# The Menace of Maritime Piracy

## Why in news?

The Indian Navy swiftly responded and stopped two pirate attacks off the Somali coast in a span of less than two days.

## What is maritime piracy?

- Any robbery or other violent action, for private ends and without authorization by public authority, committed on the seas or in the air outside the normal jurisdiction of any state.
- The term 'piracy' is used to describe a range of crimes from petty theft from ships at sea or anchorage to armed robbery and hijacking of a ship for ransom.
- **Types**-Maritime piracy can take various forms, each requiring different prevention strategies.

| Types of maritime piracy | About |
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| **Armed robbery** | Armed criminals illegally board a ship to steal cargo, equipment, or personal belongings of the crew without harming them. |
| **Hijacking/ Kidnapping** | Pirates seize control of a vessel and its crew, often demanding ransom for their release. |
| **Violent assault** | Pirates use physical violence against the crew, causing harm or even death, while stealing valuable assets from the ship. |
| **Cargo theft** | Pirates target specific cargo or valuable goods, robbing the vessel of its valuable shipmen |

- **Hijacking**-It is a greatest concern, since it causes panic in maritime business and leads to the establishment of high-risk areas, and a resultant increase in maritime insurance premiums.
- **Disrupt trade activities**- It also affects the safety of ships and seafarers, and disrupts global supply chain

## Why the areas in recent attacks are most affected by piracy?

*In recent years, waters off the west coast of Africa, Gulf of Aden, Horn of Africa, Bangladesh, and the Strait of Malacca have seen attacks by pirates.*

- **Poor policy-** The seas are very vulnerable to piracy as they lack effective law enforcement.
- **Lack of capacity building**- The countries that borders these waters do not have strong or sufficient naval capabilities to patrol and protect them.

- **Political instability-** Some of these countries are facing internal instability, which further hampers their ability to secure their maritime domain.
- **High shipping traffic-** These areas have high volume of merchant vessels passing through them as they connect major sea lanes such as ***Strait of Hormuz or the Bab el Mandeb Strait***.
- **Narrow passages**- The ships while sailing through these areas, sail close to each other and reduce their speed making them easier target for pirates.
- **Anchored ships-** In Gulf of Aden or the Gulf of Guinea the ships have to wait for days before entering the port, they are often anchored or drifted which exposes them to the risk of being boarded by pirates.
- **Socio-economic issues**- The coastal communities suffer from unemployment, poverty and civil unrest, they rely on piracy as a means to survival or profit.
- **Lack of coordination**- These areas are mostly international waters, international straits, or archipelagic waters that fall within the maritime jurisdiction of several countries, this leads to legal complexities and difficulties in coordination.
- **Lack of legal framework**- The captured pirates escape from prosecution and punishment as there is no effective international legal mechanism for their trial and disposal.

## How to prevent maritime piracy?

- **Maritime security training**-Proper training for seafarers and the crew assists in raising awareness about piracy risks and ensures they are equipped to handle potential attacks.
- **Maritime surveillance and Intelligence**-Effective surveillance systems, such as AIS (Automatic Identification System) and radar technologies, can enhance situational awareness, enabling prompt actions against pirates.
- **Technology solutions**- Utilizing advanced technology solutions, such as alarms, CCTV cameras, and access control systems, can deter pirates and provide vital evidence for investigations.
- **Rapid response capability**- A ship with an armed helicopter is the most effective in dealing with the piracy situation, it can direct fire and vector tge nearest ship that can render assistance.
- **Marine commandos**- Indian Navy has been practising Maritime Intervention Operations (MIO) for decades, and has developed extremely high expertise in this niche area of naval operations.
- **Collaborative efforts-**Cooperation among governments, international organizations, and naval forces is crucial for sharing intelligence, coordinating patrols, and conducting joint counter-piracy operations.
- **Piracy risk assessment-** Conducting thorough risk assessments allows ship owners to identify vulnerabilities, strengthen security measures, and develop contingency plans.
- **Adopt best practices-** Adhering to industry best practices, such as Best Management Practices (BMP) guidelines and implementing effective security measures, significantly reduces the risk of piracy incidents.

## Reference


[Indian Express- The crime of piracy]


