



From Womb to Tomb - and sometimes beyond NATIONAL UNION OF SEAFARERS OF INDIA

Affiliated to International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS)

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30th May, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Sub: **Crucial Seafarer Demands Raised at the National Shipping Board Meeting on May 30, 2025**

National Shipping Board (NSB) meeting held on **30th May, 2025** at the Conference Hall, DG Shipping, Mr. Milind Kandalgaonkar, General Secretary of the National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI), vociferously presented four critical demands aimed at significantly improving the welfare and working conditions of Indian seafarers. These demands, long championed by NUSI, call upon the NSB to strongly advocate with the Government of India for their immediate implementation.



1) Comprehensive Social Security: Provident Fund, Gratuity, and Pension for All Seafarers

This is a cornerstone demand, reflecting **India's historical commitment to seafarer welfare**.

India has a proud history of pioneering social security measures for its seafarers, predating many other maritime nations. A landmark achievement was the **Seamen's Provident Fund Act, 1966**, which provided Provident Fund benefits to seafarers on Indian flag ships. This was a direct result of a powerful agitation led by NUSI in **1963**.

Since then, NUSI has relentlessly campaigned for the expansion of these vital benefits to include **Provident Fund, Gratuity, and Pension for all ranks of seafarers serving on both Indian and foreign flag ships**. This comprehensive social security package is crucial for ensuring a dignified and secure future for seafarers and their families after years of dedicated service.

The good news is that the **Board of Trustees** formally accepted this demand on **January 11, 2021**, and a draft amendment to the relevant legislation was subsequently submitted to the Government of India. However, it is deeply concerning that over four years have passed, and the Government has yet to finalise this crucial amendment. NUSI urges the NSB to exert maximum pressure to expedite this process, ensuring that seafarers receive the social security they are rightfully owed, regardless of the flag of the vessel they serve on.

2) Essential Quota for Seafarers in All Modes of Transport

Seafarers often face unique travel challenges, and a dedicated quota system is essential to ease their journeys.

For many years, NUSI has been advocating for a dedicated quota for seafarers when travelling across all modes of transport. This is particularly vital for those joining or returning from ships, often with limited time and specific logistical needs.

We commend the **Ministry of Railways (Railway Board)** for acknowledging this long-standing demand. They have already issued a communication to all **Zonal Railways**, agreeing to **include seafarers in a priority list for railway ticket booking and for medical assistance**. This is a significant step forward and demonstrates a recognition of seafarers' unique travel requirements.

NUSI now calls upon the NSB to extend this initiative to all other modes of transport, including **air and road**, ensuring that seafarers receive due consideration and priority in their travel arrangements, which directly impacts their ability to join ships on time and return home efficiently.



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3) The Fundamental Right to Shore Leave

Shore leave is not a privilege, but a fundamental human right crucial for seafarers well-being.

NUSI has consistently emphasised that shore leave is a fundamental right for seafarers, vital for their mental and physical health, social connections, and overall well-being. Denying shore leave can lead to isolation, stress, and negatively impact morale.

Despite international conventions and the clear benefits, it is deeply frustrating that Indian seafarers are frequently **denied shore leave at Indian ports**. This is an unacceptable situation that directly contradicts the spirit of maritime welfare.

Thousands of seafarers, under the banner of NUSI, have directly petitioned the **Prime Minister's Office** to address this persistent issue. The NSB is urged to lend its strong support to this cause, working with port authorities and other stakeholders to ensure that seafarers are granted their rightful shore leave at all Indian ports.

4) Recognising Seafarers as "Key Workers"

The COVID-19 pandemic unequivocally demonstrated the indispensable role of seafarers.

During the unprecedented challenges of the **COVID-19** pandemic, seafarers stood at the forefront, selflessly playing a crucial role in maintaining global supply chains and ensuring the delivery of essential goods. Their unwavering dedication prevented a far greater crisis.

Recognising their vital contribution, NUSI vociferously demanded **"key worker"** status for seafarers. This demand has now received formal international endorsement, with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) formally endorsing **"key worker"** status for seafarers at its April 2025 meeting.

India, with its robust **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958**, and its ratification of the **Maritime Labour Convention**, has historically been a leader in maritime welfare. The NSB is requested to ensure that this international recognition is fully implemented and reflected in national policies, ensuring that seafarers are accorded the respect, support, and considerations that come with their indispensable **"key worker"** status.

The National Shipping Board is now formally requested to prioritise and strongly advocate with the Government of India for the immediate action and implementation of these four critical NUSI demands. These measures are not just about improving conditions; they are about recognising the invaluable contribution of Indian seafarers to our nation and the global economy.

The meeting of the National Shipping Board (NSB) concluded under the chairmanship of **Shri Sameer Kumar Khare, Retired IAS, Chairperson**, with a shared commitment to advancing the welfare and rights of Indian seafarers and strengthening the maritime sector as a whole.

Stay united, stay strong! Your voices are being heard!

Long Live NUSI,

Long Live Seafarers Unity

With warm regards and solidarity,

Yours sincerely,

(Milind Kandalganekar)
General Secretary-cum-Treasurer