

MASA calls on govt to consult industry

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THE Malaysian Shipowners' Association (MASA) has called upon the government to pay greater attention to industry views, especially in considering setting up a National Feeder Company and the Centralised Shipping Agency.

Its chairman Mirzan Mahathir said the government should weigh the interests of port operators, who are keen on bringing in more cargo to their ports, against those of the proposed companies to ensure the proposals were viable.

"We are sure that the shipping associations will welcome the opportunity to put forward their suggestions to the Ministry of Transport," he said.

Mirzan added that although the association supported the idea of the companies in principle, there was no clear agenda as to their exact functions.

He said associations directly

involved in the industry, like MASA and the Federation of Forwarding Agents, would be in a position to put forward their views in addition to agencies like the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers and the various Chamber's of Commerce.

Mirzan said that the government could simply not afford to ignore the views of these organisations in ensuring the success of the proposed companies.

Pointing to the close relationship MASA had with the government, he said in spite of this, the association was often not consulted on such matters leading to failed policies.

Asked about the prospects for the shipping industry, Mirzan said it looked good in tandem with growth forecasted for the economy at 0.7% to 1.7% as both activities depended on each other.

This was in spite of many shipowners having gone through lean times due to reasons like lower freight rates, lower cargo volumes and higher dollar denominated operational costs.

This, he added, had forced them to review expansion plans with some even closing down or looking to mergers as a way out.

Earlier Mirzan had launched MASA's new quarterly magazine, *Shipmonitor*, to replace its previous in-house newsletter.

Produced on contract by Ports World for the MASA, the magazine will be distributed free to both members as well as the public said vice-chairman Dr Nik Mohd Zain.

"This will provide a good opportunity for the public to write in and voice their opinions on issues affecting the industry," he told *Star Business* after the mag-

azine's launch in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Although the magazine will be produced by Ports World, Zain said full control of editorial content will remain with the association.

The editorial board will have Nasaruddin Ab Ghani, who is also the MASA Exco honorary treasurer, as editor while the other members of the board are mostly also involved with the association.