

## **Regarding capture of Indian seafarers by pirates**

**SHRI HAMDULLAH SAYEED (LAKSHADWEEP):** Madam, thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak. I would like to draw the attention of the Government to the critical situation concerning seven Indian seafarers aboard the Panama-flagged vessel *MV Bitu River*, which was attacked by armed pirates off the coast of Sao Tomé and Príncipe on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025. Among those affected is young Asif Ali from Minicoy Island, Lakshadweep. The family remains without any information about his safety or whereabouts. These seven Indian nationals, who were simply pursuing their livelihood at sea to support their families back home, now face grave danger in foreign waters.

It is deeply concerning that these citizens remain unaccounted for more than two weeks after the attack. The situation has created immense distress for the family, particularly for the concerned families, like the parents of Mr. Asif Ali from my Constituency, who are desperate for any news about their son. The lack of communication and visible action from our authorities has only compounded their suffering.

I urge the Government to take immediate steps to resolve this humanitarian crisis. Our diplomatic missions should be activated without any delay to establish contact with the affected seafarers and coordinate their safe return.

I urge the Government that a robust mechanism must be implemented to better protect Indian seafarers working in high-risk zones. I request the Government to take specific measures, including establishing a special task force to monitor such cases and provide regular updates to the anxious families. The safety and well-being of our citizens abroad must be treated as a priority.

I humbly request the Government, especially the External Affairs Ministry, to act promptly and to ensure these seven Indians are brought back home safely at the earliest.