

Diperdana to exit haulage, buy Pelikan

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Looks to stationery maker for new source of earnings

By David Yong

KUALA LUMPUR: Diperdana Holdings Bhd, which is seeking new sources of earnings, said it will sell its container haulage business to Konsortium Logistik Bhd and buy a Swiss stationery maker held by the rival's principals.

The company will sell its existing business to Konsortium, controlled by Mirzan Mahathir, for RM100 million in cash and stock. It will buy a 65% stake in Pelikan Holdings AG for RM299 million, according to its adviser Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bank Bhd.

Diperdana is steering away from the haulage business as prospects for external trade dim. A 9.5% fall in exports during the first nine months of this year hurt container

throughput, leading to a 20% cut in haulage rates.

"They want to reorganise their haulage business according to the government's plan," said Azman Abdullah, who helps manage RM80 million at BIMB Unit Trust Management Bhd, and owns some Diperdana stock.

"We'll have to see if it's overpaying for the new business."

Diperdana will also pay RM18 million for 75% of Pelikan Japan K.K. and RM12 million for Germany's Geha-Werke GMBH. Both are distributors of Pelikan goods. It will offer to buy the remaining 35% of Pelikan Holdings AG for RM46 million.

The transactions conclude eight months of negotiations between Diperdana and Konsortium as they seek to reorganise their businesses.

Shares of both companies were halted for the announcement to the stock exchange.

The sale will help consolidate the logistics industry, giving market leader Konsortium the upper hand over 54 companies in the haulage industry.

Diperdana will get a chance to build an international business with recognised brands, AMMB said.

Diperdana is buying the Pelikan business from Loo Hooi Keat. Mirzan and their associates who control Konsortium, who will take a RM121 million loss on the sale.

They will guarantee that the three stationery companies will make RM81 million in profit between 2002 and 2004.

Mirzan is the son of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Bloomberg