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Mahathir-Ship

BIGGEST CONTAINER VESSEL STOPS OVER IN PORT KLANG

PORT KLANG, Dec 12 (Bernama) -- The world's biggest container vessel stopped over in Westport here today and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was among those who visited it.

Dr Mahathir said the arrival of "Clifford Maersk" clearly proved Port Klang's capability of handling big ships from all over the world.

"We know that some years back Port Klang was just a feeder port. But now we see mainlines coming here in great numbers including even large vessels," he told a press conference at the Westport Business Centre later.

Accompanying him during the visit were Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Westport chief executive Datuk G.Ganalingam and Klang Port Authority general manager Datin O.C. Phang.

The Clifford Maersk, which is 347 metres long, 43 metres wide and has a load capacity of 6,600 teus (twenty foot equivalent units), is on its first tour of the Far East from Europe.

The Danish vessel arrived at Westport this morning and is expected to proceed to Yokohama tonight. It is scheduled to stop over here again on Dec 29 on its return journey.

Dr Mahathir said Port Klang saw a 40.8 percent increase in the volume of containers handled this year while transshipments recorded by the port jumped by 130 percent.

Noting that Westport could handle 264 containers per hour, Dr Mahathir said this was a very good record.

He said Westport's wharf would be expanded by another 600 metres by June next year.

Expressing satisfaction with the current efforts to promote Port Klang among leading shipping lines, he said many of the companies acknowledged that the port offered all the services and facilities that they required.

Meanwhile, Ganalingam said that next year Westport would spend RM145 million to upgrade its wharf facilities.

He said that when the facilities were ready, the port would have the capacity to handle 2.1 million teus of load.

This year, Westport handled 800,000 teus of cargo, a big rise over the 470,000 teus recorded last year, he said.

-- BERNAMA

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