



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.23-54012/1/2025-CREW-DGS (C.No. 34454)**

**Date: 14.11.2025**

To,  
The Secretary to the Govt. of India,  
Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways,  
Transport Bhawan, 01, Parliament Street,  
**New Delhi.**

**Subject: Exemption of Indian coastal vessels, River-Sea Vessels (RSVs), and harbour crafts from immigration formalities – reg.**

Sir,

I am writing to seek your kind consideration on the matter concerning immigration formalities being applied to Indian coastal vessels, River-Sea Vessels (RSVs), and harbour crafts operating exclusively within Indian territorial waters and between Indian ports.

2. As per the existing practice, all vessels arriving at or departing from Indian ports are required to undergo immigration clearance, irrespective of whether their voyage is international or confined within Indian waters. Consequently, Indian coastal vessels and River-Sea Vessels (RSVs), which operate exclusively between Indian ports, are also subjected to the same formalities applicable to foreign-going ships.

3. While such procedures are indispensable for international voyages, they appear unnecessary in the case of domestic coastal movements where both the port of origin and destination lie within India's sovereign territory. The crew and passengers on these vessels are Indian nationals or persons legally residing in India, and their travel from one Indian port to another is entirely domestic in nature comparable to passengers travelling by air between two Indian airports. Just as immigration clearance is not required for domestic air travel, the same principle may logically be applied to domestic sea routes.

4. It is submitted that these vessels, along with their crew and passengers, operate exclusively between Indian ports and within Indian territorial waters, generally up to 20 nautical miles from the coastline. Their activities are, therefore, entirely domestic in nature and comparable to passengers travelling by air between two Indian airports, where immigration clearance is not required.

  
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5. Furthermore, the functioning of these vessels is already subject to oversight by several competent Indian authorities, including the Director General of Shipping, the Indian Coast Guard, and respective Port Authorities, which regulate aspects such as vessel registration, crew certification, and security compliance. Accordingly, the requirement of immigration checks for such purely domestic operations results in duplication of existing regulatory controls and imposes an avoidable administrative burden, leading to delays in vessel turnaround at ports.

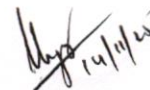
6. Further, all Indian ports comply with the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, ensuring robust monitoring and security of vessels, crew, and passengers. The arrival and departure details of seafarers serving on these vessels are already available with the port authorities through established reporting and documentation systems. Hence, all essential information is already within the control and oversight of Indian agencies, and an additional layer of immigration clearance serves no practical security purpose.

7. It may also be noted that in the case of domestic passenger cruise operations, such as Cordelia Cruises, which sail between Indian ports, passengers are not subjected to immigration checks. This precedent clearly demonstrates that domestic maritime movements can be effectively regulated and monitored without immigration formalities, provided appropriate port and security procedures are in place.

8. The Indian coastal vessels, RSVs, and harbour crafts are specially designed for operations in Indian waters and serve an important role in promoting coastal trade, inter-port connectivity, and regional development. Simplifying their clearance procedures would avoid unnecessary congregation of personnel at ports, reduce administrative burden on immigration authorities, and provide ease of operations to shipowners and operators, who often face delays and logistical challenges due to redundant formalities.

9. Exempting such vessels from immigration procedures would, therefore, enhance operational efficiency, promote the Government's objective of ease of doing business, and align maritime travel procedures with domestic travel norms in other modes of transport.

10. Exempting Indian coastal vessels, RSVs, and harbour crafts from immigration formalities would bring substantial benefits in terms of operational efficiency, cost savings, and improved ease of doing business in the coastal shipping sector. The measure would also align with the Government's broader initiatives such as Sagarmala and Maritime India Vision 2030, which emphasize simplification of port procedures and promotion of coastal shipping as an energy-efficient and environmentally friendly mode of transport.

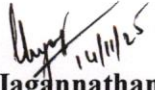
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11. In view of the above, it is requested that the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways may kindly take up the matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs (Immigration Division) for consideration and necessary action to examine the proposal and issue suitable instructions or amendments to the relevant immigration procedures. This will ensure that Indian coastal vessels, RSVs, and harbour crafts operating exclusively within Indian waters are exempted from routine immigration checks, in line with domestic travel practices, thereby facilitating smoother and more efficient port operations.

12. It is requested that the proposal may kindly be considered and necessary directions issued in this regard.

Yours faithfully,

  
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