



भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
पत्तन, पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
नौवहन महानिदेशालय, मुंबई
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF SHIPPING, MUMBAI

F. No. 23-CDC/2/2026-CREW - DGS (38805)

Date: 23.05.2026

DGS ORDER 12 OF 2026

Sub: Revision of Eligibility Criteria for Issue of Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC) and Enhancement of Seafarer Quality Standards – reg.

Whereas an alarming pattern has emerged wherein unscrupulous recruitment agents lure young aspirants, particularly from remote and economically vulnerable regions, with false promises of lucrative seafaring careers. Such agents charge exorbitant fees under the pretext of long-duration pre-sea training. However, candidates are often kept in lodges or temporary accommodation for several months without any structured training and are ultimately enrolled only in short-duration courses covering the five basic Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) safety courses, upon completion of which a Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC) is obtained.

2. Whereas such seafarers are thereafter either deployed on substandard vessels, frequently operating under open registry flags with limited regulatory oversight, or are not deployed at all, resulting in abandonment-like situations causing severe financial and emotional hardship. In several instances, the intermediaries abscond after collecting substantial sums, leaving victims without recourse.

3. Whereas the Director-General of Maritime Administration (Director-General) continues to receive a growing number of complaints relating to such fraudulent practices, often accompanied by First Information Reports (FIRs) lodged by affected candidates or their families.

4. Whereas the situation warrants urgent regulatory strengthening, targeted awareness initiatives in vulnerable regions, and prompt enforcement measures to dismantle such exploitative networks and safeguard the integrity of India's maritime workforce.

5. Whereas the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) report has revealed a significant surge in global seafarer abandonment cases, with India emerging as the most affected nationality. In 2024, 3,133 seafarers sought ITF assistance after being abandoned, representing an 87% increase from 1,676 cases in 2023. Of these, 899 were Indian nationals, which was more than double the 401 cases recorded in the previous year concerning Indian seafarers. Further, in 2025, this number has increased to 1,125 Indian seafarers.

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6. Whereas analysis of ITF data for 2024 and 2025 indicates that a substantial proportion of Indian seafarers reported to be abandoned, were either serving on vessels registered under open registry flags or were first-time seafarers who had obtained their CDC after completing only the five basic STCW courses, without undergoing structured long-duration pre-sea residential training.
7. Whereas these trends highlight two critical vulnerabilities, namely (i) exploitation risks associated with loosely regulated open registry vessels, and (ii) inadequate orientation, awareness, and institutional support for fresh entrants entering the maritime workforce through minimal qualification pathways.
8. Whereas the increasing incidence of abandonment reflects not only violations of basic human and labour rights but also exposes systemic gaps in accountability within segments of global shipping operations.
9. Whereas the Director-General is actively coordinating with international agencies, port authorities, and flag States to safeguard the rights of Indian seafarers and ensure repatriation, recovery of pending wages, and access to legal remedies, and stronger enforcement of Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) provisions and institutional safeguards is essential.
10. Whereas the International Maritime Organization advocates structured entry-level qualifications and training pathways aligned with sustainable employment prospects and the Director-General remains committed to ensuring that Indian seafarers are properly trained and compliant with national and international safety, training, and employment standards
11. Whereas the global trend towards reduced safe manning levels necessitates deployment of highly skilled and competent seafarers to maintain operational safety and regulatory compliance.
12. Whereas stakeholder feedback and data-driven assessment clearly indicate that the limited-entry pathway based solely on completion of five basic STCW courses has been widely misused by unscrupulous intermediaries, leading to compromised safety standards, poor employability outcomes, financial distress among aspirants, and reputational harm to Indian seafarers internationally. Though originally introduced with a facilitative intent, the provision has, in practice, enabled entry into a high-risk profession without adequate orientation, structured training, or assured employment linkage, thereby necessitating immediate corrective action in the interest of maritime safety and seafarer welfare.
13. Whereas approximately 3,50,000 candidates have obtained an Indian CDC after completing only the five mandatory basic STCW courses, and nearly 1,80,000 of them remain without their first shipboard employment, rendering them particularly vulnerable to exploitation within the shipping sector.

14. Now, therefore, in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 301 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025, and in supersession of all previous instructions or orders to the extent inconsistent with this Order, the following is hereby directed:

14.1. Discontinuation of Indian CDC issuance based on 5 basic STCW courses: The issuance of Indian CDC based solely on completion of the five basic STCW courses, namely Personal Survival Techniques (PST), Fire Prevention and Fire Fighting (FPFF), Elementary First Aid (EFA), Personal Safety and Social Responsibilities (PSSR) and Security Training for Seafarers with Designated Security Duties (STSDSD), shall be discontinued.

14.2. Permitted routes for Indian CDC Issuance: Henceforth, Indian CDCs shall be issued only to candidates belonging to the following categories:

14.2.1. Pre-Sea Training Certificate Holders: Candidates who have successfully completed the Director-General-approved pre-sea training courses and have also completed the five basic STCW courses.

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

14.2.3. Hospitality Sector Candidates:

14.2.3.1. Candidates holding a degree, diploma or certificate in hotel management or an equivalent hospitality course, who have completed the Director-General-approved Orientation Course for Catering Personnel (OCCP) and the five basic STCW courses.

14.2.3.2. In exceptional cases, hospitality and passenger-service professionals engaged through Director-General-approved cruise line recruitment and placement companies to meet operational requirements, who have completed the five basic safety courses under the STCW Convention, in which case the CDC shall be issued with validity restricted exclusively to service on cruise and passenger vessels only.

14.2.4. Ex-Indian Navy Personnels: Retired Indian Naval officers or sailors holding a valid discharge certificate and having completed the five basic STCW courses.

14.2.5. Certified Cooks: Candidates holding a Cook Certificate of Competency (CoC) issued by the Government of India or a CoC recognized by the Government of India and who have completed the five basic STCW courses.

14.2.6. Certificate of Competency Holders: Candidates holding a CoC issued by the Government of India or a CoC recognized by the Government of India, and who have completed the five basic STCW courses.

15. All Director-General-approved maritime training institutes 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.

16. 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:

16.1. Twenty five percent (25%) of the approved seats in any GP Rating training course shall be reserved for candidates possessing additional qualifications, such as candidates who have completed a welding course certified by an IACS member, or who hold a diploma or certificate in fitter, mechanic, electrical, plumbing or computer trades from a Government approved institution such as ITIs. The duration of such technical courses shall be not less than one year.

16.2. 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.

17. All CDC applications already submitted to the shipping master offices on the basis of undertaking basic STCW courses prior to 01.08.2026 shall be processed for issuance of CDCs in accordance with the extant rules and instructions. Further, all CDC issued under the Merchant Shipping (Continuous Discharge Certificate) Rules, 2017, as amended, prior to entry into force of this Order shall remain valid and without any impact.

18. All stakeholders are advised to strictly comply with the revised eligibility framework. Any violation of the above guidelines by a maritime training institute shall be treated as a major violation and may attract administrative action by the Director-General. Further, all Government shipping offices, surveyors of the maritime administration/recognized organizations and maritime training institutes shall implement the above requirements in letter and spirit.

19. This order shall come into effect from 01.08.2026.

(Shyam Jagannathan)
Director General of Maritime Administration