

## Cookie scare



**PUTRAJAYA:** Famous Amos Chocolate Chip Cookie Corp (M) Sdn Bhd has recalled the dough used in its peanut butter and peanut paste over fears of bacterial contamination.

The Health Ministry's pharmaceutical services director Eisah A. Rahman said ministry officials conducted an investigation and found that the company used dough which was imported from Peanut Corporation of America (PCA). "We received information that dough, which may be contaminated, was exported to Malaysia for use by the company. Results showed the dough in the peanut butter and peanut paste was indeed imported from the PCA. "The dough is used in three of its outlets at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre, Sungai Wang and Kuala Lumpur International Airport." The company has recalled the dough from all the three premises, she said.

Eisah said that as a preventive measure, level 5 inspection which entailed detention, testing and release on all peanut products from the United States at all checkpoints had been mounted. She said product checks were being conducted through the ministry's food safety and information system. "The ministry will continue to intensify enforcement and monitoring to ensure all food products brought into the country are safe for consumption." Eisah said the recall was made following a "salmonella scare in peanut butter" report by CNN on Tuesday. Salmonella can cause serious infection and lead to fatality, especially among children and elderly people with weak immune systems (immuno-compromised). Symptoms of salmonella infection include fever, diarrhoea and stomach ache. Infections could lead to septicaemia, endocarditis (infection of the veins) and arthritis. It was reported that more than 470 people fell sick in the US and at least 90 had to be hospitalised. At least six deaths have been linked to the outbreak.

**24 January 2009 (Saturday)**

## **Govt rethinking rationale for new airport in Labu**

By : David Yeow, Presenna Nambiar and Jeeva Arulampalam

**SUBANG JAYA: The government is rethinking its earlier decision to build a new airport in Labu to cater to low-cost carrier AirAsia, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak yesterday.**

On Jan 5, Sime Darby Bhd had obtained the cabinet's approval to proceed with its proposed airport in Labu, Negri Sembilan. When asked, Najib said: "We are still looking at it. There is no formal decision yet. I cannot pre-empt the decision by making an announcement." "We are studying the Labu airport proposal from all angles.

We want to verify if we can go ahead with it or do we need to make a different arrangement," said Najib after witnessing the handing over of the Bombardier CL415 amphibious aircraft to the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport here yesterday. AirAsia in a statement released yesterday said it was looking forward to presenting Najib a detailed brief on KLIA-East and the plans to make Kuala Lumpur the regional hub for low-cost carriers. "Since the cabinet's approval of Central Malaysian Vision Valley project, of which the KLIA-East LCCT is a vital component, Air-Asia and Sime Darby Bhd have been in negotiations to finalise the details," AirAsia said.

The budget airline said it had received numerous enquiries from domestic and international investors interested in the project. It is understood that AirAsia and Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB), the operator of the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, will have separate meetings with the Ministry of Finance next Friday to discuss issues surrounding the airport in Labu. The proposed airport in Labu is AirAsia's answer to its fear that MAHB would be unable to build a new permanent terminal in time to support its passenger and aircraft growth. The plan however, has come under fire as the public and non-governmental organisations raised questions on the need for a new airport, considering the KLIA is under-used. At a separate event, Sime Darby said its Negri Sembilan Vision City would be anchored by the aeropolis, whether it was located at KLIA or Labu.

"The LCCT project in Labu was one of the catalysts recommended. But if the government decides it's not viable and it has to go back to KLIA, that's fine because it's still within our vision city," said president and group chief executive Datuk Seri Ahmad Zubir Murshid. Ahmad Zubir said Sime Darby had recommended Sepang as a potential development area for AirAsia but due to the close proximity to the KLIA airport, Labu was then chosen as the site. "Since Labu was part of our vision city, we agreed to their request of 3,000ha of land. And as the owner and developer of the vision city, we applied to the government for development approval," he said.

He added that the onus was now on AirAsia to determine how the new airport would be developed and that connectivity would be borne by the airport operator. "Sime Darby is not involved in the equity and running of the terminal, it is not our core business. We are the landowner and would like to sell the land at market value. If there is opportunity for us to be a developer, we will look at it," he said.

## **24 January 2009 (Saturday)**

### **Prai council under fire over 'leaked' document**

By : Audrey Dermawan

#### **GEORGE TOWN: Problem-riddled Seberang Prai Municipal Council is in hot water again.**

The state government has instructed its president, Farizan Darus, to conduct an immediate investigation into how an official document could fall into the hands of state opposition chief Datuk Azhar Ibrahim. A furious state Local Government Committee chairman Chow Kon Yeow assured that disciplinary action would be taken against the culprit. "I want to know how the document could end up in Azhar's hands a week earlier than ours when in fact, I had requested for it from the council two weeks before that. "I want to know which official took it upon himself or herself to release the document to the opposition ahead of us," he said yesterday.

Chow was commenting on Azhar's statement on Thursday that he received a week ago, a copy of the document, containing records of arrears owed by several Umno divisions and branches in the state to the council. Chow only received the document on Wednesday. It was reported that several Umno divisions and branches which own buildings have been identified as owing more than RM200,000 in unpaid assessments over the last 10 years. They are the Umno Permatang Pauh division (RM25,548), Umno Pekan Darat branch (RM1,582), Umno Teluk Air Tawar branch (RM228) and Umno Bagan division (RM209,135). Chow had since directed the council to recover the arrears as soon as possible. The state government had made several exposes involving the council over the past few months, including the council's massive deficit budget, whose reserves had declined from RM225 million in 2000 to RM6.4 million today.

## **26 January 2009 (Monday)**

### **Projects to go ahead**

KOTA KINABALU: The state government will do its best to ensure that projects under the Sabah Development Corridor (SDC) are carried out as planned despite the gloomy global economic outlook. Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman said that several projects had already taken off the ground. "We are excited at the prospect of more investment coming in to further develop the state through the SDC," said Musa in his Chinese New Year message.

**26 January 2009 (Monday)**

### **RM1.6m car park 'a waste of funds'**



Earthwork being carried out for the new parking complex in Tanah Rata, Cameron Highlands, causes silting of Sungai Jasar.

### **CAMERON HIGHLANDS: Residents here are unhappy with the district council's decision to build a new parking complex next to the council building.**

It will replace the RM5 million bus and car park terminal in Tanah Rata, said to be a white elephant. However, the residents claim that the new car park, costing RM1.6 million, involved hill-cutting which could cause soil erosion, and it a waste of public funds.

A memorandum to this effect had been signed by 418 residents and sent to the Cameron Highlands district council and councillors on Dec 10. Group spokesman Germit Singh said only buses were operating from the Tanah Rata terminal, which did not have toilets or proper lighting. The car park could not be used as the ramp is too steep for cars. Regional Environmental Awareness of Cameron Highlands president R. Ramakrishnan said soil from the construction site was being pushed into Sungai Jasar, which was already polluted.

**28 January 2009 (Wednesay)**

### **Ismail argues for universal health coverage**

By : Annie Freeda Cuez



All the cutting-edge science and innovative technology of our industry is valuable only when it results in the alleviation of human suffering and the overall enhancement of life. — Tan Sri Dr Ismail Merican

**KUALA LUMPUR: The proposed National Health Care Finance system must provide universal coverage with healthcare costs for the poor and needy being financed by the government.**

Health Department director-general Tan Sri Dr Ismail Merican said the proposed health insurance system should be egalitarian, community-rated and based on solidarity. "It must provide universal coverage, be acceptable and affordable. "The disadvantaged groups such as the poor, the disabled and also government servants should be financed by the government," he said.

The interim report on the NHCF was first submitted in August 2006, and subsequently, Karol Consulting Pty Ltd provided consultancy services to the project. However, the NHCF never took off due to teething problems. The Health Ministry has since set up a special unit to handle NHCF with the Economic Planning Unit.

Dr Ismail said the scheme, when implemented, must be efficient and able to manage the rate of growth of healthcare spending while providing flexibility, freedom of choice and improvement in quality. "It should be viable, reliable, and sustainable, as well as create an impact on the desirable outcomes for health status improvement and encourage innovation in delivery."

He said beneficiaries of the scheme were the contributors, their spouses and dependents, and benefits should be uniform for all members of the population. However, he said, employers should be allowed to top-up benefits if they chose to do so. "The new system must be able to support new services. It must also be in line with our health services, Vision for Health and Vision 2020."

Dr Ismail said the NHCF must focus on the impact of the transition towards a K-economy, and upon the existing inequality between ethnic groups, income gap and the poor, the rural/urban divide, gender gap and the older generation. He said rapid advances were not only challenging the regulatory agencies, but also the nation's healthcare financing and insurance companies, which must adjust to new realities.

He said the healthcare industry had a mixed system of reimbursement policies that worked well for some patients, but not for others. He added current institutions and reimbursement policies would not be sufficiently flexible to absorb the level of creativity and innovation in healthcare that was occurring and about to occur.

"This can result in inequity, where only the rich can afford the benefits of new innovations whilst the poor has to wait a little longer, sometimes a little too late. "We must focus more on the needs of the patients, instead of what rigid rules say patients are eligible for, as means of directing our healthcare ringgit to the right places. "All the cutting-edge science and innovative technology of our industry is valuable only when it results in the alleviation of human suffering and the overall enhancement of life."

**31 January 2009 (Saturday)**

## **Landslide destroys eight houses**



The view of the destroyed houses in Kampung Lereng Bukit, Canada Hill, yesterday.

**MIRI: A landslide in Canada Hill destroyed eight houses in nearby Kampung Lereng Bukit yesterday.**



The foothill area of Bukit Canada where the landslide occurred.

Seventy-four villagers have been moved to the Miri Red Crescent building, bringing the number of evacuees to 108 since the first landslide on Jan 16 that killed two petrol station workers. Witnesses said earth movements were first detected about 9.30am yesterday and, fearing the worst, most of the villagers left their homes.

Their fear became a reality when six houses were brought down by the landslide at 1pm and another two at 3pm. Miri police chief Assistant Commissioner Jamaluddin Ibrahim said Canada Hill had been declared unsafe. Another 18 homes there are also in danger. Kampung Lereng Bukit is 1km from a Shell petrol station which was destroyed in a landslide on Jan 16, killing two of its Indonesian workers. That incident forced 38 villagers living nearby to vacate their homes and most of them are still housed at the Miri Red Crescent Society building.

**31 January 2009 (Saturday)**

### **Get-rich-quick schemes off-limits to government staff**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Get-rich-quick schemes are having a negative impact on the civil service as more than 50,000 government employees are believed to be actively involved in them.

What was most worrying was that many senior officers and heads of departments were encouraging their subordinates to participate in the schemes which promised quick and multiple returns for a small investment. Cuepacs secretary-general Ahmad Shah Mohd Zin said yesterday that the congress was very concerned with the development as it eroded the people's confidence in the service. He said the problem was so serious that the Public Service Department (PSD) issued a special circular banning civil servants from joining such schemes.

The Circular 2/2009, signed by PSD director-general Tan Sri Ismail Adam, and which took effect on Jan 13, bans all categories of civil servants from promoting, participating or investing in such schemes. The circular said the participation by a large number of civil servants in such schemes could mislead the public into thinking that the schemes were approved by the government. The circular described get-rich-quick schemes as a marketing method which promised high returns with small investment while the organisations that promoted such a scheme were not registered with any of the licensing authorities.

The Federation of Malaysian Consumers Association (Fomca) fully supported the government's move to ban civil servants from the activities. Its secretary-general, Muhammad Shaani Abdullah, said the schemes were not only promoted by Malaysians but also foreigners through the Net. The schemes were usually based on the multi-level marketing model where early entrants gained more than those who joined later. Ahmad Shah said although the government had given permission to some civil servants to engage in business on a part-time basis, it did not mean that they should get involved in dubious activities. -- Bernama

**1 February 2009 (Sunday)**

### **Labu plan off but Central Vision Valley to proceed**

**SEREMBAN:** The no-go for the new low-cost carrier terminal in Labu will not affect the state government's plans to build the Central Vision Valley (CVV).

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said CVV was a project between the state government and Sime Darby and was to be established on land owned by the latter. "Initially the plan was to develop some 3,000ha into a hub for education, sports, tourism and transportation. AirAsia then proposed that the LCCT be built nearby.

"The state government was not involved in the planning for the LCCT. Sime Darby has done a study and found the project feasible. So, although the LCCT is off, CVV will go on as planned," he said at an Umno function at Taman Angsa Mas near here yesterday.

Mohamad was commenting on the decision by the Federal Government to shelve the proposed KLIA East @ Labu project following a meeting on Friday, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat, AirAsia chief executive officer Datuk Seri Tony Fernandes and representatives from Malaysia Airport Holdings Bhd were among those who attended the meeting.

## **1 February 2009 (Sunday)**

### **Funds for USM business facility**

**GEORGE TOWN: The Federal Government will consider funding an "incubator" facility at Universiti Sains Malaysia to help bumiputeras set up businesses.**

Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop said the facility would provide practical training to graduates to become entrepreneurs. He said this was part of the government's efforts to nurture entrepreneurship among Bumiputeras.

"USM has the experience in this area and furthermore, they have a model already implemented in Australia. "I think it is important to find effective ways and means to help Bumiputeras in the state," he said here yesterday.

"This (setting up of the new facility) is an additional method to ensure our future graduates, during their varsity studies, are given practical training in entrepreneurship. "This is so that when they graduate, they will have additional knowledge and experience in business."

Nor Mohamed said certain bankers from other countries who had met him had backgrounds in classical history, Latin and Greek philosophy. "This goes to show that not only those who have degrees in accountancy and economics can become businessmen."

## **1 February 2009 (Sunday)**

### **Finas' RM3m deal to produce programmes**



**KUALA LUMPUR: The National Film Development Corporation of Malaysia (Finas) and AETN All Asia Networks (AAAN) yesterday signed a cooperation deal worth RM3 million to produce eight hours of original content featuring three genres of documentaries, crime and investigation, history and biography.**

The programmes, namely the History Channel, Crime and Investigation Network and the Biography channel, which are available here on pay tv Astro, will be produced by Malaysian production companies. Unity, Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said the memorandum of understanding between Finas and AAAN was the best way possible of telling the "truth" about Malaysia. "It's all about the reality of Malaysian life, the people and places. "This is the chance where we can improve the situation where sometimes reports on the country are not that positive and portray Malaysia as a lowly-rated country."

Shafie added that through the cooperation, the local products would be aired in more than 20 languages to 138 countries. According to Finas director-general, Mohd Mahyidin Mustakim, this was the third deal with an international broadcaster after National Geographic Channel and Discovery Channel. "This proves that our own production companies can produce international-level productions and open the opportunity for local products to be aired all over the world."

He said under the MoU, eight 60-minute documentaries would be produced with each worth more than RM100 million. Meanwhile, AAAN general manager Loius Bosswell said this was a landmark deal for them and underlined their commitment to localising its channels. "We believe there is a wealth of great untold stories from Malaysia and we look forward to showcasing these on the three channels," he added. -- Bernama

### **3 February 2009 (Tuesday)**

#### **'Permits used to smuggle sugar'**

**TUMPAT: At least five wholesalers licensed to sell sugar and other essential items are suspected of involvement in smuggling activities. Operating in Simpangan, they have also set up stores near the Golok riverbank.** Sources said they were believed to have misused their permits, issued by the state Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Division, by selling sugar, flour and cooking oil across the border. "This has been going on for the past two years," the sources said. Division director Che Halim Abdul Rahman said they would investigate the matter.

### **3 February 2009 (Tuesday)**

#### **RM500m suit over 'stolen' land**

By : Adib Povera

**ALOR STAR: A 77-year-old grandmother is seeking more than RM500 million from the state Land and Mines Department for "stealing" her plot of land.**

Che Sopiah Omar and her 43-year-old businessman son Md Badrul Shah Mohd Noor, the first and second plaintiffs respectively, filed the writ at the High Court here yesterday. The writ, which was filed through counsel Mohd Afza Dahari, named the registrar of land title, Kedah Land and Mines Department director, and Mohd Jamil Mohd Noor as the first, second and third defendants respectively.

Jamil is Che Sopiah's second son of 15 children. Che Sopiah claimed she was the registered owner of a 9.996ha land at Lot 123, Mukim Sungai Pasir, in Sungai Petani. Badrul is the authorised representative of Che Sopiah's plot of land.

The mother and son claimed that, in 2002, the first and second defendants transferred the plot of land to the third defendant by falsifying an originating summons for an order to change the land owner's name. They claimed the transfer was done without their knowledge and that the third defendant had by fraud obtained the title deed of the land owned by Che Sopiah.

The plaintiffs said they only realised Che Sopiah's land was "stolen" after Badrul Shah tried to get compensation for land acquisition for a road project near Che Sopiah's property last year. Badrul Shah, when met later, said he tried to sell his mother's land for a business venture with a foreign investor where he would receive five per cent of the total investment or RM380 million. He said he should also receive RM5 million in fees from a developer to develop the land.

The investor and developer however pulled out after they found out that the land belonged to the third defendant. The plaintiffs are seeking a court ruling to nullify the false order on the transfer of land title endorsed by the first and second defendants. The plaintiffs are also seeking RM420,450,488 in special damages, as well as general, aggravated and exemplary damages, with eight per cent interest from Oct 1, 2002, and other relief deemed fit by the court.

### **3 February 2009 (Tuesday)**

#### **Landslide area a disaster site**

**KUCHING: The area of Kampung Lereng Bukit that was hit by a landslide on Friday has been declared a disaster site.**

It is off limits even to residents whose homes at the foot of Canada Hill in Miri were not destroyed or damaged. The landslide, the second to hit that area within two weeks, destroyed eight houses. Another 210 were damaged or threatened. Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr George Chan said in Miri yesterday: "Police have been ordered to cordon off that part of the village."

The state Disaster and Relief Management Committee chairman said this was to prevent

looting and to stop villagers from returning to their homes because there were indications more landslides could take place. Dr Chan said it would be at least two weeks before a decision could be made regarding "which houses are safe and which are not, and therefore who can return".

He said the report by two federal Public Works Department geologists must be considered first, and "they had requested two weeks to complete their study". He said some residents might be allowed to return home in three days provided it did not rain. The authorities in Miri were looking at vacant low-cost houses and guest villages to house those facing the prospect of never returning home, he said.

The two PWD soil experts -- Nurul Eilmy Zainuddin, an assistant director of the department, and Dr Che Hassanadi Abdullah, the head of the research and development unit -- arrived in Miri on Friday night, just hours after the landslide, and spent the weekend collecting data and soil samples for testing.

### **3 February 2009 (Tuesday)**

#### **Cuepacs unhappy over contracts**

BUTTERWORTH: Cuepacs is unhappy with the Penang government's decision not to renew the contracts of 13 temporary staff in state libraries. President Omar Osman said it was unfair to do so in the current economic slowdown, and he rejected the state government's reasoning that the staff were not performing up to expectation. "Some have served for 14 years. I don't see any logic in the argument that they have not performed all this while," he said. The staff received one month's notice on Dec 31. Cuepacs plans to appeal.

### **3 February 2009 (Tuesday)**

#### **Projects in Sabah under ninth plan to continue**

**KOTA KINABALU: The outstanding projects under the Ninth Malaysia Plan's RM20.8 billion allocation for Sabah will be implemented as planned.**

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman, who said this, added that the fluctuating costs of building materials and fuel have not led to any review of the projects. Although the costs of some materials had gone up at one point, most such as steel had stabilised, he said.

"We will implement what we have planned but at the same time we will continue to monitor what is happening. "We are also asking for all related agencies to continue co-operating to make sure that projects are carried out. "I have also asked district officers to give their support

and assistance especially when it comes to (securing) land," he said after chairing the Sabah Action Council meeting at Wisma Innoprise here yesterday.

Musa was asked if projects that have yet to be implemented were expected to be reviewed following fluctuations in cost of building materials. Earlier, he told reporters that 4,934 projects would be implemented by the end of the plan period in less than two years. He said RM10.13 billion or 52.8 per cent of the plan's allocation for Sabah had been spent as at Dec 31 last year, above the national average of 45.2 per cent.

On Sabah Progressive Party (Sapp) president Datuk Yong Teck Lee questioning why the RM1 billion special grant for Sabah was placed under the Implementation and Co-ordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, Musa said Yong did not understand what was happening as he was no longer with the government.

Musa explained that RM200 million of the fund was already in the hands of the Sabah Development Office, which was set up to replace the Federal State Development Department, and that another RM250 million was channelled to the Sabah Finance Ministry. "The opposition sometimes has no work to do and they bring up petty matters. We will get the balance of the funds when we ask for it. We will use this special allocation within two years."

### **3 February 2009 (Tuesday)**

#### **No more wild heartbeats with new technique**

By : Annie Freeda Cuez

**KUALA LUMPUR: One month after its introduction at the National Heart Institute (IJN), eight patients, including a former member of parliament and a doctor, have already benefited from an innovative catheter-based technique to treat a heart disorder.**

Known as atrial fibrillation (AF), it is a rhythm disorder in which the two upper chambers of the heart (the atria) beat rapidly in an uncoordinated and seemingly chaotic disorder. The catheter-based technique allows a minimally-invasive procedure to be performed in two hours, which can either reduce or eliminate AF.

IJN's electrophysiology team, Dr Razali Omar and Dr Azlan Hussin, were among the first physicians in the Asian region to use this new treatment, along with their counterparts in Hong Kong.

AF was not considered a life-threatening condition in the past. Now, however, it is categorised as the highest risk factor for, and cause of, stroke along with hypertension. It accounts for 10 to 15 per cent of all strokes caused by inadequate blood flow to the brain.

"AF is a very common but, unfortunately, very serious rhythm disorder associated with severe symptoms and an increased risk of stroke. Up to now, treating AF has been with drug therapy, which is not always well tolerated or effective for all patients," said Dr Razali who is a consultant cardiologist. According to Dr Razali, it was discovered a few years ago that AF originated in the upper chambers of the heart, frequently within the left atrium and very often from the pulmonary veins that carry oxygen-rich blood from the lungs. Catheter ablation involves introducing a specially designed catheter into the heart. This is done by making a small incision in a vein and carefully manoeuvring the catheter through the vein and into the heart to burn off tissues that cause the condition.

This procedure involves the use of equipment such as introducers, guide wires and fluoroscopy (a real-time video x-ray monitor). The catheter itself contains one or more electrodes in a special arrangement. These electrodes are the points through which the RF or heat energy will flow. Advanced catheter technology allows the physician to control which electrodes are heated at any given time; using different combinations can help achieve desired ablation goals. The main goal of the procedure, Dr Razali said, was to electrically isolate the pulmonary veins from the left atrial body so that the impulses responsible for the AF cannot be propagated to the left atrium. In some cases, the physician may also have to ablate selected sites within the left atrium that can initiate AF.

"The theory behind catheter ablation is that destroying small areas of cardiac tissue will either eliminate the source of the AF or cut off its electrical connection with the rest of the heart. The irregular impulse can no longer form and travel to the rest of the heart, thus eliminating the high atrial rates." He said with this new technique the procedure was now safe and appeared to be quite effective for all types of AF patients.

**4 February 2009 (Wednesday)**

## **PM rebukes civil service for contract delays**

By : Hamidah Atan



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and  
his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Razak

**PUTRAJAYA:** Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday told government servants not to delay contract extensions to companies, and ticked them off for slowing things down for the private sector.

The prime minister said they should not wait till the last minute or the day the contracts expire before moving to renew or extend them. Abdullah said it was natural for companies to complain of delays. "And when there is a delay, the companies will usually get into trouble," he said at the Prime Minister's Department monthly gathering. He added that the complaints frequently reached the highest government levels.

"When it reaches the top, this generally leads to dissatisfaction and anger (among the civil servants). There will be insinuations like the companies know the top people, have 'big cables', we (civil servants) are no longer needed and so on." "It is not that you are no longer needed but each time the companies ask, the answer is yes, yes, yes, when in fact nothing has been done," he said.

Companies that complain tended to face a host of problems when dealing with officers. "Everything will be made to seem difficult. We must stop acting like this." Abdullah urged ministry officials to be proactive by approaching the companies well before the renewals are due. "They should tell the companies that their contracts would be extended and that the companies should continue with their respective projects. "Sadly, sometimes the delay could go up to one month, even up to three months. Just because our (economic) situation here is not that bad compared with other countries, do not make this an excuse to delay doing our work."

Abdullah said it was vital for all civil servants to understand that their full attention was required to help spur the economy. "The second stimulus package will be introduced as the government wants our economy to be on a track that allows us to continue our success." He said early preparation would enhance the government's ability to meeting any challenge that might come its way. "Of course, we cannot predict what will happen but at least we should be prepared. If we begin early, we will be ready to face any eventuality.

"I have always reminded you, even myself, that we must always begin as early as possible. Don't ever wait or dilly-dally." Abdullah said improvements had been made to the country's public service delivery system. Overall, I am contented with the improvements. Although the indexes reflecting our efficiency and delivery system continue to show an upward trend, all of us must remain committed to add value to ourselves and our work."