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"Both PKA and Jafza are still partners. The latter continues to play an advisory role in terms of marketing PKFZ. We still need their help internationally"

Chor

Search is on for new Port Klang Free Zone MD

By Kang Siew Li
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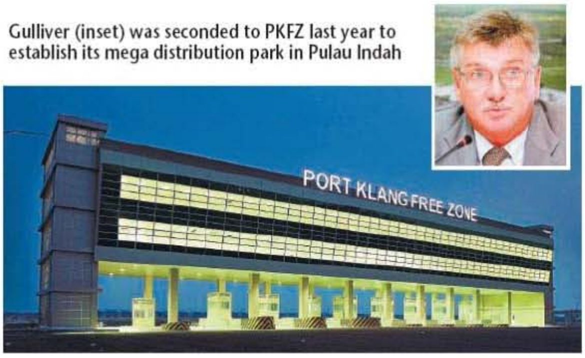
PORT Klang Authority (PKA), the regulator of Northport and Westports, said discussions are ongoing with Jafza International, the international arm of Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Zone Authority (Jafza), over who will replace Noel Gulliver William as managing director of the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ).

The position has been left vacant since Gulliver's return to Dubai in April. An Australian logistics executive, Gulliver, who has 13 years of experience in Asia, five of them as a senior executive with Maersk Logistics in Singapore, was seconded to PKFZ last year to establish its mega distribution park in Pulau Indah, Selangor.

"We don't know yet. We have yet to decide (whether to appoint a local or someone from Jafza International). We expect to come up with a firm organisational structure in due course," newly-appointed PKA chairman Datuk Chor Chee Heung told Business Times in an interview.

Meanwhile, Chor dismissed talk that Jafza International was pulling out of its contract with PKA due to a lack of progress in marketing PKFZ. The setting up of PKFZ Sdn Bhd to manage and market the free zone has fuelled further speculation that PKA was taking over the project.

Gulliver (inset) was seconded to PKFZ last year to establish its mega distribution park in Pulau Indah



"Gulliver's departure was due to the company's (Jafza International) restructuring initiatives, but both PKA and Jafza are still partners. The latter continues to play an advisory role in terms of marketing PKFZ. We still need their help internationally," he said.

"We continue to have talks with Jafza International to see what is best for PKFZ," he added.

PKA, which owns PKFZ, signed a 15-year contract with Jafza International on October 24 2004 to manage and market its free zone.

Under the agreement, Jafza International will partner PKA in conceptualising the development and marketing of PKFZ. These include management, administration, marketing and sales.

The Government, through PKA, is spending some RM4 billion to develop the 405ha PKFZ, which is slated for completion by April 2008. The project components comprise prepared land, light industrial and warehouse units, and a business complex.

"PKFZ is making good progress. Since the project started in November last year, without full infrastructural amenities, we have managed to attract RM468.3 million worth of investments from six companies for prepared land to build manufacturing facilities, eight companies for the light industrial or warehouse units and seven companies for the leased business complex," said Chor.

"For 2007, we have received committed investments (not signed) from 21 companies for prepared land to build manufacturing facilities worth RM795 million and RM15 million for the light industrial or warehouse units and RM510,000 for the leased business complex.

"In addition, we have potential customers in the process of negotiations with RM258.6 million worth of investments," he added.

In a statement released last week, PKFZ chairman Datin Paduka O.C. Phang said the latest investor in PKFZ was Pantech Group Holdings Bhd, which has taken seven acres of prepared land.

Pantech Group, a company listed on the main board of Bursa Malaysia, manufactures and supplies pipes, fittings and flow controls products.

PKFZ is the Government's biggest investment in the port industry since 1990.

To attract investments to the free zone, the Government, through the Malaysian Industrial and Development Authority, is offering companies that are set up there with tax exemptions, export incentives, research and development incentives, 100 per cent foreign equity ownership and 100 per cent repatriation of capital and profits.