

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SHIPPING
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3195
ANSWERED ON:31.07.2014
HOSTAGE BY SOMALIAN PIRATES
Venkatesh Babu Shri T.G.

Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware that a few Indian sailors have been held hostage by Somalian pirates;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; (c whether the Government has taken any effective steps for their early release and if so, the details in this regard;
- (d) whether any financial/other assistance has been provided to the families of these sailors;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI KRISHANPAL GURJAR)

(a)&(b): Yes, Madam. Seven Indian seafarers ex-MT Asphalt Venture (Panama Flag) have been continuously held hostage by Somali pirates since 28.9.2010 when it was hijacked.

(c): An Inter-Ministerial Group (IMG) set up by the Government under the Ministry of Shipping with representatives from all Ministries and Government agencies concerned, to deal with the hostage situation arising out of the hijacking at sea of merchant vessels with Indian crew on board has been regularly reviewing the situation of Indian hostages under captivity of the pirates. Ministry of External Affairs, through its concerned Missions abroad, continuously seeks the help of the concerned foreign Governments to liaise with ship owners to secure early release of Indian hostages held captive by Somalia pirates. Government has also approved the Contingency Plan for dealing with piracy and hijacking of merchant ships and constituted a Committee of Secretaries on Anti-Piracy and Hijacking at sea (COSAPH) under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary for crisis management and to advise the Government on major policy and strategy decisions. In addition to this, the following steps have been initiated by Ministry of Shipping as part of various preventing/mitigating security measures to secure the release of the Indian hostages from the pirates:

- i) M.S. Notice No.1 of 2011 issued providing for elaborate anti-piracy measures (Best Management Practices), including safe house/citdel.
- ii) Banning of sailing vessels to ply in waters south or west of the line joining Salalah and Male vide DGS M.S. Notice No. 3/2010.
- iii) Naval escort provided by Indian naval ships in the Gulf of Aden since 2008.
- iv) Enhanced vigil by the Indian Navy in the Indian EEZ and westward upto 65 degree east longitude.
- v) Active participation of India in the security meetings of the International Maritime Organization, Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) and other international fora.
- vi) Submission of Document No.27/9/1 at the IMO Assembly meeting held at London on 21-30.11.2011 for flag states to provide information on the welfare of captive crew, efforts for their release and also on continued payment of their wages.

(d) to (f): Yes, Madam. Government has granted, on humanitarian grounds an ex-gratia amount of Rs. 2.50 Lakh to each of the families of the seven Indian seamen of ex-M.T. Asphalt Venture in May, 2014 as their wages were stopped by the ship owners concerned.