

There is so little fairplay in the world. If our own efforts succeed, we shall have taken the first steps towards promoting the habit of calling things by their right name and looking at them through uncoloured spectacles...

Founder: **Thomas Hope Robinson**, Fairplay, 18 May 1883



# lookout

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## A class act

Classification has seen more change in recent years than almost any other sector of the maritime world.

Some societies have chosen to focus on shipping, but many have expanded into the industrial, energy, and wider transport sectors. Inspecting ship construction is now part of a diversified risk management portfolio.

If there is one factor that unites the class societies it's the need to ensure a steady intake of technical specialists to

support continued growth. Like vessel operations and management, class needs people of both talent and experience.

The Indian society IRClass has set itself tough targets for 2020. Earlier in the year IRClass visited the country's top

technical institutes to invite the next generation of naval architects to join. BV Nargundkar, senior vice-president at IRClass, believes it was an achievement in itself to attract 17 technical graduates because they had several options from high-achieving employers seeking to ride the much-anticipated Indian economic miracle.

He told me the graduates' decision to join a classification society attests to their confidence in the growth of Indian shipping in general and in IRClass in particular.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's aggressive 'make in India' approach is expected to become a platform for the expansion of Indian industry that will, in turn, drive growth in the Indian shipping sector. IRClass is positioning itself strategically to meet that need. It will also be well placed to maintain the quality of India's push in the offshore sector, both domestically and in Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

However, while Nargundkar accepts the importance that class societies co-operate in knowledge sharing and upholding best practice across the industry, IRClass has no intention to partner with another society.

He is seeking a "class by choice" status in the recognised fields of classification, inspection, and certification. India will remain the focus, with interest to the west and east.

The International Association of Classification Societies, the brotherhood of class societies that matter, now has a dozen members stretching from the heavily maritime-dependent Class NK to the industrial powerhouse that is BV. It's a time of change; not only the inclusion of the Croatian register and the welcoming back of the Polish register, but also a transfer of leadership at DNV GL, LR and soon at NK.

When I met Yasushi

Nakamura, Class NK's executive vice-president, last month in Tokyo, he begged me to stop asking about the post-Noboru Ueda future for the Japanese society.

His frustration is understandable, but with Remi Eriksen stepping up at the Norwegian/German society and Alastair Marsh at the British society, the future of class at a time of weakness for the commercial shipping and offshore sectors is a key question.

What has marked a step-change for class since the economic downturn began is the new advisory role on everything from making your ship even more efficient to what fuels you are likely to be buying in 2030 or beyond.

Class is no longer just about classification, it covers vessel operations, port expansion, nuclear power, trains, planes, and automobiles. This is why it is important to know the vision the leader has for the society.

If I were a technical graduate from one of India's premier institutes, and had offers of a glittering career from a host of multinationals, it would be probably more important to know the society's direction of travel than whether domestic shipping will remain strong.

Whether societies recognise it or not, class is a valued partner for shipowners and managers seeking a future in an uncertain world. It's a great choice for naval architects, but the only certainty will be change. [F](#)

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'The future of class at a time of weakness for commercial shipping is a pertinent question'

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In Glasgow, @V\_Ships' Bob Bishop says he's not selling #ship management, rather he's selling trust. Do you trust me with your ship? @LISW15

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