

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1919
ANSWERED ON 04.08.2026

‘SEAFARER-FIRST’ INITIATIVE

1919. DR. DHARMASTHALA VEERENDRA HEGGADE:

Will the Minister of PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has launched a comprehensive 'Seafarer-First' initiative to safeguard Indian seafarers operating in the conflict-affected region recently, the details thereof;
- (b) whether Government proposes to establish a real-time operational dashboard to track every Indian seafarer aboard vessels operating in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman;
- (c) the measures taken by Government to ensure the safety, communication and possible evacuation and repatriation of Indian seafarers operating in the region; and
- (d) the specific steps initiated to ensure that no Indian seafarer is compelled to sail without adequate information, protection and support?

ANSWER

MINISTER FOR PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
(SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL)

(a) to (d) The Government accords the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian seafarers, who form a significant part of the global maritime workforce. In view of the escalation of the security situation in Iran, the Strait of Hormuz, the Persian Gulf and adjacent waters, the Directorate General of Maritime Administration (DGMA), a subordinate office under this Ministry has instituted a comprehensive and graded 'Seafarer-First' framework of measures. As part of this a real-time reporting, tracking and monitoring mechanism for vessels and seafarers operating in the said region is in place and operational. The details of steps/ measures taken by the Government is placed at **Annexure**.

Advisories to Ensure the Safety and Security of Indian Seafarers:

Following advisories operate alongside the standing maritime security architecture established under DGS Circular No. 08 of 2024 dated 10.04.2024 and are supported by a 24-hour Control Room, continuous real-time monitoring through the DG Communication Centre under DGMA, and the issue of a Situation Report every 24 hours.

- i. DGS Circular No. 01 of 2026 dated 14.01.2026 – issued pursuant to the advisory of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Embassy of India, Tehran, advising all Recruitment and Placement Services Licence (RPSL) companies and shipping companies not to deploy Indian seafarers to Iran until further orders, and advising vessels calling at Iranian ports or transiting the Strait of Hormuz to exercise utmost caution.
- ii. DGS Circular No. 08 of 2026 dated 28.02.2026 – mandating comprehensive ship-shore security drills covering loitering munitions, unmanned surface vessels and similar threats, testing of the Ship Security Alert System prior to transit, voyage-specific risk assessment by owners, operators and charterers, full implementation of Ship Security Plans, and immediate reporting of any suspicious activity, interception, electronic interference or GNSS disruption to the DG Communication Centre.
- iii. DGS Circular No. 09 of 2026 dated 28.02.2026 – Urgent Advisory to Indian Seafarers and Shipping Stakeholders in view of Escalating Situation in Iran, requiring Indian seafarers in Iran to remain vigilant, register with the Embassy of India, coordinate for safe departure where feasible, and directing stakeholders to immediately provide details of Indian seafarers in affected areas.
- iv. DGS Circular No. 21 of 2026 dated 07.04.2026 - issued a safety advisory for Indian seafarers ashore in Iran and onboard vessels operating in or around Iranian waters, directing them to remain vigilant, restrict unnecessary movement, follow advisories issued by the Embassy of India in Tehran, maintain contact with company representatives, and utilize DGS emergency support channels for assistance as required.
- v. DGS Circular No. 31 of 2026 dated 13.06.2026 – Precautionary Measures for Indian Seafarers in view of the Heightened Security Situation in the Gulf Region, reiterating heightened security vigilance, directing shipping companies and RPSL companies to restrict deployment of Indian seafarers to conflict areas until further orders (except emergency crew changes with consent), monitoring and reporting requirements, and dissemination of verified security information.
- vi. DGS Circular No. 33 of 2026 dated 26.06.2026 – issued upon improvement in the situation, superseding the earlier restriction and permitting normal operations subject to caution and applicable coastal-State security protocols, and providing for a coordinated evacuation mechanism involving the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), the MICA Centre and coastal States.
- vii. DGS Circular No. 36 of 2026 dated 15.07.2026 – issued upon renewed escalation, advising ship owners, ship managers and RPSL companies to avoid deploying Indian

seafarers on vessels undertaking voyages involving passage through the Strait of Hormuz until further orders, together with heightened security vigilance and full compliance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code.

Details of real-time reporting, tracking and monitoring mechanism for vessels and seafarers operating in the said region:

- i. The eNavik Portal, operationalised on 01.07.2026, provides an integrated digital platform with dedicated 24x7 Marine Casualty Reporting, Crisis Management and Seafarer Grievance Redressal modules, enabling digital reporting of marine casualties, security incidents and distress situations, automated routing of incident reports to the concerned authorities, and real-time tracking of response measures and case progression.
- ii. An online Ship Reporting Form, has been instituted under DGS Circular No. 08 of 2024, through this all vessels transiting the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea and adjacent waters submit their details, thereby maintaining a comprehensive and up-to-date vessel database which facilitates tracking and coordination and enables a swift response by the Indian Navy in the event of an incident.
- iii. A requirement, under DGS Circular No. 08 of 2026, for the Company Security Officer to furnish to the DG Communication Centre the full particulars of the vessel together with the crew list.
- iv. Continuous real-time monitoring is undertaken through the DG Communication Centre, which is manned round the clock, in close coordination with the Indian Navy, the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) and other competent authorities.
- v. A Situation Report is compiled and issued every 24 hours, which records, inter alia, the vessel-wise position and the number of Indian seafarers onboard each vessel in the region.

The measures taken to ensure the safety, communication, evacuation and repatriation of Indian seafarers operating in the region are as follows:

- i. **Communication:** A dedicated 24-hour Control Room and the DG Communication Centre (MMDAC) function round the clock. A defined incident-communication protocol requires contact with the nearest Indian Naval or coalition warship on VHF Channel 16 and immediate intimation to the DG Communication Centre, the IFC-IOR and the UKMTO. Since activation, the Control Room has handled 15,771 telephone calls and 36,499 e-mails from seafarers, their families and maritime stakeholders. Navigational warnings and maritime security advisories are disseminated to stakeholders on a continuing basis.

- ii. ***Evacuation and Repatriation:*** A total of 60 vessels have safely transited SoH carrying cargo for India. Further, 3,972 Indian seafarers have been repatriated from the Gulf region. Close and continuing contact is maintained with the families of seafarers, and dedicated welfare counsellor access has been provided wherever required. In cases of fatality, immediate financial support is facilitated, including release of Rs. 10,00,000 (Rupees Ten Lakh) through the Seafarers Welfare Fund Society.

Steps taken to ensure no Indian Seafarer is compelled to sail without adequate information, protection and support:

- i. **Regulated engagement.** Every Indian seafarer is engaged through a licensed RPSL agency, and no seafarer can complete emigration clearance or sign-on formalities without formal and verified approvals. This provides an effective single point of control for the enforcement of deployment restrictions and for compliance monitoring.
- ii. **Consent in crew changes.** Where a crew change in the conflict-affected area was permitted in a genuine emergency under DGS Circular No. 31 of 2026, it was expressly made subject to the consent of the seafarer concerned. Genuine emergency cases are considered only within the applicable legal and safety framework.
- iii. **Removal of compulsion at the systemic level.** By advising against deployment on voyages through the Strait of Hormuz, the advisory removes, at the level of the system, any pressure upon an individual seafarer to accept a hazardous engagement.
- iv. **Disclosure and due diligence.** RPSL companies and seafarers are expected to verify the intended route of the vessel, its flag, the reputation and welfare record of the owner or manager, the insurance position and any exposure to conflict-affected or high-risk waters before a contract is accepted. RPSL companies are further expected to provide clear information to seafarers regarding the nature of the voyage, the trading pattern and the likely exposure to high-risk areas.
- v. **Grievance redressal and support.** A comprehensive 24x7 grievance redressal mechanism is available through a domestic toll-free helpline (1800-889-7768), an international toll-free helpline for the United States of America (+1-888-988-0256), WhatsApp support (+91 8655856830), a dedicated e-mail address (enavik.24x7@gov.in) and the e-Navik grievance portal, in addition to the DG Communication Centre.
- vi. **Verified information.** Stakeholders have been advised to verify incident-related information through official Government sources and to refrain from circulating unverified reports which may prejudice the interests of seafarers and their families.
