

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SHIPPING
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4062

ANSWERED ON:19.12.2011

ARMED GUARDS FOR INDIAN SHIPS

Das Shri Khagen;Gaikwad Shri Eknath Mahadeo;Paranjpe Shri Anand Prakash;Patel Shri Kishanbhai Vestabhai

Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there has been increase in the incident of pirates hijacking Indian ships including the hijacking of MV-Iceberg;
- (b) if so, the steps taken by the Government for the safe release or rescuing of the captured Indians;
- (c) whether the Government has issued certain guidelines to ship owners who wish to deploy armed guards to defend against pirates;
- (d) if so, the details of the guidelines; and
- (e) the other steps taken/being taken by the Government to protect the Indian ships from the pirates?

Answer

MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI G.K. VASAN)

(a): No, Madam.

(b): 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 are contacted through Indian Missions abroad to ensure that they take suitable steps for the safety and early release of the hostages.

(c) & (d): Yes, Madam. The Government has issued guidelines on Deployment of Armed Guards on Indian Merchant Ships. These guidelines provide the criteria for owners to contract private armed security guards for deployment on Indian merchant ships, in cases where the owners desire to do so.

(e): The Government has initiated several preventive/mitigating security measures that are as follows:

(i) Notices by Director General of Shipping detailing elaborate anti-piracy measures (Best Management Practices) including safe house/citadel.

(ii) Sailing vessels banned from plying in waters south or west of the line joining Salalah and Male.

(iii) Naval escort provided by Indian Naval Ships in Gulf of Aden.

(iv) Enhanced vigil by Indian Navy in Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

(v) Guidelines for deployment of armed guards on Indian merchant ships issued.

(vi) Joint operational exercises being conducted on regular basis among Navy, Coast Guard, Coastal Police, Customs and others.

(vii) The intelligence mechanism has been streamlined through the creation of Joint Operation Centers and multi-agency coordination mechanism.

(viii) Active participation by the Government agencies in International Maritime Organisation (IMO) meetings, meeting of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) established in pursuance of UN Security Council Resolution No. 1851 and other international fora.

(ix) Submission of Document 27/9/1 at IMO Assembly for flag states to provide information on welfare of captive crew, efforts of release and also on continued payment of their wages.