



## Govt plans nationwide port expansion

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ISKANDAR PUTERI, June 18 (Bernama) -- The government is planning to expand ports areas nationwide to meet current and future demands, said Transport Minister Anthony Loke.

He said this would require a long term strategy, not only to meet the demands for capacity, but also to provide a healthy competition with neighbouring countries which have been constructing bigger ports.

Loke said the government was well aware of the need to expand, develop and upgrade the ports, including the Port of Tanjung Pelepas.

"This will take years as it involves a lot of work in terms of getting approvals among other things, but we need to make the effort and expedite the process.

"If we don't take the necessary steps now, we will not be able to compete," he told reporters after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Pelabuhan Tanjung Pelepas Sdn Bhd (PTP) and Terberg Tractors Malaysia Sdn Bhd here today.

Under the MoU, Terberg Tractors would be providing driverless tractors at the Port of Tanjung Pelepas, part of an effort to ensure that the port remains competitive and to overcome labour shortage and reducing dependency on foreign workers.

The tractors are scheduled to begin operating within two to five years.

Meanwhile, Loke said the expansion of the ports is important as Malaysia is strategically located in the Straits of Melaka, one of the world's most busiest shipping lanes.

"We do have ports which are competitive and world renowned. Right now, we need to collaborate with port operators such as PTP and MMC Corp Bhd so that they can continue to invest in the expansions," he said, adding that the government would continue to provide the necessary support.

Citing the Port of Tanjung Pelepas as an example, he said the port currently handles nine million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) annually, and the expansion would allow it to handle up to 15 million TEUs.

"When the port is expanded, we will be also able to develop our logistics industry which will contribute to Johor's economic growth," he said.