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Dr M: Port Klang set to reach greater heights

TRANSHIPMENT at Port Klang has grown by 138 per cent and the port is set to reach even greater heights, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"Port Klang was just a feeder port before, but now the main lines and large vessels can enter," he said. The Prime Minister was speaking after visiting the Clifford Maersk, the largest container vessel in the world, which berthed at Westport yesterday.

Also present were Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Westport executive chairman Datuk G. Gnanalingam and the Clifford Maersk's captain Peter Sogaard Nielsen.

"Transshipment has grown by 138 per cent, and today I understand that Westport was also able to move 264 containers in one hour. That is also a record," Dr Mahathir said.

"Ministry officials have visited the companies and they are responding, and they recognise Port Klang's abilities," the Prime Minister said.

He added that with its wharf to be extended by 600 metres by next year, Port Klang was set to reach even greater heights.

Built this year, the 347-metre long and 43m wide Clifford Maersk is the largest ship to berth at Westport.

Westport also has the distinction of being the vessel's first port of call in the Far East during its maiden voyage from Denmark to Japan.

Previously, the 318-metre long Regina Maersk was the largest container ship to call at Westport in August, last year.

Meanwhile, Gnanalingam said that work to expand Port Klang's infrastructure, such as the 600 metres extension of the wharf, would cost a total of RM145 million.

"Port Klang has a capacity of moving 2.1 million containers a year.

In 1997, we moved about 100,000 containers, and in 1998 we moved 470,000 containers," said the Westport executive chairman.

"So far this year, we have moved 820,000 containers. We would be happy to be reach between 60 and 70 per cent of our full capacity by next year," he added.

Gnanalingam said having the Clifford Maersk at Westport was "a big honour", adding that port workers had been able to break the previous record of moving 201 containers per hour by moving 264 containers per hour.

A total of 922 containers were moved from the vessel, of which 863 boxes were 40-foot containers while the remaining 59 boxes were 45-foot containers.

The Clifford Maersk departed from Westport for Yokohama at 8pm yesterday.

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