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Mahathir-Sea

M'SIA TO STEP UP SURVEILLANCE IN MELAKA STRAITS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 27 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will step up surveillance over the Straits of Melaka and the waters off Sabah and Sarawak to ensure safety of users, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Malaysia was concerned on the safety of its waters as about 63,000 ships passed up and down the straits, one of the world's most busiest sealanes.

"We have to step up our surveillance over the straits as well as the waters off Sabah and Sarawak. That is our duty.

"We are very concern, we want people to be safe when they sail in Malaysian waters," he told a news conference after delivering a keynote address at the 10th World Economic Development Congress here.

He was asked to comment on news reports on piracy activities in the Straits of Melaka where two tankers were hijacked by pirates recently.

According to news reports today, pirates in Indonesian waters off Aceh had hijacked the Indonesian-owned MT Tirta Niaga IV and taken the captain hostage for a one billion rupiah (RM360,000) ransom.

Pirates had also hijacked a Malaysian vessel, MT Selayang, on June 19, but the Shell-chartered tanker was captured by the Indonesian navy on the east coast of Kalimantan today.

Director of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Capt P. Mukundan announced in a statement today that the vessel was arrested after a high sea chase which ended at 3.20pm when the Indonesian naval and air units, using information provided by the IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre in Kuala Lumpur, closed in on the ship near the coast.

The statement said the Malaysian flag tanker transporting 3,500 tonnes of gasoil was hijacked shortly after it left the Shell refinery in Port Dickson.

-- BERNAMA

AFY AHH JK