

1 October 2009 (Thursday)

Tabung Haji pays bonus of RM465m to depositors

KUALA LUMPUR: Lembaga Tabung Haji, for the first time ever, will pay each of its five million depositors a 2.25 per cent interim bonus for the first six months ending in June 2009. The payout will total RM465 million. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the 2.25 per cent interim bonus was equivalent to 4.4 per cent a year and would be deposited in depositors' accounts on Oct 5. "Lembaga Tabung Haji has successfully implemented its five-year strategic business plan to ensure it can earn a more attractive income in the form of dividends and bonuses to its depositors," he said yesterday after unveiling Tabung Haji's new logo.

Najib said Tabung Haji had come a long way since its formation in September 1963 starting with a government-funded investment of RM152,000 to manage a total of RM23 billion in deposits currently. He said Tabung Haji, as a government-linked institution, must continue with its efforts to become a leading organisation in managing 26,000 pilgrims annually as well as a global player via its business subsidiaries to adapt to the global economic climate. Tabung Haji, which employs 10,000 workers, has business divisions in property, plantations and travel. The Muslim management fund for haj pilgrims had in 2007 given out its maiden special two per cent bonus in addition to its five per cent yearly bonus to its depositors. Tabung Haji started paying bonuses to its depositors in 1966.

3 October 2009(Saturday)

13 tourism projects under 9MP completed

KOTA BARU: Thirteen development projects to boost tourism in Kelantan have been completed so far with the RM31 million allocated under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP). Kelantan State Tourism Action Council chairman Datuk Abdul Aziz Derashid said the 13 projects, costing about RM19 million, were among 21 listed for the state under the 9MP. The projects include upgrading the Siti Khadijah wet market and the famous Irama Beach in Bachok. "The projects have been carried out well and so far, have benefited the locals and tourists.

The Kelantan people should be grateful and thank the Federal Government for giving the allocation. "Otherwise, they will never have an opportunity such as this and see development like those found in other states," he said after attending a Hari Raya open house organised by the council on Thursday.

About 2,000 people, including representatives from the Tourism Authority of Thailand, attended the function. Also present was the council's general manager Sulaiman Ismail. On the remaining projects, Aziz said they included a 2km waterfront near the Sultan's Pier and a RM12 million bazaar in Rantau Panjang.

4 October 2009(Sunday)

'Unsafe buildings should be a thing of the past'

KOTA KINABALU: The recent collapse of the roof of a stadium in Terengganu should be a wake-up call to all consultants, particularly engineers, to pay more attention to the safety of buildings. State Infrastructure Development Minister Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan added that even smaller incidents like the burst pipe at the new Kuala Lumpur High Court building could send a negative message to the public. In Sabah, three government buildings were declared unsafe - the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in October, last year, the state archives building and state Road Transport Department headquarters in March and April this year respectively.

Speaking at a seminar on the responsibility of consultants in the construction industry here yesterday, he said the quality of buildings, infrastructure and facilities in Sabah should be improved. Schools with leaking roofs, poorly installed toilets, cracks on walls, slope failures on slopes, and problems faced by buyers of newly-completed houses should be a thing of the past. "The quality of our infrastructure and facilities today will have a profound impact on our future economic growth. It is also a major component of the competitiveness of a state to attract foreign direct investments.

"Therefore, there should not be frequent interruption of electricity and water supply as this would adversely affect the quality of construction. "Likewise, roads and bridges should be able to take on the loads of increasing traffic. Ports and warehouse facilities should meet the import and export demand, and hospitals, schools, government offices and houses should not have any defects."

4 October 2009(Sunday)

Mosque roof

Suhaidi Mohamed Amin

CHUKAI: A large part of the roof of a RM2.1 million mosque caved in early yesterday morning, just three months after a similar fate befell the roof of the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Kuala Terengganu. Three Indonesian labourers were injured, with one having to be warded at the Dungun Hospital for severe injuries. Mohd Hafiz Wat Piah, 19,

said he had just opened his restaurant, which was 50m away from the mosque, around 9am when he heard a booming sound. "I thought it was a landslide. I was shocked to see that the roof had collapsed and heard the screams of the labourers who were repairing the roof.



The roof of the mosque in Kampung Batu Putih collapsed, injuring three labourers yesterday. "I rushed to their aid and got the help of passers-by to send the trio to the Kerteh health clinic." The villagers from Kampung Batu Putih here, are puzzled how the roof could have collapsed as the mosque, which can accommodate 500 people, was completed in November last year. The village security and development committee chairman, Aziz Idris, 54, said three months ago there was a leak in the roof. "The roof was under repair. We never expected this sort of a thing to happen. I'm just grateful that no one died."

6 October 2009 (Tuesday)

Local authorities top complaints list

PUTRAJAYA: Most of the complaints received by the Public Complaints Bureau are about local authorities. But in many cases, the blame lies with clients who fail to follow procedures and file incomplete applications. Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon said public servants must, therefore, strive to ensure that they obtain complete information from their clients to avoid such problems. "Most of the complaints (about local authorities) were about delays in the approval of applications for licences and permits, and building plans," he told a seminar on managing public complaints yesterday.

The PCB receives about 11,000 complaints a month. Koh said the high number is because it had been made easier to lodge a complaint. Some 40 per cent of the complaints are sent by email and SMS text messages. Aside from the local authorities, other agencies that top the list are those that have direct dealings with the public, including the police and the National Registration and Immigration departments. In his remarks to reporters, Koh also blasted Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng for failing to walk his talk on transparency regarding Kampung Lorong Buah Pala.

Koh said he had agreed to a debate with Lim on the issue, but Lim was not ready to be transparent by declassifying and making public the full text of minutes of the discussions and decisions on the village in exco meetings chaired by Koh and by Lim since the general election, and other documents. On Thursday, the Gerakan president and former Penang chief minister said he was ready for a nationally televised debate with his successor not only on Kampung Lorong Buah Pala but also on transparency issues.

6 October 2009 (Tuesday)

New state govt plan to manage tourism assets

ALOR STAR: Many tourism projects and facilities in the state are poorly handled, state Tourism Committee chairman S. Manikumar said. Attributing the matter to poor coordination, he said the state government planned to link up government-linked companies (GLCs) with the private sector to jointly run tourist attractions and facilities. "I am new at the job, having been appointed a few months ago but I have studied the matter and we are working hard at managing our tourism assets. "While the GLCs and private players will manage them, we will monitor their progress," he said when asked to comment on Kedah Tourism Action Council chairman Datuk Othman Aziz's observation that the Pas-led state government lacked long-term planning in managing tourism projects and sites in the state.

Othman had commented on the RM6.4 million Malay traditional village here, which had been left idle although it was handed over to the state government in April. The New Straits Times had highlighted that many traditional houses in the village, located at the foot of Gunung Keriang, another popular tourist spot in the state, were in ruins since federal authorities handed them to the state government. Manikumar agreed that a number of tourist attractions and facilities handed over to the state government had not been properly developed and managed. "I found there was no proper mechanism or structure to monitor them. "Give me some time to work on these," he said without identifying the neglected tourism sites and facilities.

6 October 2009 (Tuesday)

Business - No plan to sell PLUS: Nor Mohamed

By Zuraimi Abdullah

The government says it has no plan to sell off PLUS Expressways Bhd or other toll concessionaires in the country, dousing talk it would reconsider its plan.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department overseeing the Economic Planning Unit (EPU), Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop, reiterated that the government does not plan to sell the companies to private firm Asas Serba Sdn Bhd or any other party. "Whether we have received any proposal or not, we have no plan to sell our toll roads. I can confirm it," he told reporters after delivering a keynote address at the Khazanah Megatrends Forum 2009 in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. "I talked to them (PLUS) and they have no plan to sell. If anyone has a plan to buy, good luck. But we have no plan to sell," Nor Mohamed said.



About a month ago, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had said state investment agency Kha-zanah Nasional Bhd has no plan to sell PLUS.

Recent reports quoting Asas Serba's allies, however, claimed that the Prime Minister was now interested to listen to the firm's proposal, and that a briefing was supposed to have been held last week. Khazanah directly and indirectly holds 64 per cent of PLUS. The EPU is responsible for carrying out a study for the government to take over some of the busier highways including PLUS to ease the burden of toll users. Asas Serba had in May this year proposed to the Works Ministry to acquire all 22 highway concessionaire companies for RM50 billion. The company is manned by four businessmen, two of whom are former senior executives of the former Renong conglomerate.

7 October 2009 (Wednesday)

Scam cost contractor RM27,000

By Veena Babul

KUALA LUMPUR: A contractor became the latest victim of a scam which uses Bank Negara as a front when he transferred RM27,000 to an unknown private account. The victim, Ali P. Mohamad, was contacted by a "Bank Negara officer" on Sept 9. The officer who identified herself as Ms Wong, sought to verify a transaction worth RM3,500 which was supposedly made by the former using his credit card at a shopping complex. "When I told her that I did not have such a credit card she immediately told me that I was a victim of some scam and urged me to transfer all my money to an account number she provided," said the 47-year-old.

"When I wasn't convinced she told me to meet her at the second floor of Bank Negara. She persistently harassed me to act fast or risk being penniless as the culprit involved could drain my other savings as well," he said at the MCA Public Services and Complaints Department here yesterday. "I then called the Hong Leong Bank's customer service hotline but no one was available. So, I panicked and relented as I had another credit card with the same bank," he said, adding that he banked in RM27,000 from a company's account in a commercial bank to the personal account provided by the person within the same bank. He then withdrew RM20,000 from another of his company accounts and banked it into the same account.

Following the second transaction, he called the credit card company which told him that no transaction had been made with his card. "They told me that I was a fraud victim. I panicked and got the second transaction blocked but unfortunately the culprit had already made away with the initial RM27,000," he added. Later that day, the person who withdrew the sum from the dubious account was caught at a bank in Batu Pahat.

8 October 2009 (Thursday)

Tiong: Paper prompted to run false report

By Joseph Sipalan

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, who is facing a RM500 million defamation suit, slammed a newspaper for reporting that there was no evidence that he had given a RM10 million donation to MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat for party activities. Tiong, the Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB) chief executive officer, said the credibility of the report, carried by a local English daily on Wednesday, was dubious as it did not quote any senior Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission official.

The MACC, in a separate statement, denied that its officials had said they had found no evidence to back Tiong's claims that he had given the money to Ong. The two-paragraph statement, issued by the MACC's Putrajaya headquarters, stressed that investigations were still on-going and urged all parties to stop speculating on the case. In a not-so-subtle reference to Ong, who filed the suit, Tiong claimed that a certain party had "prompted" the newspaper to run the report in the hope of gaining support going into MCA's extraordinary general meeting this Saturday. "It is an attempt to influence the outcome of that meeting. It is probably also an attempt to give credence to his reputation and gain support," he said in a statement.

Tiong, who is also the MP for Bintulu and Barisan Nasional backbenchers club chairman, said the commission's office had gone to his office on Tuesday to follow up investigations on his alleged donation to the MCA through Ong. He said he had given MACC officers additional documents relating to their investigations, and stressed that he was ever ready to help with any request to speed up the probe. Tiong, however, did not comment on another article in the newspaper claiming that KDSB's assets were frozen by police in their investigations into the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) debacle, where KDSB is alleged to have made up to RM1.5 billion in excessive claims.

On Wednesday, the newspaper front-paged a report claiming transactions on some of KDSB's assets, including a luxury jet, were frozen to make way for police investigations into the PKFZ scandal. A separate report on the same day also claimed that the MACC had not found any evidence that Ong had received the RM10 million political contribution on behalf of MCA from Tiong. In early September, police froze several of KDSB's accounts holding over RM140 million as they were deemed crucial in assisting investigations into the case. KDSB, the turnkey contractor for the 405-hectare transshipment hub, has been accused of overcharging and making unsubstantiated claims in the controversial PKFZ project. The company denied the charge, and is facing two lawsuits filed by the Port Klang Authority claiming a total amount of over RM1.6 billion.

8 October 2009 (Thursday)

Business - RM28b rail plan

By Sharen Kaur

PRIVATELY-HELD Global Rail Sdn Bhd and its partner from China have jointly submitted a RM28 billion proposal to develop a high-speed railway and inter-modal freight system in Malaysia, linking economic corridors to major airports and seaports.

Global Rail managing director Fan Boon Heng said the proposal was submitted on September 28 to the Ministry of Finance, the Economic Planning Unit and the Johor Menteri Besar. The project is a private finance initiative (PFI) with China Infraglobe Consortium, a global infrastructure development and logistics specialist. Fan said China Infraglobe has the financing in place to fully fund the project, which will be implemented in four phases over 10 years. He said the financial mechanism will be crafted such that the local government will have a total cost capped for the whole project and risks will be allocated to the parties best able to manage them. "It will free up the current government funds for public spending in other areas," he told Business Times in an interview.

Fan said the implementation of the project to lay electrified double tracks will start from Iskandar Malaysia in Johor. Under the first phase, the parties involved will lay the tracks from Johor Baru to Gemas, while under Phase 2, the tracks will run from Gemas to Tumpat in Kelantan. Phase 3 will start from Kluang, with connections to the KL International Airport, Port Klang and the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) in Selangor. The fourth phase will be from PKFZ to Perlis and up to the Thai border. "We will call for tenders for local participation on the civil works, building of stations and yard facilities after we get the green light from the government. China Infraglobe will work with a European group on the systems portion," Fan said.

The proposal is in line with the government's 2020 National Physical Plan on Transportation. "This development plan will transform Malaysia into a regional logistics hub for Asean and be the southern gateway to the overland logistics rapid freight system for China and Europe," Fan added.

It is also expected to propel Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd into a major logistics and industrial corporation, enhancing and augmenting its role as a national rail and logistics services provider in passenger and freight services. Global Rail, set up in July last year, was founded by Fan, who previously headed ABB Daimler-Benz Transportation and, later, Balfour Beatty Rail Sdn Bhd for over 15 years. It already has jobs from Road Builder Sdn Bhd for electrification for a railway project in Batu Gajah, Perak, and from YTL Corp Bhd to supply automatic train protection system and railway point machines for its Sentul-Batu Caves railway project.



9 October 2009 (Friday)

Order for MB to pay RM65m set aside

By V. Anbalagan

PUTRAJAYA: The Court of Appeal yesterday set aside a High Court order compelling the Pahang menteri besar to pay RM65 million in damages and interest to a logging firm for breach of contract. Court of Appeal judge Datin Paduka Zaleha Zahari said Seruan Gemilang Makmur Sdn Bhd was wrong in naming the menteri besar as party in a judicial review proceeding to enforce a court judgment. "A wrong entity (menteri besar) has been named in the proceedings," Zaleha said of the unanimous ruling.

Sitting with her were Datuk Sulaiman Daud and Datuk Jeffrey Tan Kok Wha. Zaleha said the court would deliver its grounds of judgment soon for Seruan Gemilang to take the necessary action. She said the ruling did not affect the judgment of the Federal Court which held that the Pahang Government must pay the judgment sum to Seruan Gemilang. As of yesterday, the sum owed was RM65 million as the judgment sum included eight per cent interest per year. In September last year, the Federal Court ordered the Pahang government to pay about RM60 million to Seruan Gemilang for breach of contract.

The Federal Court however dismissed the state government's leave application to set aside the decision of the Court of Appeal which upheld the High Court order. Seruan Gemilang then attempted to enforce the judgment to recover the money but payment was not made. It then filed an action for an order of mandamus to compel the menteri besar, as chief executive of the state and who was in charge of the finance portfolio, to settle the amount. On April 20 this year, the High Court in Kuantan allowed Seruan Gemilang's mandamus application and ordered the amount to be settled within 14 days. The menteri besar appealed against the High Court ruling.

Lawyer Datuk Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, who appeared for the menteri besar in the Court of appeal, said a certificate of payment under the Government Proceedings Act was originally addressed to the state government and the director of the state Forestry Department. He said Seruan Gemilang now could not name the menteri besar in the mandamus order to obtain payment. Lawyer Karpal Singh, who represented Seruan Gemilang, said the menteri besar was obliged to settle the debt as it was a judgment against the Pahang state. Karpal, who was assisted by J. Amardas, said that Seruan Gemilang would file leave application to the Federal Court to appeal against the Court of Appeal ruling.

9 October 2009 (Friday)

RM900,000 to upgrade Chinese schools, temple

PORT DICKSON: Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin yesterday announced a RM900,000 allocation for the upgrading of four Chinese schools, a temple and several Chinese-based non-governmental organisations here, yesterday. In making the announcement, the deputy prime minister and education minister said this was over and above the yearly allocations from the government to assist the numerous Chinese schools throughout the country, which include the payment of salaries and allowances for teachers. "The Chinese are a strong community here and contribute 47 per cent of the nation's economy, while the Malays contribute 18 per cent and the Indians, one per cent. "Though the contribution from the Chinese is significant, there are no ill-feelings among us and our main agenda is to continue progressing as one united nation."

Speaking at a lantern celebration organised by the state MCA, Muhyiddin said during his younger days in Bakri, Johor, he used to join the Hokkien community during the Mid-Autumn Festival. "However, I never knew the history of the mooncake until I asked Ong (MCA president, Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat) who told me that it was used by the Han Chinese to send secret messages to each other against the Mongols. "I hope you are not using it today to send messages not to vote for the Barisan Nasional," he said in jest. He said the celebration of different festivals in Malaysia reflected its rich culture and heritage, which everyone here took for granted. "Our multi-racialism is not something which should be taken for granted. "In fact, this is something special and we should treasure it and work on further strengthening it," he said.

Muhyiddin said he would, at times, seek the advice of Kuok Group chairman Tan Sri Robert Kuok on certain matters. "We all live together as one and should not be ashamed to seek advice from each other, regardless of our race or religion." Muhyiddin said Pas youth members were spreading SMS messages calling their members nationwide to come to Bagan Pinang and wage war (jihad) after alleging that one of their supporters was beaten up by BN supporters. Muhyiddin reminded the voters not to be taken in by such tactics and to come out in full force on polling day. "Don't worry about your safety. We have stationed numerous policemen here and there is nothing to worry about," he added. Later, Muhyiddin met with 1,500 Indian voters at the Sua Betong estate.

10 October 2009 (Saturday)

Faizal lodges police report

By Fadhal A Ghani

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuala Demensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB) deputy chief executive officer Datuk Faizal Abdullah lodged a police report against several parties over two leaked documents at Brickfields police station here yesterday. The report was against Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat and the Port Klang Authority (PKA) chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng in connection with the two documents that appeared in the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) blogspot.com. At a press conference held in front of the police station, after lodging the report at 5pm, Faizal said the first document was a letter dated May 10 last year written by Ong to the then prime minister and finance minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Faizal alleged that in the letter, Ong justified and recommended to Abdullah to accept the valuation of approximately RM1.2 billion of works to be carried out by KDSB in the PKFZ project. He said Abdullah, through a letter dated May 14 last year, written by his deputy principal confidential secretary Datuk Ahmad Nazri Yusof, accepted Ong's recommendation. "In response, Ong minuted to his senior private secretary for an immediate action to be taken. "However, there was no reference made of the two letters in a report commissioned by PKA which was prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers which included the task force committee." In the police report, Faizal alleged that the two letters were not disclosed so that it would not interfere in PKA's civil suit and Ong's and Lee's claims against KDSB.

10 October 2009 (Saturday)

CTRM clinches RM3.5b deal with Goodrich Corp

Kamarul Yunus and Hamidah Atan

Largest supplier contract awarded so far by US firm.

PUTRAJAYA: Government-owned Composites Technology Research Malaysia Sdn Bhd (CTRM) has clinched a major contract to supply composite aircraft components to Goodrich Corp, a 20-year deal valued at RM3.5 billion. The deal is the largest ever awarded by Goodrich, a US company, to CTRM since it started doing business in 2004. With the new contract, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said CTRM now has orders of RM6.5 billion in total, more than double the present RM3 billion. "The book order is expected to increase to RM8.5 billion at the end of the year, as CTRM is targeting to conclude more new contracts from various customers within 2009," he said at a briefing to announce the award here yesterday. CTRM was also named strategic supplier to Goodrich at the event.

Najib said CTRM and Goodrich have signed agreements that establish the former as a manufacturing composites centre of excellence, providing nacelle components across multiple commercial airplane programmes. Under the agreements, CTRM will deliver larger and more complex components and composites assemblies for long-term programmes. CTRM was also awarded the Strategic Supplier Award by Goodrich for 2009, an award given to only a select few of its thousands of suppliers.

The award was presented by Goodrich's chief supply chain officer Dan Pleshko to CTRM chief executive officer Datuk Rosdi Mahmud. Incorporated on Nov 20, 1990, with the Ministry of Finance Inc as its principal shareholder, CTRM's role is to develop a high technology-based industry in the areas of aerospace and composites. Today, it is part of the composites global supply chain for major commercial and military aircraft manufacturers around the world. Among its major clients are Airbus UK, Spirit AeroSystems, EADS, CASA, GKN Aerospace, SONACA and Goodrich.