

DR M: DON'T OBSTRUCT PORT SERVICE

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PORT KLANG, Sun. — The Prime Minister warned all sectors today not to resort to any action that would obstruct efforts to upgrade services at the port here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the move to privatise the overall operations of the port was aimed at making its services more efficient and at par with foreign ports.

He said the port workers and the Government would benefit once the entire port was privatised.

Bureaucracy would be reduced through privatisation, Dr Mahathir said when he launched the Klang Port Authority's Silver Jubilee celebrations at the North Port here.

He said that when the Government decided to give the Port Klang container terminal to the private sector two years ago, it did not mean that the port authority had failed to make the terminal a profitable one.

"The container terminal was privatised so that it

could play an active role because containerisation needs flexibility and adaptability," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if the privatisation of the port failed, everyone would have to face the losses.

"It would be a shame to see our goods being handled by other foreign ports owing to our inefficiency."

He said the Government often monitored the container congestion at the port and a team had been formed to study and work out long and short-term measures to overcome container pile-ups.

He said the Government had also allowed the three container haulier companies to operate nationwide.

In the past the three operators — Kontena Nasional, Shapadu Kontena and Consortium Perkapalan — could only operate in certain areas.

He also said Malayan Railway (KTM) had also been given a role to act as an agent to handle containers besides the road hauliers.

"Although we have spent large sums of money to develop our ports, a big tonnage of Malaysian cargo is still being handled by foreign ports," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this was due to "inefficiency in our cargo handling system" when compared to ports in the neighbouring countries.

"We need to upgrade our productivity and efficiency and ensure optimum use of port facilities," he added.

He said in order to encourage more international trade via the ports, steps had been taken to cut down cargo documentation and simplify Customs and immigration procedures.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was committed to make Malaysia a maritime nation and, because of this, steps had been taken to increase the number of ships owned by MISC.

The Prime Minister later toured Klang Container Terminal Sdn Bhd, the private company which took over the container operations in 1986.