

ISM - A WAY OF LIFE

Here a tanker master turned academic, Capt Syamantak Bhattacharya<sup>1</sup>, shares some thoughts with us.

In the shipping industry some regulations get through relatively quietly, others draw attention of experts, and the odd few require support through additional clarification. For one regulation, the ISM Code, it has been no ordinary eight years since it first became mandatory. The number of articles and books written, and seminars and research conducted since its entry into force in 1998 is fascinating. The ISM Code still enjoys all the same concerns, criticisms and charms. There seems to be an aura about this particular piece of legislation. 'What is it then?' we ask.

It is not just about some dos and don'ts, and certainly not about millimetres and centimetres; it is actually about *a way of life* at the heart of the shipping industry. Within a certain parameter and with the help of a few tools we, the seafarers and colleagues ashore, need to decide our own ways of leading our lives. In the process all we need to do is to be realistic in charting our ways, be truthful in its application and admit to mistakes as we go along for we are not infallible. It is no wonder that many of us are still grappling with the ISM Code and its proper implementation; it is a way of life, after all!

However, in reality we find that the operation of the ISM Code is somewhat distorted from this ideal as there are a number of influences, such as the impact of socio-economic conditions, regulatory and legal issues and the working culture of the industry, that shape its implementation. To learn about these influences I am currently conducting my PhD research at the Seafarers International Research Centre, Cardiff University, by

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<sup>1</sup> Capt Bhattacharya is currently undertaking full time research towards a PhD at the Seafarers International Research Centre at Cardiff University. The thrust of his research involves a practical look at the ISM Code in practice. The next issue of Reportism will include some details from Captain Bhattacharya about his research programme.

investigating the practice of the code on board ship and in shore offices from a social science perspective.