

# To do list for new minister

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## Challenging welcome for Chan from transport fraternity

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DATUK Chan Kong Choy, who will officially take over as Transport Minister this week has been given a list of tasks to look into by the country's transport and logistics community.

The fraternity, comprising leading industry players and heads of organisations representing trade practitioners have come up with a number of 'challenges' they feel the new minister should focus on and address so as to enhance Malaysia's position as a developing maritime and transport entity.

Among the issues they want him to deal with are;

- The re-structuring of the Transport Ministry to better reflect and take-on the country's vision of becoming a premier maritime and logistics nation,

- Setting up a Maritime University to develop a pool of professional seafarers and solve the shortage of local seamen,

- Hastening the establishment of the long overdue Malaysian Ports Commission (MPC) to ensure that policies, tariffs and development of local ports are streamlined,

- Ensuring that Port Klang, KLIA and Port of Tanjung Pelepas continue to be promoted as regional hubs and national load centres,

- The formation of a think-tank outfit that includes experts from the sea, air, road and rail sectors,

- Boosting the movement of rail freight via the landbridge and seeing to the completion of the Trans Asian rail link; and,

- Better dialogue and a more open channel of communication between industry players and the Ministry, especially with regards to handling of problems and complaints.

International Shipowners Association of Malaysia chairman Datuk Abdul Latif Abdullah said the creation of a 'think tank' to focus on the development of the transport industry would serve as a platform to discuss issues and lay out future plans in all the different transport modes.

"There is a need to re-look at the strategies as to enhance the dynamics of the transport industry, especially with the advent of multi-modalism. So far, this has not been co-ordinated as effectively as it should be."

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# Industry players present Chan their hopes

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"With new blood, there is bound to be new ideas and efforts will be made to see that existing areas are improved.

"At the same time, we cannot dismiss the contributions that former Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik has made," he said.

Abdul Latif added that Chan would have a "pair of big shoes to fill" but was confident that his standing and experience as Deputy Finance Minister would enable him to carry out the tasks.

Malaysia Airlines senior general manager (cargo) J.J. Ong said it was important for the new minister to continue the momentum of promoting KLIA and Port Klang as regional transshipment hubs and national load centres.

"We have thus far achieved good standing as load centres for sea and air cargo but more needs to be done, especially in providing matching infrastructure capabilities to mirror the new growth."

Federation of Malaysian Shipping Agents Association president V. Muthiah called for the restructuring of the ministry to be known as the Maritime Affairs and Transport Ministry.

He said this would reflect the growing importance of the sector to the national economy and answer Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call to become a premier maritime nation.

"The MPC has also been put on hold for several years now and it should be immediately started as it will ensure uniformity and transparency in port charges and policy development.

"At present tariffs differ from

one port to another. Outstanding issues like the Sunday labour fee, which has been abolished in Port Klang but still charged in Penang, must also be looked into as the Ministry has agreed to cancel it but not done so yet."

Muthiah also urged Chan to check on port authorities to ensure they carried out their roles effectively instead of being "redundant" and see that terminal operators did not neglect certain areas.

"The emphasis is now on containerisation and the private operators seem to be uninterested in providing services that are not money-making such as conventional, marine and pilotage facilities.

"He should also call for the formation of a task force comprising all players in the industry to advise, work together and implement measures collectively instead of listening to only a few parties."

Malaysian Maritime Institute president Capt Jaffar Lamri said the new Transport Minister should focus on developing a comprehensive maritime policy owing to the new developments and trends in the industry.

"We have developed first-class ports but the supporting facilities like bunkering and ship repairs do not match the fast developments the ports have experienced.

"We are still behind in this area when compared to Singapore and the Philippines.

There is also a need to improve the standards in the shipping and forwarding sector for better efficiency," he said.

Capt Jaffar said the establishment of a Maritime University should be considered seriously because Malaysia was vying to become a maritime nation and

there was a need to enhance the professionalism of the sector.

Currently, he said there was an acute shortage of seafarers and manpower in the maritime industry and the setting up of the university would help to get trained and qualified workers.

He also said the government should support the development of local shipowners and ship registry in the country.

"We would be seeking a meeting with the minister soon to highlight the issues and challenges concerning the industry because 95% of Malaysia's trade is done via the sea," he said.

Airfreight Forwarding Association of Malaysia chairman Walter Culas, who described the appointment of Chan as a blessing in disguise and a dawn of a new era, looked forward to more co-operation and communication with the ministry.

"We want the ministry to seriously consider our opinions because previously most of our correspondence with them went unanswered and not seriously taken note of.

"I hope that whatever measures agreed upon will be implemented quickly. We want to take a second look at KLIA to execute the assurances previously given, including Customs processes and seamless documentation.

"We should have an integrated community system at KLIA instead of the existing multiple system."

Culas added that Afam was looking forward to working with the Transport Minister, something which he said was "long overdue because Afam had always been treated like a step-son".

KTMB general manager (freight services division) Abdul Radzak

Abdul Malek said Chan should maintain the efforts undertaken by Dr Ling to ensure the progress of the Trans Asia Rail Link that would connect Singapore to Kunming, China and the further development of the landbridge.

"He has to continue developing the country's logistics industry to greater heights to be on par with international standards.

"We are operating in a very competitive and challenging environment and have to play our part in ensuring a greater foothold in the regional supply chain network.

"This is especially so with globalisation and Afta coming into play."

Federation of Malaysian Freight Forwarders president Pauline Tee said better consultation and dialogue between industry players and the ministry was the way forward.

"There has to be an open channel of communication and discussion with all concerned. Issues like enhancing the professionalism of customs agents and freight forwarders will be resolved by talking it out.

"Chan should not take all the industry views in a negative light but rather see it positively as a way of working together for the betterment of the industry," she added.

Association of Malaysian Hauliers president Shalimin Shaffie hoped the minister would look into the problem of conventional lorries illegally carrying empty containers, especially during the night.

"This has become rampant and we hope the Ministry via the Road Transport Department can carry out stricter enforcement to stop this as it is affecting hauliers' operations."