

BY THE CHIEF HYDROGRAPHER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

'As it Is'

The history of Indian Naval Hydrographic Department itself goes back three hundred years, with publication of the first known chart of Indian Waters in 1703. Since then, marine surveyors based in India have embarked upon the onerous task of charting the coastline and harbours of the entire North Indian Ocean Region, thus giving a boost to sea-borne trade and the economic wellbeing of this entire region.

Hydrographic and charting here received a quantum boost with the establishment fifty years ago of the National Hydrographic Office at Dehradun, headquarters of the Naval Hydrographic Department of free India.

The department has over the last ten years witnessed rapid growth, with a quantum jump in surveying and charting activities, implementation of the latest technology/practices and development of human resources. Wider representation and active participation in many national and international committees has been achieved, with a prominent role carved out for India. Acknowledgement of its growing national and international status led to the Naval Hydrographic Office being renamed as the National Hydrographic Office on 12th May 1997. The department has taken a number of initiatives towards promoting hydrographic co-operation and capacity building in the region, some of which are:

- formation of the North Indian Ocean Hydrographic Commission
- participation in the Antarctica Programme
- surveys in foreign waters in Oman, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Seychelles towards fulfilment of obligations to IHO
- training students from abroad at the National Hydrographic School in Goa; over 350 foreign trainees have already been trained at this institute.

NHO has actively participated in the IHO programme to create a World Electronic Chart Database, WEND. The National Hydrographic Office is also in the process of establishing a digital hydrographic database system. Once implemented, this database will integrate all NHO functions within a single platform, enabling more efficient management of production and delivery of various hydrographic products and services to meet the growing demand of both naval and civil agencies for digital hydrographic data and information. Today India is proud owner of 230 official Electronic Navigational Charts (ENCs) of its National Waters. These ENCs are being marketed and distributed worldwide through C-MAP. The updates are available both in CD and RTU (Real Time update) via satellite to allow fully automatic updating of Indian Electronic Navigational Charts onboard ships.

The Indian Naval Hydrographic Department may be justifiably proud of its achievements in the form of eight indigenously built ocean-going Indian Naval Survey ships fitted with the latest state-of-the-art equipment. Another is the National Hydrographic Office at Dehradun, equipped with advanced technology, well-trained manpower and enjoying increasing demand for its products and services at both national and international levels. Our constant quest to innovate and implement measures to become one of the most advanced Hydrographic Office in the world have resulted in value-added products and services, especially in digital form, apart from our navigational safety services under the IMO/IHO Conventions.

In this new millennium the department is all set to play an important role in national economic development and maritime security by providing reliable data on our maritime zone, the EEZ and sea areas of great interest to the nation.