

Comments, if any, may be sent within 10 days i.e., by 21.12.2025 to the following email addresses:

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F. No. 23-XX/XX/2025-CREW-DGS

Date: XX.XX.2025

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**DGS Order No. XX of 2025**

**Subject: Improvement of Rating Seafarer Standards and Discontinuation of CDCs Issued Only on the Basis of Five Basic STCW Courses – reg.**

**A. Background:**

1. Whereas, an alarming pattern has emerged wherein unscrupulous recruitment agents are luring young aspirants, particularly from remote villages, with false promises of lucrative seafaring careers. These agents charge exorbitant fees under the pretext of offering long-duration pre-sea training, but in reality, the candidates are often confined in lodges or temporary accommodations for several months, with no real training imparted. Eventually, they are enrolled only in 15 days courses covering the 5 basic STCW courses, after which a CDC is obtained.
2. Whereas, these seafarers are then either placed on substandard vessels, often flagged under Flags of Convenience (FoC) with poor oversight, or abandoned without deployment, leaving them financially and emotionally devastated. In numerous cases, the agents abscond after collecting large sums, leaving the victims without recourse.
3. Whereas, the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) continues to receive a growing number of complaints and queries related to such fraudulent activity, often accompanied by First Information Reports (FIRs) lodged by victims or their families.
4. Therefore, this situation calls for urgent regulatory tightening, awareness drives in vulnerable regions and swift enforcement actions to dismantle such networks and protect the integrity of India's maritime workforce.

**B. Data and Analysis:**

1. Whereas, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) 2024 report has revealed a disturbing surge in global seafarer abandonment cases, with India topping the list as the most affected nationality. In year 2024, 3,133 seafarers reached out to the ITF for assistance after being abandoned with a staggering 87% increase from 1,676 cases in 2023. Of these, 899 were Indian nationals, making up the largest single nationality affected by abandonment and more than double the 401 Indian cases recorded the previous year.
2. Whereas, a closer analysis of the ITF 2024 data reveals that a significant proportion of the 899 Indian seafarers reported abandoned were either employed on vessels registered under Flags of

Convenience (FoC) or were first-time seafarers (freshers) who had obtained their Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC) based solely on the completion of the 5 basic STCW courses, without undergoing any long-duration pre-sea residential training.

3. Whereas, these trend highlights two critical vulnerabilities i.e., the exploitation risks posed by loosely regulated FoC-flagged vessels and the lack of adequate orientation, awareness and institutional support for freshers entering the maritime workforce through minimal qualification pathways.

4. Whereas, it has been observed that the issuance of CDCs based solely on these basic safety training courses has resulted in an influx of non-qualified personnel into the seafaring ecosystem, many of whom are not gainfully employed or deployed onboard substandard vessels which leads to abandonment, thus contributing to the problem of oversupply and false hopes of maritime employment.

5. Whereas, there has been a worrying increase in the number of seafarer abandonment cases globally, with India now emerging as the most reported country of nationality affected. These cases not only reflect violations of basic human and labour rights but also expose deep gaps in accountability mechanisms in global shipping operations.

6. Whereas, the Directorate General of Shipping is actively working with international agencies, port authorities, and flag states to safeguard the rights of Indian seafarers and ensure swift repatriation, pending wage recovery, and legal redress. Stronger enforcement of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) provisions and robust support systems are the need of the hour.

7. Whereas, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) advocates for stricter entry-level qualifications and structured training pathways aligned with quality employment prospects. DG Shipping is committed to ensuring that Indian seafarers are adequately trained, employable and in alignment with national and international safety, training and employment standards.

8. Whereas, there has been an increasing trend of reducing the safe manning of merchant vessels, which in turn demands highly skilled and competent seafarers in order to remain competitive and compliant with international standards.

9. Whereas, so far, approximately 3,25,000 seafarers have completed only the five mandatory basic STCW courses and obtained an Indian CDC after issuance of Merchant Shipping (Continuous Discharge Certificate), and a majority of these seafarers are still awaiting an opportunity to join even their first vessel.

### **C. Corrective measures and Decisions:**

Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred under section 456 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 as amended and in supersession of all previous instructions or orders to the extent inconsistent with this order, the following is hereby ordered:

#### **1. Discontinuation of Indian CDC issuance via 5 Basic STCW courses route:**

The issuance of Indian CDCs based solely on the completion of the following five STCW courses such as Personal Survival Techniques (PST), Fire Prevention & Fire Fighting (FPFF), Elementary First Aid (EFA), Personal Safety & Social Responsibilities (PSSR) and Security Training for Seafarers with Designated Security Duties (STSDSD) **shall be discontinued**.

#### **2. Permitted routes for Indian CDC Issuance:**

Henceforth, Indian Continuous Discharge Certificates (CDCs) shall be issued only to candidates belonging to the following categories. However, all other eligibility criteria such as educational qualifications, medical fitness and age etc., as stipulated in the Merchant Shipping (CDC) Rules, 2017, shall remain unchanged:

a. Pre-Sea Training Certificate Holders: Candidates who have successfully completed DG Shipping-approved pre-sea training courses and, in addition, have completed the five Basic STCW courses.

b. Agniveer Candidates: Agniveer discharge certificate and have completed the five Basic STCW courses.

c. Hospitality Sector Candidates: Candidates holding a degree, diploma, or certificate in hotel management or equivalent course for hospitality industry etc, completed DG Shipping approved Orientation Course for Catering Personnel (OCCP) and have completed the five Basic STCW courses. The CDCs so issued will be with limitations for service on cruise vessels only.

d. Ex-Indian Navy Personnels: Retired Indian Naval officers or sailors in possession of a valid discharge certificate and who have completed the five Basic STCW courses.

e. Certified Welders / Fitters / Mechanics /Electricians / Plumbers: Candidates who have completed a welding course certified by a member of the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS), or those who hold a diploma/degree in fitter, mechanic, electrical, plumbing, or computer trades from any Industrial Training Institute (ITI) or an equivalent qualification from a recognised organisation approved by the Government of India or any State Government, shall be eligible, provided they have also completed the five mandatory Basic STCW courses.

f. **Certified Cooks:** Candidates holding a Cook Certificate of Competency (CoC) issued by the Government of India, and who have completed the five Basic STCW courses.

g. **Certificate of Competency (CoC) Holders:** Candidates holding a Certificate of Competency issued by the Government of India or a CoC recognised by the Government of India, and who have completed the five Basic STCW courses.

### 3. Directives to Maritime Training Institutes (MTIs)

All DG Shipping approved MTIs are instructed to cease advertising or offering standalone 5 basic STCW courses as a route to obtaining CDCs. Non-compliance may attract penal action including suspension or withdrawal of approval.

4. **Enhancing the quality of the rating seafarers** - In order to further add on to the quality of the Indian seafarers from rating background, the following measures will be implemented.

a. Fifty percent (50%) of the seats in any GP Rating training course shall be reserved for candidates possessing additional qualifications, such as completion of a welding course certified by a member of the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS), or holding a diploma/degree in fitter, electrical, mechanic, plumbing, or computer trades from any Industrial Training Institute (ITI) or an equivalent qualification from a recognised organisation approved by the Government of India or any State Government.

b. The upper age limit for entry into GP Rating training courses approved by the Director General shall be increased to 28 years, as against the existing limit of 25 years. The age relaxation applicable to SC/ST candidates, as stipulated in Training Circular No. 04 of 2014 dated 10.04.2014, shall continue to remain valid.

### 4. Public Awareness

Public advisory campaign would be launched through DG Shipping social media handles and other mediums to inform aspirants, students, parents and other stakeholders about this policy change and to highlight the genuine and structured career pathways in the maritime sector.

### 5. Monitoring and Review

a. This order shall be subject to periodic review based on employment data, stakeholder feedback and developments in international standards.

b. In order to safeguard the interests of genuine seafarers and uphold public interest, it is hereby clarified that all CDC applications submitted to the Shipping Master's office prior to the issuance of this DGS Order shall be processed as per existing rules.

c. The said decision has been taken in light of systemic misuse, irregularities and to ensure only qualified and appropriately trained candidates as per the revised eligibility criteria are only issued Indian CDCs and No transitional relaxation shall apply under this Order.

d. The renewal of CDCs for seafarers will continue to be carried out based on the eligibility criteria stipulated in the MS (CDC) Rules, 2017 as amended from time to time.

6. This order shall come into effect from 01.04.2026.

7. All stakeholders are advised to comply strictly with the revised eligibility framework with immediate effect. Any violation of the above guidelines by Maritime training institute will be

viewed as major violation for taking administrative action by DG Shipping. Further, all Government Shipping Offices, Surveyors of the maritime administration / Recognized Organization, Maritime training Institute are required to implement the above requirement.

(Shyam Jagannathan)  
Director General of Shipping

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