

# PORTS MUST BE ON PAR TO COMPETE GLOBALLY

Infrastructure and ecosystem needs to be beefed up to accelerate economic growth, says PM

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**M**ALAYSIA'S port-related infrastructure and ecosystem must be strengthened to allow the country to remain globally competitive.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said this was critical to accelerate and drive economic, as well as investment growth in the country.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said efforts to boost the infrastructure of Malaysia's main ports were among the government's priorities, following congestion currently experienced at several ports, including Port Klang and Penang Port.

"We (the country) are facing a dynamic region with fierce competition (in today's world). Hence, the role of these ports is critical in driving growth (of the economy).

"Even small successes are considered impressive and if we are slow, we will be left behind.

"Hence, the existing ecosystem and infrastructure need to be further strengthened," he said at the Westports 2 container terminal groundbreaking here yesterday.

Present were Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, Transport Minister Anthony Loke, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amiruddin Shari and Westports Holdings Bhd executive chairman Datuk Ruben Emir Gnanalingam Abdullah.

Anwar said the enhancement of Malaysia's ports had been raised several times during cabinet meetings.

"The government has requested that all port-related matters be expedited as we do not want the country to fall behind due to administrative processes."

Regarding the development of Westports 2, Anwar said its establishment was timely to alleviate congestion issues at



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says addressing congestion issues at several ports and enhancing infrastructure are critical in driving growth. He said this during Westports 2 container terminal groundbreaking in Port Klang yesterday. PIC BY ASYRAF HAMZAH

Port Klang. He said Westports' capacity as a globally recognised logistics hub would continue to grow with the opening of the new container terminal.

"When I was finance minister in 1994, I visited Westports to observe the early construction works, and I could see its capacity and potential to become a major port.

"With this in mind, I believe the development of this new infrastructure is beyond question, and the government will provide full support to ensure the success of this port expansion project."

On a separate matter, Anwar, during a town hall session with Westports' employees, urged the company's management to boost its employees' wages in line with its productivity and financial performance.

Anwar also said issues relating to employees' welfare should be prioritised as the company's success was due to the hard work and dedication of its workforce.

"While workers are treated well, I would like to call on the company to raise employees' wages. We must not forget their wellbeing and welfare, such as their children's education and housing needs," he said.

On a related issue, Anwar said the Transport Ministry and the Selangor government would soon hold discussions on the expansion of the road along Port Klang.

This, he said, followed reports of frequent road accidents involving lorries in the area.

"I am aware of reports on lorry accidents and that they are common in the area.

"Therefore, I will discuss with the menteri besar (of Selangor) and the Transport Ministry on ways to address the issue and how we can expedite road expansion efforts within our capacity," he said.

Anwar said the government would review allocations to repair and improve the roads in the area. This, he said, was aligned with the government's efforts to boost infrastructure at main ports.

He added that while the allocation for the road expansion works could not be disclosed at present due to significant financial commitment, he had given his assurance that the matter would be reviewed by the government.

"As a responsible prime minister, I cannot give a categorical answer, and while we do have the capacity, for now, we will need to wait a little longer.

"I agree with the proposal (to expand the road), but such matters take time. However, I will request for the proposal to be reviewed once I return to the office.

"For now, we will approve the allocation to repair the existing roads," he said.