

## Press Clipping

Port Klang Free Zone

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# Port Klang: Potential tourist port city?



DESPITE its success as a principal gateway for a huge portion of Malaysia's trade, Port Klang has remained what it is — just a port.

The port, which handles close to half of Malaysia's containerised cargo remains largely a destination for only those who have dealings with imports, exports and all matters related to maritime trade and the shipping industry.

There are no places of attraction for tourists — no shopping malls or cultural centres. Just a skyline dotted with gantry cranes, huge hauler trucks and other heavy machinery on the ground and miles and miles of warehouses, depots and godowns.

Port Klang is included in the voyages of many of the world's major shipping lines. Maersk Line, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Cosco Container Lines, Evergreen Marine, Hanjin Shipping and Franco's CMA-CGM call on the port, and international corporations such as Schenker Logistics, Kuehne + Nagel and BAX Global have set up their logistics activities in the vicinity.

"Even though Port Klang is Malaysia's oldest port, it is not a popular tourist destination. This is a pity because Port Klang has as much history as other foreign port cities," said a senior manager at one of the ports in Port Klang said.

The 806ha Port Klang is occupied by three port terminals — Northport, Westports and Southport. Unlike port cities such as Capetown in South Africa, Dalian in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Busan in South Korea, Port Klang does not offer a picturesque landscape and coastline.

The people who have dealings in Port Klang do not usually spend one minute more than necessary in the area. They usually opt to stay at hotels in Petaling Jaya or Kuala Lumpur, which has more entertainment outlets and shopping facilities.

"Port Klang lacks sufficient accommodation, shopping centres, events and attractions, and nightlife to attract both local shoppers and international tourists," said the senior manager.

"First off, there are no five-star hotels in Port Klang. The nearest hotel from Port Klang is Crystal Crown Harbour View,

The history of Port Swettenham, which is now Port Klang, dates back to 1901 when it started as the country's primary gateway for trade. From two terminals — Northport and Southport, it expanded to include Westports in 1996 and today, is the world's 16th busiest container port. But despite a rich, century-long history, Port Klang is not on the tourist map. KANG SIEW LI finds out why.

a three-star hotel.

"There are also no world-class shopping centres in the vicinity. The closest town is Klang, one of the oldest towns in the country. While you can find malls like Bukit Raja Shopping Centre, Klang Parade, Ocean-Klang and Shaw Centrepoint in Klang, they cater mainly to the local population," he added.

Large commercial vehicles are a regular sight on roads as they rumble in and out of the ports.

"Many people have come to view Port Klang as dirty, crowded and badly planned. This is sad, considering that Port Klang is the main gateway to the country," said the senior manager.

International Shipowners Association of Malaysia chairman Datuk Abdul Latif Abdullah concurs.

"Port Klang is not a port city, but very much a trading centre. It is not a destination for tourists and locals," he said.

"In my opinion, it is a practical port purely focused on handling cargo inflow and outflow," he told Business Times.

He believes that for Port Klang to become a port city, it should have a vibrant waterfront.

"Currently, there are no waterfronts or social activities or attractions to lure tourists to make a trip to the port," said Abdul Latif, who is also Mitsui O.S.K. Lines (M) Sdn Bhd executive director.

Plans to build a tourism project called Harbour City on a 28ha site near the Selangor Royal Yacht Club was announced in 1997 and the Selangor State Government had given Asa Niaga Sdn Bhd the task to undertake the project.

The Harbour City project was expected to take between 10 years and 15 years to complete and will cost RM1.5 billion. The project features a passenger terminal, shops, a hotel, a marina, an office tower and chalets. But project has not taken off.

Evergreen Marine Corp (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd vice-chairman (oi) Lean Hin said poor town planning has limited Port Klang's ability to become a port city.

"As one drives through Port Klang and its surroundings, one gets the impression that the place is not properly planned. There is a lack of well designed and promoted local



“With its interesting history, Port Klang has great potential in the tourism industry and can be redeveloped into a world-class port city”

## From small port to main gateway

PORT Klang is located 80km south-west of Klang town, one of the oldest towns in Malaysia, abuzz with shipping and industrial activities.

Encompassing an area of 806ha, Port Klang comprises three terminals — Northport, South Port and Westports, and is the main gateway to Malaysia by sea.

According to the Port Klang Integrated Coastal Management, Port Klang (previously known as Port Swettenham) was opened by Frank Swettenham in the early 20th century.

Prior to that, it was a small port used by traders to unload their merchandise such as tin ore, opium and foodstuff.

The port handled 6.3 million TEUs (20-foot equivalent units) of cargo last year, compared with 3.5 million TEUs in 2005.

Ranked 57th on the "World's Top Port" chart in 1980, Port Klang has steadily climbed the ladder to secure a 16th spot last year in terms of TEUs handled.

Port Klang targets to handle 7 million TEUs this year. The port handled 1.6 million TEUs in the first quarter, an 8.7 per cent increase from the same period last year.

Adjacent to the cargo terminal of Westports lies the Star Cruises Terminal, one of the biggest leisure cruise terminals in the Asia-Pacific region.

Port Klang is also well known for its seafood at Teluk Gong.

“Poor town planning has limited Port Klang's ability to become a port city ... there is a lack of well designed and promoted activities and facilities”



“The Government has been making efforts to develop Port Klang, promoting it as a halal hub and the free trade zone as an ideal place for investments. Eventually these businesses will help it develop into a port city”



"So far, there is not enough being done to promote Port Klang as a tourist destination. Even if there were, they are done on an ad hoc basis," he said.

Lai said nonetheless, the Government has been making a lot of efforts in developing Port Klang, promoting it as a halal hub and the Port Klang Free Zone as an ideal place for

investments. Eventually these businesses will help Port Klang develop into a port city," he said.

Former Port Klang Authority (PKA) chairman Datuk Yap Pian Hon said Port Klang, with its interesting history, has great potential in the tourism industry and to be redeveloped into a world-class port city.

But he is aware that there is currently a lack of tourist information, promotional activities and developments to attract tourists to the port and a lack of masterplan to make it a port city.

During his three-year tenure at PKA since June 2004, Yap started the ball rolling by taking steps to change the status of land in Port Klang in order to manage it more effectively.

He has successfully re-categorised land at Port Klang that was originally railway reserve land into port reserve land and PKA land.

In addition, he successfully resettled squatters occupying land under the port authority's jurisdiction, which include some prime sites with waterfront views. The land will be used either for port activities or for commercial, residential or tourism development.

PKA recently submitted a proposal for a 20-year masterplan to the Transport Ministry for approval, which may be the catalyst for making Port Klang a port city.

The proposed masterplan is from 2010 to 2030 and will detail not only the use of land owned by the port authority, but also how to promote the township. It may include the development of Port Klang into a port city.

"But first, we have to get the ministry's approval before we can appoint a consultant to draw up the masterplan," said Yap.

Nonetheless, Port Klang has a long way to go before becoming a port city as it requires extensive development of facilities and attractions which involve huge costs.

"With the land issues settled, now comes a new chapter, and it is up to PKA to continue to pursue the plan to develop Port Klang into a port city. Its success will depend on the port authority and the support it gets from the various other government agencies," he said.