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Monday 8 May 2006

B28 | **Logistics**

MARITIME

Port Klang Free Zone to use Jebel Ali as benchmark

By **CHOI TUCK WO** in London

THE Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) will strive to be the Jebel Ali with the Malaysian twist, said its managing director Noel Gulliver.

He said discussions were going on at the highest level to create PKFZ using the Jebel Ali Free Zone in Dubai the world's most successful free zone as the benchmark.

"That would present some challenges as Malaysia is not Dubai and you can't do that exactly. But we're going to make some adjustments to the Malaysian perspective and deliver as much of Jebel Ali's operating environment as possible into PKFZ," he said when addressing a seminar on Business Opportunities at Malaysia's Premier Maritime Gateway in London.

More than 60 British and Malaysian shipping and maritime industry leaders, bankers as well as businessmen and industrialists attended the event.

Among those present were National Bank of Kuwait director Sir Michael Craig-Cooper, Ecopack Global Ltd chief executive officer William Halligan, SMPA managing director Andrew Hardy, Moffat Dickson Ltd director John Kelly and British-Malaysian Society chairman Datuk Neville Green.

The seminar was part of the PKFZ road show that has so far covered Hannover,

Stockholm and Frankfurt to promote Malaysia's latest free zone to key decision makers in Europe.

Gulliver said they wanted PKFZ to be a major trading hub for South East Asia, and not just a transshipment centre for the main sea routes in the Straits of Malacca.

"Our business environment is second to none in respect of those in the region while the cost-effectiveness is extremely competitive.

"The bottom line is that PKFZ has got support from both the federal and state governments," he said, adding the Malaysian Government was going out of its way to attract investors to the regional distribution hub.

Gulliver said the PKFZ was scheduled to have its soft launch in July, followed by the official opening later in the year.

He said the free zone had generated a lot of interest, including from the chief executives of Dubai port and customs and the Jebel Ali Free Zone Authority (Jafza), who were anxiously waiting for the right time to come over and review the project.

He added that he was happy with the response towards the seminar, especially with the background of those who attended.

A video presentation on the PKFZ was later

held, followed by a question-and-answer session with the participants.

Malaysian Industrial Development Authority (Mida) London director C. Mathialakan said the PKFZ was designed to promote entreport trade and manufacturing industries involved in the production of goods primarily for transshipment, re-export and regional distribution.

He said this would allow factories and logistics companies to be located in the same zone to enhance co-ordination and optimise the supply chain management process.

Through the partnership with Jafza, the international management section of Jebel Ali Free Zone, PKFZ will ensure a high level of expertise, experienced management and an ideal operating environment for businesses to grow and succeed, he added.

He said that Port Klang had trade connections with over 160 countries and dealings with more than 300 ports around the world.

Located on a 400ha site in Pulau Indah, Selangor, PKFZ is poised to become a regional distribution hub and trade and logistics centre.

The project is the biggest investment undertaken by Port Klang Authority since it completed the privatisation of all its port services in the 1990s.