

Piracy checked, Indian Ocean now safe for trade vessels

High risk area warning on Gulf of Eden, Somalian coast removed for seafarers from Jan 1

TE Raja Simhan
Chennai

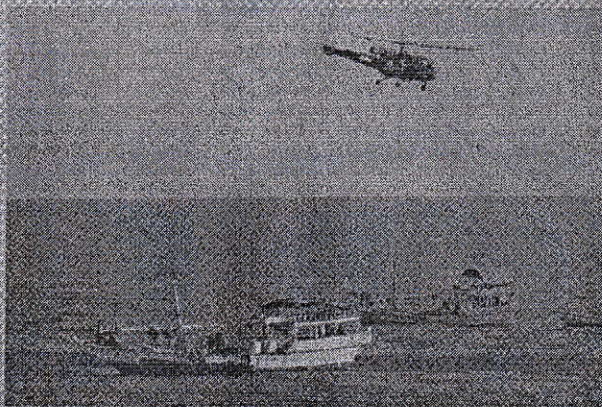
Seafarers can breathe easy. Dreaded pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden, the Somalian coast and Omani coast have been checked and ships can now sail smoothly through the Indian Ocean.

From January 1, 2023, the High Risk Area (HRA) warning on the Indian Ocean has been removed.

The safe transit of trading vessels through one of the world's busiest shipping lanes is good news and critical for India. Nearly 13 per cent of India's trade is dependent on the Gulf of Aden route, and thousands of Indian seafarers work on the hundreds of foreign ships transiting the Indian Ocean every day.

SMOOTH SAILING

The HRA was created in the



NO MORE GUARDS. The drop in piracy attacks in the Indian Ocean has been mainly attributed to the joint combat efforts by various countries, including India. FILE PICTURE

Indian Ocean at the height of the Somali piracy threat in 2010.

The International Chamber of Commerce International Maritime Bureau, which tracks piracy attacks globally, said the total number of attacks in the Indian

Ocean region attributed to Somali pirates peaked in 2011, when 237 incidents were recorded. This soared to 557 between 2010 and 2014 but declined sharply to 14 between 2015 and 2020.

The removal of HRA means seafarers don't need

armed guards. There will now be less stress on board although companies will remain vigilant, said Sanjay Prashar, former National Shipping Board member.

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The Ministry of Shipping estimates that Indian imports through the Gulf of Aden route was valued at around \$50 billion and exports at \$60 billion. Although this accounts for only 13 per cent of India's trade, the crew of several foreign vessels is Indian. India's large seafaring community (approximately 100,000 in number) accounts for 6-7 per cent of the world's seafarers.

The Indian Navy commenced anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden from October 2008.