

CIRCULAR

Subject: **SoP for controlled crew change at anchorages within port limits**

In the wake of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, Indian seafarers are stranded across various ships inspite of completion of their contracts as countries around the world are in a state of lockdown and refusing to sign them off. In order to address the concerns of the seafarers stranded across various ships, DGS vide Addendum No.1 to its Order NO.12/2020 date 06.05.2020 has issued an SOP for controlled crew change at anchorages within port limits.

While implementing this SOP, due care should be ensured from security angle so that loopholes if any are not exploited by undesirable elements. Hence it is desired that Immigration sea check posts across the country should follow prescribed procedures uniformly while effecting crew change from anchorage, which are illustrated below, leaving no scope either for complaints from the seafarers or ensuring fulfillment of security requirements.

1. Crew change shall be effected by the Shipping Agent only after obtaining permission of the concerned Port and the Port shall mention the exact position of the vessel while granting such permission.
2. As the crew change is to be effected within port limits, the Port authorities shall incorporate the name of the vessel in their daily vessel schedule which would ensure that all the services rendered to the vessel in their daily vessel schedule which would ensure that all the services rendered to the vessel are routed through the Port.
3. The Master of the vessel, through the authorized steamer agent shall submit a request to the FRRO/Civil authority along with the arrival notice as prescribed by the IMO and last ten ports of call for approval of crew change at anchorage, 48 hrs before the arrival of the vessel.

4. The FRRO shall grant permission subject to the submitted documents being in order and fulfillment of all prescribed conditions which shall be communicated to the steamer agent by way of a speaking order.
5. On arrival of the vessel at the anchorage, the steamer agent shall submit the arrival report to the Immigration authorities, along with the request of the Master of the vessel and steamer agent for effecting crew change in the prescribed proforma.
6. Necessary clearance/permission should be obtained from the Customs, PHO, Harbour master and the Harbour Police and a copy of the same submitted to Immigration.
7. The crew change shall be carried out only by utilizing tugs owned by the port or registered with the port. No private boats shall be utilized for this purpose.
8. The tugs thus deployed by the port shall move to/from the anchorage from designated wharves of the Port where CISF deployment is ensured.
9. Immigration authorities shall check the tugs/boats deployed for this purpose both at the time of proceeding to the anchorage and on return and ensure that no unauthorized person manages to proceed or arrive to/from anchorage.
10. The onus of producing all the crew who are to be signed on/off at the office of Immigration for completion of Immigration procedures rests with the steamer agent.
11. The Steamer Agent shall strictly adhere to the guidelines regarding COVI D-19 issued by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and DGS both for the signing on and signing off crew.
12. The vessel shall not be permitted to sail out from Port limits until sign off formalities are completed and NOC is granted by Immigration.
13. The sailing time of the vessel shall be intimated to Immigration by the steamer agent by coordinating with the port.
14. The crew change should be limited to the day time and requests during nights should be avoided.

15. This facility shall be provided only to the crew of cargo ships. Necessary clearance from MHA has to be obtained for grant of crew change in respect of cruise vessels.

16. Once the Covid 19 Pandemic protocols are removed, Sign on and Sign Off procedure must revert to practices as prescribed by the Visa Manual.

The steamer agent shall communicate to the Master of the Vessel that liability under Sec 6 of Foreigners Act and Sec 16 of Registration of Foreigner's Rule 1992, shall be applicable on the Master and Steamer Agent while effecting crew change from anchorage and contravention of the mentioned conditions shall invite legal action as per Sec 14 of Foreigners Act.

Ajaya,
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