

# We'll continue to expand ports, says PM

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia will continue to upgrade and expand its ports according to the global demands of the container industry, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We will continue to invest in our infrastructure because the container industry is very important to our country's economic growth," he said, adding that the total trade is now worth US\$180 billion (RM684 billion) a year.

Speaking at the International Maritime Night held in conjunction with the International Council of Containership Operators (ICCO) meeting yesterday, Mahathir said the British, during their rule here,

had only developed the ports in Singapore, preferring to use rail to transport goods.

"After independence, we decided that we want to be a major international port of call because we have always been a trading nation," he said.

"Ten years ago, we handled only about two million containers a year in our 10 ports. Today, we are handling 10 million containers ... it is still growing and we are now among the top 20 trading nations in the world."

Mahathir took a swipe at *Time* magazine which, he said, wrote 25 years ago that "there is no future in the container industry".

"How wrong can they be. They also want to teach us how to run our country," he said.

"It looks like to succeed, we must

take the opposite direction (of the magazine's views or recommendations)."

He also thanked the ICCO for choosing Malaysia as the venue for its meeting - the first time in its 20-year history.

"It is a recognition of our ability in providing port services and quality infrastructure for the global container industry," he said.

ICCO chairman Ray Miles said the industry would continue to support Malaysia as long as Malaysia continues to upgrade and expand its ports to meet the growing needs of a very competitive industry.

Transport Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy said the ICCO's support had helped make Port Klang and Port of Tanjung Pelepas rank among the top 20 container ports in the world.