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Radar

DR MAHATHIR LAUNCHES STRAITS RADAR SYSTEM NEXT FRIDAY

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 (Bernama) -- A RM100-million radar system to enhance traffic safety in the Malacca Straits will be officially commissioned by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad next week.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today the commissioning of the system on March 27 would enable Malaysian authorities to monitor movement of vessels plying the world's busiest waterway and avert collision among them.

"The radar detects the movement of each vessel passing through the straits and gives out early warning if ships are on collision course," he told reporters here.

Ling, who earlier opened an Amim (Association of Marine Industries Malaysia) forum here, however said mandatory reporting by ships could not be implemented yet in the Malacca Straits although the International Maritime Organisation has already approved it in principle.

The radar system would be manned by the Marine Department at Port Klang and Kukup in Johor, he said.

It has been installed within Malaysian waters off Port Klang and Tanjung Piai and Pengerang in Johor.

Ling said mandatory reporting by ships, as observed in several advanced countries, could only be enforced in the Straits six months after the organisation's conference scheduled for May.

The ruling requires every ship passing through the Straits to report to the nearest control centre.

He said International Maritime Organisation's approval was necessary to enforce the ruling as the Malacca Straits "is an innocent passage."

About 30,000 ships, mostly cargo and container carriers, use the narrow and congested Malacca Straits in a year risking not only collisions causing losses of millions of ringgit but also costlier damage to the environment by oil spills.

The latest major collision occurred last Oct 1 between cargo vessels M.V ICL Vikraman and M.V Mount killing 12 crewmen with 15 others still missing.

On the registration of Malaysian-owned leisure craft, Ling said the requirement would be incorporated into the Malaysia Shipping Bill now being drafted by combining three existing ordinances on merchant shipping.

The issue was the main agenda of the two-day forum.

Ling said the proposed bill, which seeks to streamline national maritime laws with those enforced internationally, provides for registration of local leisure and recreational vessels to ascertain seaworthiness.

Upon registration, an owner of such vessel would be issued certificate as proof of ownership and related document to facilitate mooring in foreign ports, Ling said.

"The draft provision is still under discussion," said Ling.

The minister was confident that the proposed bill would be a boon to the development of the Malaysian as well as Asean's marine tourism industry.

Earlier in his speech, Ling commended Amim for organising the forum which could provide feedback required by the industry. -- BERNAMA

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