

Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill 2019: What are the key features?



Piracy in High Seas

Union government brought the “Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill 2019”, in line with India’s commitment with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982. India had ratified the UNCLOS in 1995. Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill 2019 was introduced in the aftermath of kidnapping of 18 Indians aboard a crude oil carrier, off the coast of Nigeria

Key Features of the Bill include:

- The Bill enables Indian authorities to take action against piracy in the high seas.
- It will be applicable to all parts of the sea adjacent to and beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone of India.
- Under it; the act of piracy will be a punishable offence. It provides for life imprisonment or death, if the piracy comprises of attempted murder, or results into death. In cases of attempt to commit piracy, or directing others to participate in it, there will be punishment of up to 14 years along with a fine.
- Offences will be extraditable. Thus, accused can be moved to any country for prosecution with which India has inked an extradition treaty.
- It empowers the authorities to seize a ship or aircraft under the control of pirates and property on board.

Designated Court:

The central government can notify the Sessions Courts as “Designated Courts” in consultation with Chief Justice of concerned High Court. These courts will look after offences committed by;

- Person of any nationality, in custody of the Indian Navy or Coast Guard
- A citizen of India, a resident foreign national in India, or even a stateless person.

It will have no jurisdiction over offences committed on a foreign ship, if any intervention is requested.