

Increased surveillance for ships to combat piracy

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government will step up surveillance and security for ships plying the Straits of Malacca as well as the waters off Sabah and Sarawak to minimise the threat of piracy.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said it was the Government's duty to ensure that the ships passing Malaysian waters were protected against such a threat.

The Government, he said, was very concerned over the increasing incidence of ships being hijacked in the Straits of Malacca lately.

"The Government is very concerned because we have around 63,000 ships passing up and down the Straits of Malacca.

"We have to provide them with security so we have to step up the

surveillance over the area as well as waters off Sabah and Sarawak. That is our duty because we want people to feel safe when they sail in our waters," he told a press conference after delivering a speech at the 10th World Economic Devel-

opment Congress here yesterday.

On Monday, the Indonesian tanker *mt Tirta Niaga IV* was hijacked by pirates in the straits who took the captain hostage and demanded a ransom of one billion rupiah (RM360,000).