

From the Editor's Desk



“TRUTH SHALL ALWAYS PREVAIL”

To lead our country to new heights and to inspire new thoughts, visions, ideas and motivation needs in the people of India, the need for awakening with a fresh and right thinking administration, alertness and activeness to the surrounding environment. Never rest unless a fair and just policy and system is implemented in practice. What a system of government we have, when such corruption can-not be checked at the highest level and in the highest form? When so much is being said by media, (editorials of "Marine Waves"), isn't it possible for the Supreme Court of India to file a case under its Suo-Moto powers on behalf of media reports with valid exposures, to investigate the matter by CBI? It appears that the present politics, is not focused for the interest of the citizens at large, but it is all about the vested interest. Choosing inaction over action, is admission or neglect? Media needs to desist from propaganda and biased approach to "News". Bias cannot defeat the rights. The media should evolve ethical standards based on socially accepted norms and standards of fair conduct, which would largely determine the degree of accountability. Seafarers of India should wake up against corrupt, unjust, unregulated practices; oppose the opportunist unworthy mariners and middlemen, in the Mercantile Marine Department, of the directorate general shipping. Empower the seafarers by providing access to all requisite information. Common practices mostly found in our social system are mischievous, teasing and torturing. Let's help out to Root-out the prevailing corrupt practices, re-thinking and self-introspection to ensure that sovereignty of the country and its people will be safeguarded. Seafarers need to be really united at least during this computerized age by exchanging their thoughts, as inter-actions will result in the well being of all the seafarers. This is after having very much understood, the sufferings of the seafarers, who lead a secluded sacrificial life, away from their near and dear ones, while earning foreign exchange for their country of origin but being neglected of their welfare comparatively to those working ashore, by their national governance. Many old- timer seafarers hanging around in port cities jobless, in poverty, the old age retired senior citizen seafarers, leading a life of poverty without after service benefits etc. Though, the neglect of their legitimate welfare of seamen is a violator of human rights. All this owing to incompetent mariners inducted neglecting seamen's welfare while they view only their vested interests. Hence, only competent people in the governance with commitment, concern and compassion towards fellowmen could put an end to these social maladies.

Think it over... Why does a person, knowing what truth is, hesitate to speak it out? Is he ashamed? Ashamed of whom? Whether he is a superior or a subordinate, what matters it? The fact is that habit swallows us all. Let us reflect over this and rid ourselves of the bad habit. — M K Gandhi

I call upon the aggrieved seafarers, hanging around near the Seafarers Club on Kamani Marg and as well as near the Seamen's Hostel, near Masjid Bunder Stn. etc. etc. to think strong and you become strong. Think weak and you become weak. As you think, so you become. The food for the self is thought. So, choose thoughts as you would choose healthy food. The world of thought is more real than the external world. Learn to picture yourself as strong, good and loving. To become conscious of our mental pictures is a part of wise living. The Vedas tells us to picture ourselves as infinite and blissful.. Aham Brahmasmi.

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to do the dirty work for older, more powerful criminals, who turn a profit by taking a cut of the ransom money and selling the ship's cargo.

Pirates often dress in military fatigues, using speedboats equipped with satellite phones and Global Positioning System equipment. They are typically armed with automatic weapons, anti-tank rocket launchers and grenades, according to the U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia.

Somalia's already overstretched government welcomed the initiative to involve international forces in patrolling its pirate-infested coastal waters. Wracked by more than a decade of violence and anarchy, Somalia does not have a navy, and the transitional government formed in 2004 with U.N. help has struggled to contain a deadly insurgency.

"These forces could come inside the country if it is needed," said government spokesman Abdi Haji Gobdon.

To some pirates, however, the prospect of international force is not particularly daunting.

"We are not scared of the U.S. troops or any other troops stationed off our waters. Why should we be scared?" asked Siyad, a Somali pirate who asked that his full name not be used for fear of reprisals.

"They have weapons, but so do we. And we are the ones with the human shields," he said, noting that troops are loath to use force because it risks harming hostages.

The International Maritime Bureau says piracy worldwide is on the rise, with seafarers suffering 49 attacks between January and March - up 20 percent from the same period last year.

Nigeria ranked as the No. 1 trouble spot. India and the Gulf of Aden off Somalia's northern coast tied for second, with each reporting five incidents. Somalia had 31 attacks involving pirates in 2007 alone, according to the International Maritime Bureau.

Noel Choong, head of the agency's piracy reporting center in Kuala Lumpur, said simple economics can explain much of Somalia's burgeoning piracy.

"At the end of the day, you hijack a ship, you get paid ransom," Choong said. "These pirates aren't frightened because the returns are so big."

The pirates frequently travel in open skiffs with outboard motors, often working with larger mother ships that tow them far out to sea. With an intimate knowledge of

local waters, they clamber aboard commercial vessels with ladders and grappling hooks.

The attackers generally treat their hostages well in anticipation of a big payday. Shipping companies and foreign governments rarely acknowledge paying ransom, but recent demands have soared into the millions of dollars.

"Our motivation is money, so it is not our plan to harm the hostages we take,"



Indonesian forces practicing for operations against pirates in July 2007.

Siyad said. "We never agree to release the hostages or the ship before the ransom is paid in cash."

Andrew Mwangura of the Kenya-based Seafarers Assistance Program estimates that Somali pirates have received more than \$3 million in ransom this year alone, an astronomical sum even considering it would be split among dozens or even hundreds of criminals.

International terrorism, always a concern in the volatile Horn of Africa, and particularly in lawless Somalia, does not appear to have a role in the country's piracy, according to several observers.

"I don't know that there has been a tie. We're not necessarily looking for one," said Robertson, the U.S. Navy spokeswoman.

Ali Abdi Aware, the foreign affairs minister in Somalia's semiautonomous Puntland region, where many of the attacks take place, said he does not know of any links between piracy and foreign terrorists. But, he added, the pirates' disregard for law and order in general "may encourage terrorism."

Siyad said his decision to become a pirate was a matter of survival. Impoverished and with no job prospects, he saw two options: risk his life by fleeing Somalia in a leaky boat to the more prosperous countries across the Gulf of Aden, or join up with pirates who were flush with cash. Now, \$35,000 richer after hijacking two

vessels, including a Japanese tanker seized in December, Siyad said the best, most profitable choice was clear.

He plans to use his spoils to try to escape the poverty and instability of Somalia. "I want to go abroad using a safe route, using my money," he said.

But Muse - the pirate who spent all his money in one go - had second thoughts a few years ago, blaming the easy money for the loss of his wives and other

personal misfortunes.

"I had to sell the house and the cars," Muse said. "I divorced my wives. I stopped this job after thinking about how it affects our Islamic religion and our Somali culture."

"Now I work at a private company, I am no longer a pirate," he said. "I am happy to get a small monthly salary."

France, US draft Somalia piracy resolution:

France and the United States, with the aid of Britain, are drafting a U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing countries to fight piracy off Somalia and elsewhere, France's U.N. envoy said on Tuesday.

A surge in maritime hijackings for ransom in the waters off the coast of lawless Somalia have made it one of the world's most dangerous shipping zones.

"We French and the Americans, with the support of the British and others, want to have a resolution on piracy," French Ambassador to the United Nations Jean-Maurice Ripert told Reuters.

"We are in the process of agreeing among ourselves the (details) of the resolution, including the scope and the legal aspects," he said.

Somali pirates hijacked a ship en route from Dubai on Monday and Spain said it had sent a naval frigate after the seizure