

Strive for efficiency, transport sector told

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By Farush Khan

PORT KLANG, Mon. — The country's transport services sector must strive towards greater efficiency to overcome the threat of protectionism and inward-looking tendencies among economic organisations in the West, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the sector could not expect fairness and justice from these groups as they acted just for their own advantages.

He said trade restrictions to benefit one group and prevent competition were an unhealthy approach.

Those who talk about level playing field, he said, become quiet when they had advantages such as size and capital.

"What they concentrate on is only on whatever little advantage we have," he said when opening the Laman MISC here today.

Laman MISC is the site where its subsidiaries, the Malaysian International Shipping Corporation Berhad (MISC)'s Trucking and Warehousing Services, the MISC Container Services and MISC Haulage Services are located.

Dr Mahathir said based on the economic achievements of Southeast Asian countries of late, the region was on the way to emerge as an economic powerhouse respected by the world.

"While the trade in this region is expanding, the economic situation in western countries is still at the same level. In fact some of them are facing numerous problems, including recession," he added.

To meet the increasing demand for transport and shipping services, he hoped the MISC would intensify its renewal programmes and expand its fleet.

He said such a move would not only popularise Malaysia in terms of shipping services, but also reduce the outflow of the ringgit to pay for shipping services run by foreign firms.

He also touched on the significant progress made

by the shipping industry within the last two decades and the effect it had on the transportation sector and distribution centres.

Dr Mahathir pointed out that one of the obvious developments was the establishment of the multi-capital containerised service under which a single operator was involved to transport goods from the supplier to the customer.

This, he said, would improve the efficiency of the overall transport service.

The Prime Minister also wanted storage capacity to be increased and the shipping and port management efficiency improved as the export of industrial goods represented 71 per cent of the country's total export value.

"Ships which do not move for having to wait in the port for their turn to be loaded or unloaded will cause losses to all concerned, including the country, and limit the growth of the port," he said.

He said with the privatisation of the Klang Container Terminal Bhd and Klang Port Management Sdn Bhd, the port's efficiency was expected to improve.

He hoped the additional facilities being provided in Pulau Indah near here would increase the storage capacity at the port.

He said the port could play a more effective role as a distribution centre in the Southeast Asian region, especially with it being declared a free port.

"It is hoped that as a national shipping company, the MISC will continue to help make Port Klang a successful entrepot," he said.

The MISC's move in acquiring a 25 per cent equity in the Klang Port Management Sdn Bhd, he said, would ensure that MISC's interest would have direct links with the success of the port.

He said the activities carried out in Laman MISC such as the trucking and warehousing services, and container repair and refurbishment were important in the efforts to establish an efficient transportation network and to make Malaysia

a truly maritime country to support development programmes through industrialisation.

Dr Mahathir said the port and shipping activities always faced stiff competition from established entrepots.

To compete with others, he said, the MISC should take steps to improve the quality of its service.