

Pirates overran us in minutes, says skipper



Nor Fazly breaks down in tears during a press conference at the Malaysian Sea-farers Day yesterday. — Picture by Zuraneeza Zulkifli

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PORT KLANG — The crew of the oil tanker *MT Orkim Harmony* had no warning of the pirate attack and could not respond as the attackers had already boarded.

“By the time we knew what was going on, eight of them had boarded the vessel and tied us up at gunpoint,” Captain Nor Fazly Sahat said yesterday.

Relating his experience of being hijacked and held hostage at the annual Malaysian Seafarer’s Day breaking of fast, he said:

“They overran the bridge in minutes and herded the crew into the ship’s galley. I pleaded with them not to harm my boys.

“It was critical in the first couple of days. The pirates were agitated and had shot the ship’s cook. It was just out of panic.”

Nor Fazly said he did not believe the pirates were murderers but were only interested in the cargo of petrol.

He said the crew lost all their personal belongings.

“I did what I had to do. I am responsible for the lives and safety of my crew,” he said, adding that the standard procedure was to cooperate.

He thanked those involved in the search and rescue operations, especially the company, navy and the maritime enforcement agency.

“They didn’t give up looking for us and there is no way I can describe my gratitude for all they have done. My crew and I are thankful to all those who ensured

our safe return home,” he added, fighting back tears.

Also present was the ship’s second engineer, who did not comment when asked what caused the engine problems when the vessel had been recovered.

Director-General of the Malaysian Marine Department Datuk Baharin Abdul Hamid officiated at the event and presented gifts to recognise Malaysian seafarers for their contributions.

He downplayed the threat of piracy in Malaysian waters, saying that attacks were few in comparison to the number of ships sailing.

“They are just going after targets of opportunity. This is not a daily occurrence,” he said.

Baharin additional efforts were being made to provide better security on the east coast.