

(a) whether the Ministry is aware that many ports including Dahej, Veraval, Mangrol and Porbandar in Gujarat have the capacity to become a major port;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has any plan to make major port out of any port of the State; and

(d) if so, by when the work will commence in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI G.K. VASAN): (a) and (b) Based on the potential for future development, strategic importance of the concerned port and keeping national perspective in view, ports are declared to be Major Ports by the Government.

(c) and (d) There are no plans to make major port out of any port of the State of Gujarat.

Pirates in the Indian Ocean

1353. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK:

SHRI SANJAY RAUT:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that west Indian Ocean is still one of the world's most dangerous areas for piracy as our shipping companies have paid millions of dollars in ransom and hundreds of Indian sailors have been abducted by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether many ocean scientists are seeking security protection and the help to repel Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean; and

(d) if so, Government's response thereto?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI G.K. VASAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Incidents of Piracy are on the rise in Western Indian Ocean region. A total of 468 crew were hijacked on Foreign Flag Ships and Indian/Foreign Mechanized Sailing Vessels (MSV) since 21st August, 2008 and 51 still remain in captivity. The ransom paid by owners of foreign flag ships is not known. The Government has initiated various preventive/ mitigating security measures that are as follows:

1. 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.

2. Issuance of Notice by Director General of Shipping detailing elaborate anti-piracy measures (Best Management Practices) including safe house/citadel.
3. Banning of sailing vessels to ply in waters south or west of the line joining Salalah and Male.
4. Naval escort provided by Indian Naval Ships in Gulf of Aden.
5. Enhanced vigil by Indian Navy in Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and westward upto 65 degree east longitude.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Two recent incidents of research vessels being affected by the threat of Piracy in the Arabian Sea region have been reported. The scientists were advised to move away from the Piracy affected zones.

Ports Regulatory Authority

1354. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's move to bring all major and non-major ports in the country under a regulatory regime through creation of Ports Regulatory Authority has run into rough weather;

(b) whether it is a fact that several maritime States which at present control the non-major ports in their respective State have opposed Government's move;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government has any proposal to modify the draft of Ports Authority Bill; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI G.K. VASAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. Only a few Maritime States have opposed Government's move.

(c) The basic apprehension of the maritime States is that the Bill intends to take away the autonomy and freedom of maritime states in promoting investments in port sector.

(d) and (e) The Government is yet to finalise the Draft Port Regulatory Bill and the proposed Bill will be finalised in consultation with various stakeholders.

Ferry service from Rameshwaram to Thalaimannar

1355. DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is fixing a date to start Rameshwaram to Thaliannannar (Sri Lanka) ferry service; and