



# Labour Codes Benefit the Dock Workers

November 28, 2025

## Key Takeaways

- Compulsory **registration of docks** as establishments and official recognition of the dock, enabling workers to access legal rights.
- Universal coverage under **provident fund, pension, and insurance** schemes for all dock workers, including contract and temporary staff.
- The **new Labour Codes** and **maritime legislation** have introduced **transformative benefits** for the safety, health, and welfare of dock workers.
- **Enhanced Social Security and Employment Rights** to Dock Workers

## A New Era of Labour Reform in Maritime Workplaces

Labour is a key driver of economic growth and development. In order to simplify and strengthen the framework governing workers' rights, the Government consolidated 29 labour laws into four comprehensive Labour Codes—namely, the **Code on Wages, 2019**, the **Industrial Relations Code, 2020**, the **Code on Social Security, 2020** and the **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020**. This historic reform ensures that workers gain easier access to security, dignity, health, and welfare measures, reinforcing **India's commitment to a fair and future-ready labour ecosystem**.



The recent enactment of India's four Labour Codes, along with updates to maritime legislation such as the **Indian Ports Act** and the **Merchant Shipping Act**, has introduced transformative benefits for dock workers. These reforms address long-standing gaps in protection, welfare, and regulation that existed under the previous fragmented system.

## Benefits to Dock Workers

The codification aims to **enhance** ease of doing business, promote employment generation, ensure safety, health, social & wage security for every worker. The benefits to Dock Workers under the Labour Codes are as follows:

### Mandatory Dock Registration and Legal Recognition

Historically, many docks operated without formal registration, limiting regulatory oversight and denying workers basic legal protections. Under the new regime:

- **Compulsory registration of docks as establishments** is now enforced.
- This ensures **official recognition of the dock**, enabling workers to access legal rights, claim entitlements, and seek redress.
- Establishments must **maintain records** and comply with mandated safety, health, and welfare standards, enhancing accountability.

### Enhanced Social Security and Employment Rights

Dock workers, especially those employed casually or indirectly, were previously excluded from social security benefits. Key improvements include:

- **Universal coverage under provident fund, pension, and insurance schemes** for all dock workers, including contract and temporary staff.
- **Mandatory appointment letters** and formal recognition of service, ensuring inclusion in social security databases.
- These provisions remove historic exclusions and provide a **secure financial safety net**.

### Modernized Operational Processes

The Codes introduce **digital platforms** for dock registration, compliance, and benefit delivery:

- Online registration, documentation, and reporting improve transparency and reduce delays.
- **E-governance for wages, complaints, and benefits** ensures efficiency and minimizes disputes.
- Interstate and cross-regional **portability of social security and compliance records** now supports worker mobility.

### Safety, Health, and Welfare Reforms

The OSH&WC Code now brings all docks, including temporary or contract workers, under **mandatory health, safety, and welfare regulation**:

- **Annual employer-funded health check-ups** improve early detection of occupational health risks.
- Detailed **risk assessments** and preventive measures address dock-specific hazards, including falls, fire, explosions, noise, and exposure to hazardous substances.
- **Mandatory safety equipment** such as certified lifting devices, protective gear, and lifesaving appliances are now standard.

- Provision of **medical facilities, first aid, sanitary and washing areas, canteens, drinking water, and rest areas** are now legal requirements, not discretionary.

### **Institutional Oversight and Worker Participation**

- **Occupational Safety Boards** at state and national levels provide guidance, inspect docks, and update safety standards with worker and employer representation.
- Regular **safety audits, inspections, and accident reporting systems** are now mandatory.
- Workers now have a voice in **policy formulation and compliance oversight**, promoting participatory governance.

### **International Alignment**

These reforms bring Indian dock operations closer to **global best practices**:

- Alignment with international maritime safety and labour standards.
- Registration of Indian-flagged ships and standardization of compliance enhance worker protection.
- Transparency, accountability, and enforceability of employment and safety measures ensure a modern, equitable working environment.

<b>Key Improvements</b>		
<b>Feature/Benefit</b>	<b>Old System</b>	<b>New System/Code Reference</b>
Dock Registration	Optional	Mandatory (OSH&WC Code Sec 3, Registration Rules)
Social Security Coverage	Partial	Universal PF, Pension, Insurance (OSH&WC Code, Wage Code)
Compliance Process	Manual, Fragmented	Digital, Integrated, Transparent
Health & Safety	Uneven, Voluntary	Legally Required, Annual Health Checks, Risk Assessment
Welfare Facilities	Discretionary	Mandatory: Medical, Sanitary, Canteen, Rest Facilities
Worker Mobility	Limited	Portable Social Security and Compliance Records
Employment Documentation	Informal	Appointment Letters, Formal Recognition

### **Towards a Safer and Stronger Dock Workforce**

The new Labour Codes and maritime legislation collectively deliver a **holistic framework** for the safety, health, and welfare of dock workers. By formalizing registration, enhancing social security, modernizing operational processes, instituting rigorous safety standards, and enabling worker participation, these reforms create **safer, more equitable, and future-ready dock workplaces**, addressing decades of regulatory and welfare gaps.

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