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Mahathir-Port

MAHATHIR SAYS IT'S A 'NATIONAL DUTY' TO HELP PORT KLANG

PORT KLANG, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today all government departments and employees are required to help ensure that the bulk of the country's trade will go through Port Klang.

"It is a national duty," he said when officially opening the West Port here.

He said the government is prepared to listen to any problems faced by all those involved in the port services.

Dr Mahathir also said the government would offer assistance to port, freight and insurance entrepreneurs.

He called on other states to refrain from posing competition to Port Klang. "Undoubtedly, Selangor will gain much benefit with the presence of this large port in the state."

West Port, with 11 wharves in operation, is the third here after the North Port and South Port.

Dr Mahathir was confident that with proper supervision, West Port would be able to match the North and South Ports but, he said, they must cooperate when required.

"Competition is good but competition that is not based on business sense, that is merely motivated by the desire to win, is unhealthy," he said.

All parts of the port made up the nation's premier port and what must be given priority is the country rather than mere companies or the port itself, he said.

"It might be difficult for the different companies to sacrifice their profits in the interest of the nation. That is not what is required. What is needed is the rejection of the attitude of being fanatical about your own company.

"If you give in once in a while to your friendly competitor, in the long run it will benefit you and it will benefit the nation. Whatever benefits the nation must eventually benefit you."

Dr Mahathir also said greater use of the national port will help reverse the deficit in the services account.

The absence of a large international port in Malaysia previously led to most of the country's goods being exported through ports in other countries, resulting in an increase in the deficit, he said.

"There's no other way to reduce the deficit as long as Malaysia does not have a port that can attract large vessels.

"The growth in Malaysia's trade only increases the deficit in the services account and it appears that the deficit cannot be overcome at any time."

Dr Mahathir said ports in Malaysia must be equipped with modern facilities and utilise information systems that could speed up ship and cargo handling.

He urged government departments, like the Customs and Immigration Departments, to give their closest cooperation to ensure no delay in port services.

He said the government had agreed to designate the port area as a duty-free zone, and this would make Port Klang an international or entrepot port.

The port management should undertake aggressive marketing of its

services throughout the world, especially to the smaller ports in neighbouring countries, he added.

Efforts are also needed on the part of the Port Klang management, shipping agents and large manufacturing companies in Malaysia to promote use of the port.

With large volumes of goods being cleared through Port Klang, more international cargo lines would call at the port, and this would promote growth of support industries, particularly the insurance industry.

"If the insurance industry and CIF (cost in freight) and FOB (free on board) are arranged in a manner that can benefit us, that is CIF for imports and FOB for exports, we might be able to reduce our services account deficit," he said.

Dr Mahathir said West Port, with its six kilometres of wharves, holds great potential. "Without doubt, if its management is efficient, West Port can become one of the biggest in Southeast Asia," he said. -- BERNAMA

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