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MAHATHIR-PTP

MAHATHIR: EMERGING INDOCHINA MARKETS OPEN UP VAST TRADE OPPORTUNITIES

KUALA LUMPUR, March 13 (Bernama) -- The maturing of new container markets, following the admission of Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos into Asean, will open up vast opportunities for new ports like Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP), Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said PTP was therefore in a good position to provide a better platform for Malaysia to capture these growing markets as the port would have the single largest container handling facilities in the region outside Singapore.

The Prime Minister said this at the launch of the Pelabuhan Tanjung Pelepas 2000 conference and exhibition in Johor Bahru after launching the RM2.28-billion port this morning at Gelang Patah near here.

The text of his speech was made available in Kuala Lumpur.

Strategically situated at the confluence of international shipping lines with just 45 minutes navigation time away, he said PTP saw itself as offering a viable and alternate port of call to shipping lines in this region.

"Located on 1,935 acres (about 774 hectares) of greenfield site, PTP will enhance Malaysia's port sector's contribution to Malaysia's development," he said.

On the impact of the new era of globalisation to the international trade sector, Dr Mahathir said with globalisation, world markets were increasingly independent of regulated policies and as a result would become highly competitive.

Increasingly, he said, companies were outsourcing their needs to achieve the lowest cost and highest quality to remain viable.

Dr Mahathir noted that shipping lines and ports had benefited from this by dealing with third party logistics providers who were able to "network" a diverse chain of players within the global logistics chain.

"With shipping lines embarking on larger Super Post Panamax vessels, the world's demand for containership cargo was expected to continue to increase with reduced overall freight rates," said the Prime Minister.

This, the government believed, would lead to further port expansion and a surge in demand for both port and shipping sectors, moving further towards the growth of the global logistics business providing effective avenues and choices of cargo owners, he said.

Dr Mahathir added that PTP also aspired to develop into a regional transshipment hub and had aimed to be on par with existing international ports like Singapore and Hong Kong.

"With a state-of-the-art Information Technology system, PTP gives instant access to its purpose-designed Integrated Terminal and Port Management Information System (ITPMIS)," he said.

By synergising the port's operations and communication centres, the ITPMIS facilitated a free-flow of updated information and provided near paper-less transactions among port personnel, shipping lines, marine services and freight forwarders, he said. -- BERNAMA

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