



Government of India

*White paper on
firm commitment to
wellbeing of seafarers and
to maritime industry*

Government of India
Ministry of Port, Shipping & Waterways

Directorate General of Shipping, Mumbai
08th August, 2024

COMMITMENT

This white paper has been developed based on the Directorate General of Shipping's '**Sixteen (16) Deliverables**' which underscore a firm commitment to the wellbeing of seafarers and to the maritime industry as it outlines the policies, strategies and positions on key issues.

OBJECTIVES OF THE "WHITE PAPER"

Deliverable 1: Notes on interventions by Crisis Management Group

By DG Shipping order dated August 2023, a Crisis Management Group has been constituted, and under the chairmanship of DG Shipping and with DDG (Crew), regular weekly reviews of urgent cases involving distressed seafarers are discussed with subsequent actions are followed up. There have been numerous interventions by Crisis Management Group in live cases involving stranded and abandoned seafarers and the group has been successful in ensuring safety of seafarers and repatriation of seafarers back to India such as the case of safe return of 23 seafarers who had been stranded on the MT Advantage Sweet in Iran for nearly six months. This achievement followed persistent and repeated negotiations with ship-owners, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Govt. of India, High Commission of India (HCI) in Iran and Iranian authorities including issuing show-cause notices to the Recruitment of Placement & Seafarers (RPS) agency involved in the case and the results have been highly satisfactory for the Crisis Management Group team. Moving forward, the DG Shipping is working on to operationalise as Comprehensive Grievance Redressal module for seafarer to further strengthen and institutionalize this engagement to make it more vibrant and globally responsive system.

Efforts and successful interventions made by Crisis Management Group for seafarer's well-being cases would be on regular basis would be updated in website of the DG Shipping under the menu section for information's to "seafarers / crew" in the following link:

<https://dgshipping.gov.in/Content/NoticetoalSeafarersStakeholders.aspx>

Deliverable 2: Comprehensive Grievances Redressal Mechanism

DG Shipping is working on to completely revamp the current grievance redressal system to create a more comprehensive framework, where by the new system will include an integrated call center and will address seafarers' issues in a timely and transparent manner.

The new proposed Comprehensive Grievance Redressal portal aims to streamline and centralize the grievance redressal process for seafarers and other stakeholders. It is designed as a web-based system with app-based applications, offering several key sub-modules:

Crisis Management Group: This module likely serves as a centralized unit to manage and respond to crises affecting seafarers, ensuring timely and effective resolution.

Biometric Seafarer Identity Card (BSID): This feature would focus on the issues and grievances being faced by seafarers and streamline issuance and management of biometric identity cards for seafarers, enhancing security and identity verification processes.

Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC): The CDC sub-module is aimed at managing the the issues and grievances being faced by seafarers and would streamline issuance, renewal and verification of Continuous Discharge Certificates, which are essential for seafarers' employment records and certifications.

Indian National Database of Seafarers (INDOS): This sub-module would focus on the issues and grievances being faced by seafarers and streamline the database management for all registered Indian seafarers, ensuring their information is up-to-date and accessible for various administrative purposes.

Dedicated Help Line Support: This support system is intended to provide assistance and resolve issues for seafarers and stakeholders through dedicated helplines, making the grievance redressal process more efficient and user-friendly.

Deliverable 3: Streamlining of RPSL module

Immediate efforts are being undertaken to streamline the Recruitment and Placement Services License (RPSL) module by the DG Shipping's. These efforts aim to prevent grievances and issues faced by seafarers and other stakeholders, ensuring a more efficient and transparent process. This initiative is also in alignment with the Maritime India Vision 2023, reflecting the broader goals of modernizing and enhancing the maritime sector in India.

Deliverable 4: Examination reforms

A significant examination reform is being implemented to eliminate human intervention and reduce ambiguities in the certification process for seafarers, in line with the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) requirements.

This initiative is comprehensive, covering various aspects of the certification process, including:

Written and Oral Exams for Certificates of Competency: The reform will standardize and potentially digitize these exams, reducing subjectivity and ensuring consistency in the evaluation process.

Online Objective Module Exams: Introducing or expanding online objective exams will further minimize human bias and streamline the certification process, making it more transparent and efficient.

Ratings Examinations: The reform will also apply to ratings examinations, ensuring that these are conducted in a standardized manner across all Maritime Training Institutes.

The primary goal of this reform is to ensure that all Maritime Training Institutes adhere to a uniform examination system, thereby enhancing the overall training standards. This, in turn, is expected to improve both the quality of training provided to seafarers and the outcomes of their certifications.

Deliverable 5: Unrestricted shore-leave for seafarers in Indian ports

Efforts to streamline the shore leave process for seafarers are currently underway. The Directorate General of Shipping is actively collaborating with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Govt. of India and immigration officials to simplify and expedite the process. This initiative involves the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders, aiming to make shore leave more accessible and efficient for seafarers, while ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements.

Matter is taken up with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Govt. of India with a request to highlight the violations of Maritime Labour Convention 2006 provisions i.e. denial of shore leave to seafarers in Indian ports and MHA has been requested to issue necessary directives to Immigration authorities under Bureau of Immigration (BoI) and Secretaries of Coastal States endorsing the “*key essential workers*” status the seafarers possess by virtue of their nature of work and as under the provisions of Essential Services Maintenance Act 1968 and the seafarers shall be granted shore leave and unrestricted access in Indian ports and Indian airports in possession of their respective Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC) / Seafarers Identification Document (SID).

Deliverable 6: Maritime Single Window (MSW) & NLP-Marine

The Directorate collaborating with the Indian Port Association (IPA) on the implementation of the National Logistics Portal (NLP - Marine), which will serve as the Maritime Single Window (MSW). Officials of Directorate, Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) Mumbai, along with the Technical Advisers from the Mumbai Port Authority are working closely on this initiative.

The Maritime Single Window (MSW) module will reduce the waiting time for vessels and goods in Port by up to 40% and contributing to faster turnaround times for vessels through online submission / approval process. The Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) Module included in MSW will provide greater transparency and planning of vessel departure and Maritime operations and reduce the time taken by upto 30%.

The launch of the MMD and MSW modules of Sagar Setu (NLP-Marine) is not just a technological advancement; it is a commitment to shaping the future of India's Maritime Sector with digitization of processes. Directorate's goal is to institutionalize the Prior Arrival Notification System (PANS), ensuring timely vessel arrivals and efficient turnaround. Additionally, pilot projects under the IMO Green Voyage 2050 initiative, with support from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and Norway are proposed. This pilot will be implemented either at Mumbai Port or JNPA, aiming to make port arrivals more efficient, stress-free and risk-free.

Deliverable 7: Enhancement of shore facilities for seafarers

The enhancement of shore facilities for seafarers is set to be significantly improved through collaboration with port authorities and the Port Welfare Committee (PWC). This committee will include representatives from the Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) of the relevant port. The process will be conducted with a strong emphasis on transparency, involving thorough consultations with key stakeholders, including the ports, MMDs, and seafarers' associations. This collaborative approach ensures that the needs and concerns of seafarers are addressed, leading to better facilities and support services at ports.

DGS Order 8 of 2024 (dated 22.04.2024):

This order mandates the creation of the **Seafarers' Welfare and Benefits Audit Team (SWBAT)**, responsible for auditing and monitoring port welfare facilities across all Indian ports. The SWBAT's role is to ensure that these facilities meet the required standards and effectively serve the needs of seafarers.

DGS Circular 10 of 2024 (dated 22.04.2024):

This circular provides detailed **guidelines for port welfare facilities**, outlining the standards and services that must be provided at Indian ports to ensure the well-being of seafarers. These guidelines are intended to standardize welfare provisions across ports, ensuring consistent quality and availability of services.

Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030:

Deliverables for Seafarers' Well-being at Indian Ports:

As part of the broader **Maritime India Vision 2030**, there are specific deliverables aimed at enhancing the well-being of seafarers at Indian ports. These deliverables focus on improving the living and working conditions of seafarers, ensuring they have access to essential welfare services while at port.

Financial Assistance for Port Welfare Facilities through SWFS:

Financial support for enhancing port welfare facilities will be provided through the **Seafarers' Welfare Fund Society (SWFS)** subject to approval of the Committee of

Members (CoM). This funding will be used to upgrade infrastructure, improve services, and ensure that seafarers have access to the necessary facilities and support at ports.

Human Resource and Infrastructure Support for SWBAT:

The SWBAT will be supported by appropriate human resources and infrastructure to effectively audit and monitor all Indian ports, including the 12 major ports and 217 non-major ports. The SWFS subject to approval of the Committee of Members (CoM) will provide the necessary financial backing to ensure the SWBAT can carry out its duties comprehensively, ensuring that all ports meet the standards set for seafarers' welfare.

Deliverable 8: Sagar Mey Yog

To enhance health and stress management among seafarers, a major initiative will be launched at the **Global Maritime India Summit 2023** under the 'Sagar Mey Yog' program. This initiative is a collaboration between the Directorate General of Shipping and the Yoga Institute and other yoga organizations. Together, they will develop a structured curriculum designed to integrate yoga practices into maritime training institutes, as well as onboard ships and at onshore facilities. The program aims to promote the overall well-being of seafarers by addressing physical health, mental health, and stress management through the incorporation of yoga into their daily routines.

Deliverable 9: Sagar Mey Samman - Honour at Sea

At the **Global Maritime India Summit 2023**, the initiative "Sagar Mey Samman – Honour at Sea" will be launched to promote the greater inclusion of women in the maritime sector. This program is designed to increase the enrolment and participation of women seafarers by focusing on gender equity and inclusion. The initiative aims to advance gender equality by developing a structured approach to integrate more women into maritime careers. This will involve collaboration with stakeholders across academia, policy, industry, and media to highlight and support women in maritime roles.

Challenges and Global Context:

The push for gender equality globally faces significant challenges, particularly in relation to **Sustainable Development Goal 5** on gender equality and **Goal 8** on decent work. Despite progress, women still represent only about 0.5% of onboard seafarers in India. To address this disparity, the "Sagar Mey Samman" initiative will include awareness campaigns, incentives, and gender sensitization programs aimed at creating a more inclusive environment.

Inspiration and Support:

The initiative draws inspiration from successful global examples, such as Taipei, which has effectively increased the number of women seafarers through targeted policies and promotion. In support of this effort, the **Maritime India Vision 2030** will employ a multi-

faceted approach, including career counselling, scholarships, and initiatives to combat gender discrimination.

Recent Milestones and Commitment:

Recent milestones, such as the deployment of all-women crewed ships and the recognition of female pioneers in the maritime sector, underscore India's commitment to gender equality. The Directorate General of Shipping is also advancing gender sensitization training for maritime training institutes as part of this broader effort.

Goals of "Sagar Mey Samman":

The "Sagar Mey Samman" initiative aspires to set a new precedent for increasing the percentage of women seafarers through a concerted and institutionalized effort. By addressing the systemic barriers that women face in the maritime industry, this program aims to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable sector, ultimately leading to a stronger and more diverse maritime workforce.

Deliverable 10: Suraksha Pratham- Hamesh (“**Safety First - Always**”)

The Directorate General of Shipping is set to launch a major campaign titled “**Suraksha Pratham- Hamesh**” (“**Safety First - Always**”) aimed at reducing accidents and minimizing risks aboard ships. This initiative is focused on promoting safety and security protocols, ensuring that seafarers engage in risk-free professional practices.

Key Components of the Campaign:

Comprehensive Documentation:

The campaign will involve the detailed documentation of all incidents that occur at sea and during port operations; by systematically recording and analyzing these incidents, the Directorate General of Shipping aims to identify patterns, understand root causes and implement strategies to prevent future occurrences.

Safety and Security Protocols:

Emphasizing the importance of adhering to safety and security protocols, the initiative seeks to instil a culture of safety among seafarers. This includes ensuring that all safety measures are thoroughly understood, properly implemented, and consistently followed.

Educational Component:

The campaign will feature a strong educational focus, utilizing a **web-based learning management system** to deliver safety training. Additionally, **open free online courses** will be developed to provide accessible, standardized safety and risk certification programs for seafarers. These courses will be designed to enhance learning, improve compliance with safety standards, and ensure that seafarers are well-equipped to manage risks in their work environment.

Goals of “Suraksha Pratham - Hamesha”:

The ultimate goal of this campaign is to create a safer working environment for seafarers by reducing the frequency and severity of accidents at sea and in ports. Through comprehensive incident documentation, strict adherence to safety protocols and enhanced safety educative safety videos (AI based innovative videos) with "Suraksha Pratham- Hamesha" aims to establish a culture where safety is always the top priority.

Deliverable 11: Seafarers mental health and well-being

The Directorate General of Shipping is collaborating with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) to undertake several critical studies aimed at enhancing the mental health and well-being of Indian seafarers. This collaboration will focus on the following key areas:

Developing a Model Psychological Examination Framework:

NIMHANS will work on creating a comprehensive psychological examination framework to assess the suitability of cadets for careers in the merchant navy. This model will help identify individuals who are mentally and emotionally prepared for the challenges of life at sea, ensuring that only those fit for the demands of the profession are inducted.

Preparing Cadets / trainees for Induction into the Merchant Navy:

The studies will also focus on developing programs to prepare cadets for the unique environment and stresses of the merchant navy. This will likely include psychological training, coping strategies, and mental resilience building, helping cadets adjust smoothly to the demands of their roles.

Evaluating and Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing of Seafarers:

NIMHANS will conduct assessments and provide recommendations to enhance the mental health and overall well-being of Indian seafarers. This may involve regular mental health check-ups, counselling services, and interventions designed to mitigate the mental health risks associated with prolonged periods at sea.

NIMHANS is an autonomous apex institution recognized as a center of national importance under the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bangalore Act, 2021. As the largest training center for mental health and neuroscience professionals in India, NIMHANS brings extensive expertise and resources to this collaboration, ensuring that the mental health needs of seafarers are addressed comprehensively and effectively.

This partnership between the Directorate General of Shipping and NIMHANS is a significant step towards ensuring that the psychological well-being of Indian seafarers is prioritized, contributing to their overall safety, productivity, and satisfaction in their maritime careers.

Deliverable 12: Mental health related programmes / conclave

In celebration of the Directorate General of Shipping's 75th anniversary, a two-day Health and Wellbeing Conclave is proposed to be organized as these events will concentrate on managing and coping with stress, as well as addressing mental health issues among seafarers.

The conclave would aim to bring together experts, stakeholders and seafarers to discuss and develop strategies for improving mental health and well-being in the maritime industry. The insights and recommendations from this event will be used to enhance and integrate best practices into the operational frameworks of maritime administration, ensuring that the welfare of seafarers is consistently prioritized and improved.

Deliverable 13: Regular crew connect programmes

Crew Connect programmes (Hum saath saath hain) is a key initiative programme aimed at enhancing seafarers' safety and well-being and to encourage regular interactions with seafarers.

Monthly programs are planned in different maritime coastal cities in India and these could include the following:

Workshops and Seminars: Focus on safety protocols, emergency response training, and updates on maritime safety regulations.

Health Check-ups: Regular health screenings and wellness checks to ensure seafarers' physical and mental well-being.

Safety Drills: Conducting simulated emergency situations to prepare seafarers for real-life scenarios.

Mental Health Support: Offering counselling sessions, stress management workshops, and resources to address mental health concerns.

Networking Events: Opportunities for seafarers to connect with industry professionals, share experiences, and discuss safety practices.

Educational Talks: Expert speakers covering topics like maritime safety innovations, legal updates, and best practices.

These programs would help foster a culture of safety and well-being among seafarers by providing them with valuable knowledge and support.

Deliverable 14: P&I club related programmes for seafarers' safety

A retreat for the **P&I (Protection and Indemnity) club** will be held, with a renewed focus on risk reduction, mitigation, and safety. This retreat will emphasize how creating safe and stress-free work conditions for seafarers can positively impact their overall well-being.

Key aspects of the retreat will include:

Risk Reduction and Mitigation:

Discussions will center on identifying and mitigating risks to enhance safety for seafarers. This involves evaluating current practices, addressing potential hazards, and implementing measures to reduce risks effectively.

Safe and Stress-Free Work Conditions:

The retreat will explore how fostering a safe and supportive work environment can improve the mental and physical well-being of seafarers. Emphasis will be placed on developing strategies to minimize stress and enhance job satisfaction.

Integration into Maritime Administration Practices:

The findings and recommendations from the retreat will be incorporated into the operational practices of maritime administration. This ensures that the insights gained are translated into actionable policies and practices that promote seafarer safety and well-being.

By focusing on these areas, the retreat aims to contribute to a safer and more supportive maritime environment, benefiting both seafarers and the broader maritime industry.

Deliverable 15: Social media connect

The Directorate General of Shipping is planning a comprehensive overhaul of its social media and website. The aim is to enhance the platforms' content and support campaigns focused on:

Destigmatizing Mental Health Issues:

By providing valuable information and resources, the Directorate seeks to challenge and reduce the stigma associated with mental health problems within the maritime community.

Promoting Physical Well-Being:

The content will also emphasize the importance of physical health and well-being for seafarers.

The updated platforms will feature stories, resources, and expert advice to foster an open and supportive environment. This initiative is designed to encourage seafarers to engage with their health concerns and seek assistance when needed, thereby improving overall well-being in the maritime sector.

Deliverable 16: Psychometric evaluations into the admissions process

A two-day conclave for Maritime Training Institutes will be organized to explore and establish best practices for integrating psychometric evaluations into the admissions process. Key aspects of the conclave will include:

Incorporating Psychometric Evaluations:

The conclave will focus on determining effective methods for using psychometric assessments during admissions to better gauge the suitability and mental resilience of cadets entering maritime training programs.

Addressing Health Issues in Training:

Discussions will center on how maritime training institutes can enhance their programs to better equip and train seafarers in managing health issues, with a specific focus on:

Stress Management: Techniques and strategies to help seafarers handle the pressures and stresses associated with maritime work.

Mental Health: Incorporating mental health education and support into both pre-sea and post-sea training to promote overall well-being.

The goal of the conclave is to improve the preparedness of seafarers to handle the unique challenges of their profession, thereby fostering a healthier and more resilient maritime workforce.

Conclusion

DG Shipping urges all stakeholders to unite their efforts to create a better future for seafarers, free from stress and mental strain. Let us follow our hearts, though they may be on the left side, they are always right.”

The Amrit Kaal has just begun and our destination is "India a developed nation by 2047". It is our Kartavya Kaal.
