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## Dr M calls for changes in maritime law to check piracy

PETALING JAYA: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said merchant ships should be allowed to carry armed personnel.

He said international laws should be amended to make this possible to protect crew against pirate attacks.

"Armed and trained personnel on board would be much more effective than naval ships sending commandos as the merchant vessels would have already been boarded by pirates.

"(By then) the pirates would have likely taken the crew as hostage, and would threaten to kill them if the commandos do not leave," he said in his blog posting.

Dr Mahathir said this in response to the success of a squad from the Royal Malaysian Navy

in rescuing a Malaysian merchant ship, *MT Bunga Laurel*, from a Somali pirate attack in the Gulf of Aden recently.

Dr Mahathir also noted that recently South Korean commandos had been equally successful in protecting a Korean merchant ship against Somali pirates.

"(But) I wonder if this means that the anti-piracy forces of different countries are responsible for ships from their countries only.

"Will the Malaysian or Korean commandos sit by and watch as ships of other nations are hijacked in front of their eyes?" he asked.

Therefore, he said it would be more effective if preventive measures were taken by having armed and trained personnel on-board to protect the crew and cargo.