

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SHIPPING
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4242

ANSWERED ON:29.08.2011

ARMED GUARDS ON SHIPS

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Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has decided to allow armed security guards on board of Indian merchant vessels against the backdrop of recent piracy incidents;
- (b) if so, the details thereof?
- (c) the number of Somali pirates captured and apprehended by India as on date;
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to safeguard the interest of Indian crew members aboard foreign vessels especially in exigencies like pirate hijacking or fatal accidents;
- (e) whether implementation of Indian Maritime Act has not been effective in handling such cases; and
- (f) the measures taken by the Government for the welfare of Indian seamen and seafarers?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI G.K. VASAN)

- (a) & (b): Yes, Madam. The Government has decided to issue guidelines for deployment of armed guards on Indian Flag Ships.
 - (c): 120 somalian pirates apprehended by India as on date.
 - (d): Following initiatives have been taken by Government to safeguard and to release the hostage:
 - (i) An Inter-Ministerial Group of Officers (IMGO) has been set up to deal with hostage situation arising out of the hijacking of merchant vessels with Indian crew on board.
 - (ii) The owners and flag administration of the hijacked vessels have been contacted through Indian Missions abroad to ensure that they take suitable steps for the safety and early release of the hostages.
- As regards fatal accidents steps are taken to get the relevant inquiry and processing of compensation claims expedited. The cases pending with RPS agents are also reviewed periodically.
- (e): Indian Merchant Shipping Act does not include provisions for dealing with incidents related to piracy. However, such issues are dealt under other National Legislations including Indian Penal Code and Suppression of Unlawful Acts etc.
 - (f): The Government is actively considering following measures for welfare of Indian seamen and seafarers:
 - (i) Reinforcement of the Monthly Ex-gratia Monetary Assistance (MEMA) Scheme operated by the Seamen's Welfare Fund Society (SWFS).
 - (ii) Introduction of a contributory Annuity Scheme for the seafarers.