



'It should be about Getting the Right Person for the Job, rather than the Right 'Man' for the Job'

Sanjam Sahi Gupta, director, Sitara Shipping, is busy organizing the launch of Women's International Shipping and Trading Association in India (Wista). In an interview with her, **V Ayyappan** tries to understand how Wista would be different from many of the run of the mill associations floating about Indian maritime

Despite having numerous industry organizations and trade bodies, Indian maritime industry is said to be going nowhere. According to you, what ails most of them?

Shipping industry in India is not given the importance it deserves and does not figure anywhere in the priority list of the Indian government.

Various organizations including INSA are capable and have been doing good work. However due importance has not been given the industry by the policy makers.

While a major chunk of the organizations are just existing on paper, many others are degenerated into serving existing top functionaries. How could you ensure that Wista is not adding to the list?

There is no hidden agenda for Wista. Having succeeded in over 33 countries we at Wista India will be answerable to our members and Wista International.

Wista aims to bring together experts and executives for knowledge sharing, discussion and networking. This is a chance for members to meet women in shipping who are shaping the future of their own careers, companies and

When you joined the shipping profession, you faced a difficult time getting acceptance from your colleagues. Has the situation changed now?

My stint in the industry began in 2001. Even when I started off as a trainee in my family business, by attitude the managers had a tough time accepting me and my sister as prospective directors. However, having proved ourselves through hard work and determination, we have earned their respect.

Your earlier efforts to mobilize maritime women failed due to lack of response from other women. How is the response now and how confident are you of Wista?

To start with, we will take small steps. We plan to bring together like minded women from not only Mumbai but all other cities in India. Our initial plans are to have regular meetings, talks by industry leaders, seminars and training programs.

You believe that shipping is still a very male dominated industry. How do you think the association can change the situation more conducive for women?

Shipping is still very male dominated. In many instances women executives still have a struggle to re-

assert their rights in the course of their careers.

Individually we not be able to do as much as we wish to, but collectively we will have a voice.

You want Wista to be platform for all women in the shipping industry to excel. But, it seems to have similar plans and programmes like other organizations?

Women are in the minority in our industry. Hence they are often sidelined and are not adequately represented. Our members will benefit in two ways - personally and professionally. They will benefit from each others experiences and we plan to encourage the younger lot.

We recognise that women have to face different challenges-balancing work and home. Sharing experiences and providing a support system is an essential part.

I not only believe but also implement the above. At my office majority of workforce is women. Despite offering facilities like flexi-time the quality of work is not compromised.

Professionally, the networking opportunities are immense as our members will also have a chance to network with other members in over 30 countries.

If efforts by other associa-

tions to position India on the forefront of the global shipping industry have failed earlier, what makes you think that Wista would be able to achieve it?

Rome was not built in a day. One has to be optimistic and look ahead.

Eventually we wish to position Wista India on the forefront of the global shipping industry by providing leadership and educational opportunities to our members.

Future plans include working with some of the major shipping companies to promote talent.

In this regard we see the possibility to introduce young, talented people who hold a bachelor degree an internship in some of the major shipping companies. They will work on real life projects and will be mentored by senior members of the industry.

What is that you want to see changed in the industry in its relation to women?

It should be about getting the right person for the job, rather than the right "man" for the job.

Some of the most efficient people who have worked with me are women. Despite

having to juggle home, family and work I would say their commitment is 100%.

What is your outlook for Indian shipping industry? And if it is not adequately responding to the times, where lies the faultlines?

The outlook for the industry is positive. We have consulted experts, as they say, the industry is not adequately responding to the times, where lies the faultlines? (For more information visit www.shippingbiz360.com)

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