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Ling - Port

GOVERNMENT TO MONITOR MOVEMENT OF MALAYSIAN CARGO

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 7 (Bernama) -- The Ministry of Transport has directed all port authorities in the country to monitor the movement of Malaysian cargo to determine whether they are going to Port Klang or any other foreign port.

"This is in line with the government's policy to attract main liners to call at Port Klang and make it a main load centre," Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Ling Sik told reporters at his office here today after attending the weekly Cabinet meeting.

Dr Ling said traditionally Malaysians shipped their goods via Singapore but from now on the government would monitor the movement of cargo from ports like Kuching, Kota Kinabalu, Kuantan, Pulau Pinang and Pasir Gudang to ensure it left the country via Port Klang.

Early last month Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government would make sure that "anyone that imports and exports" used Port Klang, meaning Malaysians should send and land their goods at Port Klang - the country's largest port.

Dr Mahathir had said the action by Malaysians who sometimes looked for the easy way out by exporting goods via other countries had resulted in the loss of port dues and other income and had created a deficit in Malaysia's balance of payments.

He said his ministry was creating an awareness among Malaysian exporters and importers and cargo handling agents to use Port Klang so as to attract larger vessels to call at the port.

"Efforts must be made to ensure that it is viable for main liners to call at Port Klang as anything below the quota is not viable for them," he said.

Dr Ling hoped that by next month, more main liners would call at Port Klang to deliver or collect Malaysian goods and continue from there for their end-bound destinations.

He said among the main line operators that had been calling at Port Klang since last month were APL (American President Line), OOCL (Orient Overseas Container Line) and Hyundai.

According to him, Malaysian vessels carried only 15 per cent of the country's goods while the rest went to foreign ships as there were insufficient local ships.

"Malaysians are encouraged to enter the shipping business to help overcome the shortage of local vessels to carry our own goods," he added.

One of the efforts taken to encourage ships to make direct calls at Port Klang was the directive issued in November last year that all government purchases from abroad be made with a clause specifying that the cargo be carried by vessels which called at Port Klang.

The government had also taken a number of other measures to induce more direct calls such as doubling the terminal handling charges (THC) for goods imported or exported via feeder vessels from Malaysian ports. -- Bernama