



Guiding Spirit to Shipping Industry

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GMU and ISWAN join forces to investigate issues related to recruitment and placement of Indian seafarers



Gujarat Maritime University (GMU) and the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) have collaborated on a joint research project to understand the challenges that Indian seafarers face when looking for work at sea and the issues that arise when they are duped by fraudulent crewing agents.

India is one of the largest seafarer-supplying nations in the world, with an estimated 250,000 active trained seafarers. However, due to the imbalance between demand and supply of seafarers, some of them struggle to find work at sea.

This disparity has paved the way for unscrupulous crewing agents to exploit freshers to their advantage. ISWAN's Seafarer Help helpline has received an alarming number of cases in recent years from Indian seafarers who have been duped by fraudulent crewing agents and subjected to extreme traumatic incidents as a result.

The research will examine any potential gaps in the current Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 identified by the findings and suggest suitable amendments to the legislation to address them. The research will also develop a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to help stakeholders initiate action against any errant agents who have duped a seafarer.

Prof. (Dr.) S. Shanthakumar, Director, School of Maritime Law, Policy and Administration, Gujarat Maritime University, said:

'The seafarers are instrumental in ensuring the swift movement of ships and cargo from one place to another. India prides itself as she is one of the largest seafarers supplying nations in the world. Despite their contribution to the economy these unsung heroes have to face many difficulties while getting placed onboard vessels. This is why the GMU is pleased to partner with ISWAN to conduct further research on the topic to understand the key challenges a seafarer undergoes during

the recruitment process before joining a vessel. The study intends to examine the lacunae in the current legal system and aim to suggest suitable amendments to the laws to remedy the situation.'

Chirag Bahri, ISWAN's Director of Regions, said:

'The seafarers being duped by fraudulent crewing agent often find themselves stranded, abandoned on vessels for months while others being held in jail in a foreign land on various charges of illicit crime on an unseaworthy vessel. These incidents have impacted not only the future career prospects of the seafarers but also their as well as their family's mental, physical and financial health. We are pleased to work on this crucial research work with Gujarat Maritime University and that their expertise on the subject shall be very useful towards further advocating the outcome with the relevant stakeholders.'

Who can participate in this survey?

Any Indian seafarer who may have faced crewing agent-related issues while joining ships or has been a victim of fraud can participate and fill out the survey form.

By completing the anonymous online survey, seafarers can provide GMU's research team with the necessary information about their experiences with a fraudulent crewing agent. The information collected by GMU will be used to examine any gaps in the current Merchant Shipping Act (as amended), and the stakeholders will be requested to take appropriate action in response to the findings.

Visit and share the survey form through this link: <http://bit.ly/GMUISWANSurvey>, <https://www.dgshipping.gov.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/MS%20Act,%201958%20-%20With%20Hyperlinks.pdf>

International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN): A charity and membership organisation which works to promote and support the welfare of seafarers all over the world.

ISWAN provides a number of direct welfare services to seafarers including the free, 24-hour, multilingual helplines, SeafarerHelp and Yacht Crew Help. Others include relief funds for seafarers and their family members in need and a range of health information resources. ISWAN works with companies, unions, governments, welfare organisations and

ports for the implementation of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention, 2006. ISWAN supports those who establish and provide welfare facilities and services in port and on ships. ISWAN is funded by membership subscriptions, grants from foundations, sponsorship and earned income. For more information, visit www.seafarerswelfare.org.

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