



**6 Mac 2009 (Friday)**

### **Difficulty in getting boat licence**

**NIBONG TEBAL:** More than 50 fishermen want the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry to reconsider their applications for boat licences.

The fishermen, from Kampung Teluk Ipil, Kuala Haji Ibrahim, Tanjung Berembang and Sungai Chenaam, said the Fisheries Department had turned down their applications without giving any reasons for the past two years. They said without the boat licences, they were not eligible for fuel subsidy.

Action committee chairman Kamaruddin Daud said the problem was affecting their livelihood. He questioned how others who don't even own boats could get licences. "We can't understand why genuine fishermen cannot get a licence but factory workers and businessmen can get it easily," he said.

The fishermen yesterday gathered at Kampung Teluk Ipil here to express their displeasure. Nibong Tebal MP Tan Tee Beng attended the gathering and promised to take up the matter with the ministry.

**7 Mac 2009 (Saturday)**

### **RM500m to develop Kuala Terengganu**

**KUALA TERENGGANU:** The state government has allocated RM500 million to develop the state capital.

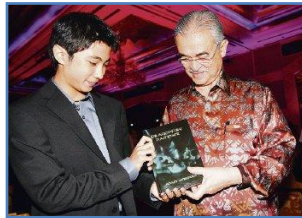
Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Said said the allocation would be used to fund infrastructure, commercial and beautification projects over the next three years. The money will be spent on, among other things, new commercial premises, upgrading basic facilities and infrastructure and to beautify here. "A portion of the money will also be used to improve public transport in the city."

He said this after opening the Serikandi (Association for the Wives of State Assemblymen) annual meeting here yesterday. Kuala Terengganu, which was awarded city status in January last year, and has earned the name "Waterfront City", has a population of almost 300,000.

Ahmad said the projects were already in the pipeline when the state made its official bid for city status. The menteri besar was confident these projects would benefit the people as the city continued to grow in terms of population and stature. "These are part of our restructuring plans for Kuala Terengganu."

**8 Mac 2009 (Sunday)**

**PM: Resolve language issue before it gets out of hand** By : Azura Abas



**Adam Umemoto (left), 13, showing his 500-page fantasy novel to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday**

**KUALA LUMPUR: The prime minister wants the Education Ministry to decide quickly whether Science and Mathematics should continue to be taught in English.**

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the contentious issue should be resolved before it got out of hand. "This issue has become bigger and more sensitive. I hope the ministry will make a decision on the matter fast. "If not, the issue will become even bigger and the pressure from non-governmental organisations will continue," he said after launching a fantasy novel written by 13-year-old Adam Umemoto titled Dragonfire Hammer.

Abdullah said the ministry would make a decision that will benefit the people and ensure a good future for the nation. He said examination results could be the basis for any decision on the issue. English has been used in the teaching of Science and Mathematics since 2003. Although some groups were not happy with it from the start, in recent months, opposition to it has become more vociferous.

The Education Ministry has undertaken a review of the policy but has yet to announce its decision whether to continue with it or allow the two subjects to be taught in the mother tongue. Last month, Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein told Parliament a report on a study of the policy would be tabled at a cabinet meeting before year-end.

In praising the young writer, his nephew, Abdullah said Malaysia was a great place for young people. "This is a land of opportunity for the young." In this respect, the prime minister urged parents to support their children's dreams and activities. Abdullah said parents could lose their children if they failed to give them the much needed support. He urged the talented Adam to write sequels to his book. "I hope the book will not be your first and your last." Adam said the

500-page fantasy novel would be released on Wednesday. It will cost RM39.90 a copy. Profits from the sale of the books would be donated to Hospice centres. "So many people have donated to various children's funds and organisations. "I want to help those at Hospice centres have a better environment to live through their remaining days," said Adam.

**8 Mac 2009 (Sunday)**

### **Another unsafe Sabah building**

By : Julia Chan



**The RM24 million state Archives building that was built 25 years ago**

KOTA KINABALU: A second government building has developed cracks barely five months after the Queen Elizabeth Hospital here was declared structurally unsound. The cracks inside and outside the State Archives building in Penampang Road are worrying staff and the public.

State Archives director Datu Tigabelas Zainal Abidin, speaking on Thursday after a ceremony to receive a grant of RM188,000 from the government of Japan, said that he had informed the state government. The department had occupied the building after it was built 25 years ago at a cost of about RM24 million. Tigabelas said the State Archives had 4.8ha of land which could be used for a new building. Minister in the Chief Minister's Department Datuk Nasir Sakaran said he would raise the matter in the state cabinet.

**9 Mac 2009 (Monday)**

### **Rais: Let schools use BM**



**Some of the protesters who took part in the march from the National Mosque to Istana Negara on Saturday.**

## **BACHOK: Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim is against the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English.**

He said the Education Act stated that Bahasa Malaysia should be the medium of instruction for all subjects in school. He said Bahasa Malaysia must be used to nurture the identity and culture of the Malays for at least the first five years of schooling, especially in the teaching of the two subjects. "This has been my position all the while... there is no need to intimidate me as it is my stand. But as a cabinet member, I followed the majority but I still don't agree with the present policy (teaching of Mathematics and Science in English)," he said after meeting Umno members at Kampung Pauh Lima here on Saturday.

The foreign minister was asked to comment on the involvement of literary figures, including National Laureate Datuk A. Samad Said, in the protest against the policy of using English to teach the subjects. Rais, who is vying for a vice-presidency in the Umno election, said the present policy could be rationalised and discussed with teachers' unions and intellectuals. "It is the general opinion (that English should be taught from secondary schools onwards). The present policy is still on trial and there is now a need to strengthen the Education Act. "Umno must reconsider this policy. It might be a problem to certain parties but it could be co-ordinated."

Rais said the government and Umno could not ignore the views of intellectuals as the debate involved the culture and the identity of a race. On the political crisis in Perak, he said it was a grand design to cripple the traditional powers of the sultan. "I think the opposition wants to see the power of the sultans destroyed worse than (the constitutional crisis) in 1993. They are trying to get others with them in ensuring that the traditional powers of the sultans are no longer effective," he said.

In Kota Baru, Wanita Umno head Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz said she preferred that the teaching of English be strengthened so that students would be able to learn other subjects effectively. She said she would like this to happen compared with teaching certain subjects in English. Rafidah said she was also ashamed of those who had demonstrated on Saturday over the issue. "There was no need for it. They can voice their unhappiness through the proper channels or non-governmental organisations. "Malaysians have been regarded previously as civilised and courteous but not any more. Whenever there is an issue, people will go out to demonstrate." She said Malaysia needed to be a developed nation not only physically but also mentally.

In Kuching, Deputy Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said the MPs who took part in the demonstration did it to gain political mileage. He said they had jumped on the bandwagon to portray themselves as defenders of the Malay language. He said Malaysians must understand that English was vital for the country to be on a par with advanced countries. He added that the government would ensure that the teaching of the subjects in English would never be at the expense of Bahasa Malaysia.

**9 Mac 2009 (Monday)**

### **Insulated containers for fish 'optional'**

**JELI:** The Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry yesterday waived the mandatory use of insulated fish containers by wholesalers, ending a controversy that had the wholesalers protesting against their use and sending retail prices of fish soaring lately.

Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, in announcing the decision, said the ministry also decided to provide cash incentives to wholesalers who used the insulated containers, the quantum of which would be announced next week. "The ministry has decided against making it mandatory for fish wholesalers to use the insulated containers. The issue is considered settled," he said after launching the national-level Veterinary Month 2009 at the Gemang Rest & Recreation Area here yesterday.

Mustapa said although it was not mandatory to use the containers, which should have taken effect on March 1, the ministry would conduct a campaign to encourage fish wholesalers to use them. He also said it was not true that all fish wholesalers boycotted the containers because a check by the ministry found that 10 per cent of the wholesalers were using the new containers. Mustapa said he hoped that following the announcement, fish traders would not take advantage of the situation and raise the prices of fish, as had happened. "The shortage of fish in several places, including Kuala Lumpur, is not due to the use of the containers but more a problem with the supply," he said. -- Bernama

**10 Mac 2009 (Tuesday)**

### **Heavy rain, water pump failure blamed for floods**

By : By Satiman Jamin



**Several villagers from Kampung Mohd Amin in Johor Baru being evacuated after their homes were flooded yesterday.**

**JOHOR BARU:** Several areas in Jalan Yahya Awal, Kampung Mohd Amin and Jalan Kolam Air here were flooded because of heavy rain.

Some 20 residents in the area were evacuated to Sekolah Kebangsaan Nong Chik yesterday. The water level started to rise less than 30 minutes after heavy rain lashed the city at 10am, sending residents scampering to save their belongings as the water rushed into their homes. Kampung Mohd Amin Umno Youth chief Saiful Adli Jamian, 39, said there had been floods in the area in the past but this time the water rose so fast that many of the residents were caught unawares. "I was informed that the pump at the Sungai Chat warehouse failed to start when the water level went up." The strong currents of the flash flood heaved off chunks of road surface at Jalan Yahya Awal and bricks from the sidewalk were swept onto the road, along with other debris.

Mayor Datuk Mohd Naim Nasir said he had rushed over from the Maulidur Rasul celebrations at Kompleks Islam nearby to oversee the efforts of city council workers to help those who were affected. He said the pump at the Sungai Chat pump house had failed to turn on as the electricity supply was disrupted when a tree fell onto a high tension cable in front of the Tepian Tebrau food stalls. "The flood would not have been so bad if the pump had worked but the cable could only be repaired by Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) after the tree was removed by our workers." The cables were freed from the fallen tree about 3pm and TNB workers moved in to reconnect the power supply to the pump house.

Rescue efforts were conducted by the city council and the Fire and Rescue Department, which combined their resources to send boats to the affected houses. Most of those rescued were children and the elderly. They were sent to SK Nong Chik which had been turned into a temporary flood evacuation centre.

## **11 Mac 2009 (Wednesday)**

### **Will benefits trickle down to the poorest?**

By : Julia Chan



**Jovilin Ventula with her customer, Ulik Jinaun, at her corn stall in Kampung Mangaris Satu in Kota Marudu. It is sold RM5 for five cobs. Her earnings help ease She earns between RM50 and RM250 a day, adding that it helps to which eases her family's burden.**

**KOTA KINABALU:** There were mixed reactions among Sabahans to the mini-Budget, with some lauding it while others were wary of its implementation and questioning if the actual benefits would reach the ground.

Sabah Homestay Association secretary Rubbin Gurribah was leery of the mini-Budget. "From past experiences, the Budget was always conscientious and people-oriented. But by the time the allocation filtered to the ground, there is nothing left for the poor. "This time around, I hope the intended targets will reap the benefits." Rubbin and his family have been running the Melangkap homestay in Kota Belud for five years since he opted for early retirement from the Sabah Foundation.

"Tourist arrivals have been steady but we are hampered by poor infrastructure like bad roads. I hope the government is serious about helping us in these tough times." Last year, his homestay received about 150 guests, including 50 foreigners. "There seems to be fewer foreigners arriving but the locals are still coming," he added.

Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister cum Finance Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced that the government had allocated RM200 million to upgrade infrastructure in tourist spots, diversify tourism products, organise more international conferences and exhibitions in the country as well as improve the homestay programme. Basic facilities, such as electricity, water supply and roads would also be improved in rural areas, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak, with an allocation of RM230 million. Another RM350 million has been earmarked for the construction of rural roads.

Uluk Jinaun, 61, from Kampung Mengaris I in Kudat, was happy to hear about efforts to upgrade the living standards of the poor. The father of 15, of whom seven are still schooling, was also relieved to hear about efforts to create more jobs. "We just want the basics to be able to live a decent life. A job, clean water, and electricity."

Jovilin Ventula, 28, only gets to see her husband a few times a year because he works in a factory in Kuala Lumpur while she tries her best to fend for her two children and family in their village. To make ends meet, she sells fresh corn by the roadside. "It's good to know that the rural folk are not neglected."

Housewife Sharen Kisel, 27, while welcoming the mini-Budget, said that people were becoming too dependent on the government. "People here should learn to stand on their own feet and stop relying on the government to help them get jobs, money and other handouts."

## **12 Mac 2009 (Thursday)**

### **Now comes the vital part -- implementation**

By : By Mustapha Kamil

**AT RM60 billion, Tuesday's was a rather large mini-Budget. But it was also a level-headed one.**

There were no populist measures, never mind that there are three forthcoming by-elections everyone and both sides of the aisle in Parliament consider to be "must-wins". Deputy Prime



Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak started the tabling of the mini-Budget painting a very realistic picture -- the world, including Malaysia, is under siege. And he ended his speech by calling on both sides of the aisle to close ranks, even if just to steer the population away from widespread hardship.

The government will effectively pump in RM15 billion into the economy and the remaining RM45 billion or so will be made available indirectly through various provisions such as tax allowances, suspension from contributing to certain funds and other incentives. The targeted recipients are what Najib calls the vulnerable groups. These are people who are at risk of losing their jobs, those who have lost them already, small businesses whose inventories lay idle with the export market in a state of semi-paralysis and whose order books are starved from the lack of contract works.

The mini-Budget lifeline also comprises guarantee funds to ensure banks do not shut off the funding faucet on already struggling businesses. And there are also capacity-building measures to ensure that Malaysia is ready to assume the growth path once the global economy stabilises. With part one of the stimulus package already dished out, now comes the equally vital part two -- implementation.

New agencies have been formed to implement both the first and second stimulus packages and they need only to look at similar agencies formed in the aftermath of the 1998 economic crisis to figure out how to put everybody in line to ensure the current measures will succeed. Will the RM60 billion be enough for Malaysia to stay away from recession? Probably not, because the problem is global in nature. But it will surely be enough to prevent a deep recession and to protect the domestic economy and general population.

## **13 Mac 2009 (Friday)**

### **3 state subsidiaries running at a loss**

**SHAH ALAM: Three out of 10 subsidiaries of the Selangor Menteri Besar Incorporated (MBI) are making losses.**

Based on their yet-to be audited accounts for last year, Rantaian Mesra Sdn Bhd, Tourism Selangor Sdn Bhd and Bukit Beruntung Golf and Country Resort (BBGC) recorded a total loss of RM372, 000. BBGC recorded a loss of RM186,000 while Rantaian Mesra and Tourism Selangor accounts showed a loss of RM151,000 and RM35,000 respectively.

Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim in his reply to a supplementary question by Haniza Mohamed Talha (PKR-Taman Medan) in the state assembly, said the companies' management would be restructured.



"If the companies continue to show losses for three consecutive years, it is up to the board of directors of the respective companies to decide if they should continue their operations or shut them down."

In his reply to the original question by Haniza, Khalid said the rest of the subsidiaries recorded a total profit of RM57 million with Kumpulan Darul Ehsan Bhd taking the lead with a profit of RM28 million.

Permodalan Negeri Selangor Bhd had a profit of RM19 million while Kumpulan Semesta Sdn Bhd and MSNS Holding Sdn Bhd recorded a profit of RM2.5 million and RM247,000, respectively.

Pusat Pelaburan Selangor Bhd and Pendidikan Industri Yayasan Selangor Berhad's accounts showed profits of RM1 million and RM6 million respectively.

He said MBI was not just a finance company under the state government. It has the power to make contracts, acquire, enjoy, sell or transfer any movable and immovable properties under certain terms and conditions. Khalid said MBI would become the sole investment body for the state in six months' time. "All the state's investments will be placed under MBI for easier monitoring."

**13 Mac 2009 (Friday)**

## **RM60b mini-Budget not a silver bullet, says Najib**

By : Eileen Ng



**Datuk SeriNajib said the mini-budget was to give the best protection to the people by arresting retrenchments and ensuring continuous economic activity Najib Razak Deputy Prime Minister**

**KUALA LUMPUR: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the RM60 billion mini-Budget was not a "silver bullet" against the global economic downturn.**

"The package was tabled to prevent the country from sliding into recession. We aimed to give the best protection to the people by arresting retrenchments and ensuring continuous economic activity." He said the country's credit rating would not be adversely affected by the expansion of the fiscal deficit to 7.6 per cent of gross domestic product this year.

Najib, who is also finance minister, said the deficit was bound to increase following the RM60 billion stimulus package, which was unveiled in Parliament on Tuesday. "The 7.6 per cent deficit is not expected to affect the country's credit rating because deficits during economic crises are expected and can be accepted," he said in concluding the debate on the mini-Budget.

Najib said the government would be able to bring down the deficit when the economy improves as it had between 2002 and 2007, when the deficit was cut from 5.3 per cent to 3.2 per cent. "What is important for the short and medium term is to take steps to reduce the fiscal deficit," he said, adding that the country's liquidity stood at a healthy RM250 billion.

During his winding-up, Najib was constantly interrupted by opposition MPs, who asked for clarifications on numerous points. Their antics were jeered by the BN bloc. Initially, Najib allowed the interruptions but later read through his points without stopping, despite attempts by Dr Dzulkifli Ahmad (Pas-Kuala Selangor), Saifuddin Nasution Ismail (PKR-Machang) and Liew Chin Tong (DAP-Bukit Bendera) to impede him.

On the progress of the RM7 billion stimulus package announced late last year, he said some RM1.584 billion had been disbursed as at the end of last month. "By the end of this month, some RM2.8 billion will have been disbursed," he said.

Najib also outlined the mechanisms instituted to accelerate the implementation of the first and second stimulus packages. Among them was the setting up of a technical committee headed by the Treasury's secretary-general that meets weekly to monitor the progress of the measures in the stimulus packages.

The committee will report to a steering committee headed by Najib, whose members include the second finance minister, the minister in the Prime Minister's Department in charge of the Economic Planning Unit and the chief secretary to the government. Another was the creation of a key performance indicator (KPI) for ministries and government agencies to ensure the projects are on schedule.

Najib said the government did not announce tax cuts for the corporate sector as the current tax rate of 25 per cent was competitive for the region. He said the corporate tax rate had been reduced from 28 per cent in 2006 to 25 per cent this year, which compared favourably with Thailand and Indonesia (30 per cent), Vietnam (28 per cent) and China and Taiwan (25 per cent).

He pointed out that Singapore and Hong Kong had a lower corporate tax rate of 17 per cent but this was because they levied a goods and services tax (GST) which Malaysia chose not to implement at the moment.

On criticism that the second stimulus package was "too late", Najib said the mini-Budget was drawn up after comprehensive study. Among the factors considered was the International Monetary Fund's downward revision of world growth this year from 2.2 per cent to 0.5 per cent.

"We also wanted to see the effects of the stimulus package under both the Bush and Obama administrations to restore confidence in the US financial sector. "It was clear to us that the crisis was going to be more protracted than earlier estimated and that was why we decided to roll out the second stimulus package."

Najib said the government would not hesitate to add more measures in the coming 2010 Budget, to be tabled in October, should the economic outlook worsen.

**17 Mac 2009 (Tuesday)**

### **'Tourism Malaysia staff get RM300 for dental treatment'**

**KUALA LUMPUR: Tourism Malaysia staff are entitled to seek dental treatment at private clinics but the amount is limited to RM300 a year.**

Datuk Amiruddin Abu, 56, deputy director-general of marketing division at Tourism Malaysia, told the Sessions Court yesterday the staff could go to any clinic but the amount was limited. "Those who seek treatment at private clinics would normally pay the bill first and then make a claim."

Amiruddin was testifying at the trial of former Tourism Malaysia director-general Datuk Mirza Mohammad Taiyab, charged with accepting dental treatment worth RM13,860, which was paid by Syarikat Perunding Pakar Media director Zulhisyam Ayob, 48, without consideration.

Mirza is alleged to have committed the offence at Clinical Practice Prosthodontics in Taman Tun Dr Ismail between Jan 17 and July 26, 2005. Amiruddin said the limit was the same regardless of the staff's grade.

Another witness, Datuk Kamaruddin Siaraf, 55, who was a former Tourism Malaysia director-general, said he had signed an agreement dated Dec 8, 2005, between Tourism Malaysia and Syarikat Perunding Pakar Media.

The agreement, to be in effect from June 15, 2005 to Dec 31, 2007, was on the promotion of Malaysia as a tourism destination for the North American market, including Canada and the United States, he said. The contract was worth RM12 million. "Under the agreement, Syarikat Perunding Pakar Media would be the marketing agency," said Kamaruddin, who is now the Information Ministry secretary-general. He added that the agreement was also signed by Mirza Mohamed Tariq Beg on behalf of Syarikat Perunding Pakar Media.

When Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission deputy public prosecutor Saiful Hazmi Mohd Saad asked Kamaruddin whether he knew of the relationship between Mirza Mohamed Tariq

Beg and the accused as their names were almost similar, he answered: "I was told that they are brothers. Mirza Mohamed Tariq Beg is the elder brother."

To a question by counsel Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, Kamaruddin said promotion contracts were awarded to companies which were selected through open tender. "Datuk Mirza did not get involve in the selection process."

Hearing before judge Zainal Abidin Kamarudin continues today.

## **18 Mac 2009 (Wednesday)**

### **Selangor Assembly: Water CEO salary in the spotlight**

By : Reports by Suganthi Suparmaniam and Mazlinda Mahmood

#### **DID Syarikat Bekalan Air Selangor (Syabas) chairman Tan Sri Rozali Ismail deserve his monthly salary of RM425,000 in 2007 which worked out to RM16,346 per day or RM35 per minute?**

This was the thrust of Sekinchan assemblyman Ng Suee Lim's question yesterday when he asked why Rozali took home RM5.1 million in 2007 when the company was RM2.9 billion in debt. "The company faced a critical economic crisis. Yet, what surprises us is that they could afford to pay the chairman such a high salary."

Ng said something was not right when a state government company chairman earned so much when the company was on the verge of bankruptcy. Speaking during the winding-up of the debate on the royal address, he said the company might have also not been telling the truth about its finances and that it could have been making more money. He said state government companies had debts that could be broken down into Syabas (RM2.9 billion), Splash (RM1.6 billion), Puncak Niaga (RM1.3 billion) and Abbas (RM640,000).

Ng said the Federal Government was trying to sabotage the state government's plans to restructure the water industry by bailing out these "crony" companies. He said this could be avoided if the state government was allowed to restructure the water industry.

He said Syabas last increased the water tariff in 2006 and could do so again next year with approval from the Energy, Water and Communications Ministry.

"If this happens, then we will have to drink rain water or even petrol which is cheaper now," he said, adding that the concessionaires had shown poor performance and also breached the terms of their concession agreements.

Ng urged Energy, Water and Communications Minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor to work for the best interests of the people and not the concession companies.

**18 Mac 2009 (Wednesday)**

### **Parliament in Brief: Only 1.5pc of undergrads quit**

**THE Higher Education Ministry recorded only a 1.5 per cent dropout rate among undergraduates between 2005 and 2008.**

Deputy Higher Education Minister Dr Hou Kok Chung was replying to a question by Mohd Firdaus Jaafar (Pas-Jerai) who asked on the percentage of undergraduates who did not complete their studies between 2005 and 2008. To a supplementary question from Mohd Firdaus, Hou said the dropout rate was not due to Universities and University Colleges Act.

"Many undergraduates dropped out because they did not pass their examinations, disciplinary problems, they continued their studies elsewhere or they had lied about their qualifications."

**19 Mac 2009 (Thursday)**

### **When patients have to sleep on the floor**



**Nurses removing furniture from the Tower Block following its closure.**

**KOTA KINABALU:** There was a time when patients slept on mattresses on the floor at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Complex maternity ward.

When the Luyang Hospital and the Likas Women and Children's Hospital opened more than five years ago, it helped ease the congestion. But, now, it's back to what it was as patients outnumber beds at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital following the closure of the Tower Block due to safety reasons. There is a 250-bed deficit. "It is not every day we are forced to ask patients to sleep on the floor but it happened recently," said a doctor at the hospital.

As a result of the closure of the Tower Block, one of the hospital's most important machines, the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) unit, cannot be used. Also inaccessible are 250 beds, eight surgical wards, the intensive care unit, the forensics department and a pharmacy there. The most recent setback was the temporary halting of the service elevator at the three-storey medical ward. "That was about a week ago. We now have to put at least four workers on

standby between the ground floor and third floor to carry patients on stretchers to their wards," the doctor said.

There are some 2,000 staff members at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, including 400 doctors. Patients from all the district hospitals in the state, as well as in Labuan, Lawas and Limbang in Sarawak, are referred to specialist doctors at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. "Some of these patients are referred to specialists in the peninsula."

Sabah Health director Dr Marzukhi Md Isa recently revealed that urgent cases were normally referred to hospitals in Kuala Lumpur or Penang.

## **21 March 2009 (Saturday)**

### **One ministry too many?**

By : By Regina Lee

**PUTRAJAYA: Only one ministry should be handling matters concerning migrant workers, Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam said yesterday.**

"The problem now is two ministries are involved -- the Human Resources Ministry and the Home Ministry. If it is handled by so many people, we won't know who will take care of the specifics when problems crop up.

"It is time we go to the root of the problem and all indicators are that it is better to be sorted out by one ministry," he told the New Straits Times. However, he stopped short of saying which ministry should deal with migrant labour. Subramaniam said the matter had not been taken up with the cabinet despite the numerous problems over the years.

The Human Resources Ministry comes up with the number of foreign workers required and the Home Ministry gives approval for their entry into the country. However, their roles get muddled when foreign workers are brought in legally but there are no jobs for them. "We are looking at this issue and there has to be a solution, but that is for the future," said Subramaniam.

"For now, we are looking for ways to settle the problem of the 10,000 legal foreign workers who have been laid off, as claimed by the Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC)." A dialogue will be held next week between the ministry, Human Rights Commission and MTUC on the matter.

"Of course, we appreciate the priority given to local workers, but we cannot deny the rights of the foreign workers. They have come legally and probably paid a hefty sum to their agents.

"Sending them back will ruin their future."

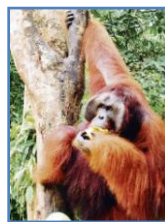
**22 March 2009 (Sunday)**

### **EPF 'must release investment info'**

KUALA LUMPUR: The National Union of Bank Employees (NUBE) has urged the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) to make public all its investments in light of the dividends declared over the past few years. NUBE general secretary J. Solomon said EPF could make its investments public on its website. He said the move would allay contributors' concerns about their investment. He said EPF's explanation about its dividends, which was justified due to the economic crisis, was not compelling enough. -- Bernama

**23 March 2009 (Monday)**

### **Orang utan habitats 'not under threat'**



**The orang utan is are found to be living in Sri Aman, Sarikei, Sibu and Kapit divisions.**

**KUCHING:** Sarawak Forestry Corporation managing director Datuk Len Talif Salleh described as false the repeated claims by Western non-governmental organisations and media that orang utan habitats in the state were under threat from oil palm plantations. "The claims that the opening up of one million hectares for oil palm by 2010 would include orang utan habitats are false," he said on Friday. Len said the animals were found in Sri Aman, Sarikei, Sibu and Kapit divisions. "All the areas in these divisions have been gazetted as totally protected areas, either as wildlife sanctuaries or national parks. "Sarawak has Lanjak Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary (168,758ha) and Batang Ai National Park (24,040ha), dedicated to orang utan conservation. "Another important habitat for orang utan is in Gunung Lesong, Sri Aman, which is in the process of being gazetted as a totally protected area," he said, adding that the orang utan population in Sarawak was stable.

He said the orang utan population had been monitored in Lanjak Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary and Batang Ai National Park since the 1990s, and the conservation projects at rehabilitation centres such as the Semenggoh Wildlife Centre had produced positive results. "The semi-wild orang utan population at the centre is now able to sustain itself and to date, 14 baby orang utan were born at Semenggoh and six baby orang utan were born at the Matang Wildlife Centre."



**24 March 2009 (Tuesday)**

## **Go-ahead for Sarawak's 12 dam projects**

By : Sulok Tawie



**Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud says the dams were needed for developmental purposes**

**KUCHING:** Sarawak will go ahead with the construction of 12 hydropower dams in its interior, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said yesterday.

He said despite world criticisms against construction of the dams, they were needed for developmental purposes and also to meet the state's power demands, adding the dams would conform to world standards.

He said this when opening the International Conference on Engineering and Education, organised by the Institution of Engineers of Malaysia, here.

He said a great deal of study would be done so that the construction would not threaten the environment. The dams are expected to generate a combine power of 20,000 megawatt when completed in 2030. "We will study the experiences of countries which have similar dams," he said,

Taib said heavy industries which require power from the hydropower dams would be professionally and efficiently managed by experts recruited from around the world. He also said the dams would give vast opportunities to the state on how it could modernise its development efforts, especially in central Sarawak where the Sarawak Corridor of Renewal Energy has been identified.

Taib did not think that the dams would bring about a climate change in Sarawak. Meanwhile, IEM president Datuk Keizrul Abdullah said IEM would build a centre for engineering excellence on a piece of land granted by the state government in central Sarawak. "The centre will be dedicated to the development of post-graduate research and development programmes in engineering and the enhancement of learning through active involvement of local and international experts," he added.

Later, Keizrul conferred Taib the IEM Honorary Fellowship Award for outstanding services to the engineering profession.

**24 March 2009 (Tuesday)**

## **E-tender system launched**

**KUALA LUMPUR: Local contractors no longer need to queue up for tender forms as the Works Ministry launched its electronic tender management system (e-tender) yesterday.**

Works Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Zin Mohamed said with the e-tender, the entire procurement process from advertisement to evaluation could be undertaken automatically either online or through the use of CD-ROM.

"The electronic tender management system can improve the quality of information dissemination and also ensure that the procurement process is carried out transparently and with integrity. "Contractors have the choice of using the online or CD-ROM method," Zin said after the launch of the e-tender system here.

He said the e-tender process would be carried out in four phases, starting with advertising the tenders online up to the evaluation process. He said those using the e-tender system only needed to fill the project form online and those without Internet access could buy a CD-ROM containing the project specifications.

Those interested in knowing more about the e-tender system can visit [www. etender.com.my](http://www.etender.com.my). -  
- Bernama