



Sarbananda Sonowal Reviews Safety Preparedness for Indian Seafarers Amid Evolving Geopolitical Situation

24x7 Support System in place to assist Indian Seafarers in conflict-affected regions

Indian Missions Across West Asia and Black Sea Join Centre's Seafarer Safety Review

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As geopolitical tensions continue to impact key global shipping routes, **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal**, today undertook a comprehensive review of the safety and welfare of Indian seafarers serving aboard merchant vessels in conflict-sensitive regions, reaffirming the Government's commitment to ensuring that every Indian mariner remains safe, informed and supported.

The review brought together senior officials from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS), and Heads of Indian Missions from countries across West Asia and the Black Sea region, including Oman, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia and Ukraine. The Minister was briefed on the prevailing security situation, maritime developments and the preparedness of Indian diplomatic missions to respond swiftly to any contingency involving Indian seafarers.

During the meeting, Sarbananda Sonowal directed officials to maintain constant coordination across all agencies and emphasised that the safety of Indian seafarers must remain the Government's foremost priority. "No Indian seafarer should find himself caught in the crossfire of geopolitical conflict. Every possible measure must be taken to safeguard our seafarers, support their families and ensure timely assistance wherever required," **Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal** said.

The Directorate General of Shipping further informed the Minister that its **24x7 Seafarer Grievance and Assistance Cell** is fully operational, providing round-the-clock support to Indian seafarers and their families through dedicated helplines, information services and grievance redressal mechanisms.

To strengthen preparedness before deployment, the Minister also reviewed initiatives to enhance awareness among seafarers. The Recruitment and Placement Service Licensees (RPSLs) are being engaged to conduct structured pre-departure orientation programmes, enabling seafarers to better understand operational conditions, security protocols and evolving geopolitical risks in areas where they may be deployed.

Recognising the psychological impact of prolonged deployments in volatile regions, Sonowal directed that mental health support be integrated into India's seafarer welfare framework. He called for structured counselling services for both seafarers and their families and stressed that transparent communication on operational risks must become an essential part of pre-deployment preparation.

"Our responsibility extends beyond ensuring physical safety. Seafarers and their families deserve timely information, emotional support and complete transparency regarding the challenges they may face while serving at sea. We must strengthen every aspect of our welfare ecosystem to stand firmly with our maritime community during these uncertain times," **Sonowal** said.

The Minister also directed officials to maintain close coordination with Indian Missions abroad, shipping companies, maritime authorities and all relevant stakeholders so that India's response mechanism remains proactive, integrated and capable of responding swiftly.



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(रिलीज़ आईडी: 2290817) आगंतुक पटल : 552
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