

Mulling use of private guards on board ships

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PORT KLANG: The country's ship owners are contemplating hiring private security companies to guard their vessels when sailing through the Gulf of Aden.

Malaysian Ship Owners Association (Masa) executive secretary Captain Intiaz Hussein said, however, it was too early for the ship owners to take such an initiative because it would be costly and would only be a temporary measure.

"The first hijacking incident involving Malaysian ships made ship owners start looking for ways to overcome pirate threats in the area," he said at the Marine Department's open house here, yesterday.

On July 19, Malaysian International Shipping Corporation (MISC) ship MT *Bunga Melati Dua* with 39 crew members was hijacked in the gulf when it was on its way to Rotterdam from Dumai, Indonesia.

Ten days later, another MISC vessel, MT *Bunga Melati Lima* with 36 crew was also hijacked in the same waters when the ship was making its way to Singapore from Yanbu, Saudi Arabia.

Intiaz said ship owners had requested that MISC shared its experiences with them so as to be able to come up with precautionary measures for vessels plying the gulf.

At yesterday's event, several crew members of *Bunga Melati Dua* and *Lima* were honoured.

Marine Department director Captain Datuk Ahmad Othman said the department took the opportunity to host an open house to welcome local and foreign seafarers as well as crew members of the two hijacked vessels.