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MAHATHIR-PORT

PTP WILL BE COUNTRY'S LARGEST PORT IN 2005, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PASIR GUDANG, July 25 (Bernama) -- The Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) in Gelang Patah, some 40km from Johor Baharu, will become the country's largest port in 2005 with the capacity to handle more than 10 million TEUs (twenty equivalent units) of containers annually.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that PTP which currently handled more than 2.5 million TEUs is capable of reaching the target once all the relevant facilities and infrastructure for the port are put in place.

"PTP would have sufficient new capacity of handling up to six million TEUs plus the present 4.5 million TEUs (full capacity). PTP will become the biggest port with 10 million over capacity," he told reporters after a visit to Pelabuhan Johor Berhad here today.

Dr Mahathir said that the Johor Port in Pasir Gudang had also grown tremendously with its cargo capacity now standing at 700,000 TEUs from only 300,000 TEUs eight years ago.

"Previously our ports handled less than one million containers.. but now the Johor Port alone handles 700,000 TEUs and if all the figures are added including that of Johor Port, PTP and the Klang Port, it is almost eight million," he said.

The prime minister said that the country's port could be further expanded to be in par with other international ports in the world.

To a question on the position of Johor Port following the land reclamation work being carried out by the Singapore government, he said: "We are not happy as their reclamation has further narrowed the straits (Selat Tebrau)."

This would make it difficult for the ships passing through the Johor Port, particularly the navy ships, he said.

Earlier during his visit, Dr Mahathir was briefed on the progress of Johor Port by the chairman of Johor Port Berhad, Datuk Mohd Taufik Abdullah.

Also present at today's event were Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, his deputy Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib and Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman. -- BERNAMA

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