

Loke: No more restrictions on foreign vessels carrying out undersea cable repairs

by Martin Carvalho, Hemananthani Sivanandam, Rahimy Rahim, and Tarrence Tan



KUALA LUMPUR: The government has decided to exempt the cabotage policy on foreign vessels carrying out undersea cable repair work, says Transport Minister Anthony Loke.

"The government's main consideration is to increase Malaysia's competitiveness in attracting foreign investors, including Facebook, Google, and Amazon, who wish to construct undersea cables as well as data centres on land.

"The move will not only attract investment but also bring about more job opportunities while expanding growth of the domestic telecommunications and Internet industry," he said, when answering a question raised by Ahmad Fahmi Mohamed Fadzil (PH-Lembah Pantai) in Parliament on Thursday (April 11).

The move, he added, would make the nation a more attractive hub for telecommunication companies who had previously shied away due to red tape stemming from the cabotage policy.

"Usually, it will take 27 days to get the regulatory permits, but we estimate it will be cut down to 14 days," he said.

The exemption, he said, came into effect on April 1 under Section 65(U) of the Merchant Shipping Ordinance 1952 following a gazette on March 28.

Loke told lawmakers the move would not affect local shipping companies as undersea cable repair work requires specialised vessels which were lacking here.

Later in the Parliament lobby, Loke said Malaysia currently has 16 underwater international cable networks and nine domestic cable networks located at cable landing stations nationwide.

Communications and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo hailed the move, saying it would boost confidence among investors from the telecommunications sector.

"With the gazette, it will make Malaysia as one of the top priority for them to bring their cables in Malaysia," he added.

The cabotage policy has been in place since the 1980s, which requires all domestic transshipment of goods to be made using Malaysian vessels.