



Guiding Spirit to Shipping Industry

# Sagar Sandesh

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## COVID19 Pandemic- Keep plowing ahead is the only way - By Capt. Vipin Talwar, Director OSM India



Capt. Vipin Talwar, Director OSM India

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In COVID-19 pandemic, the shipping industry has largely continued to operate around the world, kept the essential supply moving despite strict restrictions imposed at ports. However, the sector faces unique set of challenges.

**Biggest immediate issue has been crew change** to ensure safety, crew health and welfare and minimise the risk of human error in operating the ships.

Uncertainty over easing of restrictions and apprehensions over escalating pandemic situation has taken a toll on the mental and physical health of crew members. They have been stranded on ships, waiting to come back home and others waiting to join vessels. There have been cases of seafarers having depression. How one can continue working diligently on board if he has finished his contact

and may be having his family member/s in the hospital with Covid! The name itself gives a shiver!

We salute our seafarers who are joining vessels under all odds and making the supply chain continued. Surely, they must be going through tough time convincing their family before saying 'YES' to join, then the whole business of going through the Covid test and dreading the outcome. All going well they then have to go through hard time boarding the flight and travelling for hours before joining. At times they had to return back home as they were found covid positive at destination! There have been cases where the entire group was quarantined because one seafarer was found positive.

The government Authorities all over have been very helpful in giving permissions for the charter flights & facilitating the crew change operation and the D.G Shipping Mr Amitabh Kumar, Capt ( Dr ) Daniel Joseph and DGS team have gone out of the way to help RPSL companies to carry out crew change in India and abroad. Without their help this humongous operation would not have been a success. Along with above mentioned we appreciate our two large maritime associations MASSA and FOSMA and Travel Company ATPI for taking up this whole process on them and making sure all goes well. It is by no means an easy operation. There have been many issues such as travelling within India before or after sign on and sign off as all the states have their local rules for entry and exit but all these meticulously been resolved through MASSA/ FOSMA.

The Ship owners need to be applauded for carrying out the crew change at a very exorbitant cost. Their budget of course has gone way beyond the limit. At this unusual circumstances created by COVID-19

, Shipowners are fully supporting of relieving seafarers so that they can be with their families.

One thing which could have been facilitated by Governments all over is to allow seafarers to come without entry visa and join vessels. This is one big issue being faced by Shipping Companies as the Consulates are closed. This understand is being discussed

at MEA level and hopefully industry may hear good news.

We pray for wellbeing of everyone to keep you healthy and safe. It is painful to see young kids not being able to come out of their home. They are forced to be at home which is definitely not natural but as they say -this is the new normal !!! .. STAY SAFE.

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