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Title: Reported disappearance of the ship M.V. Rassak along with 25 Indian sailors in the Black Sea.

SHRI K. FRANCIS GEORGE (IDUKKI): Sir, on 17<sup>th</sup> February, a carrier ship namely M.V. Rassak went missing in the Black Sea with 25 Indian crew members, while on its way from Russia to Turkey.

It is now one month since the disappearance of the ship, but the authorities could not establish any reasonable or substantial finding about the whereabouts of the ship and its crew. It is all the more objectionable that the Director General of Shipping does not have a clear idea about the ownership of the ship and is now supporting the contention of the agency which recruited the crew that the ship might have sunk due to bad weather.

The Agency, which recruited the crew M/s. Pelican Marine does not have any license for such recruitment. The Deputy Director General of Shipping, Shri P.H. Krishnan, has confirmed this and he has stated that we do not have strong laws and regulations in place to deal with such erring agencies. It is to be noted that the same agency had supplied the crew to the Ship Jupiter-6, which went missing on September 2005 in the African coast.

The families of the 25 missing Indian Crew members including the Chief Engineer of the ship, Shri Mahendra Mohan, a Keralite, are in deep agony and distress for the last one month, though to alleviate the agony, the authorities have not taken any step.

I request the Government and the Shipping Ministry to conduct a comprehensive enquiry about the incident urgently, taking the help of international maritime agencies, if need be, and find out the truth about the disappearance of the ship. Government should also take urgent steps to strengthen the laws relating to recruitment and placement of shipping crew and to license and regulate recruiting agencies in the shipping industry.

It is a very serious matter; it is almost 30 days since the disappearance of the ship, but it seems that the authorities are without any clue as to the whereabouts of the ship and the crew. We need an urgent intervention from the Government of India and the Shipping Ministry to find out the exact truth of what happened and to take action against the erring agencies and the people concerned in this matter.