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Ling has done a good job for shipping sector, say officials

Jimmy Yeow

PORTS and shipping officials yesterday were surprised by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik's announcement that he is resigning from the Cabinet, saying that the minister has done a good job for the port and shipping industry.

Officials contacted by Business Times concurred with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's opinion that Dr Ling has done a great job, especially in the port sector.

"He (Dr Ling) has done so much for the port and maritime industry in the country and created a lot of awareness among Malaysians on the industry," said Jardine Port Agencies general manager Thum Hoong Yip.

"The minister is ever willing to listen to the problems of the shipping lines and agencies and help to solve them," he said.

"There is so much awareness created in the print and electronic media during the past five years on the Malaysian port and shipping industry, particularly Port Klang.

"More people are now aware of the load centring policy and Port Klang being promoted as an alternative hub in the region," he said.

"If there is a legacy about Dr Ling, then it should be the port sector," Thum said, adding that transshipment volume and throughput at Port Klang have been rising tremendously over the years.

Port Klang is now one of the top 15 container ports in the world.

Dr Ling has been going round the world to promote Port Klang and other Malaysian ports to major liner operators and also port users in the country he visited.

"He has led a number of road shows with Malaysian port operators, shipping lines and authorities to Europe and Asia during the past few years," Thum said.

The president of the Association of Forwarding Agents Port Klang, Datuk Dr Jason Goh, said Dr Ling has been working very hard for the port sector.

He has managed to get a number of systems to improve the port and airport operating procedures in the country.

"Dr Ling managed to get the cooperation of the Customs, Health and Immigration Departments to facilitate the cargo trade with the pre-clearance system," he said.

"On numerous occasions, even on Sundays and public holidays, he went to the various local ports, even at mid-night, to get a first-hand look at the operations, clear cargo backlog and improve productivity and efficiency at these terminals when there are complaints from the users," said Goh, who is also the vice chairman of MCA Port Klang Division.

He should be credited with improving the overall port efficiency in Malaysia with "Operasi Cekap" by identifying and trouble-shooting the problems in the logistics chain.

"The Prime Minister should retain Dr Ling in the Cabinet, now is not the right time for him (Dr Ling) to resign," he said.

"Dr Ling's successor has a very big shoe to fill in," he said.

A Port Klang official, who declined to be named, said Dr Ling is well respected by foreign shipowners, especially by the leading mainland Chinese shipping company, Cosco.

"They have high regards for his understanding in the shipping industry and acknowledge Dr Ling as an overseas Chinese who has made it good in political area and value his contributions to the community," he said.

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