

No pirate attacks in Malacca Strait in first quarter

■ **By Kang Siew Li**
siewli@nstp.com.my

THE Malacca Strait recorded zero incidence of pirate attacks on ships in the first quarter of 2008 compared with two attacks in last year's first quarter.

The ICC-International Maritime Bureau (IMB) attributed the improvement to the enhanced cooperation between the littoral states of Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

"(However) there is no room for complacency. It is vital that law enforcement resources remain deployed in this area if the attacks are not to resume," said IMB director Captain Pottengal Mukundan in a statement, following the release of the international maritime watchdog's "Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships" report for the first quarter of 2008 last week.

Mukundan said all ship masters, owners, shipping industry bodies and the respective flag states are urged to report all incidents of actual and attempted piracy and armed robbery to the IMB piracy reporting centre in KL.

"These attacks are always passed on

immediately to the nearest law enforcement agency and followed up by the Centre. The reports are a vital first step in the response mechanism," he said.

He added that the IMB is aware that a number of incidents go unreported each year due to various local fears and pressures upon masters.

In the January to March 2008 period, piracy attacks worldwide increased to 49, from 41 in the same period last year.

ICC-IMB said Nigeria ranked the number one hotspot in the first quarter, accounting for over 20 per cent of the total with 10 reported incidents.

India and the Gulf of Aden shared second place with five reported incidents each.

"For the first time in the last decade, Indonesia was no longer ranked with the highest number of reported incidents. There has been a sustained decrease in the number of reported attacks in the archipelago leading up to only four incidents reported this quarter," ICC-IMB said.

Indonesia ranked fourth in the first-quarter figures.

LOCATIONS OF ACTUAL AND ATTEMPTED ATTACKS (January-March)

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Indonesia	28	21	16	19	9	4
Malacca Strait	3	8	4		2	
Malaysia	2		2	3	1	1
Myanmar		1				
Philippines	4			1		2
Singapore Strait		6	2	1		1
Thailand/Gulf of Thailand)		1	1	1		

Source: ICC-IMB Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships Report - First Quarter 2008

