

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 196
ANSWERED ON 21.07.2026

SEAFARER SAFETY FRAMEWORK FOR EMERGING MARITIME RISKS

196. SHRI SANJAY KUMAR JHA:

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

- (a) Whether, despite India has a legal and regulatory framework governing seafarer safety under the Merchant Shipping Act, Maritime Labour Rules, and international conventions, recent incidents involving Indian seafarers in conflict-sensitive maritime regions have exposed new operational risks;
- (b) if so, whether the Ministry believe the existing framework would adequately addresses challenges such as conflict-zone deployment, emergency medical evacuation, and crisis response; and
- (c) if not, the legislative or policy amendments being considered to strengthen seafarer protection?

ANSWER

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

a) to (c) The Merchant Shipping Act, 2025 has come into force with effect from 15th March, 2026. The Act modernises India's maritime legal framework in line with contemporary international maritime standards and significantly strengthens the statutory framework governing the safety, welfare and rights of seafarers. It introduces statutory safeguards for abandoned seafarers, strengthens the regulation and oversight of Recruitment and Placement Services, and provides a robust legal framework for implementing evolving international maritime labour standards.

In addition, the Directorate General of Maritime Administration, the regulator under Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, in response to evolving security situations in conflict-sensitive maritime regions has issued advisories and circulars. Details attached as **Annexure**.

Annexure

1. The advisories include precautionary measures, heightened security vigilance, reporting requirements, 24x7 emergency contact mechanisms, coordination with Indian Missions abroad, restrictions on deployment of Indian seafarers in identified conflict areas, guidance on emergency preparedness, and dissemination of safety information to seafarers and stakeholders. The details are:

i. **DGS Advisory (14.01.2026)** – *Advisory to Indian Seafarers and Shipping Stakeholders in view of MEA Advisory on Iran*, advising shipping companies not to deploy Indian seafarers to Iran until further orders, requiring close monitoring of Indian crews in the region, and directing seafarers to follow advisories issued by the Embassy of India and the Ministry of External Affairs.

ii. **DGS Circular 09 of 2026 (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.

iii. **DGS Circular 10 of 2026 (06.03.2026)** – *Safety Advisory for Indian Seafarers and Shipping Stakeholders Operating in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Adjacent Waters*, advising continuous vigilance, compliance with ISPS Code security measures, establishment of 24x7 emergency contact mechanisms, liaison with Indian Missions, emergency preparedness, and psychological counselling support for seafarers and their families where necessary.

iv. **DGS Circular 11 of 2026 (07.03.2026)** – *Social Media Advisory to Maritime Stakeholders and Seafarer Community*, directing maritime stakeholders to refrain from circulating unverified information, rumours, fake videos or speculative reports and to rely only on authenticated information from official sources.

v. **DGS Circular 21 of 2026 (07.04.2026)** – *Safety Advisory for Indian Seafarers Ashore in Iranian Ports and Onboard Vessels Operating in or Around Iranian Waters*, advising seafarers in Iran to remain at designated locations, avoid unnecessary travel, maintain heightened vigilance, follow Embassy advisories and remain in contact with company representatives, while also providing 24x7 emergency assistance contact details.

vi. **DGS Circular 31 of 2026 (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.

2. Further, a dedicated helpline has been established for providing assistance to seafarers. The stakeholders have also been directed to establish emergency communication mechanisms, maintain liaison with Indian Missions and Consular authorities, monitor official advisories, facilitate assistance to affected seafarers, and provide appropriate support during distress situations.
