

12 JUNE 2000

Mahathir-Ling

DR LING HAS DONE GOOD JOB, SAY DR MAHATHIR

By: Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud

TOKYO, June 12 (Bernama) -- Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik has done a very good job, especially in developing the country's ports, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"He came to see me before I came here. He accepted my advice not to resign because I felt that the work he has done is something good," the prime minister told a news conference at the end of his week-long working visit to Japan.

He was asked to comment on Dr Ling's decision not to quit his Cabinet post after seeking his advice.

Dr Mahathir said that since Dr Ling took over as transport minister, the country had seen a lot of progress especially in the ports.

"There was a time when the performance of the country's ports was very unsatisfactory as all the ports of Malaysia handled less than one million containers per year and they were just feeder ports handling goods to Singapore.

"We spend a lot of money build ports but they are not used. Now we are no longer feeder ports and we have increased container handling, he said.

Dr Mahathir said at that Port Klang alone, three ports -- North Port, Klang Container Terminal and West Port -- handled three million containers a year, not counting the Pasir Gudang, Tanjung Pelepas and Penang ports.

"Even Kuantan Port is now being expanded to handle more traffic," he said.

"This is all the result of Dr Ling's efforts. If he stops, I will have to take in a new man who may not have the experience," he added.

The prime minister said Dr Ling had established good relations with shipowners from all over the world, including Europe, America, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

"These people have become his golfing partners and in this kind of business it is important to be personally acquainted and Dr Ling has done that.

"So, whatever people may say about him, as far as the government is concerned, we are very happy that he has decided to withdraw his resignation," he said.

Asked about his meeting with Dr Ling at the initial stage, he said: "He had some personal problems...everyone was accusing him and he was disappointed.

"But he has a commitment to the government. That is why I asked him not to hand in his resignation letter when he met me. And I don't want to receive any resignation letter," he said.

Dr Ling, who is also the MCA president, surprised the nation when he announce on May 22 that he was quitting the Cabinet but decided to stay put last Tuesday after returning from a 10-day holiday in Perth to think over his quit decision.

-- BERNAMA

GM JK