

# Guyana fights rising pirate attacks

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GEORGETOWN, Guyana --

Pirate attacks along Guyana's rivers and Atlantic coast have prompted the South American country to set up an emergency radio network for boaters and place special markings on engines to track stolen equipment, officials said Friday.

Fishermen outraged by more than two dozen raids reported in the last two months met this week with Cabinet ministers to complain that armed sea bandits have stolen catches of fish and shrimp and even small vessels.

Agriculture Minister Robert Persaud said the new measures should reduce attacks and help police track the pirates, some of whom are believed to flee into neighboring Venezuela or Suriname.

"If we can frustrate them and put mechanisms in place, then it can go a long way," he said.

Pirates have targeted Guyanese fishing boats for years but victims say the attacks have increased in recent months. Last week, Interior Minister Clement Rohee turned down fishermen's requests for permission to carry arms at sea to defend themselves.

The government has proposed increasing the maximum prison sentences for convicted pirates from 10 years to 25 years. The legislation, expected to be submitted to Parliament later this year, would make piracy a crime on par with murder or manslaughter.