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Mahathir - port (pix)

BE MORE EFFICIENT TO OVERCOME TRADE PROTECTION THREAT - MAHATHIR

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PORT KLANG, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants Malaysia's transport services sector to be more efficient to overcome the threat of trade protectionist tendencies and the inward looking attitude of western trade blocs.

"We have to work harder and defend our comparative advantage," he said when opening the Malaysian International Shipping Corporation Berhad (MISC) Trucking and Warehousing Sdn Bhd and the MISC Container Services Sdn Bhd.

Dr Mahathir said trade restrictions to benefit one group and prevent competition were unhealthy and Malaysia could not hope for fairness.

This was because those who raise the question of "level playing field" put on the cloak of silence when they had advantages such as size and capital, he said. -- more

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Mahathir - port 2 Port Klang

Dr Mahathir hoped the MISC would continue with its renewal programmes and expand its fleet to meet the increasing demand for transport and shipping services in the Southeast Asian region which was emerging as an economic powerhouse whereas the western countries were at their same level or faced with recession.

The expanding volume of trade among countries of this region would result in greater demand for shipping and transport services, he said.

By expanding its shipping services, Malaysia would become noted for such service and this would also check the outflow of the ringgit to pay for shipping services run by foreign companies, Dr Mahathir said.

He also spoke of the changes taking place in the shipping industry where a single operator was involved in transporting goods from the supplier to the customer under the multi-capital containerised service.

"This will further increase the efficiency of the overall transport service," he said.

He also wanted steps to be taken to increase storage capacity and improve the shipping and port management efficiency as the export of industrial goods accounted for 71 per cent of the country's total export value. -- more

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Mahathir - port 3 (last) Port Klang

"Ships having to wait in port for their turn to be loaded or unloaded will cause losses to all including the country and restrict the growth of the port," he said.

The Prime Minister hoped that the additional facilities being built on Pulau Indah near here would increase the storage capacity at Port Klang which being the country's major port could play a more important role and become a vital cargo centre in the region.

With a free trade zone at the port, goods imported for re-export or industrial output from Port Klang itself could be handled for shipping speedily without the need to go through customs checks, he said.

The Prime Minister also wanted an increase in the number of ancillary services at Port Klang so that it would emerge as a distribution and entreport centre in this region and he hoped the MISC as the national shipping line would assist the port.

The acquisition of a 25-per cent equity by the MISC in the Klang Port Management Sdn Bhd would ensure the interest of the MISC in seeing the success of Port Klang, he said. -- Bernama

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