

# Women in **Indian** shipping go places with **WISTA**

Nishit Doshi



Karin Orsel

**T**he Indian wing of the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA)-celebrated its first anniversary with an interactive seminar themed "Women in Shipping-gearing up for tomorrow's challenges." Held on 13 December 2013 at the CCI Club in South Mumbai, the event hosted some of the most influential women in Indian shipping today- and there are many.

Besides a keynote speech by Dr Sujata Naik-Tolani, Chairperson of Tolani Shipping and Vice Chairperson, Tolani Maritime

Institute, who spoke on well-known women in Indian shipping starting from 'the first woman in Indian Shipping-Sumati Morarjee', the seminar saw a presentation on the growth of WISTA-India by its President Sanjam Sahi Gupta. Also addressing the audience was the President of WISTA International- Karin Orsel. Jasamin Fichte, President, WISTA UAE, spoke on sanctions against Iran and their impact. Towards the end of the conference, Mr Adil Malia, President-HR, Essar, gave an interesting presentation focusing on the dynamic talent required by the industry today.

Ms Gupta is proud of the fact that WISTA in India already boasts of 82 members across



Sanjam Gupta



Vinita Venkatesh



Adil Malia



Rokhsana Vohra



Jasamin Fichte



Dr Naik-Tolani



Bhagyashree Ogale



the country and is the fastest growing WISTA chapter worldwide. WISTA India has plans to expand the organisation in the subcontinent- the Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka Chapters. It

is also planning to launch a Mentor-Mentee programme wherein a young professional will be teamed with a WISTA Member or, alternatively, a young WISTA member could be teamed with a

shipping veteran, for career guidance.

In India, subdivision of the country into four zones- north, south, west and east, each with their own



Neera Saggi, Gitanjali Shah, Michael Pinto, Anjali Bhadbhade & Vinita Venkatesh





sub-Chapters- is on the anvil. For instance, Chennai Chapter's Vinita Venkatesh will develop the southern region. WISTA India wants to double its membership within another year and have sub-chapters in New Delhi, Kochi and Kolkata. A 'New Member' committee headed by the dynamic and driven Sharmila Amin will be put in place and so will scholarships be given to deserving women. WISTA internship programmes and tie up with educational institutions are both on the cards. Meanwhile, the benefits of inter-WISTA networking and business links will be encouraged.

Vinita Venkatesh stressed the role of professional expertise in any career. "A career is a not just a job; it is adapting to the changing environment and coming out on top. This requires continuing education and women need to keep themselves abreast of

industry happenings and be networked in the industry," she stressed.

"Emotions at workplace are a strict no-no," she said, adding, in a lighter vein, that the "strategy for husbands at home will not work with male colleagues at the workplace!" She was also mindful of the fact that the present generation of women in shipping had a big responsibility towards future women entrants. "Our performance will define the approach of the industry towards future generations of women employed in shipping," she felt.

Amidst these well experienced and prominent personalities, Bhagyashree Ogale- a lady Cadet from Tolani Maritime Institute, gave a speech talking about her experiences and expectations as a woman who has recently entered the industry.

A scintillating panel discussion

mid-conference on "Gender diversity- integral to growth" was moderated by Mr Michael Pinto (ex-Secretary, Indian Ministry of Shipping) with panellists Anjali Bhadbhade, CFO, DHL Express India; Vinita Venkatesh, Advisor, Krishnapatnam Port; Gitanjali Shah, Director, Narendra Forwarders, and Neera Saggi, Executive Director, L&T Seawoods.

A dinner and entertainment get-together in the evening provided an opportunity for the ladies of shipping to intermingle and network. After watching a short bhanga (folk-dance from the Indian state of Punjab) performance, many ladies were seen enjoying themselves on the dance floor.

Maritime Matrix Today & The Marea Bulletin were the prominent media organisations covering the event.

#### WISTA India Events Committee

- Sharmila Amin
- Mrunal Tanna
- Tarini Fernandes
- Loretta-Fernandes
- Namrata Parag Joshi

#### Executive Committee of WISTA India

- Sanjam Sahi Gupta (Founder Member & President)
- Rukhsana Vohra (General Secretary)
- Sumeet Sahi (Founder Member & Joint Secretary)
- Shantha Martin (Joint Secretary)
- Miriam Mathews (Treasurer)

In an exclusive interview with the Editorial Lead of Maritime Matrix Today, **Nishit Doshi**, Karin Orsel, the President of WISTA International spoke on diverse aspects of the industry. Mrs Orsel, the CEO of the Management Facilities Group, is also the Vice Chairman of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS).

**Welcome to India. Please elaborate on your specific presence at this Event.**

Sanjam had invited me to join WISTA India circa a year ago for the founding gathering but due to other business obligations I couldn't attend then. I promised Mrs Sahi-Gupta that if my agenda would allow, I would like to join her in December 2013 on WISTA India's first anniversary.

There is a lot of respect within WISTA International (for WISTA India) for what has been achieved over the past year. WISTA India is the fastest growing member over 2013 and the goal set by the board (150 members by the end of 2014) will result in WISTA India becoming the 3rd biggest National WISTA worldwide. We admire the personal involvement of Sanjam, the board and individual members, which for me was the reason to attend this event- to show my respect!

**Your role in WISTA internationally?**

My personal life has changed but not only by taking up the role of President of WISTA International. My travels have increased quite a bit and whenever possible I combine business trips, and speaker's invitations as Vice Chairman of the ICS, with WISTA related business. Becoming President of WISTA International enriched my personal life- I am fortunate because I learn every day about the various cultures worldwide and try to build bridges and assist our members.

**Finer points on your presentation today?**

WISTA is a unique association as its members

represent the whole maritime cluster/chain, along with all the working fields one can think of.

We (the WISTA International board called WISTA ExCo) have over the past years achieved to set up closer cooperation with the ICS, InterManager, INTERTANKO, IMO, and the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH).

We are working on a project called Best Management Practices for Women in the Maritime industry- together with InterManager. We are also working on a cooperation project with the World Maritime University (WMU)- we will be speaking at their conference at the end of March/beginning of April this year, and the third project is a cooperation agreement with IAPH.

**On your being a woman in the maritime world?**

I hope to motivate more women (and men) to start working in the maritime world. Our industry is one of the most fascinating industries I know. From the first moment I started working in this industry- which was in 1988- I got infected with the "maritime virus". I started my own company in 1994 at the age of 23 and our company has been booming ever since.

If you want to make a difference in the world or within our industry you have to be active. This proactive role has led to my becoming Vice Chairman of the ICS, board member of the Royal Dutch Shipowners Association, President of WISTA International, and a board member in a number of other associations and companies. I am a strong believer that working together and strengthening forces will have more impact than trying to "fight" for a good cause as an individual.



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