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DHL BULLISH ABOUT M'SIAN MARKET

PUCHONG, Feb 17 (Bernama) -- DHL Worldwide Express, an international courier service provider, remains bullish about the Malaysian market despite the current economic downturn, said its area director for Asean, Bryan Jamison, today.

"We will be investing more than RM100 million this year for the expansion of our local operations and this amount is exclusive of the investment in this regional hi-tech facility," he said during a media preview for DHL's new regional information technology (IT) centre here

The DHL Asia Pacific/West Asia IT centre, covering 33,000 sq ft at the IOI Mall in Puchong, is the data hub for DHL's 51 countries and territories in the Asia Pacific and West Asia. It provides the essential link between Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas.

DHL's IT director Stephen McGuckin told reporters that the centre, with a current investment of RM80 million, would also be based a research and development team to build solutions tailored to the Asian environment.

In Malaysia, currently DHL has five international gateways -- Subang, Pulau Pinang, Johor Bahru, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu as well as a comprehensive network of 28 service and express centres.

Jamison said recently DHL opened a new service centre in Port Klang, and would be relocating its Ipoh and Pulau Pinang service centres as well as shifting its headquarters from Petaling Jaya to a new site in the Klang Valley.

However, he pointed out that DHL's most significant investment in 1998 would be at the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, where it would have the largest cargo facility with an area of about 50,000 sq ft that was estimated to cost about RM25 million.

Jamison said: "We are very excited about the benefits which the KLIA will offer to DHL's customers, particularly if the government proceeds to confirm the designation of the airport as a 'free commercial zone' as has been proposed."

Asked whether the regional economic slowdown was affecting DHL's business, Charles Longley, chief executive officer - Asia Pacific/West Asia, said that the company was still assessing the impact of the recent economic downturn in its business.

The Asia Pacific region contributed about one-third of DHL's business, at par with the contributions from Europe and the Americas, Longley said adding that DHL's revenue was between US\$3 and US\$5 billion (US\$1 = about RM3.86).

Jamison said despite the recent slowing down in the regional economy, there would be a silver lining to DHL as these countries would boost their exports, which would subsequently add more business volume to DHL.

To a question why DHL picked Malaysia as the new regional IT after San Francisco and London, Longley said it was timely for Malaysia to be picked while DHL was scouting for this region's IT base.

At the same time Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had also announced the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project.

McGurkin added: "...the Bill of Guarantees and the government's commitment to introduce cyberlaws will create the environment required to aggressively re-engineer our systems and the way we do business, to meet the changing needs of our customers in the new century."

DHL has received MSC status and is a member of the International

Advisory Panel for the MSC. The company has a long term plan to base its IT centre within Cyberjaya in the future. -- BERNAMA

MK SHY