

PKFZ a good idea, says Ling

Ex-minister proposed Pulau Indah land for acquisition

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KUALA LUMPUR: The plan to set up the Port Klang Free Zone to emulate Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone was a good strategic idea, said former Transport Minister Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Dr Ling, who retired as the minister in May 2003, said he had proposed the acquisition of the 405ha land in Pulau Indah, which was then being offered to the Government, for the purpose.

"The intention was to copy Jebel Ali Free Zone for the Asean region, which is good. If you find a good idea anywhere in the world you should bring it home to benefit the country," he said.

"Jebel Ali has 4,500 factories supplying to the whole of the Gulf. Our idea was to combine port trade with Jebel Ali, bring at least half the factories here to supply to Asean, operating out of Port Klang.

"Jebel Ali Free Zone to the Dubai Ports Authority was like Pulau Indah (to us). The land next to Port Klang should be very valuable for the port, as it can be used to generate cargo and import-export trading.

"It would be wasted if the land was used for a theme park or low-cost housing," the Utar council chairman told reporters after presenting scrolls to 547 Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman graduates.

Dr Ling added that the Cabinet meeting chaired by then Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad approved his recommendation to acquire the land and its valuation came under the Treasury.

To a question, he said that the PKFZ had not taken off during his tenure.

"Up to my time, it was the idea put forward and accepted by the Cabinet. So we took the first step and bought the land before we lose it (to other development)," he said,



Happy moment: Dr Ling and Utar CEO Tan Sri Datuk Ng Lay Swee (right) chatting with the top students in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. They are (from left) Catherine Wong Yen Ee, Arfa Azrin Ansar Ahmad, 23, Kon Kar Hou, 22, Goh Tuan Shy, 24, Fan Chuan Yu, 22, and twins Lydia and Esther Chew, 21.

adding that he only knew of developments in the PKFZ issue through the newspapers.

The Transport Ministry last week said the Port Klang Authority bought

the land at RM25 per sq ft from Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, which had bought the undeveloped property in 1999 for RM95mil or RM3 per sq ft.

It said the price was reached

because of work done on the site.

The Ministry said the Government would extend a loan to PKA to help cover the total cost of RM4.6 billion for the PKFZ.