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48 collisions in Straits of Malacca last year

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Forty-eight collisions involving ships and boats were reported in the Straits of Malacca last year, a considerably small figure compared to the high number of vessels plying the route daily.

Capt Mohd Halim Ahmed, from the Marine Department, said last year a total 35,873 vessels had used the Straits of Malacca, including 10,948 tankers, 8,338 containers and 10,893 general cargo vessels.

"Considering such a high figure, coupled with the fact that the Straits is one of the busiest in the world, the reported number of accidents are considerably very small," he said at a talk on accidents at sea organised by the Maritime Institute of Malaysia.

He said safety measures along the busy straits had been enhanced with the introduction of a ship monitoring system known as the Vessel Traffic System (VTS).

Using a network of nine radar stations along the straits, the VTS, launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last June, had been recognised as an effective tool in reducing risk of collision in a busy waterway.

Mohd Halim said as shipowning had its own fair share of risk, proper and careful risk management was essential.

He said some of the casualties suffered at sea were caused by technical errors like poor design and condition of vessels and some could be attributed to human weaknesses.

"There should never be an element of complacency," he said.

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