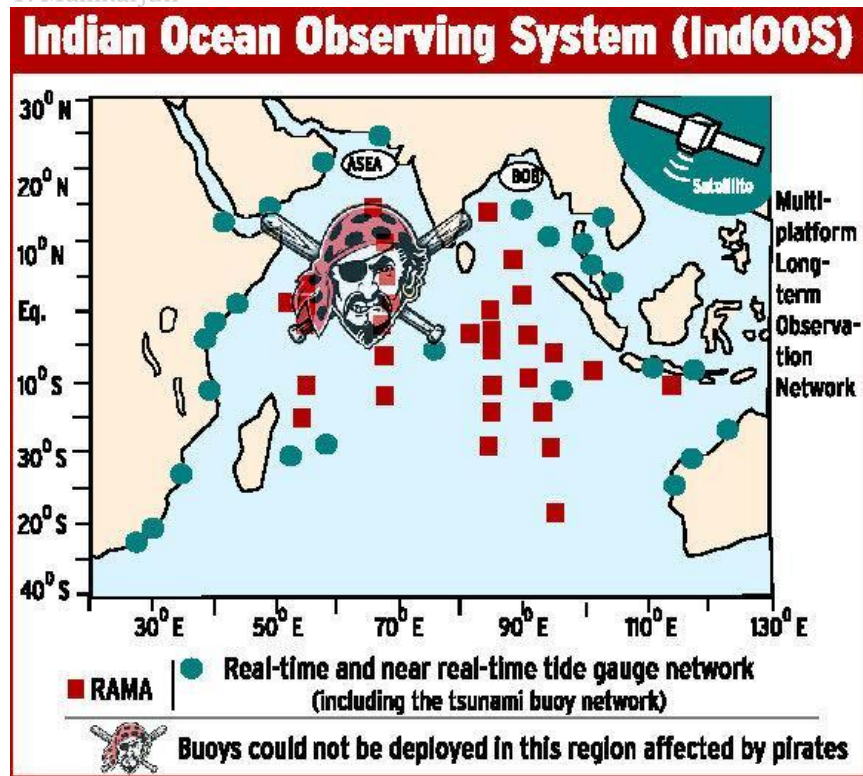


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Pirates keep ocean researchers at bay

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Pirates operating in the western Indian Ocean, especially the Arabian Sea, have dealt a severe blow to the climate research plans of Indian and international scientists to have a better understanding of monsoon.

Many countries joined hands and established the Indian Ocean Observing System (IndOOS), to collect data relating to climate, monsoon, cyclones and related phenomena. It was planned to deploy 46 buoys — called RAMA (Research Moored Array for African-Asian-Australian Monsoon Analysis and Prediction) — for in-situ ocean observation studies in the Indian Ocean. The moored buoys are programmed to provide all meteorological and oceanographic data in real time from specified locations in the high seas.

The other observing systems of the IndOOS include Argo profiling floats to collect data on temperature and salinity up to a depth of 2,000 metres, the expendable bathythermograph (XBT) to measure temperature data up to a depth of 760 metres along major shipping routes and drifting buoys to measure air pressure and sea surface temperature along with surface currents.

One of the major objectives of the IndOOS is to understand the interaction between the ocean and the atmosphere. India is fully partnering in and contributing to the ocean observing system, by providing research vessels, deploying floats and drifters and conducting XBT deployments.

As many as 30 out of the 46 RAMA buoys have been deployed in the Bay of Bengal and equatorial Indian Ocean since 2005. However, scientists could not deploy these moorings in the Arabian Sea due to growing activities of pirates in the past few years.

Before the problem hit the western Indian Ocean, more than 1,000 Argo floats were deployed in the Indian Ocean and half of them are currently active. "With some of the floats in the Arabian Sea completing their lifetime of four years, scientists are not able to go there to deploy new floats" said M. Ravichandran, head of the Modelling and Ocean Observation Group at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Observation Services (INCOIS).

The INCOIS is the nodal agency for implementing the ocean observing system in the Indian Ocean on behalf of Union Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Dr. Ravichandran is also the co-chair of the Indian Ocean Panel — an international body which provides scientific and technical oversight for implementation of the ocean observing systems. It also coordinates research on the role of the Indian Ocean in the climate system.

Underscoring the importance of studying the data from Arabian Sea, he said: “If you want to forecast weather for the next season, you have to depend on ocean as it is a storehouse of heat which will be released into atmosphere”.

With no immediate solution to the problem posed by pirates, scientists are exploring different options to tackle it, including seeking Navy help.

Keywords: [Indian Ocean Pirates](#), [climate research](#), [Indian Ocean Observing System](#)

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