

A Leading Port In the Region

22 November, 2011 NSTP

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Ports have played an important part in Malaysia's history as a trading nation. They form part of the backbone of the economy enabling growth and development. In modern times with the trend moving towards just in time practices a production strategy that reduces process inventory and carrying costs ports are an essential way to move goods efficiently and in the shortest time possible especially for cross border trades. As an economy that contains a large manufacturing industry and that relies on international trade ports are Malaysia's main trade gateways.

The country's biggest and busiest port is Port Klang. One of its three terminals Northport has played a pivotal role in facilitating sea trade since the early 20th century back when it was known as Port Swettenham. Nowadays Northport provides state-of-the-art multipurpose terminal facilities and services that attract main line operators and feeder services.

The multiport connectivity available at Northport means that exporters to get their goods to their final destinations in the shortest time possible. Northport offers cost-effective options in the form of strategically bundled multiport on-dock supply chain solutions which enable its customers to compress the lead time and cost in their supply chains locally and internationally. Over the years Northport has become an expert in its ability to berth and sail vessels in and ahead of real time.

Offering the choice of good connectivity to other parts of the world and becoming an expert in facilitating international trade in the most efficient ways have helped Northport not only stay relevant but also essential to the import/export industries.

The terminal's reliable service delivery is complimented by its good working relationship with the relevant authorities such as the Royal Malaysian Customs and trade organisations that are part of the Port Klang business community. This reliability is what attracts customers to Northport, says En. Abi Sofian bin Abdul Hamid General Manager Container & Engineering Services. The efficient processes ensure timely departure of vessels and cargo, and security and safety is a key feature here.

Northport complies with the International Code for the Security of Ships and of Port Facilities in short also known as ISPS. The ISPS prescribes the responsibilities of governments shipping companies and port personnel when it comes to minimum security arrangements for ships and ports used in international trade.

Northport has been a leader in pioneering both good practices and advanced technology for container handling, continues En. Abi Sofian bin Abdul Hamid. In its evolution from being part of the old Port Swettenham to its sleek and modern doings today the terminal has upgraded the old wharves turning them into multipurpose berth facilities. The close collaboration between business units – container, conventional, logistics marine services – means that Northport is able to provide viable solutions to supply chain requirements.

Containerisation is on the rise and the volume of sea freight continues to increase in tandem with the global economy. Sea transport is far more cost effective than air transport and trade by this means will certainly continue to remain a relevant and important part of the international trading community. At Northport will be there to serve.

How Northport works

Two elements make up Northport: business units (four of them) and support services.

Northport's support services include equipment and infrastructure maintenance, Information System, human resources finance and corporate services and security. The terminal also offers value-added services via warehousing and distribution of containerised cargo through its container freight stations (CFS) and the Northport Distripark (NDSB).

CFS and NDSB have become an integral part of the terminal's wide array of services. They are situated at strategic locations within the port area and offer facilities for cargo distribution operations. These facilities yield great advantages in time and transport costs for Northport's customers.

The warehouses besides obviously offering warehousing, also offer pre-shipment activities such as internal haulage packing and unpacking consolidation and deconsolidation relabelling, and minor assembly to complement core business activities. The warehouse facility is one of the largest in Malaysia totalling more than 1 million sq feet.

Northport has long been a pioneer in using innovative information technology starting in 1989 when the first port-focused client-access system was introduced. The technologies used in the port have advanced over the years – the Electronic Data Interchange in 1993 web-based real time tracking in 1996 and electronic billing in 2001 to cite a few – as its customers themselves became more tech-savvy and receptive.

Business applications that Northport uses have also seen development, driven by the terminal s desire to improve productivity and real time operations. Most systems now use web-based technologies.

Northport also uses the state-of-the-art Navis SPARCS container terminal management system to manage the complex planning sequencing and execution of container terminal operations from quay-side to the yard and to the container gates. Myriad technologies including RFID optical character recognition and intelligent rule based systems are all used to track shipments and provide alerts about shipment status to customers via email.

The terminal regularly benchmarks its services against other ports around the region as a means of ensuring it meets customers demands and keeps up-to-date about industry best practices. It has the Management Standards ISO 9001 and is currently working on the requirements for ISO14000 for environmental standards and ISO 18000 for safety standards to ensure that all activities are in line with a sustainable development policy and the work areas are safe. Northport adheres strictly to international standards and look upon them as opportunities for change and development.

Continuing to evolve

Northport has seen quite a few developments over this past year. There have been improvements in facilities and processes in all business units such as the renewal of equipment, and improvements to infrastructure:

- Purchase of prime movers reach stackers and empty container handling stackers to replace ageing units
- Purchase of a new level luffing crane bringing the total number of cranes at the Bulk Terminal to three
- Purchase of six towing tractors to complement other initiatives to enhance operations
- Completion of the new main gate for Container Terminal 1 significantly improving cargo movements into and out of the port
- Realignment of front line work groups, enabling greater efficiency and productivity
- Successful upgrade of a bulk warehouse enabling it to store various types of grain and bulk commodities

There are several more upgrading projects lined up for the future, which would enable Northport to continue meeting the growing and evolving demands of its customers.