

## IRClass To Enhance Middle East Coverage Through A New Office In Saudi Arabia

Evolving from a regulator to a facilitator to clients towards ensuring compliance, IR Class has maintained its role within the maritime community, and is looking forward to strengthen its business across new regions. Speaking to Robban Assafina about future plans, Vijay Arora, IR Class Managing Director, explained that IR Class is seeking to gain recognition from leading oil and gas companies across the Middle East. This comes in line with initiated plans to enhance their Middle East coverage through additional offices in the near future, mainly Saudi Arabia. And through its journey to guide owners, managers and other stakeholders and provide technical assistance to enable them comply with the new regulations, IR Class is also digitally active, recently joining forces with Smart Ship Hub, a company based out of Singapore, to offer a bouquet of services through a digital platform.



Vijay Arora

**First of all, we would like to congratulate you on your new position, hoping for the best. Please introduce yourself to our readers.** Thank you for the kind words. I am a Marine Engineer with over three decades of professional experience. During my tenure at IRClass, I have worked in various survey stations in India and abroad and have handled multiple responsibilities within IRClass in both technical as well as operational roles.

The experience gained from working with IRClass has enabled me to participate in

various international forums such as member of IACS Statutory Panel, Chairman of the IACS Safety Panel and had also held the Chair of IACS General Policy Group (GPG) from July 2019 to June 2020. Also got the opportunity to participate in the various committees of IMO -- Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) & Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) and sub committees --- Ship Design and Construction (SDC), Ship Systems and Equipment (SSE).

Now the desire is to utilize this experience

in paving a strong growth path for Indian Register of Shipping in the coming years.

**We would like to shed the light on IRClass the classification society and its services. How do you help clients navigate the complexities of the maritime world?** IRClass is firmly positioned as a maritime leader within the safety and quality domain. We operate within the regulatory framework in the maritime industry and ensure compliance to the requirements laid down by respective flag administrations and the regulations covered under various international Conventions.

In the recent years, our role with the maritime community has evolved from a regulator to be more of a facilitator to our clients towards ensuring compliance. We offer cradle to grave services commencing from ship design validation, new construction of ships, conducting various surveys throughout the operating life of the ship as well as ship recycling related certification services.

Our strong research expertise enables us to develop and provide a slew of various services including Marine Technical Services, Training and Skill upgradation for both sailing as well as shore-based staff.

**As you have handled multiple responsibilities within IRClass, what plans do you have to improve IRClass' service levels for customers and stakeholders?** Safety and quality are at the heart of everything we do. We have a capable and dynamic team which constantly strives to improve service levels for our customers and stakeholders. Shall be working to build on these solid foundations with a renewed focus on innovation and safety.



**IRCLASS**  
Indian Register of Shipping

We aim to guide the owners, managers and other stakeholders and provide technical assistance to enable them comply with the new regulations which are mainly focused on environment protection. We have enhanced our customer engagement and are actively seeking feedback towards continual improvement in our service delivery.

**How do you think the rapid changes in the regulatory as well as technological domains within the maritime sector will provide multiple growth avenues for IRClass?** Compliance to new regulations requires technical expertise towards planning and implementation. This also opens new opportunities for growth where Class can work with industry partners.

In support of IMO's decarbonization initiatives, we are constantly developing new services. Recently, we have launched services for Energy Efficiency Existing Ships Index (EEXI) and Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII).

We have also been involved in certification of vessels with hybrid propulsion (vessels with diesel engines and Li-ion batteries) and Solar powered vessels with battery storage. We are also working with Li-Ion battery manufacturers for certification of batteries in that aspect.

**With a hasty advancement in technologies and ever-changing regulatory requirements, how is IR Class meeting the expansion in verification fields and the emerging areas of data quality?** As technology advances and regulatory requirements evolve, the role of IRClass is also changing. Expanding our verification fields into the new and emerging areas of data quality assurance is another important aspect which IRClass will continue to champion. We have recently tied up with Smart Ship Hub, a company based out of Singapore, to offer a bouquet of services through a digital platform.

Through this digital platform, IRClass plans to offer remote vessel and fleet monitoring, performance and voyage optimization,

remote maintenance assistance, predictive maintenance, condition monitoring and various other services. This will enable data-based decision making for maritime companies.

**As a classification society, you try your best to devote your services in a safer, smarter and greener manner. How is IRClass contributing to the green marine solutions?** We are conducting joint research on various alternative fuels towards achieving the goals of green shipping. We have developed guidelines for methanol fuelled ships as well as battery powered vessels. We have been involved in a new construction project of a solar ferry. We have a collaboration with a leading Indian shipyard on hydrogen fuel cell powered vessels and other alternate fuels such Methanol, Ammonia etc.

We are also working closely and assisting Indian Maritime Administration for IMO's GreenVoyage2050 project for which India is one of the Pioneer Pilot Countries (PPC).

**How do you evaluate IRClass presence in the Middle East? Any expansion plans.**

Middle East is IRClass' largest market outside India where we have a strong presence with multiple offices. We currently cater to marine, ports and terminals, oil & gas, offshore and industrial companies based in the Middle East.

We look forward to further strengthening our business across the region and are also seeking to gain recognition from leading oil and gas companies. We have also initiated plans to enhance our Middle East coverage through additional offices in the near future and will be opening an office in Saudi Arabia at the earliest.

**What can you tell us about IR Class Academy and its offerings?** Skill development and upgradation form an important part of our service offerings. IRClass Academy has been offering several training programs for sailing as well as shore-based personnel. Currently in view of the pandemic induced restrictions all

our programs are being conducted through e-learning mode which also helps us to address a wider audience.

We develop and conduct courses tailor made to the needs of our clients mainly the shipyards, ship owners, managers & operators. Familiarization on design, construction, quality control of ships, drydock management, newbuilding supervision, techno-commercial aspects of ship operation etc. are some of these courses.

We have also conducted customized training programs for construction & supervision of warships for Naval overseers, Coast Guard vessels for ICG inspectors, Inland vessels for National Inland Waterways inspectors etc. IR Class has tied-up with Kenya Maritime Authority to provide training for their flag surveyors. This will be a long-term project over the next 8 years.

In addition, we have conducted training at various shipyards for Naval Architects on Class Rules and Plan Approval procedures. We also work closely with various training institutes for conducting several courses.

**How does IR Class see its future; what goals do you try to achieve?** The future will see more autonomy, connected ships and greatly increased shore-based decision support system. IRClass will continue to work with the industry to extend its support in validation and approval of new technologies, undertaking risk-based inspection, using data analytics for improving operational efficiency as well as certification of new age and cyber safe ships.

IRClass aims to work with the industry to comply with international regulations using technology as an enabler. We work closely to assist with ship owners, shipyards, managers, and other stakeholders in achieving their compliance goals.

While the role of class is constantly evolving with time, promoting the safety of life at sea and the protection of property and environment would continue to remain an important focus area.