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`Globally-recognised standards in shipping traffic management needed'

PORT KLANG, Thurs. - Malaysia needs internationally-recognised standards in shipping traffic management, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

He said confidence among the world's major shipping nations in the safety and standards of Malaysia's maritime traffic management would encourage more shipping companies to use Malaysia's ports like Port Klang.

This will in turn encourage and generate regional economic development, especially in the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand and Singapore-Johor-Riau growth triangles.

"This will help the Government reach its goal to turn Port Klang into a regional hub centre," said Dr Mahathir when launching the Malaysian Vessel Traffic System (MVTS) at the Marine Department, Peninsular Malaysia headquarters here.

Completed in March, the MVTS is a radar-based system for maritime traffic management.

The MVTS enables the tracking and monitoring of all vessels plying the Straits of Malacca, with operators able to communicate with all vessels to provide advice and direction at all times.

It consists of nine radar towers, known as remote sensor sites, located in Tanjung Kemarong, Langkawi; Pulau Angsa, Bukit Jugra, and One Fathom Bank in Selangor; Tanjung Tuan and Pulau Undan in Malacca; and Bukit Segenting, Tanjung Prai and Bukit Penggerang in Johor.

Dr Mahathir said that the creation of the MVTS was a practical move to equip local ports with a modern information system so as to increase the quality of its operations.

"It will also make our ports more competitive and efficient," he said, adding that a system similar to the MVTS was currently being planned for Johor's Tanjung Pelepas port.

He said the system was needed in light of the increasing shipping traffic in the Straits of Malacca, currently the world's third busiest after the Dover Straits and Gibraltar.

"It is expected that the amount of traffic in the Straits of Malacca will increase at the rate of 1.3 per cent annually.

"From this projection, by the year 2010, a total of 46,842 vessels over 30 metres in length are expected to use the Straits every year," said Dr Mahathir.

Currently, more than 600 trading vessels including cargo ships of over 200,000 deadweight tonnage and cruise ships use the Straits of Malacca every day.

Dr Mahathir said the MVTS was also necessary as the increase in maritime traffic in Malaysian waters had made traditional management systems obsolete.

"A more efficient and modern shipping traffic management mechanism like the MVTS is needed to reduce the risk of accidents and pollution in the future."

This, he said, was in light of the increasing number of ships plying the Straits of Malacca carrying hazardous cargoes.

Also present were acting Transport Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng, Deputy Transport Minister Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, National Security Council director-general Datuk Jaafar Ismail and Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri

Abu Hassan Omar.

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