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`Port Klang has the edge'

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EXPORTERS and importers will only begin to appreciate Port Klang and use it more frequently if they know how efficient it is and inexpensive to use.

Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) chief executive Mohammad Abdul Halim Abdul Rahman said he believes that local ports have the capacity to handle or service Malaysia's own cargo.

"If the terminal operators prove that they have both the capacity and the speed and efficiency, they will win the shipping community's support," he said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday after opening a half-day seminar on "CE Marking: Procedures for Application and its Implications on Exporting to EU".

He added that the exporting community must be aware that Malaysia has world-class port facilities and services which are on par with Singapore and other ports.

Citing an example, he said a lot has been said of Westport's efficiency and cost-effectiveness compared with Singapore port. The terminal operators, too, have proven how fast ships can turnaround.

"By and large, the exporting community should be more involved in the export business rather than leave the business transactions entirely to forwarders."

Halim was referring to shippers who tend to wash their hands of cargo exports once they had found a forwarding agent to handle the export cargo for them.

As such most of them take the easy way out and ship through a third party. As such, they do not get involved in the final stages of the export chain as trading houses which are usually located in a third country take over from there and dictate the use of main lines from their port.

He said Matrade has not come up with a set of rules or guidelines for exporters and importers to use Port Klang.

He added that it should be a natural move on the part of the shipping community to use local ports.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz has said that the increased use of local ports requires a concerted effort of all those concerned, from the manufacturers, shippers, hauliers and importers to exporters.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik has also in recent weeks encouraged the use of Port Klang to turn it into a national and regional hub.

On Wednesday, Dr Ling announced the setting up of a special committee to be headed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to spearhead the campaign to promote Port Klang.

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