

Sri Lankan navy rescues 71 boat people

by UPI

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka -- The Sri Lankan navy Monday reported finding a wooden trawler that had been adrift 12 days in the Bay of Bengal, with 71 survivors and 20 dead aboard. The people were identified as migrant workers from Bangladesh and Myanmar, formerly called Burma, according to a Sri Lankan government news release. The trawler was found drifting 150 miles off Sri Lanka's Mullaithivu, the report said. Starvation and dehydration were blamed for the deaths. Among those rescued, 50 were identified as Myanmar nationals and the rest Bangladeshis. All of them were reported to be in serious condition due to prolonged dehydration and starvation. Navy medical teams were attending to the victims. The trawler, suspected of being used to transport illegal migrants to Thailand and Malaysia, apparently began drifting after its engine failed, the report said. The navy said after receiving information about the trawler from fishermen, it deployed two deep-sea surveillance units to rescue the occupants.

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