

DGS - CMMI Seminar “Workshop on ‘Salvage and Emergency focused on the incidents that have occurred on the Indian Coast” held on 4th March, 2025 at IRS, Powai, Mumbai

India’s maritime sector is set on a course to enhance its preparedness and operational resilience, particularly in the areas of salvage operations and emergency response. A major step in this direction was taken with the high-impact Salvage & Emergency Response Workshop organized by the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), in collaboration with the Company of Master Mariners of India (CMMI) and the World Maritime University India Alumni Association (WMUIAA), serving as the knowledge partner. This event, held at the Indian Register of Shipping in Mumbai, brought together industry leaders, salvors, maritime professionals, and regulatory authorities. The discussions covered real-world salvage case studies, regulatory updates, emergency response frameworks, and stakeholder collaboration strategies.

The workshop’s timing was particularly significant, as it came in the wake of the proposed Merchant Shipping Bill 2024, a reformative move that is expected to modernize and streamline the country’s maritime legal framework. The event was inaugurated with a warm welcome from Capt. M. P. Bhasin, the Chairman and Master of CMMI, who acknowledged the robust participation from both domestic and international attendees, including stakeholders from the Indian Coast Guard (ICG). Capt. Bhasin’s remarks centred around the critical nature of salvage operations, which, as he explained, are specialized services aimed at saving vessels in distress. These operations encompass rescuing ships facing hazards such as sinking or grounding, mitigating damage, recovering cargo, and towing vessels to safety. The overarching goal is to minimize loss and environmental impact in emergency situations.

A significant portion of the workshop was dedicated to real-world case studies and technical sessions that provided valuable insights into best practices in salvage operations. Capt. S.I. Abul Kalam Azad, Nautical Adviser in Charge, DGS and Principal Officer at the Mercantile Marine Department, (MMD) Mumbai, presented a detailed analysis of several recent maritime incidents around India’s coast. His analysis stressed the importance of proactive decision-making in maritime emergencies and raised questions about whether vessels passing through India’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) should be required to have specific insurance and be tied to local emergency response services.

The workshop’s keynote address was delivered by Shri. Ajithkumar Sukumaran, Chief Surveyor at DGS, who emphasized the significance of sustainability in maritime operations. While praising the industry’s commitment to sustainability, he cautioned that even a single act of negligence could lead to catastrophic consequences, undermining years of progress in the sector. He specifically highlighted the critical “golden hours” following an incident, during which timely and effective intervention is essential for minimizing damage. He stressed on the importance of institutionalized emergency mechanisms as well as localized support systems, which are equally vital in ensuring effective response during a maritime crisis.

The Chief Guest of the workshop, Shri Shyam Jagannathan, IAS, Director General of Shipping, took the stage to deliver a comprehensive address on the evolving landscape of India’s maritime administration. His speech delved into the importance of a proactive, technology-

driven approach to emergency preparedness, stressing the need for timely, coordinated responses to maritime crises. His address was a broader reflection of India's vision for the maritime sector, which ties into the larger economic growth trajectory outlined in the Maritime India Vision 2030 and the Amritkaal Vision 2047.

Shri Jagannathan further elaborated on several initiatives that are pivotal to India's maritime modernization. He also emphasized the growing importance of human capital in ensuring maritime safety and security, stressing the need for continuous skill development, mental resilience training, and international collaboration. He also pointed to the crucial role of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard in safeguarding the country's maritime interests and managing crisis situations effectively.

The technical sessions also covered the intricacies of notification procedures for salvors under the Merchant Shipping Bill 2024. These discussions aimed to streamline protocols and improve coordination among all stakeholders involved in maritime crisis management. Industry experts shared firsthand accounts of major salvage operations, further underlining the critical role of efficient response systems in minimizing damage and environmental impact.

A special session conducted by the ICG provided a strategic overview of the emergency response efforts during the MV Maersk Frankfurt incident, emphasizing rapid intervention protocols and the importance of inter-agency coordination.

The final portion of the workshop involved a panel discussion with leading maritime stakeholders such as Capt. Harinder Singh, Capt. Anuj Sahai, Capt. Pankaj Jain, Mr. Jody Shields, Capt. Firoze Mirza, Ms. Kajal Festen-Purohit, Mr. Rik Groves, Comdt. Kundan Singh and Ms. Leena Mody. The panel discussion, convened by Capt. Anish Joseph, Deputy Nautical Advisor, DGS provided a comprehensive exploration of all key elements of salvage operations, emphasizing the need for a robust regulatory framework under the Merchant Shipping Bill 2024. The discussion addressed legal and operational challenges, environmental considerations, technical advancements, and multi-agency coordination, ensuring a holistic approach to maritime emergency response. Key solutions included training programs for shipowners to improve salvage preparedness and empanelling professional salvors for swift deployment. The session concluded with an interactive Q&A, where participants' doubts were addressed, offering clarity on legal liabilities, response coordination, and emerging challenges. This exchange ensured attendees gained practical insights and actionable steps to enhance salvage preparedness and operational efficiency

In his closing remarks, Capt. Pankaj Kumar, Secretary, World Maritime University (India Alumni Association) summarized the workshop's key takeaways, emphasizing the importance of continued collaboration and innovation within India's maritime sector. The workshop concluded with a vote of thanks by Capt. Harinder Singh, reinforcing the collective responsibility of all stakeholders in ensuring maritime safety, environmental protection, and efficient crisis management.

India's commitment to a more resilient maritime future was evident throughout the workshop, with key takeaways centred around strengthening regulatory frameworks, improving salvage operations, and fostering greater collaboration between industry,

government agencies, and local communities. As India moves forward in its mission to build a safer, more sustainable maritime industry, the lessons learned from this workshop will serve as a crucial guide for navigating the challenges ahead.