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`Identify suitable ports for yachtsmen'

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Cabinet has instructed all port authorities to identify suitable ports to be developed into tourism centres catering especially for yacht owners.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said attracting yacht owners to stop at Malaysian ports would be a lucrative business.

He said among the ports which could be turned into yacht ports were Langkawi, Penang, Pangkor, Port Dickson, Malacca and Tanjung Piai in Johor.

He added that the setting up of the yacht ports would also help locals, who could then set up businesses such as eateries and souvenir shops at these ports.

"We can promote our local culture as well as our food," he said, adding that sleepy fishing villages could be turned into a hive of activity if yacht ports were nearby.

"Yachters from all over the world will stop by not only to rest but also to experience local food and culture," he said.

The demand for yacht ports, he said, was high due to the increased affluence among Malaysians, who were now into yachting.

"These yacht ports will also attract foreign tourists and this will mean extra cash flowing into the country," said Dr Ling.

He, however, said no timeframe had been set to start the yacht ports but added that their true potential would be realised one or two years after the setting up of a few of them.

"We can expand from there," he said, adding that the idea to set up yacht ports came from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Ling also said the Government had decided to have a one-stop centre to issue permits for vehicles transporting hazardous cargo like toxic chemicals and inflammable items.

He said currently four agencies were involved in issuing permits for lorries transporting such products.

They are the Road Transport Department, the Department of Environment, the Domestic Trade and Consumers Affairs Ministry and the police.

Dr Ling said the one-stop centre would make it easier for the operators to obtain permits.

"The Cabinet has decided on the formation of the one-stop centre to issue permits straight away," he said.

He said it had not been decided which ministry would run the one-stop centre. "It could be the police because any accident is first reported to the police," he said.

Dr Ling said the move to set up a one-stop centre was initiated after taking into account the hardship faced by those applying for permits to transport hazardous cargo.

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