

27th June, 2019

PRESS NOTE

“Our Commitment to Protect Each and Every Indian Working Overseas”: Mansukh Mandaviya

Five Indian seafarers from the vessel ‘MT Apecus’ were kidnapped and taken ashore from the vessel in the outer anchorage off Bonny Island, Nigeria, at around 13.30 GMT (1900 IST) on 19.04.2019.

The Directorate General of Shipping was reported about this incident during early hours on 20.04.2019. Standard Operating Procedures as per the applicable contingency plan was initiated, and various agencies concerned were intimated of the said incident.

An Inter-Ministerial Group of Officers (IMGO) has been set up by the Government of India, under the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India to deal with potential maritime security situations arising out of any hijacking at sea of merchant's vessels with Indian crew. The IMGO was, therefore, convened to deal with the situation. Ministry of Shipping through the Directorate General of Shipping continuously coordinated with various agencies to work towards the early release of seafarers. Ministry was also in touch with the family members to update them on the developments in a timely manner as well as give necessary support as required.

The High Commission of India, Abuja, Nigeria conveyed the details of the incident to the Nigerian Authorities due to which the Nigerian Navy boarded the vessel to secure the vessel as well as carry out an investigation of the incident. Also, the Regional Maritime Rescue & Coordination Centre, Nigeria (RMRCC) continued to assist in the matter.

The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), thereafter took the lead to coordinate Nigerian efforts for securing the release of kidnapped seafarers. In coordination with the Nigerian Police and Nigerian Navy, NIMASA deployed a team in the area, to try and expedite the safe release of the Indian nationals.

The Directorate General of Shipping also coordinated with owner of vessel MT Apecus as well as communicated to the Maritime Administration of Greece from where the owner operated its vessels, to coordinate the release of kidnapped seafarers. The Directorate General of Shipping also took up the issue of piracy in the region with the International Maritime Organization and other international fora towards coordinating the efforts for eradication of this menace.

Mandaviya stated that, “I am happy to share that due to the sustained efforts of various stakeholders, including the Ministry of Shipping, the Directorate General of Shipping and the High Commission of India, Abuja, Nigeria, the kidnapped Indian seafarers were successfully released and have reached the safe custody of the authorities on 27.06.2019.”
