

# RM11.7m fund for safer straits

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia received RM11.7 million from various countries to enhance safety and navigation in the Malacca Straits.

The money was channelled to the Aids to Navigation Fund, which was set up by Malaysia last month.

Transport Minister Datuk Ong Tee Keat said the fund would be rotated between Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore every three years.

"It shows other countries are sharing responsibility to upkeep and maintain the Malacca and Singapore Straits," he said when opening a three-day forum on navigation safety and environmental protection of the Malacca and Singapore Straits.

Fifty delegates from various countries and the maritime industry attended the inaugural forum.

Ong said South Korea, Middle Eastern nations, Japan and China had contributed to the fund.

"More money is expected from other countries," he added.

Ong said the fund would be used to maintain the cleanliness and upkeep of navigation aids in the straits.

It also showed that other countries were sharing the responsibility to upkeep the straits, he said.

The fund is one of the three components under a co-operative mechanism set up to foster co-operation between Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and other users of the straits.

Other initiatives under the mechanism include removing ship wrecks, enhancing co-operation on hazardous and noxious substances, enhancing marine environmental protection and replacing navigation aids damaged during the 2004 tsunami disaster.