

9 JAN 1996

Mahathir-port

CHANGE THE MIND SET, MAKE PORT KLANG A SUCCESS, SAYS PM

PORT KLANG, Jan 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysians, especially importers and exporters, as well as the Malaysian business papers must change their mind set in order to make full use of Port Klang, the country's principal port.

The prime minister said one third of Malaysia's trade was currently being carried out, either exported or imported, through other non-Malaysian ports even though Port Klang had all the facilities of a principal port to serve their needs.

"We have actually come to accept that as normal as if this is something that is so natural that we should not question it," he said at a reception to mark the maiden call of "APL China", one of the largest ships of American President Lines (APL), here.

He said Port Klang had the capacity of a principal port and must be made into one for Malaysia to cater for direct trade with other countries and for big ships like the 276.3m APL China, which has a capacity of 4,832 TEUs, to call.

"The mind set that we have (towards our ports) must be changed," he said, chiding the Malaysian business papers, for example, for publishing the names and expected times of arrival and departure of ships calling at foreign ports but not at Port Klang.

"If you care to look at the Malaysian business papers you will find that it is ETA SIN...I dont know what SIN means but it must be some sin or other," he said in a jest to the laughter from all present including Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and his deputy Datuk Mohamed Ali Rustam.

Dr Mahathir questioned why it could not be ETA Port Klang when those ships were going to call here and added: "I hope that it is not any sin that we deal with when we should talk about Port Klang...when the ships arrive and depart from here."

He said the movements of ships to Malaysian ports and not to foreign ports should be the information carried by the local business papers as that was the information needed by Malaysian importers, exporters, freight forwarders and others in the business.

"I'm not running down anybody, but it so happens that they like to use SIN to denote their name, their port...but we should not sin along with them," he said to another round of laughter from the guests who also included port operators and users.

"So I hope the newspapers will take note because as I have said before, everybody in Malaysia must make it their duty to make Port Klang a success and to be a success, all must be committed, everyone at all levels," he added.

On a more serious note, the prime minister stressed that the world's largest container ships would not be coming to Malaysia if there were not enough cargoes for them to carry, and hence the great need for Malaysians to make full use of Port Klang.

Dr Mahathir said that on the other hand, everyone at the port, from the workers to the managers, to lorry operators and other transport operators and the customs, must be committed and must do their level best to ensure efficiency.

He said, for example, that the ships needed to be ensured of a fast turn around time so that they would not have to wait long at the port as

time meant money for them.

"Everybody must work hard and be committed towards making Port Klang a successful port and to be successful means to be efficient, hardworking and committed on the part of everyone," he said, adding that the government's keen effort to promote Port Klang would be for the good of everyone.

He added that the success of Port Klang would be good for the country's economy and everyone would benefit from the economic growth either financially or in other ways.

"Thus, I would like to emphasise the need for Malaysians to think more of Port Klang, to use Port Klang, and for Malaysian business people, manufacturers, exporters and importers to make it a point to use Port Klang, collect as much cargo here so that it'll be worthwhile for huge ships to call," he said.

On the APL China, Dr Mahathir said it was the government's hope that its call here would be profitable and the beginning of more frequencies in the future.

APL China is the first of six APL vessels which will be calling weekly at Port Klang for direct sails between Malaysia and North America, giving shippers in Malaysia the fastest transit time available between here and North America in just 17 days to and from the U.S West Coast.

On hand to welcome the prime minister at the Klang Container Terminal (KCT) berth was George Hayashi, chairman of American President Companies Ltd, the parent company of APL, who later accompanied Dr Mahathir on a tour of the ship.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said Port Klang was planned as an entreport and a free port which received goods from other countries and breakbulk here for distribution locally and to neighbouring countries and collected goods from other small feeder ports for repacking and export.

Asked to comment on the increase in charges by several shipping companies recently, he said that if the increase applied to all their routes it would not pose a problem for Port Klang.

As for charges in Port Klang, he said there would be no increase as the port wanted to attract more users. -- Bernama