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The Straits Times
INTERACTIVE

Two ships seized in Indonesian waters Hijackings underscore the problem of piracy as maritime experts gathered in KL warn that coast guards are no match for well-equipped pirates

June 27, 2001 TUE, By [Reme Ahmad](#) IN KUALA LUMPUR

TWO ships have been hijacked in Indonesian waters, Malaysian police said yesterday, just as maritime experts meeting here warned that piracy in regional waters is likely to worsen as poorly-equipped coast guards find themselves in an uneven match against better-armed marauders.

The seizures of both the Indonesian-registered Tirta Niaga and the Malaysian-registered MT Selayang were condemned by officials of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), which opened a two-day meeting here on growing piracy in Asian waters.

The Tirta Niaga was attacked and its crew overpowered on Monday night after it set sail from Penang's Butterworth pier, carrying palm oil bound for India. Malaysian Marine Police commander Muhamad Muda told AFP: 'The pirates have kidnapped the Indonesian captain and are holding him on land for ransom somewhere in North Sumatra, while the remaining 20 crewmen are on board the ship.'

The vessel was drifting near Sumatra's north coast.

The MT Selayang, which sailed from Port Dickson with a cargo of gas oil used in diesel engines, was attacked near Borneo island on June 19. The incident was reported only last Thursday.

It was not clear how many crew members remained on board the Selayang.

The attacks underlined the grim message brought by maritime experts meeting here. They said cash-rich pirates and international syndicates are making it increasingly difficult for the authorities to fight the scourge.

Mr Hiroshi Terashima, executive director of Japan's Nippon Foundation, an organisation involved in marine safety, noted:

'Cooperation among countries is not necessarily in the most ideal state, so how we go about creating regional cooperation in the future is going to be a key issue.' He said Japan suffered the most from pirate attacks in the Straits of Malacca, losing three billion yen (S\$45 million) over the past five years.

His concern about increasing pirate attacks was backed up by the first-quarter report of the IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre released last month.

It said actual or attempted piracy attacks worldwide hit a 10-year quarterly high of 68 incidents in the January-March period.

Sixty-three per cent of these incidents occurred in South-east Asian waters, compared with only 50 per cent over the same period during the past two years. Most of the raids occurred in Indonesian waters.

Pirate attacks reported in South-east Asia tripled between 1991 and 1999, according to the bureau.

Indonesian and Philippine officials point to a lack of funds and the continuing political and economic turmoil in their countries as factors impeding their fight against the pirates.

A Philippine official said piracy was 'thriving' because ransom money paid to the Abu Sayyaf for the dozens of people it kidnapped had gone to better equipping the rebels. They now had speed boats that can go up to 40 knots an hour while the Philippine navy's vessels can hit a top speed of only 25 knots. 'We have little chance against them,' he said.

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Thursday, June 28, 2001

Indons recover hijacked Malaysian tanker

By Hilary Chiew

KUALA LUMPUR: The hijacked Malaysian tanker *mt Selayang* was recovered by the Indonesian navy yesterday afternoon north of Kalimantan after an intensive search operation since Tuesday. The pirates had renamed the vessel *Wang Yung* in an attempt to avoid detection.

The vessel, which was anchored a few nautical miles off the coast of Samarinda, was boarded by navy personnel at about 3.20pm before being towed to the naval base at Balikpapan, south-west of Samarinda.

"We believe the ship had encountered engine problems, which explains why it was anchored since 4am.

"We will have more details about its crew and cargo when the vessel arrives at Balikpapan,"

International Maritime Bureau (IMB) director Capt P. Mukundan said in an interview.

He said the pirates were on board and expected to be handed over to the Indonesian police.

"The success demonstrates once again the importance of international co-operation and the determination of the countries concerned to apprehend the culprits," he added.

Earlier, breaking the news at a press conference after a two-day anti-piracy conference here, Mukundan said precise and regular updates on the ship's location by the IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre here had assisted the Indonesian navy to track down and capture the ship.



RESCUE DRILL .Royal Malaysian Navy personnel being lowered from a helicopter onto a Fisheries Department boat 'seized by pirates' during a demonstration at the marine police jetty near Port Klang Wednesday. The drill was held in conjunction with the anti-piracy conference in Kuala Lumpur.

Asked if the accurate monitoring of the vessel was related to the use of the Shiploc, a satellite-based tracking device concealed on board the vessel, Mukundan said: "It might be."

Since 1999, the IMB has been encouraging shipowners to install the device to give them a better chance at recovering their hijacked vessels. He also said the Indonesian authorities should conduct investigations immediately and release the vessel and its cargo to the Malaysian owner without undue delay.

The ship is owned by Azam Shipping and chartered to Shell Malaysia Trading Sdn Bhd. It was transporting gas oil from Shell's refinery in Port Dickson to Labuan when it was hijacked on June 19.

Asked about the Indonesian vessel *mt Tirta Niaga IV* which was attacked by pirates in the Straits of Malacca on Tuesday and had its captain taken hostage, Mukundan said the tanker had sailed back to Butterworth.

He said marine police were conducting investigations and advised ships encountering engine failure not to anchor in Indonesian waters. Last September, the Shell-chartered tanker *mt Petchem*, which is also owned by Azam Shipping, was hijacked for one day and lost its cargo of gas oil.

Following the incident, it is believed that Shell had demanded that Azam Shipping beef up security

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International Maritime Bureau



Loyang Offshore Supply Base
No 113 SOPS Ave
Box 5172, Singapore 508988
Phone: (65) 545 8000
Fax: (65) 545 0093