crew change, are also a violation of the spirit of MLC. Hence even port state control can also intervene and detain such vessels. Message must go loud and clear to such rogue charterers that there can be no business if their fundamental rights are not protected.”



Capt Sanjay Prashar, Managing Director, V R Maritime Services Pvt Ltd who has been keeping close watch on the effects of pandemic on shipping, has shared following updates, with special emphasis on crew change:

been sharing information, harmonizing actions and promoting awareness and cooperation among various actors. There has been very good cooperation among actors, such as ILO, IMO, ICS and ITF. Work is also being carried out by the IMO Seafarer Crisis Action Team (SCAT), the Marine Coronavirus Strategy Group and the Group on Coordinated Strategy on Crew Changes.

More national governments need to come forward with requisite permissions to travel to improve the present status of crew change. This is being worked on. Certain relaxations have been made by some countries for sports personnel. We are hoping this will be extended to seafarers who are key workers.

Designation of key workers could mean priority on covid vaccination programmes when they are launched. Efforts are being made to get a booklet for vaccination similar to the yellow fever one for Air Travel and also facilitate port entry. This would assist in easing travel restrictions.

“Crew travel in the month January 2021 seems to be slightly better than September 2020. At least things are moving. Full credit goes to the brilliant move by Hon Minister of Shipping Shri Mansukh Mandaviya Ji for ensuring crew change which remains top agenda for him. As a result, we have Seafarers charter flights; we also have Bubble flights carrying Indian Seafarers. International flight status is becoming better with each passing day although there are surprises at times, like UK flights suspended, Emirates flights to HK suspended etc.”

Praising the Indian Seafarers for handling the situation professionally he said, “Average tenure of onboard Seafarers is now 12 months. Seafarers have adjusted very well to new norms of crew change. Indian Seafarers are sensibly maintaining social distancing and as a result we hardly see seafarers being positive to COVID 19 during PCR Test. Unfortunately, Maritime Training is badly

suffering as Seafarers are not allowed to attend courses. Doing 75% of the course online is proving to be dangerous.”

He also shared the status for Crew change globally as available from Inchcape Shipping broadcast to shipping companies: Open Countries – 32. Open Countries with restrictions – 73. Closed Countries- 30

India, he felt, is the most favoured country for crew change. In fact, according to him, It's best among the world for India or foreign seafarers.

The problem, he pointed, is that the Qatar Airways Bubble flights, as per Government of India, are not allowing Seafarers to board from Mumbai - Doha. Doha is hub Airport and especially for Seafarers joining / returning from Australia. For KLM Airlines, Seafarers need to make health declarations online and then hand carry the printout.

Further elaborating he mentioned, USA flights are really good and seats available. While Srilanka is very expensive as they need 4 days stay in Hotel and go by only charter flight. In Singapore we need to give a 14 days notice to MPA for crew change. This needs to be really done well in time. Singapore is connected by Air India for Seafarers.

Speaking about crew change at other locations he said, "Recently many crew changes have happened in Turkey, South America, Europe, Fujairah etc. But New Zealand, Australia and China are the bottlenecks. In Japan on the other hand, on arrival at the airport, all crew undergoes PCR test. Even if one is negative, all crew then need to be quarantined for 14 days. If all have negative reports, then all can join the ship. Sign off can be a problem for Indian Seafarers. Nevertheless, local agents and Indian Embassy in Japan can be of great help. South Korea has 5-7 days

quarantine requirements for Joiners. Malaysia: There's a requirement of 14 days for both on-signer and off-signer to stay in a Quarantine center in Malaysia. Thus Malaysia is extremely costly for crew change. Thus each Seafarer costs about 3000 USD for sign on. Antwerp Port / Rotterdam are the best ports for crew change. Gibraltar is turning out to be problematic due to no flights to London from Gibraltar. Egypt / Port Suez is a great crew change port. Crew must carry soft copy of CRA or else they are repatriated. In Mexico it's easy to achieve crew change. No quarantine period for joiners but COVID tests are done. It's OK to Board and Seafarers need a PCR negative report 72 Hrs before boarding. Seafarers without US Visa can also travel and join / sign off at Mexico via Amsterdam."

Speaking about the high costs of the entire procedure he said, "Crew change costs are now about USD 2500 per Seafarer which earlier used to be USD

1250. Thus 100% rise. Although, when compared to November 2020, it's still less, because at that time, there was a 14 days quarantine for Joiners."

Nowadays, Ship Owners are putting vessels offshore for crew change. BIMCO Clauses are hotly debated by Industry but many Owners are ready to go the extra mile to ensure they run happy ships.

Looking positively into the New Year he concluded, "It's so nice to see that Seafarers on Ships are healthy. It's due to good SOP that ships are free of pandemic COVID 19. But Chinese Seafarers are still facing serious problems to join ships globally as well as return home. This has given some advantage to Indian Seafarers and additional Jobs."

"Nowadays, Seafarers are well aware of the COVID travel restrictions, thus it's sensible to stay quarantined at home for 14 days before joining." He cautioned.

STARTING 2021 ON A HOPEFUL TUNE

MSC was founded in 1970 by Captain Gianluigi Aponte. In 2020 it celebrated its 50th anniversary. The company has been a pioneer in innovation and environment and contributes constantly in building the morale of the maritime industry.

In the latest endeavour to reach out to everyone Mrs Nita Jha from MSC uses the power of the word HOPE to motivate, encourage and inspire during these very challenging pandemic times.

Spreading the message of positivity to unlock the potential of all in the maritime industry, the MSC Group's talented Mrs Jha has created a sweet melody called "Gleam of Hope" to urge everyone to look into a better future with greater expectations...

Hope keeps us alive. It keeps us excited and engaged. Enjoy the song, sing along and spread the word!

<https://youtu.be/cs0ouy5wRmw>



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PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR



Each year Women International Shipping and Trading Association, India, an organization for women in managerial positions involved in the maritime transportation business and related trades, nominates and honours a deserving individual who has made significant contributions to the maritime industry and who also strongly supports diversity, inclusivity and equality with the “WISTA Personality of the Year Award”.

This year WISTA, India is proud to present the prestigious award to a very dynamic and respected personality in the shipping industry, Smt. H.K. Joshi, Chairperson and Managing Director of SCI. With rich and diversified experience, spanning over three decades with ONGC, a mammoth Maharatna PSU, her experience also includes almost two decades with ONGC Videsh Ltd. Her passion and commitment to the industry and its' people

are a source of inspiration for all. Dynamic, result oriented with an eye for identifying talent, she believes that human resources are integral assets of a Company. She has been the recipient of many awards in her career trajectory.

She advocates promotion of a gender diversity culture, ingraining, in one and all, the positivity and confidence to deliver through perseverance and a focused work approach, raising their bar, constantly. Her vision and strategizing skills with her domain experience in finance add great value to the operations and projects that are ventured into. A focused leader, guide and mentor, taking the path untrodden and reaching the goal through sustained efforts. WISTA, India would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Smt. H K Joshi and wishes her more accolades and awards in the years ahead!



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COVID

CLEANING SERVICE

Rotterdam-based company DisinfectYour.com has launched a new service to help vessel owners and crew respond to COVID-19 outbreaks. The service includes complete disinfection of closed areas on a vessel, as well as care for the crew - including sanitised transfers between the vessel and COVID-safe accommodation in Rotterdam – during the treatment.



DisinfectYour.com service includes complete disinfection of closed areas on a vessel, as well as care for the crew.

Even vessels that have spent a long time at sea can still harbour potentially dangerous microorganisms including viruses, with sleeping quarters and galleys particularly

fertile breeding grounds for germs and bacteria due to the number of people using these areas. Disinfecting these work areas is a critical part of looking after crew and vessels



in the midst of a global pandemic. A new focus on biohazards means it is likely to remain an important part of vessel maintenance even after the current situation has eased.

Nico Vroom, CEO, DisinfectYour.com, said: "Despite strong regulations and safety procedures, COVID-19 can still sneak onboard and we are seeing more vessels being disinfected as outbreaks continue. Our team of specialists has the experience, resources and knowledge to clean and disinfect any closed space within vessels of any type."

Vessels are treated using a highly effective equipment approved by the UN and the World

Health Organization. Nebulisers create a fine disinfectant mist that quickly cover surfaces, enabling the vessel to re-enter service as soon as possible pending a safety check after surfaces have dried.

DisinfectYour.com has a strong pedigree of sanitising workplaces – including airports, public transport facilities, shopping centres and offices as well as ships - to the highest environmental and occupational safety standards. The company's processes target both visible dirt and invisible organic material to eliminate microorganisms, protecting the health and well-being of its clients' employees, customers and visitors.



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Group of Companies



GEMAK WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1969 AS A SMALL YARD IN THE BOSPHORUS, ISTANBUL. GEMAK GROUP NOW STANDS OUT IN TURKEY AND AROUND THE WORLD FOR ITS WIDE RANGE OF SKILLS AND TECHNICAL EXPERTISE.

Gemak has the vision to be the best in class and preferred partner on worldwide basis for demanding projects on steel fabrication industry, marine and offshore vessel building, marine conversion projects, marine vessels repair and maintenance.

Gemak Group consists of Gemak Tuzla Shipyard (established in 1969), Gemak TGE Shipyard (acquired in 2000), Gemak Neta Factory (established in 2008) and Gemak Altınova Shipyard (established in 2013) totally on 336.000 m2

The milestones in Gemak's history are linked inseparably to projects which is not only financially a factor of innovation, change and foresight, the levers that contribute to expanding frontiers and creating progress for the company.

50 years of experience in engineering solutions, Gemak is proud of being in service to over 2.800 ship owners and managers. The group continues to provide services for dry-docking, ship repair & conversion, offshore – oil & gas and new ship building as the one of the most competitive shipyard in the Mediterranean.

The Group has been profiled as a leading fabricator of high quality large steel constructions in the wider region with its advanced infrastructure by building steel shafts for Izmit Bay Bridge and by fabrication of steel decks for 3rd Bosphorus Bridge.

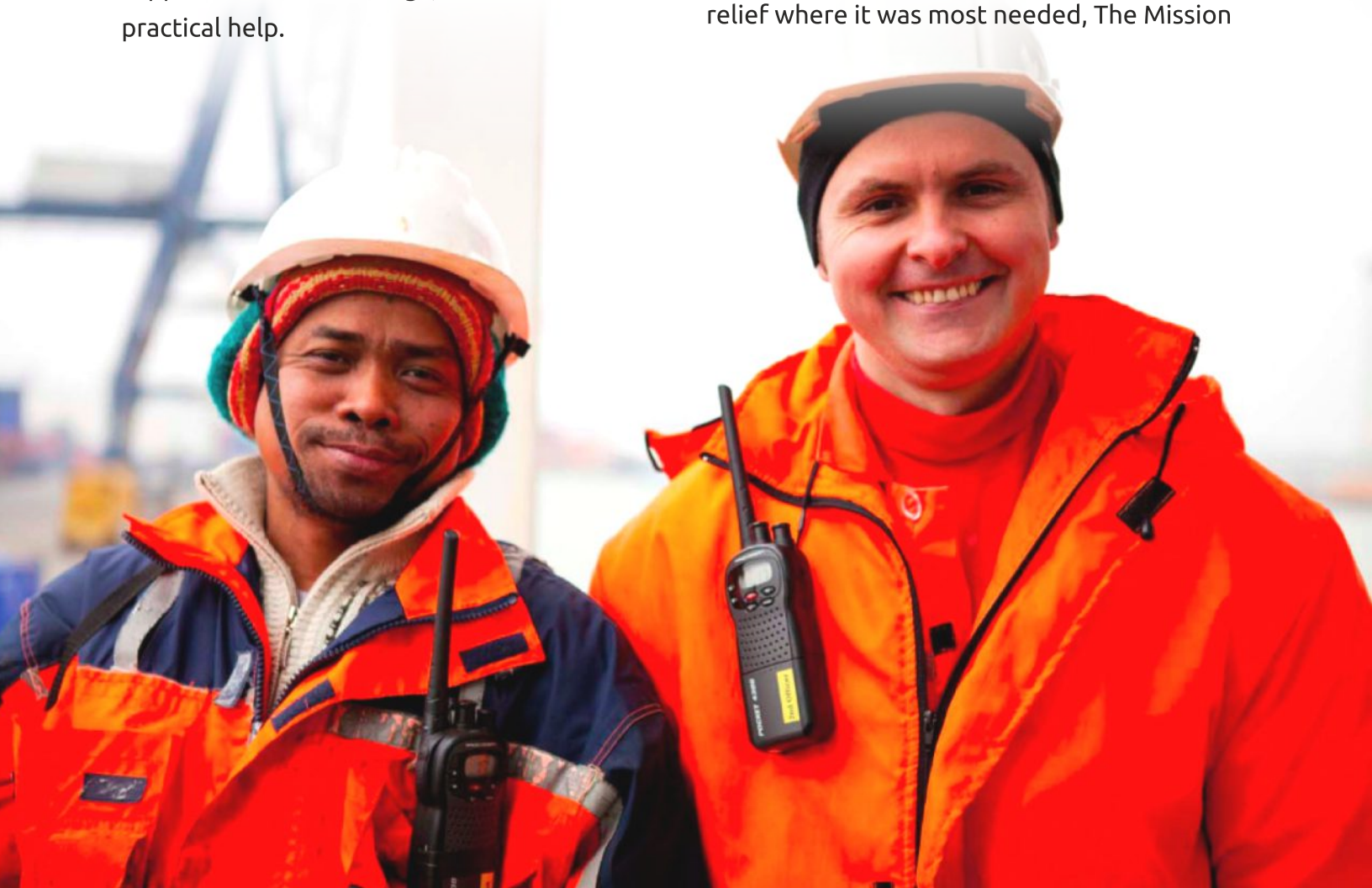
The Group strives to bring benefit to its clients by combining strengths generated by involvement in these main activities.

WELFARE AND SUPPORT PROGRAMME FROM MSC GROUP

The Mission to Seafarers recently announced the launch of a new fundraising campaign to sustain the crew welfare support currently being provided around the world at a time when it is most needed and as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. The Mission will unveil a rolling programme of initiatives which will have significant benefits for the welfare of the entire industry from welfare training for seafarers and frontline staff to new family support network offerings, reassurance and practical help.

The programme has already received a generous donation from MSC to start the Sustaining Crew Welfare Campaign which will ensure the Mission is providing the best care possible, encouraging innovation in adapting and maintaining services to meet seafarers' needs, and providing mental wellbeing support.

Following the success of the Flying Angel Campaign, which provided immediate welfare relief where it was most needed, The Mission





to Seafarers is now focusing on a sustainability programme to ensure the support continues for seafarers. In response to a possible mental health crisis, the lack of crew changes and the families impacted by extended or cancelled contracts, the Mission will be focusing initially on three main strands to offer support: Justice & Welfare, Innovation & Regional Support and Family Support.

JUSTICE & WELFARE

The Mission is often the first point of contact for seafarers in difficulty. Issues can include abandonment, the aftermath of a pirate attack, human rights abuses or issues between crews such as bullying and harassment. Seafarers' families often contact the Mission following a bereavement or where a loved one has been lost at sea. Where possible, Mission teams co-ordinate the work with recognised

organisations, such as Port State Control to enable chaplains to focus on the mental health and wellbeing side effects of the issue and to provide practical support.

This fund will help The Mission enhance the training of its frontline teams to cope with the new demands they are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

INNOVATION & REGIONAL SUPPORT

The Mission to Seafarers operates in nine regions, each one differently impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. This campaign will enable local and regional teams to adapt their support, depending on what local seafarers need most, according to current and emerging requirements.

In locations where chaplains and ship visitors have been able to visit vessels, the demand for SIM cards has soared, with Hong Kong reporting sales of 25,000 units in three months. Adaptation of seafarer centres could allow crews 24/7 access to specific areas.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Maintaining the Family Support Network in the Philippines is essential and the Mission plans to establish a new service in India. This offering is vital to support families emotionally and practically. The Family Support Network in the Philippines was established in 2017 and, during the pandemic, the team in Manila provide transport for returning seafarers and food to families with

no income. They have also co-ordinated the provision of life-sustaining medication to seafarers overseas living with HIV. Across the network, teams continue to support seafarers and their families who have financial, emotional, health or relationship concerns.

Based on the success in the Philippines, the Mission plans to build a new Family Support Network in India. During the pandemic, our Chaplain and the Tuticorin team has provided vital food to over 1,000 seafarers' families who have been unable to work due to the issues in crew changes. The Mission sees this as an important development for the charity and the seafarers.

"For us at MSC, our people are our number one priority. As an essential conduit for global



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trade, container shipping relies on the seafarers who keep global trade moving even under extremely difficult operating conditions. We are proud to support initiatives such as the new Crew Welfare Programme by The Mission to Seafarers to alleviate the hardship on these heroes of the transportation world and their families, who are absolutely essential to the trade flow which our society all relies upon," said Bud Darr, Executive Vice President, Maritime Policy and Government Affairs, MSC Group.

The Revd Canon Andrew Wright, Secretary General of The Mission to Seafarers, added:

"During the pandemic, seafarers' health has become even more fragile, with some working in excess of a year without a break. With

limited crew changes, and in some countries no sign of the pandemic easing, our help is vital to those on the front line of international trade. Our Flying Angel Campaign was crucial to providing rapid relief and support to seafarers facing the most challenging circumstances.

"Now we need to be able to sustain this network of welfare support. We are calling on the industry to recognise that this crisis has not abated and we need to unite to support our international key workers. Without the generosity of donations, our work is not possible. We give our sincere thanks to MSC for providing the first donation of our new campaign and look forward to being able to continue our support for seafarers."

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SUSAN TERPILOWSKI

Managing Director at Image Line Communications

We need to stop talking about unconscious bias and address the conscious ones. I want to see diverse speaking panels without these there is no meaningful conference, sponsors should use their powers wisely.

SONALI BANERJEE

Marine Surveyor at Indian Register of Shipping

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SYLVIA BOER

Director at Amsterdam IJmuiden Offshore ports

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MARIA BELEN ESPINEIRA

Partner - Maritime Lawyer at IT&L Legal Consultants

Women's empowerment is essential to achieve fairer societies and sustainable development. This will not be possible until those in charge of driving such change are trained in gender equity issues. In Argentina, since 2018, there is a law that makes it compulsory for the public sector. Policies like this should be extended to all sectors, especially those that are masculine-oriented like the Maritime Industry.

NEW RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS BENEFITS OF REGULAR SOCIAL INTERACTION ON BOARD AND COMMON OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME

Regular social interaction on board benefits overall crew wellbeing, reduces isolation and stress and helps to build and motivate safe and efficient teams on board, new research shows.

ISWAN's research findings from Phase One of the Social Interaction Matters (SIM) Project have been published today with the support of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and Red Ensign Group who sponsor the project. The SIM Project was initiated with the primary objective of encouraging social interaction on board. This was achieved by conducting research that examined the relevant drivers and barriers to the promotion of social interaction and specific activities which seafarers around the world identified as helping to engage people. The project acknowledges the importance of crew coming together during their leisure time and the positive impact this has on wellbeing and operational efficiency and safety as a result.

The need for this project was recognised long before the widespread impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the consequential crew change crisis has placed even more importance on the need for strong crew cohesion. Connecting with others and time for hobbies and recreational activities are

fundamental to wellbeing but this is challenging for seafarers who live and work on board for many months. Extended time on board has exacerbated these existing challenges and emphasises the value of strong relationships on board now more than ever.

The project is divided into three phases with this report marking the end of Phase One. The research consisted of a large survey of seafarers and other maritime stakeholders as well as 10 in-depth telephone interviews. Key research findings highlight the necessity of good leadership – which supports an inclusive and unifying on board culture – to encourage crew to interact comfortably together. Conversely, increased workloads and fatigue were identified as the biggest barriers to social interaction on board. Evidence also showed that many obstacles to social interaction are seen to impact on each other. For example, smaller crew sizes and increased workloads can lead to fatigue and isolation with seafarers simply not having enough energy to mix socially during their down time.

Dr Kate Pike, research lead and author of the report said: 'Although measures can be put in place to facilitate recreational gatherings on board, it is these fundamental issues that need to be addressed for a long-term impact to take effect. Social interaction on board has a unifying impact that promotes a happier, more motivated crew that can work more effectively and safely together.'

The project is still ongoing but the report details many important takeaways for shipping companies and ship operators. For example, the research shows that crew differences including nationality, gender and age should be considered in the planning of social activities as these factors can influence recreational preferences. It is therefore important for ship management to consider what engages and brings people together and adapt suitable activities to their own company requirements. The research provides numerous examples of such activities and these can be adapted to accommodate most vessel types, voyage patterns, nationalities, and time constraints. Ensuring that crew engage socially, even for small amounts of time every day, is vital and should be a priority on every voyage, however long.

Katy Ware, Director of Maritime Services, also co-chairs the Red Ensign Group Conference and is the UK's Permanent Representative to the International Maritime Organization. She said: 'Our seafarers provide a vital service, keeping the hearts of nations beating and we can't underestimate their role in our lives. They work in unique environments that can be both immensely rewarding and at times

incredibly demanding on physical, mental and emotional health.

'The MCA works closely with seafarer charities and industry to understand the challenges faced by seafarers and to strive to make further improvements which could potentially have positive short and long-term impacts on the wellbeing of seafarers and is committed to spotting early signs of people who may require help as well as providing suitable support to ship owners, who owe their crew a duty of care under the Maritime Labour Convention.'

Building on these findings, ISWAN is working with a number of shipping companies interested in strengthening crew cohesion on their vessels to trial social engagement initiatives on board. This will form Phase Two of the SIM Project. Following this, Phase Three will use the data and feedback from the trials to develop guidance for shipping companies in the form of a toolkit to be shared publicly. The toolkit will document proven successes, recommendations and ways to overcome challenges to social interaction on board, all with the end goal of happier, healthier, safer and more engaged crews on board.

Caitlin Vaughan, ISWAN Project Manager, said: 'We began this project at a difficult time for the industry so the widespread enthusiasm we've received from many different companies and seafarers about participating in the project is very encouraging. We're looking forward to building on the valuable findings in this research to ensure all companies recognise the importance of facilitating social interaction on board.'

ON THE GUARD

SINGAPORE WILL FOLLOW STRICTER TESTING RULES FOR ALL SHORE-BASED PERSONNEL GOING ONBOARD SHIPS, THE DECISION WAS TAKEN TO SAFEGUARD AGAINST ANY FUTURE RISKS.

Singapore government agencies including MPA, the Ministry of Health, Enterprise Singapore and Economic Development Board (EDB) are investigating if there has been any breach of Covid-19 safe management measures recently by a marine surveyor and a harbour pilot.



Incidentally, the marine surveyor is from Lloyd's Register (LR), hence the classification society has suspended all its shipboard survey and audit activities,

saying that it will be testing all its marine surveyors for Covid-19.

Meanwhile, MPA not taking any chances has

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tightened the testing regime, following which, all shore-based personnel going onboard ships will need to take a Covid-19 PCR test by January 8, to give assurance that they are clear of the virus. This will cover more than 20,000 personnel.

They will also be subjected to a tighter RRT regime; which includes being tested every seven days instead of 14 days previously.

Those who do not adhere to the RRT regime will not be allowed to board ships to work.

A "special testing operation" to cover all workers who had boarded the ships that the aforesaid marine surveyor and harbour pilot had recently worked on, will also be followed.

In a joint statement issued it was mentioned

that the MPA, EDB and relevant agencies will be stepping up checks to ensure compliance of Covid-19 safe management measures by companies and individuals. Individuals and companies which are found to have violated these measures will be taken to task. Agencies will also review the need to enhance personal protective equipment and infection control measures in the sector.

New mandatory precautionary measures have come into effect at Shipyards too. Letters to ships seeking repairs will be issued only when a ship is compliant with the required Covid-19 measures. Shipyards can only allow shore-based personnel to board a ship for work when all crew have been tested negative for Covid-19 infection on arrival at the shipyard.

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