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Circular Number: 05/2020, updated on 20 April 2020  
Issue Date: 20-04-2020

To: Shipowners, managers, operators, masters, Officers, Crew, recognized organizations, Certifying Authorities, PSCO's, Ship Manning Agents, Shipping Agents, Maritime Training Academies/Institutes, Port Health Officers and the Shipping community

**UPDATED CIRCULAR RELATING TO CERTIFICATION OF SHIP'S AND SEAFARER'S FOR CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC.**

For dealing with the impact of the outbreak of COVID-19 Department of Shipping, Bangladesh issued a circular on 23 March 2020 to apply relaxation on certification of ships and seafarers. In accordance with the circular all types of ship's and seafarer's certificates were extended up to 30 June 2020.

IMO conventions do not allow extension of surveys, audits and inspections beyond the stipulated window period; however, it allows extension of renewal survey by 03 months under special circumstances. STCW convention 1978 as amended also does not allow extension of seafarer's certificates beyond the expiry date until stipulated requirements are met.

Taking into account that serious interruptions to the shipping industries are becoming long-lasting and uncertain as the consequence of the pandemic COVID-19; such as travel restrictions; lock down; delayed port clearance; prevention of crew and passengers from embarking or disembarking (preventing shore leave and crew changes); Prevention of discharging or loading cargo or stores, or taking on fuel, water, food and supplies; and imposition of quarantine or refusal of port entry to ships etc. In these circumstances seafarers are not able to sign off/repatriated and under compulsion to sail with expired CoC/CoP/CoR and seafarers willing to sail cannot validate/renew their expired CoC/CoP/CoR.

Bangladesh **reviewed/revised and updated** the relevant circular in order to cope with the uncertain circumstances. The circular may be further reviewed in due course of time upon any future IMO/ILO initiatives or developments of the situation on this issue.

## **1. General Guidance:**

Information on COVID-19 relevant to the maritime industry can be found on the following websites:

- (a) International Maritime Organization ([www.imo.org](http://www.imo.org))
- (b) International Maritime Health Association ([www.imha.net](http://www.imha.net))
- (c) World Health Organization ([www.who.int](http://www.who.int))
- (d) International chamber of shipping ([www.ich-shipping.org](http://www.ich-shipping.org))
- (e) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of Bangladesh ([www.mohfw.gov.bd](http://www.mohfw.gov.bd))
- (f) Directorate General of Health and Family Welfare of Bangladesh ([www.dghs.gov.bd](http://www.dghs.gov.bd))

Specific guidance for ship operators for the protection of the health of seafarers is available in IMO Circular Letter No.4204. Please note that this circular letter is being regularly updated, the latest version is available on the international Maritime Organization's website.

## **2. Seafarer's Certification:**

Certificates of Competency (CoC) and Certificates of Proficiency (CoP) and associated endorsements which have expired or are expiring before 1 October 2020 is hereby extended for a period of 6 (six) months from the expiry date printed/typed on the relevant certificate. Seafarers are not required to apply for the extension but may retain a copy of this circular onboard for the guidance of the officials.

During the revalidation of expired certificates, the new validity shall be issued for a period of five years from the original expiry date.

Consideration will be given to allow seafarers who hold foreign issued Certificates of Competencies (CoC) to continue serving onboard Bangladesh Registered Ships, if they are unable to revalidate their CoC before the expiry date due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Bangladesh Registered Shipowners and managers may submit such request in-writing to Department of Shipping ( [cns@dos.gov.bd](mailto:cns@dos.gov.bd) ), accompanied with a confirmation of continued validity from the issuing authority of the seafarer's CoC.

**3. Minimum Safe Manning Document (MSMD):**

Where it can be demonstrated that a crew member is required to depart a vessel owing to the COVID-19 and unable to be replaced, exemptions to MSMD will be considered on a case by case basis and should be supported by risk assessments from the company.

**4. Seafarers Medical certificate:**

Seafarer's medical certificate which has expired or is expiring before 1 October 2020 is hereby extended for a period of 6 (six) months from the expiry date printed on the relevant certificate. Seafarers are not required to apply for the extension but may retain a copy of this circular onboard for the guidance of the officials.

**5. Continues Discharge Certificate (CDC):**

Continues Discharge Certificate (CDC) which has expired or is expiring before 01 October 2020 is hereby extended for a period of 6 (six) months from the expiry date printed/typed/written on the relevant CDC. Seafarers are not required to apply for the extension but may retain a copy of this circular onboard for the guidance of the officials.

**6. Extension of Seafarers Employment Agreements (SEA):**

The Seafarers Employment Agreements (SEA) should remain valid. The company should explain to the seafarers the prevailing COVID-19 situation and as to why they need to remain on board. The company needs to ensure that the seafarers are sent home at the first available opportunity. If any of the SEA's has expired, they need to be extended or new ones issued. Evidence should be retained by both the seafarer and the Company clearly demonstrating the reason why the Seafarer was asked to extend their contract.

**7. Extension of mandatory surveys, audits and expiry of statutory certificates:**

Certificates, Surveys, Audits and inspections of Bangladesh Flag vessels which has expired or are expiring before 1 October 2020 can be extended for a period of 6 (six) months with the following conditions:

- a. While all reasonable efforts should be taken to ensure that statutory certificates are kept valid, Recognized Organizations (ROs) are hereby authorized to grant extension as described above after obtaining undertaking from the master of the

vessel for the satisfactory condition of the vessel and verification of past survey/audit/inspection records, as deemed appropriate.

- b. The Department of Shipping shall be kept informed of such extension that when and to which vessels the extension under paragraph “a” are issued.

**8. Extension of the validity of the ship sanitation certificate:**

While all reasonable efforts should be taken to ensure that the ship sanitation certificates are kept valid, but if this is not practicable due to lock down state/social distancing measures, the validity of the ship sanitation certificate of Bangladesh flag ship, which has expired or are expiring before 1 October 2020 is hereby extended for a period of 1 (one) month or until the arrival of the vessel to a port where the ship sanitation certificate can be issued if there is no evidence of public health risk found on board the ship and the ship is free of infection and contamination, including vectors and reservoirs.

**9. Port State Control Measures:**

Port State Control officers are instructed to take a pragmatic and practical approach in relation to these certificates and endorsement extensions and their acceptance in the exercise of Port State Control procedures.



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Director General