



Tribute to the
“Father of Indian Seafarers Movement”



Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang
(1879 - 1963)

It gives great pleasure to the **NUSI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE** to announce the celebrations on the occasion of the birthday remembrance of **NUSI FOUNDER Mohamed EBRAHIM SERANG** on 9th May every year. Every organisation has a beginning and a history. A Trade Union is also a collective activity and never a one - man show, but it needs a dynamic visionary, a person of conviction and commitment to achieve the goals of the trade union. While welfare activities for seafarers are traced since 1896, it was given a proper structure of a trade union by Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang in his capacity as Founder President of National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI) in the year 1926. NUSI has grown into a strong tree with extended branches from the seed sown by Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang. **“He had started all alone towards his goal, more and more people joined in and the tribe increased”**.

Today the NUSI has set the highest standards and has gone beyond the purview of a normal trade union activity. It is no longer confined to routine activity of any union of fighting for the rights and securing decent wages and terms and conditions for the seafarers. **Its activities benefit not just seafarers but also their family members.** Today with the active support of the shipowners, it is instrumental in initiating welfare activities like training, hospital, resorts, scholarship for children of seafarers, financial assistance to widows of seafarers, loan schemes to become officers etc are a few examples. It has gained respect from the shipowners and the Government of India and is the voice of Indian seafarers nationally and internationally. **There have been many personalities who have contributed to what NUSI is today.** But all this would not have been possible without the platform provided by Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang when he founded the National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI) in the year 1926.

In our efforts to honour his achievements which have immensely benefitted the Indian shipping fraternity, it has been decided to celebrate **9th May** every year as **NUSI FOUNDER Mohamed EBRAHIM SERANG DAY**. Starting from this year 2012, the day 9th May will be a paid holiday for all seafarers working on Indian and foreign flag ships.

It is also my honour as his great grandson to present to you some rare glimpses of this great son of India who is rightly called the **"Father of the Indian Seafarers Movement"**.



Abdulgani Y. Serang,
General Secretary-cum-Treasurer
National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI)
9th May, 2012.

A Humble Beginning :

Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang was born in Cannanore, a city in Kerala in a middle class family on 9th May, 1879. He became an orphan at a tender age and came down to Bombay to seek employment when he was just around 13 years of age. He got an opening in the merchant navy as a seaman and rose to the rank of a Serang.

First World War (1914-1918) :

Before the year 1914 that is before the First World War, the salary of a new Seaman was Rs. 10/- per month and more experienced Seaman got Rs. 30/- per month in the Deck Department. Likewise in the Engine Department the Coal Trimmer and Stroker was getting a salary of Rs. 12/- per month and Fireman got Rs. 18/- per month. The Serangs got a salary of Rs. 37/- to Rs. 40/- per month. In the Saloon (Catering) Department, the Butler got Rs. 60/- per month and Pantryman got Rs. 40/- per month, Scullion Rs. 22/- per month and General Steward Rs. 33/- per month.

During the First World War from 1914 – 1918 the clouds of war engulfed many countries and resulted in more and more work on the same salary for the seafarers working on merchant navy ships. In the year 1915, Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang, who was the Serang on board the Anchor Line ship “**Elycia**” spearheaded an agitation of seafarers on board. This resulted in an unprecedented increase of five (5) per cent in the wages. This was the first situation of its kind which resulted in the increase of salary for the seafarers.



Seafarers Unity is Strength - “The First Strike” :

In the year 1918-1919 Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang again spearheaded an agitation on board the ship “**Kaiser-e-Hind**”. Under his leadership, the seafarers on board the ship went on strike and the ship was in berth in Bombay for four days. The only demand was increase in wages and a life with dignity. **This was the first strike ever by the Indian seafarers.** It resulted in an increase in wages and the basic pay of all lower rank seafarers was increased to Rs. 30/- per month. The Serangs salary was increased to Rs. 60/- per month.



The first strike and protest by seafarers on “Kaiser E- Hind” is a grand success.



“War Compensation” for Seafarers :

In the First World War during 1914 to 1919, more than 17,000 seafarers suffered financial and physical losses. **It is on record that amongst these seafarers were more than 2,223 who lost their lives serving in the Royal Navy.** Those who survived were given financial assistance by the British Government. In 1921, the British Government stopped giving the survivors of the First World War any financial aid. Under the leadership of Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang the matter was taken up with the British Government.

A resolution passed in 1928 at the Trade Union Congress demanded **“War Compensation”** for such seafarers. This resulted in an ordinance passed by the British Government dated 5th April, 1929 accepting the demand and continued the financial assistance till 1931 and thereafter till 1933 so that seafarers or their legal heirs get the financial assistance. The amount of compensation which all the seafarers got was around Rs. 16,00,000/- (Rupees Sixteen Lakhs).



Seafarers agitating for “War Compensation” from the British Government.



Nomination by British Government on “ Clow Committee” and representation of Indian seafarers on the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Geneva :

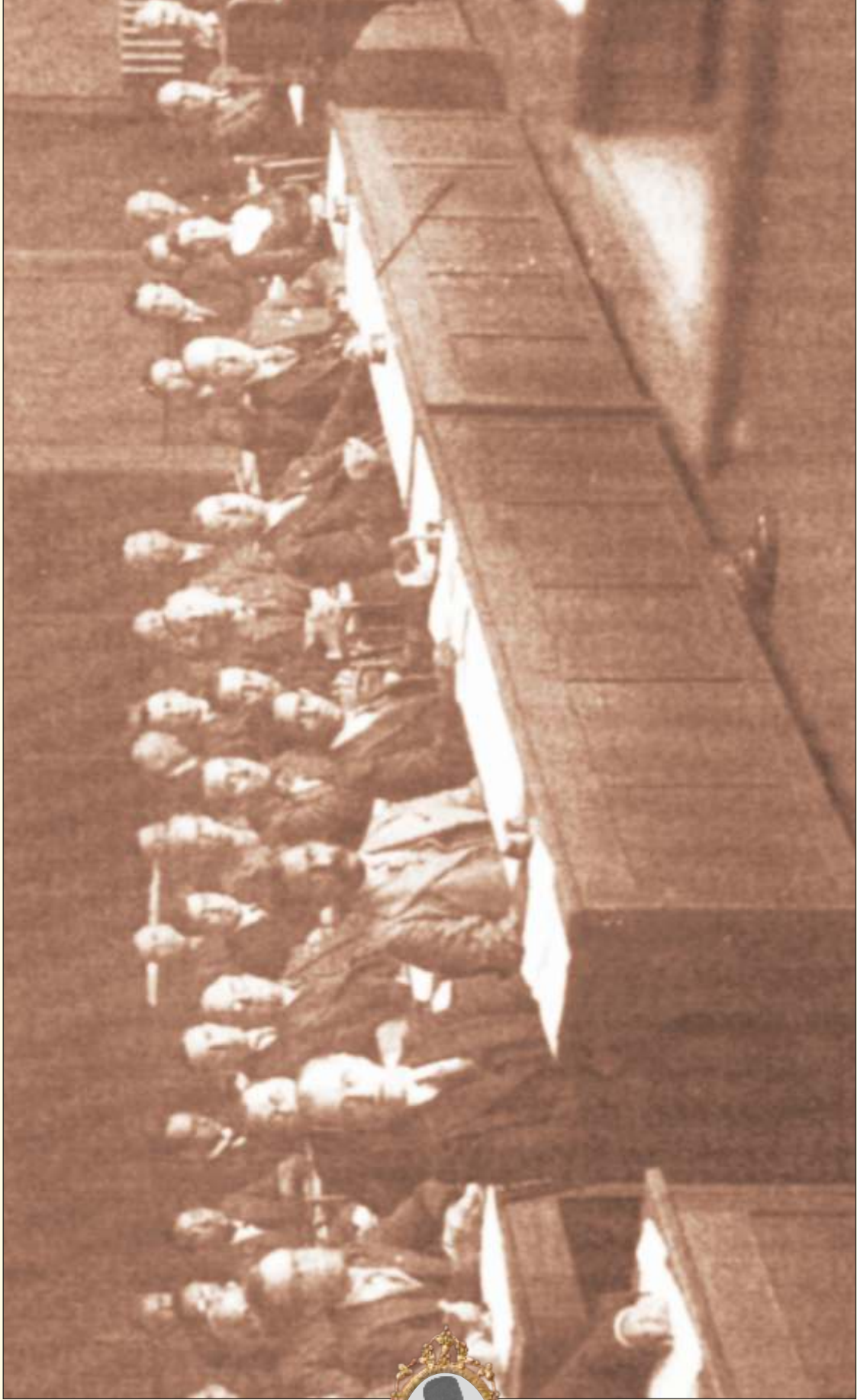
During his service, he observed the hardships and injustice done to the Indian seafarers, the most backward and tortured class of labour at that time in the labour movement. He started agitating and decided to form a union to fight for the benefits of seafarers. He agitated for the approval of the "Charter of Demands" in favour of seafarers. Thus the most lowest paid seafarers of the past have now become income-tax payers. He was recognized as an authority on the issues concerning seafarers and was nominated by the British Government on the “**Clow Committee**” in 1922. He was one of the few trade union leaders who was a worker himself. He felt the pain and the sufferings of the seafarers himself, thus, he was in a better position to understand their problems and put all his efforts to solve the same. **Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang was also the Member of the Board of Trustees of the Bombay Port Trust.**

MR. SERANG FOR GENEVA.
--Mr. Mahomed Ebrahim Serang, selected by the Government of India to attend the International Labour Conference in Geneva in October.



The British Government nominated Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang to attend the **International Labour Organsiation (ILO)** in 1936 to represent the seafarers from India.





Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Geneva in 1936.



The voice of Indian Seafarers -

The birth of “National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI)” :

The achievements of the seafarers was largely due to personal charisma and dedication of Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang. He realized that the movement has to be taken on a higher platform. He decided to give the seafarers movement a proper structure of a strong trade union organization. In the year 1926 Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang established the first organised trade union in the history of Indian seafarers under the name of “National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI)” and was its Founder President. In all his efforts, his family supported him throughout even at times mortgaging household belongings for the cause of the union activities.





Indian seafarers finally have a strong voice - **“National Union of Seamen of India”** formed.



British Government accepts NUSI demand to shift “Shipping Office” to Ballard Estate :

In 1928, for the benefits of the seafarers, the National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI) raised the issue about shifting of the Shipping Office from Old Custom House to the Alexandra Dock in Ballard Estate. The Shipping Office at Old Custom House did not have even basic amenities like proper sitting place, drinking water etc. for the seafarers. **The British Government agreed to the demand of the Union and in 1937 shifted the Shipping Office from Old Custom House to Commerce Building at Ballard Estate.** Proper seating arrangement and drinking facilities was organized for seafarers amongst other things for the first time.

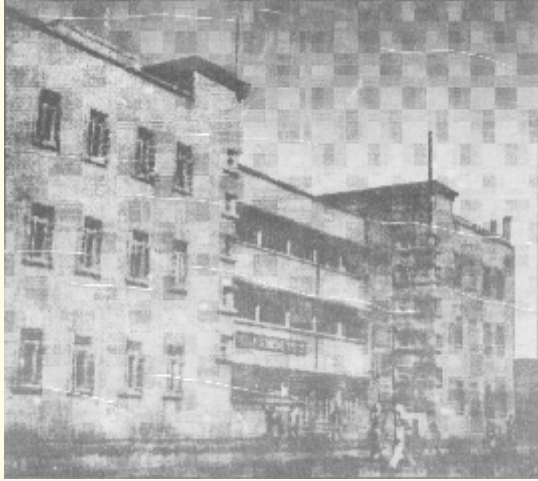


The then Shipping Master Capt. H.S Flynn being felicitated by NUSI in the new shipping office premises at Ballard Estate.

Transit Facility accepted - The “Indian Sailors Home” and “Indian Seamens Hostel” established :

The Indian seafarers did not have any facility from the British Government to stay in Bombay. This facility was very much required for the seafarers where they could stay till the time they ”signed-on” the ship. And this facility was also required for the seafarers who “signed off” from the ship. There was no transit facility for the seafarers at all. **Feeling the pain and anguish of the Indian seafarers, Shri Mohamed Ebrahim**





The "Indian Seamens Hostel established in 1949.

Serang took up the matter with the Governor General of the British Government on 24th August, 1927. Many meetings and discussions took place. Finally the British Government built a transit facility for the seafarers which was called the "Indian Sailors Home". The inauguration of the Indian Sailors Home was held in the year 1931. In the construction stage and also the Management Committee of the Indian Sailors Home, Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang represented the interests of the Indian seafarers. It was due to his continuous efforts that the Indian Sailors' Home was built in 1931.

We the several persons whose names and addresses are subscribed are desirous of being formed into a Company in pursuance of this Memorandum of Association and we respectively agree to take the number of shares in the capital of the society set opposite to our respective names.

Name of Subscriber.	Description and Address	Number of Shares Subscribed.
Y. S. Bhile	Service, Chairman, Bombay Port Trust, Ballard Road, .. Fort, Bombay.	One
S. J. Pandya	Service, Jt. General Manager, Seindia Steam Navigation .. Co. Ltd., Seindia House, Ballard Estate, Fort, Bombay.	One
C. F. Lynt	Service, Chief Accountant, Bombay Port Trust, Ballard .. Road, Fort, Bombay.	One
L. Krishnan	Service, Seaman's Welfare Officer, Bombay, Commerce .. House, Ballard Estate, Fort, Bombay.	One
N. L. Barton	Service, Assistant, Mackinnon, Mackenzie & Co., Ballard .. Road, Fort, Bombay.	One
A. W. C. Brown ..	Merchant, Turner Morrison & Co., Ltd., 16, Bank Street, .. Fort, Bombay.	One
G. A. Jadh	Service, General Manager, Bombay Steam Navigation .. Co., Ltd., Seindia House, Ballard Estate, Fort, Bombay.	One
P. N. Rao	Service, Shipping Master, Bombay, Commerce House, .. Ballard Estate, Fort, Bombay.	One
H. M. Desai	Service, Jt. Manager, Seindia Steam Navigation Co., Ltd. .. Seindia House, Ballard Estate, Fort, Bombay.	One
M. F. Serang	Seaman Worker, National Seaman's Union, 120, Dongri .. Street, Bombay.	One
A. M. Yezman	Merchant, Eastern Bunkers Ltd., Seindia House, .. Ballard Estate, Fort, Bombay.	One
S. H. Mehta	Service, Chartered Engineer, Bombay Port Trust, .. Ballard Estate, Fort, Bombay.	One

Dated this Eleventh day of February 1948.

Witness to the above signatures

SYED MAHAMED

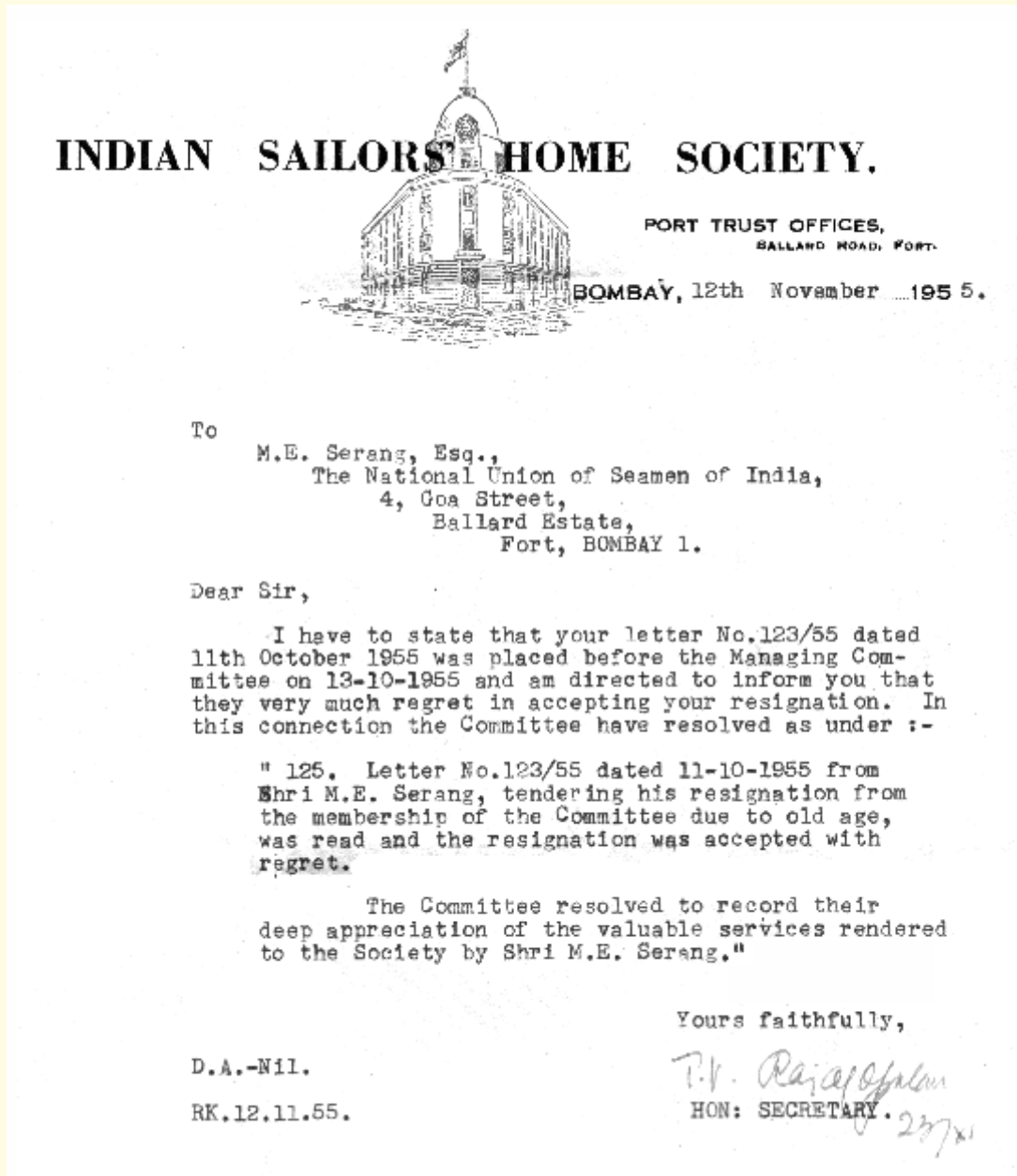
Superintendent

INDIAN SAILORS HOME.

Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang, one of the shareholders representing the seafarers in the Indian Sailors Home.



The Indian Sailors Home was a gift and a much needed facility for the Indian seafarers. But as there were many seafarers, the facility was not enough. Realising this problem of the growing demand, Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang once again put pressure on the Government to construct another building. **In 1949 the Government finally constructed another building to be named as "Indian Seamens Hostel"**. The Indian Sailors Home and the Indian Seamens Hostel are testimony of some of the landmark work done by Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang under the banner of the National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI).



Letter of appreciation from the Hon. Secretary of the Indian Sailors Home Society dated 12th November, 1955.



Second World War (1939-1945):

The world was once again engulfed in a crisis which destroyed peace during the Second World War from 1939 to 1945. **It is recorded that 6531 seafarers gave their lives serving in the Royal Navy.** Now, under the strong banner of the National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI), the seafarers demanded 200 per cent increase in wages and went on strike. After discussion with Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang, the British Government called the shipowners engaging the Indian seafarers. During the hectic discussions which followed, it was decided that there will be a 100 per cent increase in wages of all categories of Indian seafarers. **Due to this the average salary including bonus of the seafarers became Rs. 125/- per month which was also called as “paanch pagar” in those days.**

In the Second World War during 1939 to 1945 based on the same pattern of compensation of the First World War which was an accepted understanding with the NUSI, all Indian seafarers were given **War Compensation** totaling to Rs. 25,00,000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Lakhs). One more important achievement of NUSI in the Second World War was that it was able to **merge the war allowance in the salary**, thus resulting in increased wages during peaceful times also.



Agitation during the Second World War - “Paanch Pagar” achieved.

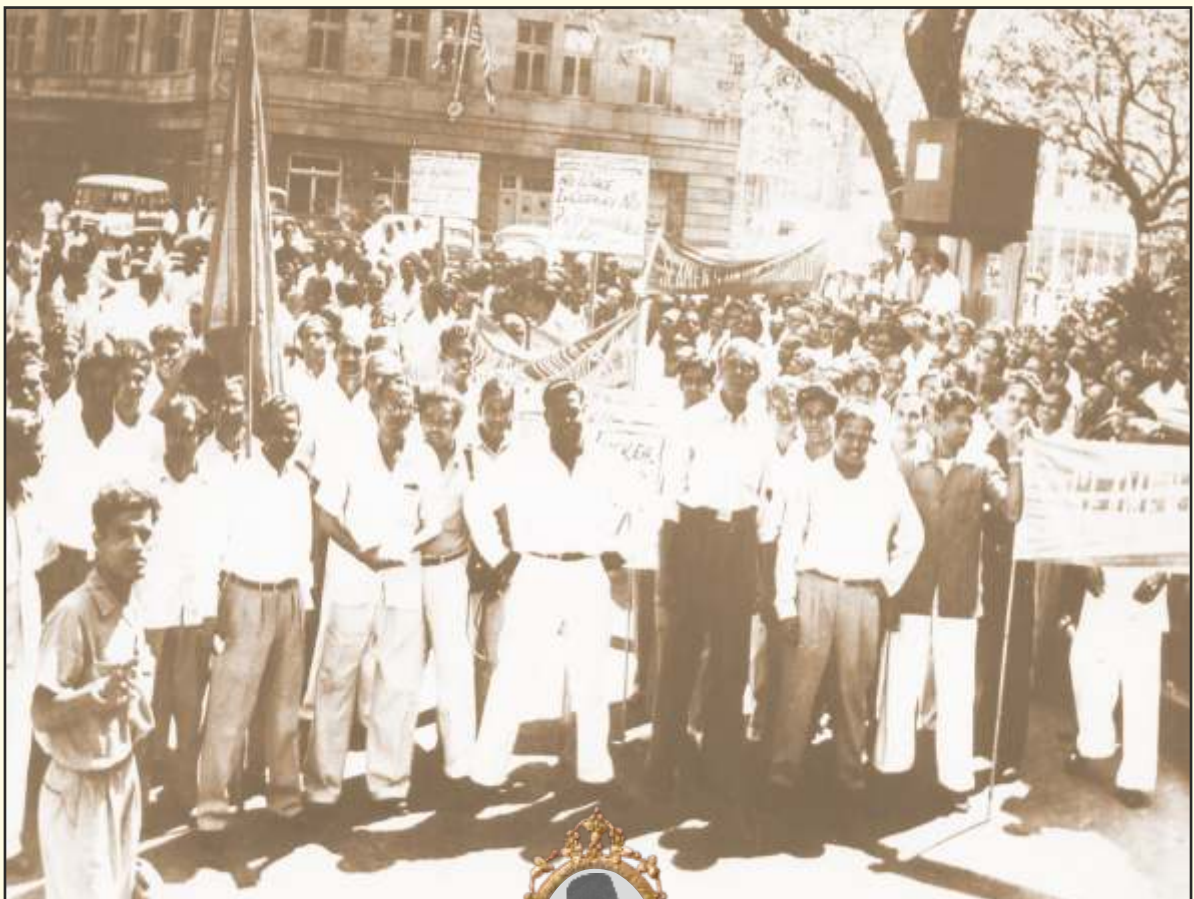


Seafarers Revolution



Historic moment for Indian shipping fraternity - National Maritime Board (India) - NMB (I) established :

Collective Bargaining negotiation was introduced for the very first time in the history of Indian shipping fraternity. The establishment of the National Maritime Board (India), NMB(I) on 14th June, 1957 gave equal opportunities to the shipowners and seafarers to discuss and conclude wage and working conditions of seafarers. This NMB(I) was modeled on the lines of the National Maritime Board of United Kingdom. It was the highest level of collective bargaining on a national level. The negotiations resulted in a **ten (10) per cent increase** in the basic wages of the seafarers with effect from **1st October, 1957**. The basic wages also included the war allowance amount which gave the seafarers more benefits. This agreement resulted in more than Rs. 1,08,00,000/- (Rupees One Crore Eight Lakhs) for all Indian seafarers working in the Deck, Engine and the Saloon (Catering) sections. **Warm clothing** for service in cold climate as demanded by the NUSI was issued for the first time in this NMB(I) of 1957. NUSI was also instrumental in enhancing the leave, same wages for seafarers from Calcutta on par with seafarers from Bombay, regulating hours of work, then overtime for additional hours worked. It was also agreed that seafarers requiring medical attention in foreign ports will receive wages till return to home port. The concept of **food money** was introduced by NUSI which was started with Re 1.50 paise daily to Rs. 2.25 paise per day and then to Rs. 3/- per day after selection till sign on.





Negotiations led by Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang with the Shipping fraternity



SUNDAY

8-12-1957

Seamen To Get 10 P. C. Rise In Basic Wages

MARITIME BOARD DECISION

By A Staff Reporter

A ten per cent. increase in the basic standard wages of Indian seamen has been decided upon by the National Maritime Board, a bipartite body representing shipping employers and seamen.

This is the first rise in wages of seamen since the end of the war. It follows an agreement between shipowners and the National Union of Seamen of India represented on the Board.

The agreement, which covers other demands of seamen as well, is said to be the first bilateral settlement reached on a national scale in India.

As a result of the agreement on the increment, about 60,000 Indian seamen will benefit and on that score, their employers will have to pay out more than Rs. 1 crore per year. The increase will be granted with retrospective effect in respect of all service on foreign-going Indian Articles of Agreement from October 1.

The decision to implement the increase was welcomed at a rally organised by the National Union of Seamen of India at Kesar Baug, Dongri, on Saturday. Mr. Dinkar Desai, president of the union, who presided, said it was

a historic agreement which proved the value of collective bargaining. The collective agreement, he hoped, would mark a new chapter in the relations of shipowners and seamen.

He disclosed that the question of a further increment of five per cent. was under consideration by foreign shipowners to whom a representation had been made in this regard as only principals could sanction increments representing more than ten per cent.

Mr. Mohamed Serang, vice-president, said the agreement partly met the aspirations of seamen who, he had no doubt, would, by and by, get other demands settled through collective bargaining.

MARITIME BOARD

He said the Maritime Board was modelled on the lines of a similar organisation in the U. K. with parity of representation to both shipowners and seamen. It had no permanent chairman, its meetings being presided over by a representative of either bloc alternatively. The agreement was reached at a meeting presided over by Mr. Dinkar Desai, seamen's representative on the board.

Mr. O. C. Mendes and Mr. A. K. M. Serang also addressed the meeting. The other terms of the agreement related to the supply of warm clothing and other amenities and flight insurance.



Sacrifices of Indian Seafarers - “A Dream Come True” :

Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang was operating the union activities from 47, Old Nagpada Road premises (later the street was named after him in 1975). The NUSI was receiving membership of Re 1/- from 1926 to 1948 and thereafter the membership was increased to Rs. 3/- from 1948 to 1951, then in 1952 to Rs. 6/-. From this subscription amount, with much difficulty, the foundation stone of the present building of the National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) was laid on 6th January, 1950. The building was completed at a cost of around Rs. 1 lakh entirely from the subscription of the seafarers and the sacrifices of all those present at that time including Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang. It was a proud moment for Indian seafarers to have a union building of their own.

The National Union of Seamen of India (NUSI) got affiliated with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) to give better support to the Indian seafarers in foreign waters.



Indian Seafarers protesting for rights in large numbers.



A Crusader for social upliftment :

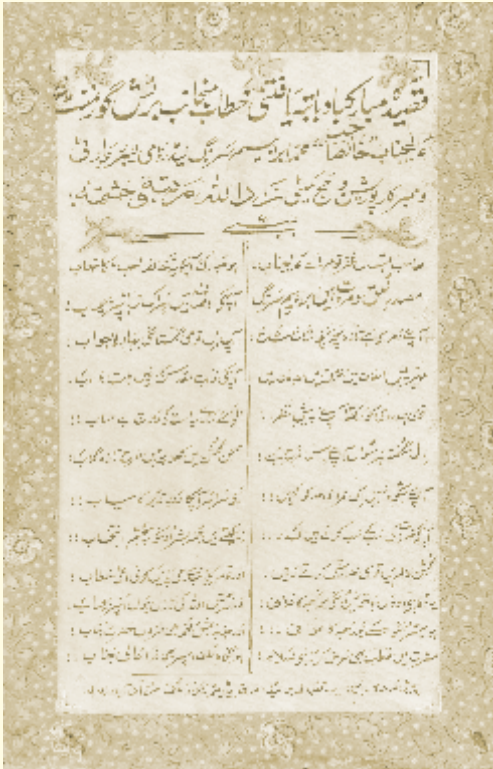
Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang was elected from the Labour Constituency to the Bombay Municipal Corporation in 1929 to 1934. In 1935 he was elected again and continued to be its member upto 1948. He was also a member of the Improvements Committee for the years 1942-43, 1944-45 and 1947-48 and also of the Works Committee and the Markets and Garden Committee. As a member of the Municipal Corporation, he used to take keen interest in several civic problems.

As a social worker, he was always helping the people in distress. During an unfortunate communal riots he was the member of the Peace Committee. He helped the poor irrespective of caste and religion. It is on record that during the communal riots, at his own personal risk, he protected a temple in his locality by keeping personal guards on it for 24 hours and he gave shelter to the inmates of the temple in his own house. During this time strict vegetarian food was cooked in his house for everybody till the inmates of the temple stayed in his house.



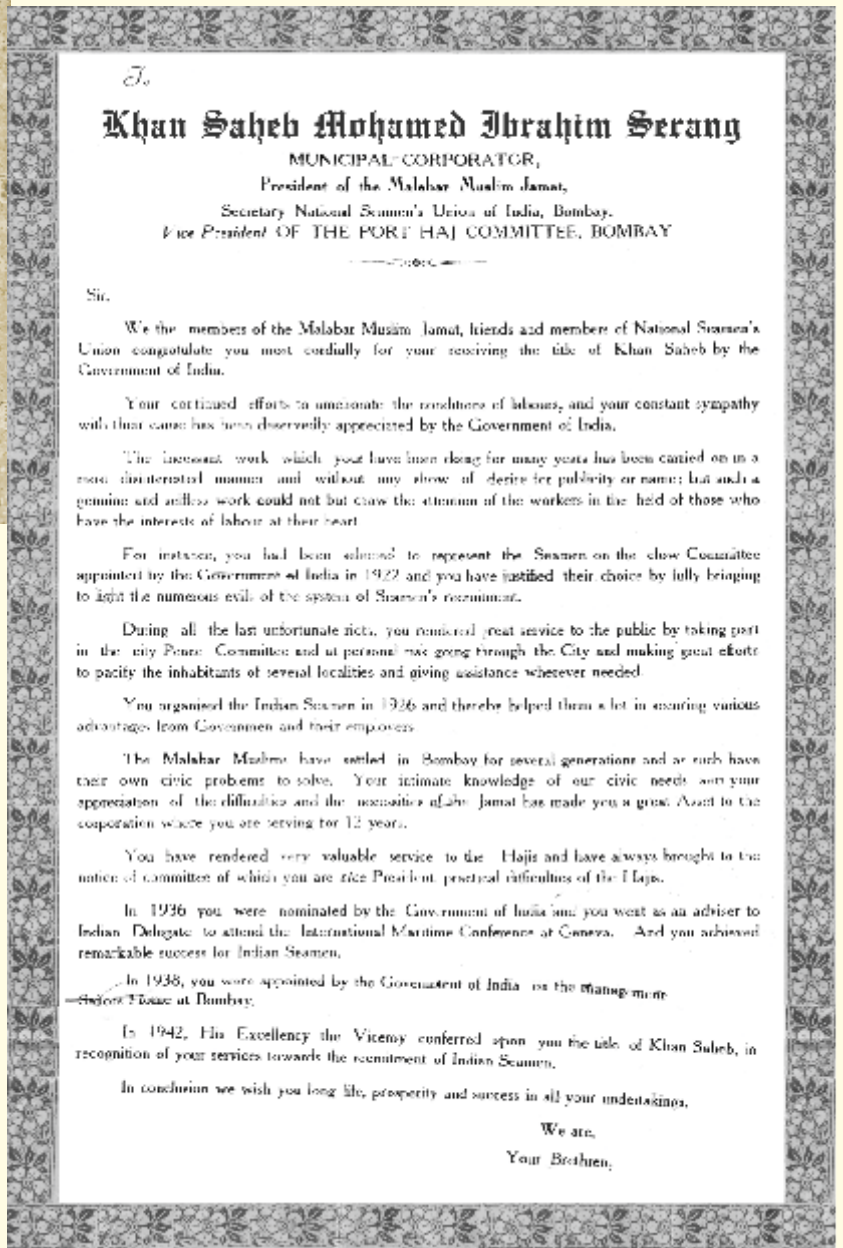
Title of “Khan Saheb”:

In the year 1942, due to his selfless and dedicated service Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang was given the title of "Khan Saheb" by the British Government.



Appreciation by seafarers, friends and community on receipt of the title.

But later in the spirit of nationalism, Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang returned the title of “Khan Saheb” back to the British Government.



“Mohamed Ebrahim Serang Marg”:

He was a born philanthropist who helped many widows and poor people irrespective of caste and religion. On 23rd August, 1975 the street by the name Old Nagpada Road in Bombay 400 009 was named after him as "Mohamed Ebrahim Serang Marg".

The President & Members of the Executive Committee of the
NATIONAL UNION OF SEAFARERS OF INDIA

request the pleasure of your company
at the inauguration ceremony of
renaming of the Old Nagpada Road as

Mohamed Ebrahim Serang Marg

on Saturday 23rd August 1975 at 4-00 P. M.

*at Dawoodbhoy Fazalbhoy Auditorium,
Nishanpada Road, Bombay-400 009.*

4, Goa Street
Ballard Estate
Bombay-400 038

Tel. 26 12 36
26 19 42
26 09 45



**Friends & well wishers on the occasion of the naming of the
“Mohamed Ebrahim Serang Marg”**



A legend and a legacy :

Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang retired from active unionism on this 80th Birthday and died on 2nd September, 1963 at the age of around 85 years leaving behind a rich legacy for which he is rightly called the **“Father of Indian Seafarers Movement”**.

M. E. SERANG Father Of Indian Seamen's Movement

By A Staff Reporter

Mr. Mohamed Ebrahim Serang, father of the Indian seamen's movement, died in Bombay on Monday. He was 89.

Mr. Serang, who retired from active trade unionism in 1959, served the cause of Indian seafarers for over 50 years. He was the founder-president



M. E. Serang

of the National Union of Seamen, now the largest organisation of sailors in the country.

Mr. Serang was a forceful speaker and a powerful advocate of the working class, particularly the maritime labour. He represented India at various maritime sessions of ILO as a labour

delegate and at other international labour conferences.

Prominently connected with the Port Haj Committee, he was, for a quarter of a century, a member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. He was closely associated with the late N. M. Joshi, who pioneered the trade union movement in India.

Mr. Serang hailed from Malabar and during his youth served as a seaman. He substituted his surname, "Cyclewalla," by Serang.

His funeral at Bado Kabristan on Queen's Road was largely attended.





Shri Mohamed Ebrahim Serang



National Union of Seafarers of India

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