



KUANTAN PORT BEGINNING ITS DIGITAL JOURNEY



Interview with Mazlim Husin, Chief Operating Officer, Kuantan Port

Facing the South China Sea, Kuantan Port is one of the premier deepwater ports of the Malaysian Peninsula's East Coast.

Like many other ports across the globe Kuantan is now embarking on a digital transformation, launched in August 2020.

With the completion of the New Deep-Water Terminal at the port it is positioning itself as the main gateway to China and the Far East as well as acting as a transshipment hub for minor ports in the region.

Speaking exclusively to PTI, Mazlim Husin, Chief Operating Officer, Kuantan Port, described the vision the port has for expansion and digitalization.

A PAPERLESS FUTURE ON THE HORIZON

The port is on a digitisation path which commenced in 2020 with a timeline set out to 2022 and beyond.

“For the digitalisation of Kuantan Port it is not just about the port its also about IJM Group, our parent company, which is a conglomerate in Malaysia as well as port operations we also include construction, prop-

erty development and a toll concession for the highways,” Husin explained.

“What we have been doing for the past few months is enhancing our transformation further as well as integrating with other applications, not just about cargo handling, not just about container handling, but also about safety and palliative services.”

He explained that the aim is to have a centralised location for all the data handled by the port so it can be accessed through one dashboard.

“When we talk about digitisation of the port it’s not a choice. It is something we have to do to transform and to be more competitive amongst other ports in this region,” Husin said.

Discussing the timeline Husin said that 2021 will be a very important milestone year for the port to achieve paperless operations. In 2021 most of the new security features will also be implemented at the port.

In terms of business and cargo Husin said that right now the port’s cargo throughput is around 25 million tonnes but in five years’

time the port aspires to achieve about 35 million tonnes.

Digitalisation is just one part of the entire strategy and the port is also investing heavily in hardware as well as the skills of its people.

Two units of ship-to-shore (STS) cranes were delivered to the Kuantan Port in November. The STS cranes arrived on transporter vessel Zen Hua 29 on 1 November 2020 from one of the largest crane manufacturers in the world, Zhenhua Heavy Industries (ZPMC).

To complement the new cranes, Kuantan Port is expecting four units of rubber-tyred gantry cranes (RTG) due to arrive in December 2020 which have been manufactured by Mitsui E&S.

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

Kuantan Port is set to be a maritime location that is part of China’s Belt and Road global infrastructure initiative.

“If you look back in the history, basically this is the route that has been a trade route between this part of the world for hundreds

of years, culture has travelled this route, religion has travelled this route,” Husin said.

The Belt and Road initiative seeks to enhance this already existing route with the Chinese intention to secure the trade routes around the world, Husin explained.

“It has been very effective, it has helped a lot in the development of Kuantan Port. For Kuantan Port, our advantage lies in our strategic location facing the South China Sea. This strategic location also complements the developments taking place in port’s surrounding hinterlands such as Malaysia-China Kuantan Industrial Park (MCKIP) who has a sister park in Qinzhou, China called China-Malaysia Qinzhou Industrial Park (CMQIP). MCKIP offers global investors opportunities to leverage on its close proximity to Kuantan Port, while Kuantan Port plays a crucial role in making the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia a gateway to the Far East especially China.” The port has already had close ties with China before this initiative and also has a Chinese partner within its shareholders.

“This enhances our marketing effort and ability to attract more investors from China to be based in Kuantan, to be based in Malaysia.”

Husin said that before COVID-19 and the restrictions to movement he would receive weekly visits from Chinese investors to the port.

“We always received very positive remarks from them when they come to the port...I have also visited Chinese ports many times and always find it inspiring the way they manage their operations and the scale of their operations.

“I am also amazed at the new technology they have over there, all the autonomous



cranes and high-speed railways. And how they dissect their information in such a detailed way so it can be used for planning.”

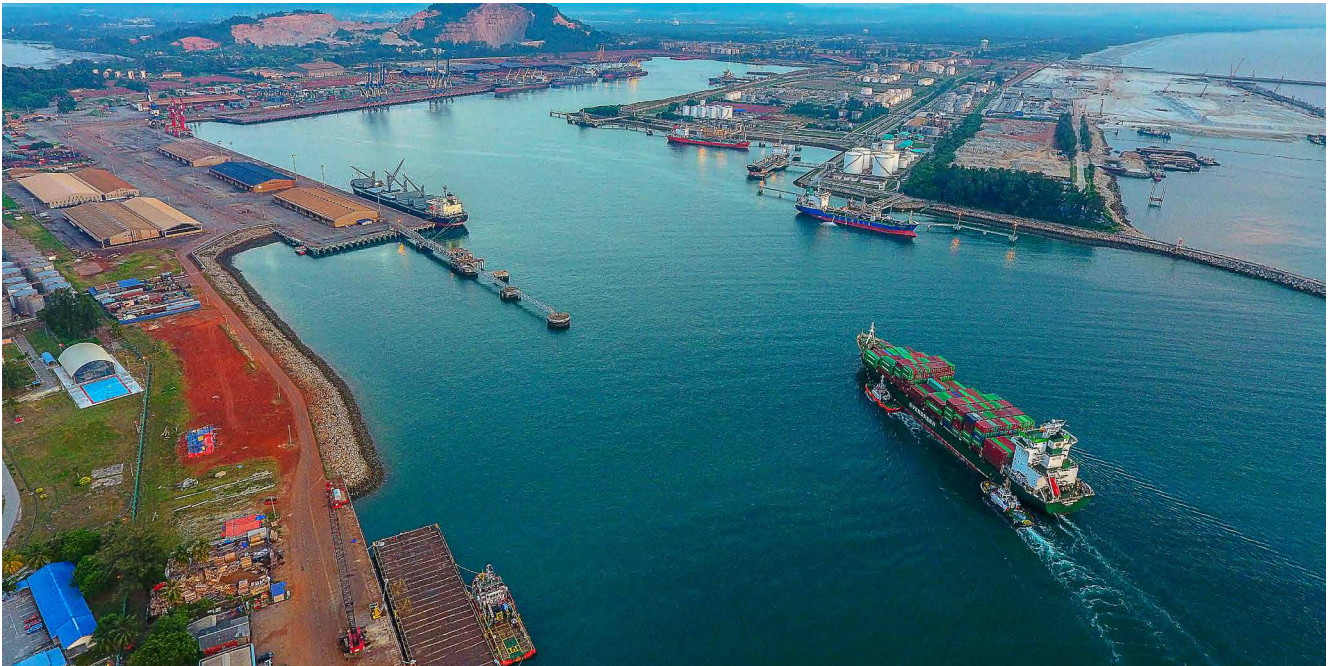
INFORMATION AND COVID

Husin explained that the port has coped well with the events of 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic which has typically disrupted much of the supply chain.

The port had faced some positive cases earlier in 2020 but Husin said these were related to a foreign vessel crew who visited the port. None of the workers at the port were affected and the crew were quarantined and all the appropriate measures taken.

“It was a reminder to us and to the port user that we cannot take this situation for granted,” he said.





Husin emphasised how important it is to provide the correct information in the most efficient way and not allow the spread of information via social media to take away from the core messages.

“What we learned from this incident is that you really have to manage the information. What we have done is formed our own emergency committee for the port which also includes some government parties and from there we manage the information and make sure that the information that is dispersed to the public is credible,” he explained.

“Even when there are no cases, we issue a statement which I personally signed, not just internally but to the community also, so I think in that sense we have been managing it pretty well.”

Husin added, “The outside community is very important to us because our workers are from that community and we do interact with that community and the partners within it.”

Husin acknowledged that no government or president could have predicted the effects of COVID-19.

Operationally this has meant to port has looked to continue to cooperate collaboratively with its partners over the period to ensure that customers requirements are met.

One problem the port had faced, like many others, was container space because they

could not be taken out of the port, but he said this is not what he considers major disruption.

“The government has also given us a lot of exceptions so we can handle these sorts of challenges through the MCO [movement control order].” This means certain companies, based on special approval given by the government, can bring out the cargo through.

He concluded by saying, “I can say that really the effect of COVID-19 [on cargo and operations] at Kuantan Port has been quite minimum.”

Overall, the port continues to be on its path to digitalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic has not hampered this effort.

“We have a vision in the sense that to us Kuantan Port is a very important development. This is the only container port on the East Coast of Malaysia, and we have been supporting the oil and gas industry as well as the heavy industry for decades now. With our existing infrastructure and our ongoing expansion, as well as the government mega infrastructures project such as the East Coast Railway Link (ECRL) that connects Kuantan Port and Port Klang on the west coast, the future is very bright for Kuantan Port,” Husin concluded.

The future vision is for Kuantan Port and the surrounding area to be a logistics hub.

Written by Beth Maundrill

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mazlim Husin carries with him over 25 years of corporate experience. His career with Kuantan Port Consortium began in mid-2016 when he successfully spearheaded its rebranding exercise. In a short span of time with Kuantan Port, Mazlim has quickly developed a keen sense of acute understanding of the business and promoted to General Manager of Operations in early 2017 and again gained the trust of the executives of the company with another promotion in mid-2018 as its Chief Operating Officer.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Strategically located on the eastern seaboard of Peninsular Malaysia and in the heartland of petrochemical industries, Kuantan Port has developed into a major petrochemical, bulk, and container terminal in the east coast region. Supported with excellent port facilities and services, a vast market outreach, and a strong network of global shipping connections, Kuantan Port will be a catalyst for the rapid expansion of the industrial and manufacturing activities in the East Coast Industrial Corridor.

With the completion of its New Deep Water Terminal, Kuantan port is envisaged to be the main gateway to China and the Far East and shall act as a transshipment hub for minor ports in the region.

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