

# Maritime industry may get more incentives

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the maritime industry needed to be developed more efficiently and effectively, considering the growth of the Malaysian economy.

To this end, the Prime Minister said, the Government would take steps to augment the industry's capacity and operations.

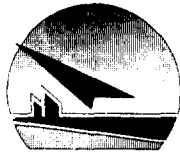
"In line with this, the Government may consider giving more incentives to traders and freight forwarders to export or import using our own vessels and ports."

Dr Mahathir said this at the opening of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima '95) exhibition.

Larger cargo volumes and increasing competitiveness had added pressure on Malaysian ports to improve efficiency and provide more cost-effective services, he said, adding that budget allocations had been made towards building a second port in Johor and completing the West Port each served by good road and rail access.

He added that the Government was also looking at ways to improve operational efficiency through the application of hi-tech equipment and systems and manpower training.

Suppliers of hi-tech equipment and consultancy services would find ample opportunities to work together with Malaysians



**LIMA '95**  
M A L A Y S I A

December 5 - 10

in the upgrading of local port facilities, he said.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the leisure aircraft industry was also being actively promoted by the Government as more Malaysians took to a "boating lifestyle", seen by the increasing number of marinas and seaside resorts being built in the country.

At least 10 marina projects are expected to be operational by 1997.

"It is undeniable that, properly operated, marinas not only stimulate employment and income, but also provide additional property, sales and other tax revenue to the Government.

"In its efforts to capture the bulk of the region's boating development and to account for a significant proportion of the industry's revenue by 1995, the Government has eliminated import duties on luxury boats and relaxed boating regulations as a means of increasing boat-related activities."

He added that Malaysia

was also encouraging the development of lake resorts. Such developments would result in higher demand for leisure craft and boating facilities.

Float planes and amphibious aircraft would be used for transportation of visitors from principal airports to and between lakes.

Dr Mahathir also mentioned the environment in his address.

In the midst of all this development in the maritime industry, Malaysia was also mindful of the need to preserve its maritime environment while ensuring its safety standards, he said.

Towards this end, steps were being taken to ratify several international conventions which dealt with the safety of navigation and preservation of the marine environment, he said.

"As the Straits of Malacca is one of the busiest in the world, the threat of pollution from oil spills and illegal discharge of sludge is very real, posing a great danger to the marine environment and to the sustainability of our coastal marine resources including the leisure industry.

"We are, therefore, actively pursuing the idea of trans-isthmus transport of goods and petroleum as one of the projects in the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand growth triangle. This proposal will reduce the risk of collision and oil spills in the strait."