



**13 January 2009 (Tuesday)**

### **First ebooks for lucky 100**

**KUALA TERENGGANU:** The state's ebook programme may be extended throughout the country to solve the problem of primary school pupils having to carry heavy textbooks.

Education director Datuk Alimuddin Mohd Dom said the Federal Government would closely monitor Terengganu's pilot programme, which is being carried out in stages, to furnish all its Primary Five pupils with an ebook, a laptop-like device costing RM1,300 each. It is loaded with software to store all textbooks, study guides and practice questions for every subject.

The programme kicked off yesterday, with 100 pupils being the first recipients. The state hopes to equip all its primary school pupils with the ebook within two years. "From a pedagogical stand point, we want to see how the device can be used in a classroom and how teachers are supposed to use them in lessons. "What's important are the courses that will be used to train the teachers. "I think it is a powerful tool that can replace traditional textbooks but we want to see how it works first," Alimuddin said at a ceremony to distribute the first ebooks. Present was Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Said.

Ahmad said the factory to assemble the ebooks was expected to be ready in April. He said the state government had also been given the rights by manufacturer Intel to sell the devices. "But I want to concentrate on equipping all Terengganu students first before we even think of selling them," Ahmad said.

The programme is expected to cost the state government RM30 million, which will be funded by money from oil royalties.

**14 January 2009 (Wednesday)**

### **Restaurant owner pleads ignorance**



The illegal restaurant belonging to the former assistant of a state councillor.

**KLANG: A former personal assistant to a state executive councillor here has been running an illegal restaurant in his corner-lot house for two months without a licence. And his response was: "I did not know I needed a licence as there are many other such shops here."**

State exco member Ronnie Liu's former assistant, Pua Joo Kian, had been running the Ah Hai Seafood Restaurant since Nov 5 last year in Taman Gembira, Teluk Gadong. The 62-year-old Sri Pinang DAP chairman was compounded three times by the Klang Municipal Council and has yet to settle them. The existence of the illegal restaurant was revealed by MCA Klang division chief Datuk Teh Kim Poo yesterday.

Teh said there had been complaints from neighbours and he wanted strong action to be taken against Pua. Teh also claimed that Pua and MPK councillor Lim Lip Suan had prevented enforcement officers from carrying out their duties at the restaurant recently. However, MPK, Lim and Pua all denied such an incident ever took place. When contacted, Pua said he did not know that he needed a licence. He has since applied for one. As for the compound notices, he said he hoped to get a reduction as he was fined the maximum amount of RM1,000 for each offence.

He quit as Liu's assistant last August. Pua called for a press conference yesterday to explain the issue after his former boss said that everyone must comply with the law. Liu said he had no knowledge of this case and urged the local authority to enforce its rules and regulations.

MPK public relations officer Norfiza Mahfuz said MPK would not approve Pua's licence as the law does not permit a restaurant to operate from a house. She said MPK would seal the restaurant if it continued operating. When pointed out that such restaurants were a common sight here, she said MPK had been carrying out operations against these premises. "We can close them down today but they can open up again the next day." Teh is expected to hold a press conference today.

## **14 January 2009 (Wednesday)**

### **Land for agriculture plea**

**TEMERLOH: State governments should allocate more land for agriculture to help the country achieve self-sufficiency in food production by next year.**

Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said at present the ministry could obtain only 1,500ha of land, although it needed 20,000ha more for the permanent food production park project. "I hope the state governments can reserve more land for food production to ensure that our children have sufficient food in future," he said here yesterday.

Mustapa said Malaysia was depending on imports for its food supply with most of its fruits and vegetables sourced from China and Thailand. For example, he said Malaysia imported 32,000 tonnes of chillies worth RM45 million from Thailand and 20,000 tonnes of tomatoes worth RM41 million from China annually. At present, he said more than 7,000ha nationwide had been allocated for the development of 45 permanent food production parks, which involved 764 agro-entrepreneurs.

Mustapa said 148 participants were now earning more than RM3,000 monthly. "Our aim is to improve the income of our farmers to RM3,000 monthly and we can achieve this by opening more modern agriculture parks." The ministry had also allocated another RM25 million to develop the infrastructure at the Lanchang Modern Agriculture Park.

## **15 January 2009 (Thursday)**

### **Use of new bins delayed, fish imports go on**

**MUAR: A last-minute deal between the Malaysian Fisheries Development Authority (LKIM) and fish importers on Wednesday night averted a possible shortage in the market.**

Fish importers had threatened to stop imports because of the new ruling on the use of insulated containers, which LKIM wanted to implement from yesterday. The negotiations in Kuala Lumpur started on Monday and ended just before midnight with LKIM agreeing to postpone the implementation. The importers had planned to cancel all imports of fish from Indonesia and Thailand, starting in Johor yesterday followed by other states on the west coast two days later. Andy Cham Wing Kian, a committee member of the Klang Marine Product Import-Export Association, said the new containers produced by LKIM came in three sizes, ranging from RM120 for the 30kg container to RM200 for the 80kg one. The old plastic 30kg container cost RM33.

A spokesman for the Johor importers denied LKIM's claims that the old plastic containers could pose a health risk as they had been in use for years without any ill effects. Muar-Batu Pahat Fishermen's Association chairman Ser Boon Huat said the "peaceful settlement" was good news this Chinese New Year because fish and prawns are "a must" for reunion dinners. He said with the availability of imported fish, prices could be kept low. In Kota Baru, where wholesalers and retailers had threatened to raise fish prices to offset the higher cost of the new boxes, LKIM director-general Datuk Mustafa Ahmad said the change to the insulated boxes would ensure the imported fish remained fresh and not infected by fungus or other contamination. "The insulated boxes are food grade and have microchips to give details of the movement of the imports. Their use is important to safeguard the quality of fish. "As usual with something new, the price of the boxes is higher, but it is competitive with those from other local producers," he said after a meeting with wholesalers and retailers at the state LKIM office.

**15 January 2009 (Thursday)**

## **RM60m cable car for Bukit Larut planned**

By : P. Chandra Sagar

**IPOH: The state government has approved in principle the construction of a RM60 million cable car system at Bukit Larut in Taiping.**

The contract will go to "a company with a good track record" with the assurance that the resort's ecological settings would not be disturbed. State Education, Local Government, Housing and Public Transport Committee chairman Nga Kor Ming said the project had the support of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Department of Environment.

A visitor will take 11 minutes to reach the 1,250m peak of the resort from the bottom of the mountain, compared with the 30-minute, 13km ride via four-wheel-drive or government Land Rover. "The cable will stretch up between 5 and 6km and will have 26 cable cars in the first phase and 46 cars which can carry 1,000 visitors." Construction will be done by using helicopters. Piling works will use the latest technology to ensure the fauna and flora are untouched.

Nga said: "The company, which has a good track record of operating the Langkawi cable car system for the past five years with a 100 per cent safety record, will make a prospective study and will take about a year to complete the project."

The hill is a haven for birds such as the rhinoceros hornbill, large moths and butterflies, beetles, monkeys and Pope's Pit Viper. Other attractions include a playground, watch tower, suspension bridge, camp site and century-old buildings. There is also the 90-year-old Sri Kalliamman Temple. Formerly known as Max-well Hill, Bukit Larut is the oldest hill station in the country dating back to 1884.

On another matter, Nga said the state executive council had approved the conversion of a 5.33ha site for the new Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (C) Poi Lam building in Seri Klebang here to replace the school in Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang, which had become congested with 4,000 pupils. The school was built in 1919. The school would only pay RM1 as quit rent. Present yesterday was the chairman of board of governors for the school, Datuk Lim Kok Cheong.

**15 January 2009 (Thursday)**

## **Green light for Sedia to manage Sabah corridor**

By : Joniston Bangkuai

**KOTA KINABALU: Implementation of the Sabah Development Corridor will begin in full swing with the setting up of a body to manage and oversee its development.**

The Sabah Economic Development and Investment Authority (Sedia) Bill was approved with minor amendments at a special one-day sitting of the state assembly yesterday. Under the amendments, membership of the authority was increased from seven to 12 and the word "minister" substituted by Yang Dipertua Negeri giving him authority to appoint members.

Tabling the bill, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman said the formation of Sedia was a reflection of the state and federal governments' commitment in ensuring the goals of the SDC were achieved. The authority will ensure social development and sustainable development are the priorities while boosting economic growth in the SDC.

Sedia will be headed by the chief minister as chairman. The members will include the state secretary, the secretary-general of the federal ministry of finance, the permanent secretary of the state finance ministry, the director-general of the federal economic planning unit, the director of the state planning unit and six others.

Launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi last January, the federally-funded SDC is an 18-year master plan that will make it a leading economic region and a choice destination for investment and living.

Musa said the SDC was designed to quadruple Sabah's gross domestic product from RM16 billion in 2006 to RM63.2 billion by 2025. He said Federal Government agreed to allocate RM2.3 billion to carry out SDC's 55 main projects during the Ninth Malaysia Plan mid-term review.

Since the launching of the SDC, it has attracted investments worth RM15.5 billion involving 14 projects, 12 of which are already in progress. Responding to concerns expressed by the opposition, Musa assured that Sedia will not erode state powers or lead to duplication of responsibilities with existing agencies

## **16 January 2009 (Friday)**

### **Miri Landslide: Bukit Kanada folks asked to evacuate**

BERNAMA



Houses behind the landslide area are in a precarious situation and the residents have been asked to evacuate. – NST picture

**The residents of 10 houses on the eastern slope of Bukit Kanada near here have been directed to move out of their homes immediately following a landslide in the area.**

Sarawak Disaster Relief and Management Committee chairman Tan Sri Dr George Chan issued the evacuation order, saying it was too dangerous for the occupants to remain there as rain was expected to fall until Monday. Several members of the committee found that three of the 10 houses in the vicinity in Kampung Pujut Tanjung Batu were in a precarious situation, he said, adding that the committee had opened an evacuation centre at the Red Crescent Society building here.

Dr Chan advised the residents of settlements near Bukit Kanada to be prepared to move out if necessary. A landslide on the western slope of Bukit Kanada buried alive two Indonesian workers at a nearby petrol station at 1.10am today. Their bodies were recovered between 1pm and 2pm this afternoon. Dr Chan, who is the state assemblyman for Piasau here, visited the scene of the landslide soon after his arrival from Kuching this afternoon

**17 January 2009 (Saturday)**

**Fishing villages to go 'green'**



Datuk Hajiji Mohd Noor (second from left) looking at the potted plants at Hayati Majat's home.

**TUARAN: Poor fishing communities here will not miss out on essential nutrients when a new project launched by the Agriculture Department to promote the planting of vegetables in all households goes into full swing.**

The Green Earth project is aimed at fishing communities living in stilt homes whose main source of food is their catch of the day. Local Government and Housing Minister Datuk Hajiji Mohd Noor, who is also Sulaman assemblyman, said the government would distribute pots to 200 families in the Mengkabong coastal village, one of the oldest and largest fishing settlements in the state.

Eventually, pots will be distributed to the 500 households in the village. "We are hoping that by providing the pots, they will be encouraged to grow essential items in their own backyards, or even in containers if there is a shortage of space. "Planting their own vegetables like leafy greens, chillies, brinjals and tomatoes will help them keep living costs down."

Hajiji launched the project at Kampung Buansa, Mengkabong recently. Housewife Hayati Majat, who was selected for the pilot project here, said she was excited to be able to grow her own vegetables. "It will be a small burden off my shoulders if I do not have to buy vegetables. It will also be healthier for my family to have more greens." Hajiji said the project involved three components -- cultivation, livestock breeding and aquaculture.

**18 January 2009 (Sunday)**

**Minister: Should we have new airport?**

**KUALA LUMPUR: Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui said his ministry was not against any development, including building a new airport, if needed.**

The issue is not whether the airport can be built on oil palm land, he said when asked on Sime Darby's plan to build the permanent low-cost carrier terminal (LCCT) on its land in Labu, Negri Sembilan. "The issue is whether we should have a new airport."

In any case, any company, which plans to build an airport, must get approval from the Civil Aviation Department and carry out an environmental impact assessment (EIA). "If you cannot use oil palm land for airport, you have to use other land," said Chin, following his dialogue session with the Malaysian Estate Owners' Association in Putrajaya yesterday.

On whether it was advisable for the conglomerate to sacrifice oil palm trees for an airport, he said: "I cannot comment. That is its commercial decision. "It is not going to involve the government if it is a private land." It was announced recently that the new site for the airport would need 1,210ha of land.

Since about 138 oil palm trees can be planted on 0.4ha of land, some 414,000 trees would have to be cut down should the airport be built on plantation land. Early this month, Sime Darby announced that it had received government approval to develop the proposed private LCCT project. It said the project was an integral part of its development plan for its Negri Sembilan Vision City (NSVC). NSVC is part of its Central Vision Valley (CVV) proper-ty development project spanning Selangor and Negri Sembilan.

Sime Darby and budget airline AirAsia Bhd had proposed to jointly develop and operate the RM1.6 billion LCCT which will be known as KLIA-East@Labu.

The project will be privately funded. The RM1.6 billion is an estimate of the cost of structures and the runway but does not include the 1,210ha piece of land where it would be constructed. -  
- Bernama

**19 January 2009 (Monday)**

### **New LCCT 'no luxury project'**

By : Dharshini Balan

**SEREMBAN: The state government has stressed that the proposed low-cost carrier terminal (LCCT), to be known as the KLIA East @ Labu, is not a luxury project.**

It is simply to complement facilities at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said he was confident the RM1.6 billion project would not only benefit the people but also the country, just as other projects such as the Proton Saga national car, the Penang bridge, North-South Expressway and Putrajaya had done.

"In times past, people had criticised the Proton project as a waste of public money, just like the other projects, but now all these 'mega' projects have proved beneficial. "It is not surprising that when a new 'mega' project is about to begin, it will have its critics but the KLIA East @ Labu is not a luxury project. It is to provide an amenity for the convenience of the public," he said yesterday after handing out Chinese New Year ang pow to patients at the Rantau branch of the Mawar Haemodialysis Centre.

To the many who had questioned the necessity of building and developing the KLIA East @ Labu, he said: "I am confident that AirAsia Bhd and Sime Darby Bhd did thorough research on the project before proposing it. "The rapid development of the country's low-cost aviation industry is one of the main planks in the argument to have the existing terminal, the LCCT in Sepang, replaced with a new one."

**19 January 2009 (Monday)**

### **KTMB aims for RM1 profit**

By : Kang Siew Li

**KUALA LUMPUR: Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (KTMB) has rolled out an ambitious plan to return to profitability this year.**

Reflecting the rarity of national rail companies making a profit anywhere in the world, the loss-making KTMB is aiming for just a symbolic RM1 net profit for the year ending Dec 31, which is the first of its three-phase turnaround plan. Figures for last year were unavailable, but KTMB posted a RM116.1 million net loss on a revenue of RM349.2 million in 2007.

The architect of this plan is KTMB's new managing director, Abd Radzak Abd Malek. Phase two, to run from 2010 to 2011, will be to re-brand KTMB, while the third phase will start in 2012 and focus on capacity-building and human capital development. Radzak is aware that success will not come easily, especially not within the currently weak economic environment. "This is an



impossible game, but we have to do it," he told Business Times in his first interview since being appointed managing director on Sept 2.

To succeed, KTMB must achieve a revenue of RM400 million this year. It targets RM200 million to come from its freight service; RM100 million from the KTM Komuter service and RM100 million from its intercity rail service. The freight unit is now profitable, contributing half of the company's revenue, while the KTM Komuter unit is breaking even. The intercity service is still a loss-making unit. The plan's first phase also includes cutting operating costs by 30 per cent through efficient management systems, being more transparent and adhering to corporate governance practices, said Radzak. He also hoped to break down the "silo" culture in the company and create an open work environment.

"The first thing we need to do is to break down the silos among the heads of department and senior management that have been built throughout the years and create an open platform where we can work together towards a common goal." The company has coined a slogan for the first phase of the turnaround plan: "One KTMB, One Goal, One Ringgit". It has also set up task forces to tackle issues on a project basis, putting specific timelines for every initiative.

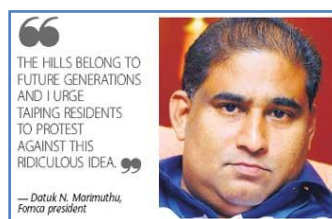
facts&figures		One KTMB, One Goal, One Ringgit		
<b>RM110m</b> <small>Losses a year suffered from 2003-2007</small>	<b>RM300,000</b> <small>Losses a day suffered from 2003-2007</small>	<b>RM400m</b> <small>Target revenue this year</small>	<b>1,699km</b> <small>Railway network in Peninsular Malaysia</small>	<b>42</b> <small>Number of KTM Komuter stations</small>

"The department heads and senior managers are coming back at night to attend these task forces in order for them to have time to discuss issues, projects and problems, and come up with recommendations where all actions have to be focused on the company's P&L (profit and loss)."

**19 January 2009 (Monday)**

## Fomca against cable car

By : P. Chandra Sagar



**IPOH: The Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) wants the state government to put off plans to build a cable car at Bukit Larut so as not to disturb the eco-system.**

Its president, Datuk N. Marimuthu, said the proposal was first made in 1997 but was abandoned in 2007 after a memorandum was sent to then menteri besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali. "We have also confirmed that the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) does not support the project, contrary to a statement that they are for it.

Marimuthu also took a potshot at the DAP, saying that when the party was in the opposition in the state, they had supported Fomca in its bid to stop any development at Bukit Larut. "The hill belongs to future generations and I urge Taiping residents to protest against this ridiculous idea."

Marimuthu said there were several reasons why the project should not be implemented. Among them is the need to protect the 21.53 square km water catchment area and the unstable slope which recorded loss of soil at 150 tonnes per hectare a year, making it unsuitable for man-made structures.

The hill had been classified as one of the "regional centres of plant diversity" under the United Nations Environment Programme but now risks losing that status. In 1910, some 7,130ha were gazetted as forest reserves. In 1962, a further 2,747ha were gazetted as the "Larut Hills virgin jungle reserve". It was also acknowledged as a habitat for flora and fauna in 2002 by the Federal Government.

Sanitation and solid waste management projects would also force animals to leave their sanctuary, said Marimuthu. State Education, Local Government, Housing and Public Transport Committee chairman Nga Kor Ming had said on Thursday a RM60 million project had been approved in principle. He had said the company to be awarded the project had been told not to endanger the environment. Construction work would be carried out using helicopters so that the flora and fauna would not be harmed.

The cable would stretch between 5km and 6km. It would have 26 to 46 cars, capable of carrying 1,000 visitors on an 11-minute trip to the top. Formerly known as Maxwell Hill, Bukit Larut is the oldest hill station in the country, dating back to 1884. Government four-wheel-drive vehicles now ferry visitors up a 13km road up the 1,250-metre hill.

**20 January 2009 (Tuesday)**

## **Specialist hospitals the future**

By : Annie Freeda Cruetz

**KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will see the establishment of single-purpose hospitals to provide better healthcare in the future.**

These hospitals would specialise in diseases or procedures, Director-General of Health Tan Sri Dr Mohd Ismail Merican said yesterday when speaking to the New Straits Times on the direction of healthcare in the country. "More surgeries will be performed in a less invasive manner. More high- tech equipment will be used in the operating rooms and wards."

He said hospitals would be restructured and redesigned to be patient-focused, wellness-oriented and integrated to promote continuity of care. As more severely ill patients were treated, there would be more intensive care and high dependency beds in hospitals. There would also be greater demand for rehabilitation services in hospitals and the community, and a shift would take place from acute hospital care to acute care in the community, with emphasis on primary healthcare settings and self-care.

The shift of inpatient care to ambulatory care within the hospital setting would continue, Dr Ismail added. As well, secondary care, health promotion and preventive services in the health system would be given high priority in the development of policies and programmes. And, as public healthcare expanded with home, community and virtual services, hospitals would become smaller, more technological and more integrated with the rest of the healthcare system. "Indeed, in planning for the healthcare facilities of the future, one cannot successfully do this by looking at the issues of today. Instead, we need to project the needs of tomorrow."

Dr Ismail said there would be significant participation by the private sector in healthcare. "There is a general feeling from all quarters that the private sector should shoulder some social responsibility. "Success in moving from our present scenario to what has been envisaged will depend largely on what is done or not done in the private sector."

He said there was a need to boost the development of the pharmaceutical industry to ensure the availability, affordability and self-reliance in quality pharmaceuticals. "We need to reduce the country's consumption of pharmaceuticals that are imported. "For years, pharmaceuticals alone have consistently accounted for at least four to five per cent of the Health Ministry's annual budget and it is increasing."

**21 January 2009 (Wednesday)**

## **'No' to Race Relations Act - Cabinet rejects proposal to legislate better racial ties**

By : Kalbana Perimbanayagam



Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal

**KUALA LUMPUR: The cabinet has shot down a proposal for a Race Relations Act after a study revealed that Malaysians were generally not in favour of enforcing better racial ties.**

Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said the decision came after exhaustive discussions within the cabinet and with representatives of all communities. "A detailed study was carried out to analyse the need and relevance of the Race Relations Act. Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the cabinet decided there was no need for such an act," he said after attending the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation's media appreciation lunch at Legend Hotel yesterday in his capacity as MCPF chairman.

"Unity should be nurtured and not forced on people. It should be cultivated and instilled in every individual through culture and good values. It's through the liking, the understanding of each other, through tolerance, that we can build unity rather than through law and forcing people into it." He said that although there were some people who were a threat to peace, the government did not see the urgency of introducing such an Act. "Besides, existing Acts such as the Internal Security Act are sufficient to handle race relations. If needed, adjustments and amendments can be made to existing laws."

Shafie also urged the public to be more sensitive when touching on race-based issues. In September last year, MCA Youth chief and Health Minister Datuk Liow Tiong Lai mooted the idea of a Race Relations Act after a member of parliament, a journalist and a blogger were arrested for allegedly stoking racial hatred. The arrests came after a furore over former Bukit Bendera Umno division head Datuk Ahmad Ismail's allegedly racist remarks when he referred to the Chinese as "squatters". Subsequently, various parties stated that legislation was necessary to strengthen unity among the people through a Race Relations Act.

**22 January 2009 (Thursday)**

### **No new foreign workers in two sectors**

By : Hamidah Atan

**PUTRAJAYA: The cabinet has decided to freeze the recruitment of foreigners in the manufacturing and services sectors.**

Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam said this was approved by cabinet members who felt the time had come to look at the welfare of locals who could be laid off. He said employers would have to recruit locals.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said he would discuss with Dr Subramaniam how it could be implemented. Speaking after his ministry's monthly gathering, he said in the event employers had to downsize, they must stop engaging foreign workers and retrench those working here first. "This is not the time for employers to ask for foreign workers. The first to be retrenched should be foreigners and not locals."

Syed Hamid was responding to a Human Resources Ministry's report that about 45,000 workers, mostly Malaysians, would be retrenched over the Chinese New Year season. "There is no valid reason to bring in foreign workers at this time. I am facing all sorts of pressures (to bring in the workers). "I will hold discussions with Dr Subramaniam on how we can extend this policy to more sectors." He said Malaysians should not try to circumvent the government's decision by introducing service contracts or outsourcing projects.

Syed Hamid said the government's decision that owners of petrol stations should stop employing foreigners had fallen on deaf ears. "I see foreigners working there. This is a clear breach of government policy." He added that the people should extend their cooperation to the government as it worked to face the weakening economic situation.

**22 January 2009 (Thursday)**

### **RM800m savings for state govt**

SEREMBAN: The newly incorporated Syarikat Air Negri Sembilan Sdn Bhd will bear the cost of replacing water pipes in the state, saving the state government an estimated RM800 million. Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said the existing cement-asbestos pipes were over 30 years old and should be replaced with steel ones. He said the cost did not include the cost of building water treatment plants and dams, which will also be taken over by the new company.