

MCI Circular 316/2025

To: Vessel Owners, Managers, Masters, Officers, Agents and all other interested parties

Subject: Important Notice – Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), India Circular No. 31 of 2025

Date: 23 July 2025

Summary:

Maritime Cook Islands (MCI) draws your attention to Circular No. 31 of 2025, issued by the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), India. The circular outlines new compliance requirements for Indian seafarers deployed on foreign flagged vessels, including those registered under the Cook Islands flag.

The new circular mandates that Indian nationals serving as Masters, Officers or Ratings must hold either:

- Certificates issued by the Government of India, or
- Certificates issued by foreign maritime administrations that are formally recognised by India under a bilateral agreement in accordance with STCW Convention, Regulation I/10.

Failure to comply with these new requirements may result in issues during Port State Control (PSC) inspections, including potential detentions, when calling at Indian Ports.

Key Requirements:

Effective immediately, the following must be observed for Indian nationals serving on Cook Islands flagged vessels trading to or from Indian ports:

1. Certificates of Competency (CoCs) and Certificates of Proficiency (CoPs) must be:
 - Issued by the Government of India; or
 - Issued by a country recognized by India under a bilateral agreement (refer to Annexure A of DGS Circular 31 of 2025).

MCI Guidance:

To avoid operational disruption or PSC related issues, vessel owners, managers, and crewing agencies for Cook Islands flagged vessels calling at Indian ports are strongly advised to:

- Review the certification of all Indian crew currently or potentially employed
- Avoid deploying Indian nationals who hold certificates issued by countries not listed in Annexure A of DGS Circular 31 of 2025.

Maritime Cook Islands is monitoring the situation and is engaging with the Directorate General of Shipping to seek further clarification, with the aim of minimising any potential impact on our seafarers and vessel operations. Further updates or guidance will be issued in due course.

For any questions or further clarification regarding the contents of this Circular, please contact the Seafarer Training & Certification Department at seafarers@maritimecookislands.com.



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

DGS (NT/ENG) Circular No. 31 of 2025

File No. 25-13012/3/2024-NT - DGS		Date: 18.07.2025
Authorized by Chief Examiner of Master & Mates and Chief Examiner of Engineers.	Subject: Mandatory compliance measures to prevent engagement of Seafarers without appropriate training and demonstratable competence prior issuance of certificates – Instructions to Ship Owner, Ship Managers, RPSL Agencies, Seafarers and Stakeholders – reg.	
<p><u>Preamble</u></p> <p>1. The SOLAS Convention (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea) mandates the safe operation of ships in accordance with Chapter IX – Management for the Safe Operation of Ships. The International Safety Management (ISM) Code further requires that seafarers are duly qualified, certified, and medically fit to perform their duties onboard ships.</p> <p>2. Article I of the STCW Convention (International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers), 1978 as amended, mandates that each State Party shall ensure that seafarers onboard ships are qualified and fit for their duties, in order to ensure the safety of life at sea and the protection of the marine environment.</p> <p>3. Article VI of the STCW Convention mandates that certificates for masters, officers, or ratings shall be issued only to candidates who meet the requirements for service, age, medical fitness, training, qualifications, and examinations, in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Convention.</p> <p>4. In order to ensure compliance with the above-mentioned provisions, the Government of India has notified the Merchant Shipping (Management for the Safe Operation of Ships) Rules, 2000, and the Merchant Shipping (STCW) Rules, 2014. The STCW Rules mandate that the training and assessment of seafarers are to be administered, supervised, and monitored in accordance with the STCW Convention.</p>		

Furthermore, each Party is required to ensure that quality standards are enforced for the training, examination, and certification of seafarers.

5. Recognizing, that the Government of India issues Certificates to seafarers only after they complete approved training programmes and demonstrate the required competence in specific duties related to safety, security, and pollution prevention. All such certificates, issued by the Indian maritime administration signifies that the seafarer has met the international standards outlined in the STCW Convention and therefore are recognized by other major maritime administration, in accordance with Regulation I/10 of the STCW Convention.

6. Noting, that approximately 80% of Indian seafarers are employed on foreign-flagged ships, the role of the Recruitment and Placement Service License (RPSL) agencies, which are duly approved by the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) in accordance with the Merchant Shipping (Recruitment and Placement of Seafarers) Rules, 2016 — hereinafter referred to as the MS-RPSL Rules has over the years proven to be crucial.

7. The MS-RPSL Rules impose several obligations on these agencies, including but not limited to the following:

a. Rule 5(1)(d) of the MS-RPSL Rules mandates that recruitment and placement service providers must verify that the seafarers recruited or placed by them are duly qualified and possess all documents necessary for the jobs concerned.

b. Rule 5(1)(k) of the MS-RPSL Rules mandates the development and maintenance of operational practices to verify seafarers' medical examinations, identity documents, and other items required for their employment.

c. Rule 5(1)(l) of the MS-RPSL Rules mandates that agencies must maintain, with due regard to privacy rights and the need to protect confidentiality, full and complete records of seafarers covered by their recruitment and placement system. These records should include, but are not limited to, the seafarers' qualifications, employment history, personal data relevant to employment, and medical information.

d. Rule 5(1)(s) of the MS-RPSL Rules mandates that agencies must ensure all mandatory certificates and documents submitted for employment are up to date, not fraudulently obtained, and that employment references are duly verified.

Matter of Concern

8. The Directorate General of Shipping came to know of reported instances of Indian seafarers being offered certificates by unapproved private entities which are not commensurate with the training and assessment standards set by India as a leading maritime administration following a structured programme of examination, assessment and certification, in line with the requirements of the STCW Convention. Furthermore, these seafarers have been lured by authorised as well as unauthorised

RPSLs to take up assignments on foreign flagged ships without adequate scrutiny of the fraudulent certificates issued to them.

9. Also, few of these fraudulent CoC/CoP holders were found in possession of STCW course certificates issued by maritime training institutes which have not been accorded any kind of approval by the maritime administration of India, i.e. the Directorate General of Shipping. There have been PSC intervention on vessels wherein engagement of seafarers with fraudulent CoCs, CoPs, and STCW course certificates have been noted with concern.

10. As a prudent maritime administration, the Directorate General of Shipping initiated a detailed inquiry into these acts of agents and touts operating both within and outside the country. The common trend noted amongst most of the known cases are as listed below:

a. Seafarers sailing as ratings were lured with promises of being eligible to be issued with higher-grade Certificates of Competency (CoCs) and Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) from foreign administrations through fraudulent means.

b. Fraudulent agents have been offering 'package' of delivering course certificates issued by institutes that were not approved by the Directorate General of Shipping, Govt. of India, and the foreign CoC/CoP without any course being conducted. The inquiry had revealed that these maritime institutes did not even exist at the stated addresses.

d. Considering the serious nature of these violations, which undermine the fundamental principles and objectives of the STCW Convention and Rules framed under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, the Directorate has initiated necessary actions including the filing of criminal complaints, confiscation of such fraudulently obtained certificates, and informing the issuing authority with a request to initiate cancellation of certificates by them.

11. In recent times, several Certificates of Competency (CoCs) issued by few Administrations have been confiscated by the Directorate General of Shipping, as part of the investigation and as identified during Port State Control (PSC) inspections. These activities which are attributable to a few unscrupulous agents has not only caused disruption to the lives of seafarers who are facing the investigation by the authorities, but has the potential to cause more damages in the future if not suitably addressed at this stage.

Immediate & prompt action to be initiated by the Ship Owners/Managers/RPSL agencies & Seafarers:

12. Therefore, in order to curb these fraudulent practices, the Directorate hereby mandates the following measures to be implemented by all the Ship Owners/Ship Managers, RPSL agencies and Seafarers. They shall ensure that:

- a. Seafarers engaged as officers or engineers on any foreign-flagged ships must hold a valid Certificate of Competency (CoC) issued by the Government of India OR by a maritime administration from countries whose certificates are recognized by India through mutual agreement aligning with Regulation I/10 of the STCW Convention (See Annexure A).
- b. ABs, Watchkeeping ratings, and Ratings must possess a Certificate of Proficiency (CoP) issued or recognized by the Government of India, or by a maritime administration from countries whose certificates are recognized by India through mutual agreement aligning with Regulation I/10 of the STCW Convention (See Annexure A).
- c. Check for all STCW course certificates of the seafarer to be engaged and ensure that the courses—such as Basic Safety Training, Basic and Advanced Modular Courses required for obtaining COP/COC for every Indian seafarer must have been issued by maritime training institutes approved by the Directorate General of Shipping. In case of doubt, the DG Shipping webpage may be visited for any confirmation.
- d. Maritime training certificates for any training programme under the STCW Convention has to be undertaken by training institutes with prior approval of the Directorate General of Shipping only. No entity in India shall issue any training certificate under the STCW Convention without prior approval from the Directorate General of Shipping.
- e. The authenticity of CoCs, CoPs, and course certificates must be verified through the Directorate's official website. In case of any doubt or need for clarification, RPSL agencies shall seek verification from the nearest Mercantile Marine Department (MMD).
- f. Seafarers must be engaged in capacity commensurate to their qualifications and must obtain the necessary flag endorsements in accordance with Regulation I/10 of the STCW Convention prior being deployed on ships.
- g. Failure to comply with these directions may attract penal action under the applicable provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act and the MS-RPSL Rules.
- h. Seafarers should mandatorily attend training courses only at DGS-approved training institutes and refrain from engaging in any fraudulent practices to obtain certificates purportedly from foreign administrations with the intent of securing employment without undergoing the necessary training, assessment, and certification processes as mandated by international Conventions. Any seafarer found holding fraudulent certificates in violation of these requirements shall be debarred from sailing for a minimum period of two years and CDC of such seafarer shall be suspended immediately and INDoS number will be blocked in e-Gov portal.

13. All stakeholders, including ship owners, ship managers, RPSL agencies and Maritime Training Institutes approved by the Directorate General of Shipping, are hereby required to take serious note of these instructions contained in this circular and initiate necessary action with immediate effect. Seafarers shall be guided accordingly.

This is issued with the approval of the Competent Authority.



18.07.25

(Capt. Ravi Singh Sikarwar)
Nautical Surveyor-cum-DDG(Tech.)

To

1. The Principal Officers, Mercantile Marine Department, Mumbai / Kolkata / Chennai / Kandla / Kochi.
2. All Surveyor – in – Charge, Mercantile Marine Department
3. The Indian National Ship-owners Association (INSA)
4. The Indian Coastal Conference Shipping Association (ICCSA)
5. Foreign Owners Representation and Ship-manages Association (FOSMA)
6. Maritime Association of Ship-owners Ship-manages and Agents (MASSA)
7. All Stakeholders / Shipping Companies through DGS Website.
8. Maritime Unions
9. Hindi Cell – with a request to translate this circular in Hindi and upload on DGS
10. Computer cell.

Copy to:

11. PS to DG(S)
12. Sr. PS to CS
13. Sr. PS to NA (i/c)
14. Sr. PS to CSS (i/c)

Annexure A

A. Bilateral Agreements for Mutual recognition of CoCs (i.e. India will recognize foreign country's certificates and that foreign country will recognize Indian certificates of seafarers).

1.	Malaysia -2001	Valid unless terminated
2.	UAE- 25.01.2017	Five years extendable to successive period of 5 years.
3.	South Korea- 10.04.2018	Five years extendable to successive period of 5 years
4.	Sweden – 02.12.2019	Full Time
5.	UK – 21.07.2022	Five years unless terminated with a six months prior written notice.
6.	Iran- 21.08.2022	Valid unless terminated

B. In addition, Indian Seafarers holding COC, COP & Modular course certificates issued by Singapore/ Australia/ New Zealand/ Canada and Ireland may be accepted for recruitment if the certificates were obtained by attending training in these countries. The authenticity of certificates issued by these countries should be verified online from the respective Maritime Administration prior to engagement of seafarers.


18.07.22