

No: ST-16011/18/2020-MA
Government of India
Ministry of Shipping

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Transport Bhavan 1, Sansad Marg,
New Delhi, Dated: the 03rd June, 2020

Office Memorandum

Subject: Standard Operating Protocol for repatriation of foreign seafarers from Indian Ports during COVID-19 Pandemic-reg.

The undersigned is directed to say that there has been a wide spread demand from the International Organizations, Maritime Community, International Trade Unions and International Transport Workers Federation to facilitate movement of seafarers to allow crew change on foreign going and domestic vessels.

2. The International Maritime Organization has prescribed SOPs for a crew member to join a vessel or disembark from it and travel to or from their country of residence. The IMO Secretary General has urged the Member States to implement the SOP to facilitate crew transfer from their Ports & Airports.

3. Considering that the shipping and port operations in India have continued throughout the lock down period and there is a need for many foreign seafarers to sign off from their vessels, it would be appropriate to allow sign off of foreign crew from vessels other than cruise vessels at Indian ports, with permission to take an out bound flight by Vande Bharat Mission, any scheduled commercial flight, or chartered flights. This move will not only help India in meeting its international obligation to facilitate movement of ship crew, but would also create job opportunities for Indian seafarers awaiting to join a vessel.

4. It is, therefore, requested that the matter may be considered and sign-off of foreign seafarers working on vessels other than cruise vessels may be allowed at Indian ports and these seafarers may further be allowed to go abroad on Vande Bharat Mission flights or scheduled commercial flights or chartered flights. A draft SOP for sign-off of foreign seafarers at Indian ports is enclosed.


(Satinder Pal Singh) 3/6/2020

Joint Secretary to the Government of India

Ministry of Home Affairs
Foreigners Division.
{Kind Attention: Shri Anil Malik, Additional Secretary}
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium,
Near Pragati Maidan, New Delhi-110001

DRAFT

DGS Order No. XX of 2020

Subject: Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)/ Protocol for repatriation of foreign seafarers from Indian ports- reg.

1. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has created a global crisis which has impacted all aspects of life and badly affected the work environment. In the maritime sector, it has severely impacted the ship to shore interactions, including crew changes.
2. The Directorate had issued DGS Order No. 12 of 2020 dated 22.04.2020 prescribing the Standard Operating Procedures / Protocols (SOP) for controlled crew change of Indian seafarers at Indian ports to facilitate and regulate crew change for seafarers so that the safe environment on the ship is not compromised or no contamination is brought from ship to shore.
3. It may be noted that appeals and statements / joint statements have been made by various international communities such as International Maritime Organisation (IMO), International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Air Transport Association (IATA), International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH), INTERTANKO, INTERCARGO, InterManager, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), World Shipping Council (WSC) etc. seeking the support of Governments and national authorities to facilitate crew changes, operations essential to maintain the global cargo supply chains and operations related to humanitarian aid, medical and relief flights.
4. Also, IMO-ICAO-ILO dated 26.05.2020 vide circular letter No.4204/Add.18 have given a joint statement on facilitation of crew changes in ports and airports in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. In continuation of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Govt. of India, vide Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I (A) dated xx.06.2020 and to facilitate and regulate crew sign-off for foreign seafarers on board the vessels making port of calls to Indian ports in a safe manner, the Directorate hereby prescribes the following Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for repatriation of foreign seafarers from Indian ports for compliance by all stakeholders;
6. **Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for sign-off by foreign national seafarers at Indian ports**
 1. Ensure DGS Order 12 of 2020 dated 22.04.2020 is complied with as applicable.
 2. Ship owner / Recruitment & Placement Services (RPS) to ensure that the validity of visa issued to foreign seafarer is adequate for their stay in India till they board

International flights for travel outside India.

3. The foreign seafarers with expired Indian visa may be allowed to sign-off on the basis of issuance of Transit Permitⁱ by local Immigration officer but subject to valid passport and valid Seaman's Identity document. The validity of the issued Transit Permit may be decided by the Immigration officer on a case by case basis for the seafarers to travel from port of disembarkation from ships to the International airports in India.
4. The master of a vessel, before arrival at its port of call, shall ascertain the state of health of each person on board the vessel and submit the Maritime Declaration of Health to the health authorities of the port and to the port authorities. In addition, the information required by the local health authorities of the port, like temperature chart, individual health declaration, etc. shall also be provided by the master as per the directives of the health authorities of the port. Port health authorities shall grant pratique to the vessel prior to berthing as per necessary health protocols.
5. Seafarer to wear necessary PPE (masks, hand gloves) on arrival.
6. All the luggage and personal effects of the foreign seafarers has to be disinfected at the time of disembarkation.
7. Seafarer will be cleared by Immigration authority at the nearest immigration center and custom authorities for luggage clearances etc. after arrival at the port.
8. Seafarer arriving on a vessel would undergo the COVID-19 test to confirm that he/she is negative of COVID-19. After disembarking and till the time the seafarer reaches the testing facility, the shipowner/RPS shall ensure that all safety precautions as per standard health protocol are observed.
9. Till the time test reports are received, the seafarer shall be kept under quarantine facility approved by the Port/State Health Authorities.
10. The seafarer tested as "positive" for COVID-19 will be dealt with as per the procedures laid down by MoHFW, Govt. of India.
11. Till such time international flights/connecting flights are available for the desired location / country, ship owner / RPS agency to arrange for boarding and lodging of seafarer at a safe locationⁱⁱ.
12. Upon a seafarer tested as "negative", the Ship owner / RPS agency to ensure completion of the following processes if travelling by car:
 - a. Seafarer's travel route post sign-off is to be identified;
 - b. Details of the Seafarer, vehicle and driverⁱⁱⁱ for the proposed travel to be uploaded on DGS website "e-pass for foreign seafarers link" for generation of e-pass, if needed;
14. Ship owner / RPS agency to download the e-pass and share it with local agents, seafarers and driver for the travel, if needed.
15. The transit pass (to and fro) will be issued for a fixed route and with specified validity

and will have to be adhered to strictly.

16. Ship owner / RPS agency to ensure the following for taking seafarer to airport:

- a. Vehicle being used for travel is properly sanitized and PPE (masks, hand gloves) and sanitizers made available for driver and seafarer^{iv};
- b. Driver and seafarer to maintain the social distancing requirements as per MoHFW guidelines^{iv};

17. On reaching the airport, seafarer to abide by the protocols as desired by airport authorities.

18. In addition to above, seafarer shall abide and full comply by all the concerned flag state orders pertaining to COVID-19 at all times.

Notes:

1. All necessary arrangements and facilities at ports in accordance with the guidelines of MoHFW will be made by the port authorities concerned.
2. The entire cost of transportation, stay and logistics etc. of seafarers will be borne by the ship owner / RPS agency.
3. Ship owner / RPS agency to make necessary arrangements and ensure that the signing-off foreign seafarer is in possession of valid stay and travel insurance policy as applicable.
4. The cost of daily subsistence allowance (including accommodation), transport, visa application/ extension assistance and cost, passport application/extension assistance and cost, access to medical treatment for existing morbidities or for any COVID 19 infected cases and its cost need to be borne by ship owner / RPS Agency.
5. Authenticity of the E-pass is verifiable online in www.dgshipping.gov.in
6. In case of any difficulty is faced en-route for signing-off, the seafarer may contact any of the following:
 - a. Contact details of e-pass issuing authority as mentioned under section in "pass details" /
 - b. DG Comm. center (022-22614646) /
 - c. Subash Barguzer, Dy. DG [Crew] (barguzer-dgs@nic.in) and /
 - d. Capt. (Dr.) A. Daniel J Joseph, Dy. DG [Tech.] (danieljohn-dgs@gov.in)
7. Daily record keeping form for seafarer - Annexure I
8. The detailed process for generation of e-pass for foreign seafarers by RPS is detailed in - Annexure II
9. Notwithstanding above permissions for crew change; the owners, operators, Master and signing-off crew of the vessel shall ensure that at all times they shall comply with all applicable relevant orders of Govt. of India and such permission shall not cause any danger to person, property or the environment.

(Amitabh Kumar)
Director General of Shipping &
Additional Secretary to the Govt. of India

Enclosure(s): As above