There are many potential lessons to be learned for Darwin in the extraordinary growth story of the Port of Bintulu in Sarawak, Malaysia, Asian Relations and Trade Minister Paul Henderson said today.

Mr Henderson and a delegation of Territory business operators met with the Bintulu Port Authority yesterday and were briefed on the development of the Port and its LNG facilities.

“In 20 years Bintulu has grown from being a sleepy fishing village to one of Eastern Malaysia’s most important shipping hub and home to the world’s largest single LNG terminal,” Mr Henderson said.

“With Darwin at the start of its journey of growth through both the Australasia Trade Route and the new Wickham Point LNG Plant, there are many lessons that can be learned to help Darwin maximise on our competitive advantages in the region.”

Like Darwin, Bintulu is a deep-water port – the only one in the region – and like Darwin, is home to its country’s second LNG plant.

Like Darwin, it has a population of around 100,000 people.

“Senior executives from Bintulu Port see the potential of our port and the similarities between our developments, and believe Darwin will play an important role in moving freight in and out of Australia along the AustralAsia Trade Route,” said Mr Henderson.

“Mr Graeme Lacey of the Australasia Group of Companies - here in Bintulu with the Territory delegation – signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Bintulu Port earlier this year and is working to establish joint venture shipping links with the Port.

“The Bintulu Port has an average growth of 9% a year in cargo through the port, most of which is being transhipped through to another destination, and this MOA highlights the potential for Territory businesses to tap into this region.

“The Territory Government will continue to work with private business operators such as Mr Lacey and the Bintulu Port to really maximise on the potential of strong links with this important shipping hub for Territory business.”

Mr Henderson departs Bintulu this afternoon.