

10-4-1989

Holding centre stage at IMO

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Recommended Citation

Garfield, Geoff, "Holding centre stage at IMO" (1989). *WMU in the News*. 376.
http://commons.wmu.se/wmu_news/376

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CHANDRIKA Prasad Srivastava's enthusiasm for tennis used to lead him on a regular pilgrimage from his native India to the All England Tennis Club's annual extravaganza at Wimbledon.

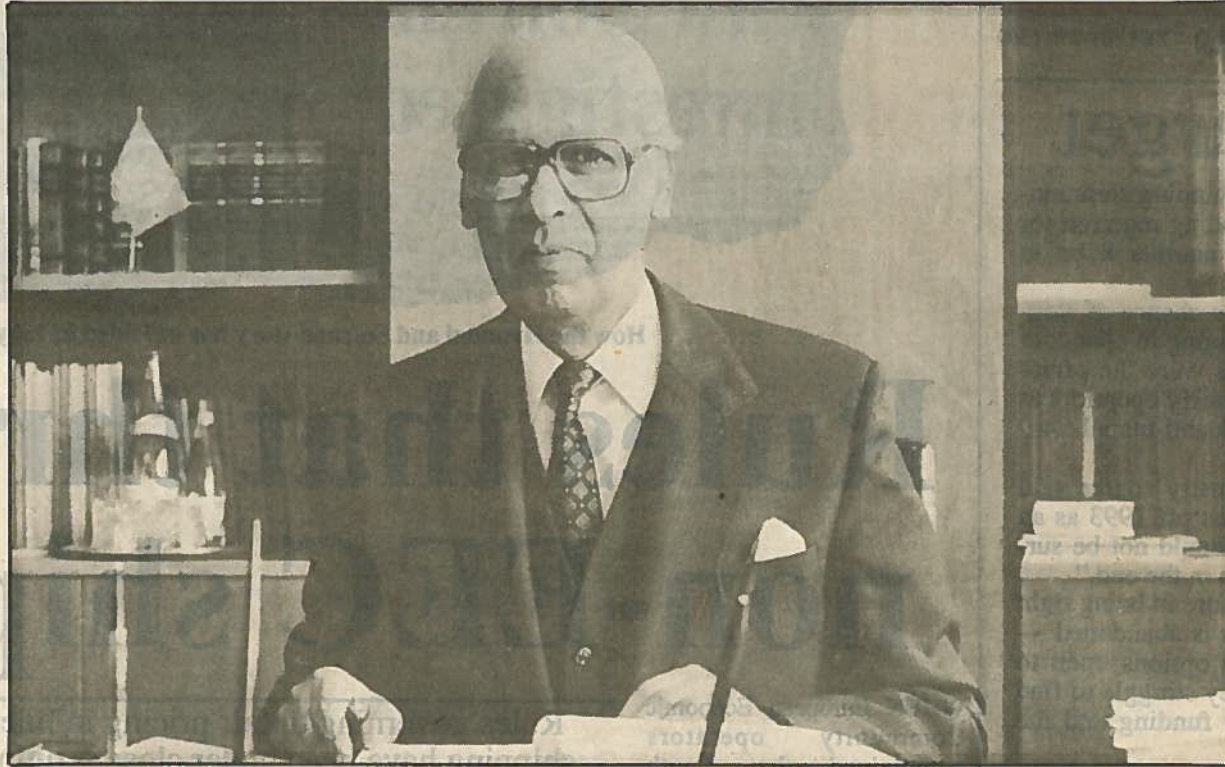
Since the title of secretary general at IMO brought with it the unexpected bonus of working only eight miles from the hallowed venue, it might have been assumed that C. P., as he is often referred to, would be an even more frequent visitor.

Nothing, as things transpired, could have been further from the truth. Taking centre court for the past 15 years at IMO has meant that Mr Srivastava's commitments, both at the organisation's headquarters on the south bank of the River Thames and in meetings around the world, have virtually curtailed his Wimbledon outings.

Leisure time has for many years been at a premium for IMO's soon-to-retire supremo who has visited 75 of the organisation's 133 member countries during his period of tenure — many of them more than once. The pressure of being at the sharp end of a United Nations organisation for so long might have proved too great a burden for lesser mortals, but for Mr Srivastava — despite his 70 years — life without IMO remains "unthinkable."

Rising usually before 6am, he starts the day with two or three cups of tea before setting off from his flat in London for the office at 4 Albert Embankment. He used to live in Oxted, Surrey but the trials of commuting persuaded him to move closer to his base — and with it the benefit of being near to London's theatreland.

"I don't think there is anywhere else in the world with better theatre," he says, eagerly switching the conversation to his recent visit to The Westminster which has been staging Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*.



Chandrika Srivastava — operating an "open door" style of management at IMO

Holding centre stage at IMO

Geoff Garfield talks to CHANDRIKA SRIVASTAVA

and within less than 20 years there was a tenfold increase in the world tanker fleet. In the 1950s it was normal to wash the tanks with water and pump the waste oil mixture into the seas — a practice which was curbed by the 1954 Oilpol Convention. In 1969, Oilpol was amended so that washings from tank cleaning were pumped into a special tank, allowing separation and recovery of the oil.

The *Torrey Canyon* disaster in 1967 led IMO to tackle the thorny issue of compensation in the event of major oil spills and an international fund was established in London. Limits of pollution compensation liability were greatly increased in May, 1984, although there is still a shortfall of countries willing to implement the new \$260m ceiling, not least of all the prime mover, the US.

Further steps have since been taken by IMO to counter pollution by oil and other so-called "vessel source" materials including chemicals, garbage and sewage — currently there are 75,000 ships operating around the world.

"Pollution will become an extremely important item on IMO's agenda in the coming biennium," says Mr Srivastava, reflecting on the fact that the recent Paris summit called on IMO to tackle the issue of oil spills globally. "I think it will become item number one, and quite rightly so. The *Exxon Valdez* has shaken the world, just as the *Torrey Canyon* and *Amoco Cadiz* did.

"It (pollution) is a menace that has to be tackled at the very highest political level," he says — a responsibility that the heads of government have placed squarely on IMO's shoulders.

"The oceans do not divide, they unite," says Mr Srivastava who, well aware of the limitations facing developing countries, believes that the UN should allocate more resources to safeguarding the environment.

"I enjoy my work, so I do not think of it as a burden," he says. "I get here (IMO's headquarters) normally about 8:30am and I am usually unable to get away before 7pm — sometimes it can be 8pm. Usually I take work home because during the day there are so many meetings and people visiting.

"I allow about one-and-a-half hours for work at home which does not make me very popular. At weekends I am usually travelling or there is work to be done, although if there is the chance I like to get out in the country.

"Really, though, it is a 24-hour assignment. I do not know how these 15 years have passed — it seems only the other day."

His "open door" style of management suits an organisation with a relatively small secretariat of less than 300 people. "Everyone of them is a gem, everyone works to the best of his or her ability and the member states are obviously satisfied. My colleagues enjoy their work and feel they are contributing to the global effort," he says, referring time and again to IMO as a universal organisation.

Mr Srivastava himself has been married for 42 years to Nirmala who shares his love of classical music — both Indian and European — as well as cricket. Nirmala, he says, is viewed by some as a spiritual leader who firmly believes that "all human beings, regardless of their religion, race or colour" are capable of leading good lives.

The couple have two daughters, Kalpana and Sadhana, and four grandchildren, all of who live in India. The daughters occasionally visit him in London, but on stepping down as IMO's secretary general, Mr Srivastava intends to see more of them by dividing his time equally between the UK and India.

Born in the United Provinces — later renamed Uttar Pradesh — Mr Srivastava was educated in his home town of Lucknow where, among his various academic achievements, he attained first class BA, BA Hons and MA degrees. A fervent interest in political science, developed in his early days, has been an enduring feature of

landowners and lawyers, the young Mr Srivastava broke with tradition and joined the diplomatic service in India, before switching to the administration. From being an under-secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, he progressed through the ranks in India's Directorate-General of Shipping before, in 1961, taking over as managing director at the state-owned Shipping Corporation of India (SCI).

The years 1964 to 1966 were spent as joint secretary to India's prime minister before he increased his shipping commitments by combining the job of SCI managing director with that of chairman of the board of directors. Before moving to IMO, he turned SCI into one of the world's largest shipping companies by amassing a fleet aggregating more than 5m tonnes deadweight.

"My experience in India was invaluable for my assignment at IMO because I received first-hand experience of the commercial, legal, operational and global sides of shipping," says Mr Srivastava.

"I became aware of the crucial importance of the human factor at that time, so from the day I came to this organisation I began promoting the idea of maritime training according to global standards."

This remains the cornerstone of his philosophy and it came as no surprise that he is to stay on as chancellor of the World Maritime University established by IMO in Malmo, Sweden in 1983.

The thrust of IMO's work for many years has been to develop a comprehensive package of technical standards covering maritime safety and pollution prevention, but Mr Srivastava says he has long recognised the need to progress further than the initial framing of conventions and codes, by ensuring countries can overcome the problems they face in adopting them.

Consequently, several steps have been taken by IMO to promote implementation, including "hundreds of

casualties involving loss of human life and pollution of the environment," says Mr Srivastava.

"Why do these things happen? What was not done that could have been to prevent these casualties? Of course the human factor is responsible but the question is why, and what can we do to assist?"

"It is not just training, but training according to international standards and that means expertise and financial resources. An effort is needed to ensure that the details of shipboard management are given the same respect and attention which we give, perhaps, to other modes of transport.

"The *Herald of Free Enterprise* was a minor error in the sense of someone not checking the (bow) doors were closed in time, but it resulted in a big casualty. The point I am making is that

"Pollution is a menace that has to be tackled at the very highest political level"

Nations' body should function.

"I am happy to say that we have that spirit of goodwill — we call it the IMO spirit — and it is extremely helpful in our work.

There is no hesitation in Mr Srivastava's voice when he says that all of IMO's treaties and protocols "have been adopted by consensus and not division." The international agency now has 32 conventions and protocols, of which "as many as 25 are in force as part of international maritime law."

Repeatedly turning the conversation to the human aspect of shipping, Mr Srivastava says: "Well trained people are needed on board and ashore in management. All of this must take into account rapidly changing technology."

He says this challenge has been met in a "considered and co-ordinated manner," although the coming decade will demand even closer attention to the problem of effective management of on-board safety.

The standards, rules and regulations are in place, and IMO training programmes are now well established at the World Maritime University and other institutions including Trieste. "And yet,

these details on board are of fundamental importance in ensuring safety."

Although IMO's role is in developing broad procedural guidelines, "it has to be the responsibility of the industry to ensure our rules are implemented," says Mr Srivastava. "I have no doubt at all that IMO's work has had a very major impact on safety — take the accident rate in the English Channel which is very much lower since traffic separation schemes were developed and implemented."

Overall, Mr Srivastava believes ships are safer and on-board personnel better trained than a few years ago. "The movement is in the right direction."

IMO's 1978 Convention on the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) — which entered into force in 1984 — is the "foundation for training programmes around the world."

"Also, I think IMO's standards have had a major effect on diminishing operational oil pollution," he says. "If reports are to be believed, it is down to one-third of what it was five to six years ago."

IMO came into existence just before

Recently, Mr Srivastava acknowledged that IMO was facing a "serious" revenue crisis itself because several member states had not paid their contributions. It is an issue that has taken up many column inches in both the trade and national Press, launching IMO into the headlines at an unfortunate stage of Mr Srivastava's exemplary term of office.

Few, if any, could argue it is a crisis of his making, given the relatively modest contributions member countries face in the first place. The existing annual IMO budget is only around £10.5m, but is at the mercy of the world's political carousel which has seen Panama — a major contributor — fail to meet its commitments.

What Mr Srivastava has strenuously denied is that IMO has lost its direction. "During my term of office, the effort to develop the organisation has been made continuously. It has succeeded and is respected globally as an organisation that works.

"I have enjoyed my time here immensely," says Mr Srivastava. "The member states have been wonderful in their support and encouragement. They have expected of me only one thing — that I serve IMO."

People in the news

TODAY we publish the first of a series of weekly portraits of people in the news.

And what more suitable subject could we have for the first of these articles, than G. P. Srivastava who retires at the end of the year after 15 years at the centre of the international maritime stage as secretary general of the International Maritime Organisation.

In future we intend to put the spotlight on the full range of our coverage; from shipping to insurance, from the oil industry to the ports and shipbuilding.

The hopes of those new to their job and the reflections of those who are leaving will be given equal weight.