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`More incentives can boost use of facilities'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Port users feel that facilities at Port Klang are more than adequate to handle varied cargo and containers, but that they can be even more attractive with greater benefits and incentives.

They said importers and exporters would rather use Port Klang than the feeder service to Singapore if issues like cost and transportation problems could be addressed.

They said more local cargo could be exported through Port Klang in due time as more main line vessels called at the port, adding that it was important to look into the frequency of vessels coming here.

President of Malaysian Furniture Industry Council, Anthony Yap Yeng Jou, one of the participants at the dialogue with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on "Port-Users and Promotion of Port Klang", said a high percentage of the council members were already exporting their goods using Port Klang.

"We have been encouraging our members to use Port Klang instead of Singapore port," he added.

As for problems faced by the exporters, Yap said: "We feel that the frequency of vessels coming here must be looked into."

He said the Government should also look into providing more benefits and incentives to woo importers and exporters.

Chairman of the Port Klang Freight Forwarders Association, Datuk Jason Goh, said main line operators would go anywhere if there was enough cargo for them to pick up.

"It is also a `chicken and egg' situation - we must have enough cargo before the main line operators would want to call at Port Klang," he added.

Goh said in terms of efficiency, competitiveness and costs, Port Klang was attractive enough to draw local importers and exporters.

As for the main line operators coming here, he said: "At present, there are 67 main line operators calling at the port and I am sure in time to come, we can expect more than 100 main line vessels."

"I think there is no problem, so long as we have the cargo," he added.

Datuk Shaari Jihin, of Asa Niaga Sdn Bhd, who operates four jetties in Port Klang, described the dialogue with Dr Mahathir as a positive move to promote Port Klang as a national load centre.

"It is our responsibility to promote Port Klang and why should importers and exporters continue to use a foreign port?" he asked.

Shaari said his "small port" catered for small coastal ships and tongkang that bring vegetables, sawn wood and timber from Indonesia and neighbouring islands.

Chairman of the Palm Oil Refiners Association Toh Pang Huat commended Dr Mahathir for taking the lead to promote the use of Port Klang.

"Now there must be a follow-up and the various Ministries and agencies should look into ways of improving services at the port," he said.

He added that the country had a very efficient port and it was the duty of everybody to promote its use.

"There is no reason for port users to go elsewhere," he added.

Toh however said importers' and exporters' concern would be the cost-effectiveness of using the port and more importantly, the frequency of vessels calling at the port.

To businessmen, he added that time was vital in sending their goods to

their clients.

"We need to load ready cargo as soon as possible, in order to get payments," he added.

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