

**NAMASTE! MY NAME** is Gulshan Rai (66). I have had the honour of being the OCC Port Officer representative for Bombay, now Mumbai, for the past 30 years. I am former Joint Commissioner of Indian Customs, Commodore/President of the Royal Bombay Yacht Club, a circumnavigator in a 32ft British-built Vancouver class of sailing yacht and recipient of the Barton Cup.

Mumbai, located at Lat 18°55'N Long 072°50'E, is the biggest



natural harbour in India. Yachting in India dates from the founding of the Bombay Yacht Club in 1846. In 1876, Queen Victoria bestowed the title Royal on the Club and, in 1896, the Admiralty conferred the Blue Ensign to the Royal Bombay Yacht Club (RBYC) with emblem of the Crown and Star of India. The RBYC is located opposite the historic Gateway of India built to commemorate the landing in 1911



of the Emperor King George VI and Queen Mary. The RBYC ([www.royalbombayyachtclub.com](http://www.royalbombayyachtclub.com)) with residential section, bar, restaurant, reception halls, gym, library, reading room and internet facilities extends honorary membership to all visiting yachtspersons during the stay of their yachts in Mumbai.

**THE ANCHORAGE** Mumbai does not have any marina. The anchorage,

located west of the Gateway, in the lee of the land, is swell free and deep enough for all sizes of yachts. However, because of the heavy southwest Monsoon, the anchorage is closed to yachts from May to September, both months inclusive. The October-April sailing season is cool with steady northeast winds.

**ARRIVAL OF VISITING YACHTS** In view of the recent (November 2008) terrorists' attacks, the Port Trust authorities have tightened up the security, both for domestic yachts and those arriving from abroad. All Indian boats have to be registered with the Port Trust authorities and have a harbour craft licence. The authorities feel that any yacht entering without their knowledge poses a very serious security hazard.

The Port Trust has made it mandatory that all visiting yachts with an intention to enter Mumbai are required to inform Police (immigration), Customs and Port authorities at least 72 hours before their arrival, giving details such as name of the yacht, flag, number of persons on board and their nationality. This they can do either through the RBYC, a registered agent at the port or their Consulate. The yachts must invariably monitor VHF Channel 12 and, when in a position within 12 miles radius of Prongs Reef Lighthouse, contact the Mumbai Harbour Control and request permission to enter the harbour. Under no circumstances should the yacht attempt to enter the harbour without clearance from the Mumbai Harbour Control.

**SUPPORT SERVICES** Mumbai is a teeming, bustling metropolis with a population of 15 million. It is very well connected by air to all countries, has many domestic airlines and its roads and rail track reaches every nook and corner of this vast country. Mumbai is a perfect gateway for visiting crews, because they can safely leave their boats in the snug anchorage and travel inland. The Customs allow a visiting yacht to be in India for six months; the stay of crews depends on the validity of their visas, which they must possess before their arrival.

There has been a massive growth in yachts and yachting in Mumbai in the new millennium. The reasons

behind this boom are the economic surge, reduced import duties – from 200 per cent to merely 38 per cent *ad valorem* – liberal governmental policies and availability of the technical skill to operate the yachts. The India International Boat Shows at Cochin (Kochi) and Mumbai display luxury yachts, speed boats, services and a diverse range of products associated with boats and the boating industry. The growth in imported sailing yachts is negligible, because wealthy Indians normally use their motor yachts as a lifestyle sport.

**MARINE SERVICES** All kinds of services for visiting yachts, navigational instruments, charts are available. Spare parts can be imported duty free for visiting yachts. Haul out is not advisable.

**SOCIAL ACTIVITIES** Mumbai is the art and culture capital of western India. From operas to English plays and the latest Hollywood movies are available within walking distance of the anchorage. The best of libraries, the



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Asiatic and the David Sassoon ones, the Prince of Wales museum, the churches of St Thomas and St John are near to the RBYC. Pubs, fine dinning places, cinemas, seafront promenades and the fishing village are close by. Taxis, trains and buses are available all the time. In fact the city never sleeps.

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