

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO- 3812
ANSWERED ON 05/04/2022

PIRACY IN HIGH SEAS AND DANGER FOR SHIPPING

3812. DR. SASMIT PATRA:

Will the Minister of PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of pirate attacks in high seas on Indian vessels;
- (b) the damage both in terms of human as well as material, due to such attacks;
- (c) the steps being taken by Government to deal with this situation; and
- (d) the degree of success found through Government initiatives so far?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
(SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL)

- (a) Mechanised Sailing Vessel (MSV) Al Khausar is the only instance of an Indian ship which was a victim of sea piracy and was hijacked off the island of Socotra on 01 April 2017.
- (b) No Sir, no damage in terms of human as well as material occurred during the incident on the Indian vessel MSV Al Khausar.
- (c) The steps taken by Government to deal with this situation:-
 - i. To deal with potential maritime security situations due to hijacking at sea of merchant vessels with Indian crew, an Inter-Ministerial Group of Officers (IMGO) has been set up by the Government of India, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Govt. of India. Further, Anti-Piracy Contingency Plan for dealing with piracy and hijacking of merchant ships with Indian crew has been prepared by Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and activated at the time of such an incident. This plan which aims to ensure the safe release of Indian national crew taken to shore after piracy or unlawful interferences at sea sets into motion an immediate integrated response by concerned Ministries/Departments/Organizations.
 - ii. The Govt. of India has also set up the Committee of Secretaries on Anti-Piracy and Hijacking at sea (COSAPH), under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary, Govt. of India, for such crisis management and to advise the Government on allied major policy and strategy decisions.

- iii. The Directorate General of Shipping, Govt. of India has issued from time to time notices / maritime security advisories / circulars, laying down guidelines and actions to be initiated by Indian Merchant Ships, Shipping companies & other stakeholders to prevent and/or take action for piracy & armed robbery incidents.
 - iv. The Directorate General of Shipping, Govt. of India has approved a security training program which includes a piracy awareness module to sensitize and improve preparedness of seafarers in case of piracy & armed robbery incidents at sea. All Indian seafarers are mandatorily required to complete this course prior joining a vessel.
 - v. India has also been actively participating in the security meetings of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) and other international fora such as the IMO (International Maritime Organization), SHADE (Shared Awareness & De-confection) and Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (FoGG) to ensure active participation of the international community to curb the menace of piracy.
 - vi. The Indian Navy (IN) maintains continuous presence in the piracy affected area of Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and East coast of Africa since 2008.
 - vii. Due to the extensive and pro-active deployment by the Indian Navy (IN) towards thwarting the spread of piracy, no incidents of piracy were reported in Eastern Arabian Sea from 2012. This has led to reduction in the geographic boundary for High Risk Area (HRA).
 - viii. Consequent to the flaring up of tensions in Gulf region that could have adversely affected the sea borne trade driving the Indian economy, *IN* launched 'Op Sankalp' in June 2019 to provide assurance to the Indian Flagged Merchant Vessel (IFMV)s transiting through the Strait of Hormuz. Since execution, *IN* has deployed 32 warships and escorted approximately 322 Lakh Tonnes of cargo onboard 397 IFMV)s, to reassure and safeguard our critical shipping and trade.
 - ix. Further, GoI/ *IN* has taken a number of measures to strengthen maritime and coastal security which include setting up of a National Command Control Communication Intelligence (NC³I) Network, interlinking 51 IN and ICG stations, Joint Operations Centres (JOCs), National AIS Chain (NAIS) and coastal radars. These have contributed towards improving safety and security in the maritime zones of India and adjoining seas. Towards strengthening of regional maritime security, the GoI has established the Information Fusion Centre- Indian Ocean Region, (IFC-IOR) in Dec 2018. The IFC-IOR has over 50 linkages in 24 countries for real time information exchange toward enhancement of Maritime Security.
 - x. Indian Coast Guard undertakes surveillance in Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) through ships and aircraft and also maintains communication with Information Sharing Centre of Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), Singapore for dissemination of information related to piracy and armed robbery.
- (d) The Indian Government's initiatives along with collaborative efforts of Governments of other countries in conjunction with support by International Agencies have resulted in the following:-

- i. High Risk Area (HRA) with reference to Somalia based piracy is a shipping industry defined area within which, a higher risk of attack exists and security requirements for vessels may be necessary. Originally, the HRA line in 2008 in the Indian Ocean region was designated at East of 65 degrees East longitude which was quite far away from India's West Coast. This HRA was extended in 2011 to geographical coordinate in the Indian Ocean - East of 78 degrees East longitude. The extended HRA came almost near the Indian coastline up to as close as about 35 nautical miles from the baseline. The Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard anti-piracy operations followed by the diplomatic efforts of the Government resulted in the reduction and movement of HRA away from the Indian coast.
- ii. There were 120 Somali pirates apprehended by the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard in separate anti-piracy operations between January and March 2011 near the Lakshadweep coast. These pirates were tried and prosecuted by a special court in India.
- iii. The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) is an International governance mechanism that was created to better coordinate the response to piracy off the coast of Somalia and was established on the basis of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1851. India has been very actively involved in the activities of the CGPCS and in 2017, India was nominated as Co-chair of Working Group 1 (Operations at Sea) along with Seychelles and UAE. The coordinated efforts have resulted in the piracy off the coast of Somalia to be suppressed.
- iv. In this regard, there has not been a single piracy incident since 2018 off the Coast of Somalia.
- v. Due to proactive surveillance efforts by Indian Coast Guard and other stakeholders, nil incident of piracy has been reported in and around Indian waters.
