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MAHATHIR-BINTULU

PM TO OPEN PETRONAS'S LNG COMPLEX ON THURSDAY

KUALA LUMPUR, May 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open Petronas's RM16.6 billion Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Complex in Bintulu, Sarawak on Thursday.

The ceremony will be Dr Mahathir's first major official function since returning from his two months' leave on Monday.

The complex, the world's largest LNG production facility on a single location, measures 276 ha and this is equivalent to 402 football fields. It comprises three plants -- MNLG 1, MNLG 2 and MNLG 3 -- and they have a production capacity of 8.1 million tonnes per annum (MTPA), 7.8 MTPA and 6.8 MTPA respectively.

The complex is complete with storage tanks and loading jetties for the LNG to be stored and exported to overseas customers via special tankers.

The three plants currently employ about 850 people, out of which 80 percent are Sarawakians.

Since its inception in 1983 to March 31, 2003, some 188 million tonnes of LNG had been shipped from the complex, generating US\$36.1 billion (RM137.18 billion) in revenue.

Most of the LNG is exported to Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, where Malaysia's share of their LNG markets stands at 25 percent, 49 percent and 21 percent respectively.

The country's venture into LNG exports took root in 1967 when substantial natural gas reserves were discovered in the Central Luconia area located between 125 km and 275 km offshore Bintulu.

Malaysia is presently the third largest LNG exporter in the world, accounting for 13 percent or 15 million tonnes per annum of global exports, after Indonesia and Algeria.

In 2002, LNG accounted for 5.6 percent of Malaysia's gross national product and three percent of Malaysia's gross exports. -- BERNAMA

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