

**9 September 2009 (Wednesday)**

## **200,000 make road safety pledge**

**By Minderjeet Kaur**

**SUNGAI BULOH:** The number nine will play heavily on the minds of thousands of Malaysians today, not merely because it is Sept 9, 2009, or 09.09.09. As of yesterday, some 200,000 Malaysians had pledged not to break road safety rules between 9am and 9pm today. To pledge, they have to first admit to speeding, beating traffic lights, tailgating and violating other traffic regulations and road safety rules and promise not to make the same mistakes again. With more pledges expected to pour in today, Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor said it marked the starting point in road safety.

"It is not only pledges that touch our hearts. But these people openly admit to breaking road rules and have made a pledge never to do it again. "Admitting they have made mistakes shows that these people are serious about making a change," he said after the launch of the "Malaysians Unite for Road Safety" (Mufors) campaign at the overhead restaurant rest area of the North-South expressway (NSE) here yesterday. Local celebrities such as race car driver Alex Yoong, celebrity photographer Kid Chan, Suria FM chief operating officer Engku Emran, singers Dayang Nurfaizah and Imran Ajmain, film director Mamat Khalid and violinist Dennis Lau also joined in to make a pledge before singing the song 1Malaysia AMP All Stars.

Every year, about 6,000 lives are lost in road accidents. Despite the various media campaigns, most Malaysians are still found to be driving recklessly with 60 per cent of the fatalities due to speeding. PLUS Expressway, the developer of the NSE, together with other industry players, decided to initiate the campaign to allow Malaysians to voice their thoughts and concerns on road safety. "The only way to make a difference is by getting people involved. It's the people's initiative. Some of them have also taken a pledge not to use handphones or read SMSes while driving," said Shaziman. He said the trend of motorists reading and sending out SMSes while driving could be on the increase and such pledges were crucial to reduce accidents. To make a pledge, visit [www.090909.org.my](http://www.090909.org.my) to make a text, photo or video pledge.

**10 September 2009 (Thursday)**

**Ministry buys over KK medical centre**

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Health Ministry announced yesterday that it had bought over the Sabah Medical Centre (SMC) in Kota Kinabalu. The ministry will renovate it to overcome a shortage of beds as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's tower block was declared unsafe a year ago. "It is more economical for us as the government now no longer has to rent the SMC monthly as it had been doing over the past few months," said Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai after signing the sale and purchase agreement with SMC chairman Dr Tseu Fui Loong. Liow said: "To build a new hospital would have been time-consuming and the government wants to rectify the problems as quickly as possible."

He said it took two months of negotiations between the ministry, the Land and Mines Department and SMC before the cabinet agreed to the government buying the hospital for RM280 million. He said the government could now provide better healthcare services in cardiology, oncology and radiotherapy for heart and cancer patients as the centre was equipped for this. "We have planned to fit 455 hospital beds in the 41,000- square-metre building and the expansion works are expected to begin as soon as I sign this agreement." He said the expansion was expected to cost RM90 million, adding that the ministry was in the final planning stages of building the twin towers at QEH, which is expected to have 660 beds. He said the ministry was also working to recruit more doctors and nurses and to upgrade the medical service sector.

**10 September 2009 (Thursday)**

**Consortium for Risda, Felda, Felcra**

**MACHANG:** The three main government agencies involved in helping smallholders and opening up land schemes -- Risda, Felda and Felcra -- will keep their separate entities but will work together as a consortium in developing new businesses. Risda chairman Tan Sri Rahim Thamby Chik, who chaired a meeting of the three agencies on Friday, said a memorandum of understanding would be drafted to outline the scope of co-operation. It will be given to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

"The agencies will work together to run their activities to optimise and rationalise their resources, in line with the call by the prime minister for the agencies to work together," he said after giving away dividends to participants of the group rubber replanting scheme in Kelantan.

**10 September 2009 (Thursday)**

## **High-powered task force to look over PKFZ affairs**

**By Farrah Naz Karim**

**PUTRAJAYA:** A high-powered government task force has been set up to look into good governance and maximising the value of the controversial Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced that the task force, chaired by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Sidek Hassan, would be made up of the Treasury secretary-general, the attorney-general, and officials from the Transport and Finance ministries. "The task force is to underline the practices that had gone against the principles of good governance. "It is also to study what the future holds for the project, and how we could maximise the project's value and reduce costs to the taxpayers," Najib said after the breaking of fast he hosted for cabinet members and deputy ministers at Sri Satria. He said the cabinet's decision underscored how the government seriously viewed the PKFZ issue.

The task force would meet for the first time after Hari Raya Aidilfitri. They will then submit a report on the two matters to the cabinet. Najib said although a timeframe had not been set for the task force to submit its report to the cabinet, it had been made aware of the urgency for the report to be completed as soon as reasonably possible. He said the PKFZ audit report commissioned by the Transport Ministry's special task force three months ago would also be considered by the government task force.

Discrepancies over PKFZ's development were uncovered by a special task force -- comprising lawyers, accountants, quantity surveyors and building cost consultants from professional firms set up by the Transport Ministry following an audit report by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The 4.5-hectare PKFZ was initially conceived as a RM1.8 billion project. The audit report released on May 28 showed that the project's cost may ultimately spiral up to RM12.45 billion, six times the original estimate.

On the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's probe into the PKFZ issue, Najib said the commission would handle its part separately, based on reports it received. Najib said the cabinet also agreed that the police would ascertain if there had been any abuse of power and acts that had contravened the law. Upon investigations by the force, the attorney-general would determine the next course of action. Earlier, Najib distributed RM21.36 million in zakat from Felda Holding and Koperasi Permodalan Felda to 14 states and one general recipient. This year's contribution is 36.52 per cent higher than last year's contribution of RM15.65 million.

**10 September 2009 (Thursday)**

**Suhakam ticks off inaction by MPs**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Parliament is to blame for the failure of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) in carrying out its task effectively. This is due to the members of parliament's reluctance to bring up Suhakam's recommendations on human rights issues for debate. Suhakam chairman Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman said criticisms that the commission was a "toothless tiger" was baseless as it was merely an advisory body without executive power. "Over the past 10 years, we have investigated complaints of police inaction, use of excessive force, selective investigations, death in custody, denial of rights to ancestral land, delay in disposal of court cases and delay in processing applications for citizenship," he said yesterday at Suhakam's Malaysian Human Rights Day 2009 conference.

"We found most of the complaints to be legitimate, indicating that many government employees regarded the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as very remote from their everyday working lives." He regretted that most of Suhakam's findings that were sent to the relevant authorities and parliamentarians had yet to be implemented by the government. The theme of the conference was "Human Rights in Malaysia: The Last 10 Years".

Abu Talib welcomed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's policy of "People First, Performance Now" as it was consistent with the principles of human rights of ensuring a life of dignity for all. He said only the government could ensure that police and other agencies respected human rights while maintaining peace and security, and the judicial system should be independent and effective in providing justice for all. "The government can allow citizens to freely voice their concerns on important issues, such as misuse of public funds and abuse of power. "Otherwise, we'll be encouraging whispering campaigns that will result in unrest."

**10 September 2009 (Thursday)**

**Ong lodges new police report against Tiong**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat lodged another police report against his nemesis, Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB) chief executive officer Datuk Seri Tiong King sing, yesterday. This time, it is to counter a "false police report" lodged by Tiong against Ong last month. Ong said Tiong's action was malicious and clearly intended to smear him as MCA president and minister of transport. "To further clear my name and defend my integrity, today I have lodged a police report against Tiong for lodging a false police report against me. "I will give the authorities my fullest co-operation," he said in his blog posting at [www.ongteekeat.net](http://www.ongteekeat.net).

The two men are at loggerheads over the probe into the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) fiasco as well as an allegation by Tiong that Ong had taken RM10 million from him for the MCA. Tiong's company, the turnkey contractor for PKFZ, is accused of having made between RM500 million and RM1 billion in excessive claims in the project. Tiong, who is Bintulu MP and Barisan Nasional Backbenchers Club chairman, caused a furore when he alleged Ong had taken RM10 million from him in three instalments for his party last year.

Almost immediately, Ong filed a police report against Tiong and also sent him a letter of demand to drop his allegations and apologise within a week, but Tiong remained defiant, resulting in Ong filing a RM500 million defamation suit against him. On Aug 26, Tiong lodged a police report against Ong to counter accusations levelled against him by Ong.

## **11September 2009 (Friday)**

### **Khair faces new MACC investigation**

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission has started its probe against Datuk Seri Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo for alleged corruption when he was the Selangor menteri besar. Sources said MACC had opened two investigation papers against the politician. He will be investigated over an estimated RM1 million that Permodalan Negeri Selangor Bhd (PNSB) spent on him, his wife, their children and maid during the company's tours to France, Morocco and United States between 2004 and 2007. The costs incurred included two study tours to Disneyland in Paris and Orlando, in the United States, where PNSB allegedly paid some RM110,000 for suites for Dr Khir and entrance tickets to Disneyland.

An investigation paper has also been opened in regard to his controversial ownership of a "palatial mansion" in Section 7, Shah Alam, that is reportedly worth RM24 million. The Balinese-themed mansion became a hot topic at the Selangor state assembly several months ago. State assemblyman Ng Suee Lim (DAP-Sekinchan) had questioned Dr Khir's financial means for the purchase of the property, which is situated on two plots of land measuring 4645 sq m or 0.47ha, when he was menteri besar. Dr Khir had said he bought it with a bank loan of RM3.5 million, an amount that was well within his means as he had been a businessman. It is learned that Dr Khir, who lost his bid for the Umno Youth chief's post in the last party polls despite being cleared of money politics by the MACC then, had been summoned to the MACC headquarters here. The Sungai Panjang assemblyman is expected to have his statement recorded this morning.

**11 September 2009 (Friday)**

**Ong welcomes govt task force**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The high-powered government task force looking into the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) fiasco is a continuation of the Transport Ministry's efforts to tackle the controversial project. "It is an extension of our efforts to resolve the problem," Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat said in welcoming the establishment of the panel. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak announced the setting up of the task force to look into good governance and future direction of PKFZ. Chaired by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Sidek Hassan, the panel will submit a report on the two areas to the cabinet as soon as possible.

The PKFZ issue erupted when it was revealed that the development cost of the transshipment hub had escalated from RM2.5 billion to RM4.6 billion. Ong said the findings from the PKFZ audit report, which was commissioned by the ministry's special task force three months ago will serve as a good reference for the task force. Asked whether he will be involved in the government task force, Ong said only his ministry's officials will be part of it. He declined to comment on whether his lack of involvement in the task force was an attempt to de-politicise the PKFZ issue. Asked to confirm news reports that former transport minister Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy was named in the special task force report, Ong said he had "a good laugh", adding that the reports were the "same old gimmicks" by certain parties.

**11 September 2009 (Friday)**

**Tiong gives police his statement**

**PETALING JAYA:** Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing gave his statement at the Federal Commercial Crime Investigation Department headquarters yesterday morning. He was there between 10am and 1.30pm. CCID director Datuk Koh Hong Sun confirmed this but declined to elaborate. Tiong is believed to have given his statement over the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) issue. On Wednesday police recorded statements from former Port Klang Authority (PKA) general manager Datin O.C. Phang. A report was lodged last month by PKA chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng, who alleged possible fraud amounting to RM1.5 billion. Kuala Dimensi is the turnkey developer of the PKFZ project.

## **11 September 2009 (Friday)**

### **Fishermen to press for diesel subsidy**

**KUCHING:** Fishermen operating in the coastal areas of Belawai and Kabong in central Sarawak will press their case on Sept 18 for subsidised diesel to continue to be sold in Sarikei. The meeting in Sarikei will be the latest round of talks with the various authorities linked to the decision by the Malaysian Fisheries Board to stop the services of the two pumps by Oct 1. The Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry, the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry and the Fisheries Board will send representatives. Closing down the pumps will badly affect the fishermen, including 200 trawler owners, as they will have to make a two- to three-hour trip to the Tanjung Manis fishery port to get their quota if they land their catch in Sarikei.

Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim said the decision was made "because we want all fishing vessels, big and small, to land their catch at Tanjung Manis. "We don't want Pelabuhan Ikan Laut Dalam Tanjung Manis to be a white elephant," Rohani replied to questions on the social networking site Facebook. She said the decision was also linked to "other serious matters" on which she did not elaborate. It is believed these are related to abuses of the subsidy system. "We have had numerous discussions on this issue (with fishermen) and we will use the Sept 18 meeting to find an amicable solution."

Rohani said the final decision on where the diesel was supplied was up to the Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry. The fishermen claim the authorities had gone back on an earlier decision not to terminate pump services in Sarikei. Last year, it was announced that the diesel service in Sarikei would end on Jan 1, but the intervention of Sarikei member of parliament Ding Kuong Hiing forced the board to withdraw that notice.

## **12 September 2009 (Saturday)**

### **State govt and Balkis chief can raise query**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Selangor government and the president of Balkis have the right to question and challenge the legality of a decision made by the Registrar of Societies (ROS) eight months ago. Balkis is the Wives of Selangor Assemblymen and MPs Welfare and Charity Organisation and is currently headed by Puan Sri Salbiah Tunut, the wife of Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim. In February, the ROS had dissolved Balkis and cancelled its registration, which prompted two applications to be filed for judicial review by the state government, Salbiah and eight other government-linked companies.

Yesterday, the High Court judicial commissioner Mohamad Ariff Md Yusof in his chambers granted leave to the applicants to challenge the ROS decision. Counsel Derek Fernandez, who appeared for the applicants, later told reporters that the judge, in granting leave, had ruled that the applicants had the locus standi (the right to bring an action) to challenge the ROS decision. "The judge ruled that the applicants were not merely busybodies and that they had contributed money to the organisation. "He also said it was a matter of public interest," Fernandez said, adding that the fact that leave was granted showed that the case was not frivolous or vexatious.

The court also fixed Sept 16 to decide on their application for a stay of execution of the ROS decision. Fernandez said in his submission for the stay application he had stated that the court should grant a stay until it made a final decision. Federal Counsel Maisarah Juhari when approached declined to comment. The first application was filed on May 4, whereby the state government, Salbiah, Permodalan Negeri Selangor Bhd and Kumpulan Darul Ehsan Bhd were named as applicants. The second application was filed two days later and the applicants were Perbadanan Kemajuan Negeri Selangor, Worldwide Holdings Bhd, Selangor Industrial Corporation Sdn Bhd, Selaman Sdn Bhd, PKNS Infra Bhd, PKNS Engineering and Construction Bhd. They named the ROS as the sole respondent. Among others, the applicants are seeking a declaration that the ROS decision dissolving Balkis was null and void and an order that it be reinstated.

## **12 September 2009 (Saturday)**

### **85,000 Labuan residents hit by water shortage**

LABUAN, Sat: About 85,000 people in Labuan have been hard hit by water shortages since July, as supply cannot cope with demand, it was revealed today. People in the city here, as well as 27 villages on the island, are being inconvenienced by water rationing in the day, and water only flows into their taps from midnight for about three or four hours before the taps runs dry. Labuan is still dependent on water supply from mainland Sabah through an undersea pipeline through the Padas River in Beaufort. Bernama reported recently that Labuan is expected to only have adequate water supply by the end of 2010, after a RM365 million new undersea water pipeline from Beaufort is fully connected.

Currently, demand for water in Labuan is about 56 million litres a day but supply is only at 42 million litres, a shortfall of 25 per cent. But if one were to take away the 10 million litres needed by Petronas's methanol plant which began operations here this year, there are only 32 million litres left for other consumers on the island, which is also home to the country's integrated international business and financial centre (IBFC). When Federal Territories Minister Datuk Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin was asked about the matter here recently, he said: "I will contact Petronas president Tan Sri Mohd Hassan Marican to discuss how we can help solve the problem. Maybe, Petronas can outsource water supply directly from mainland Sabah."



Raja Nong Chik said various efforts were being carried out to improve water supply, including the construction of tube wells at several locations in Kampung Tanjung Aru and Kampung Kerupang to tap into Labuan's underground water reserves. Labuan Water director Sulaiman Kamisan said 16 tube wells were being constructed by Sime Darby Bhd in the project, which began early this month, to produce at least 10 million litres of water daily in about three months. Raja Nong Chik said the government was also considering "rain harvesting" to enable three existing water dams to function as usual and cater to the needs of consumers on the island. Two of the three dams - Sungai Pagar and Kerupang - have gone dry.

Sulaiman said his department had also proposed sea water distillation to ensure sufficient water supply in the long run. "We have given our proposal to the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water to distill sea water for Labuan's consumption .we hope we can implement it here," he said. Raja Nong Chik said the proposal was being discussed at the ministerial level although it involved considerable costs and time. The water woes are also giving a lot of stress to some 4,000 students at two institutions of higher learning here -- Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and Matriculation College -- as water supply to their hostels have slowed to a trickle. They now rely on tankers from the Water Department for additional supplies, just like the rest of the islanders here.

"Not even a drop of water to drink from the pipe, what more to bathe?," asked a UMS student from Sarawak's interior, who wished to be known as Abdul Wahid. "I never thought I would face this kind of problem when I enrolled into UMS early this year. I want to look fresh each time my class starts. Unfortunately, there is no water to bathe, wash my face or even brush my teeth (in my hostel)," he said.

He added: "Labuan is not an isolated place compared with my area in Sarawak. I am not living in the interior here. Whoever gets up early will have a chance to bathe (before the water runs out). The worst part is that the toilets stink because there is no water to flush." A staff at the Student Affairs Unit of Matriculation College said there were 2,348 students studying at the college. The majority come from Sarawak and Sabah, with a small number from Peninsular Malaysia. "Many parents of the students have been calling us, following the water problem in our college but there is nothing much we can do. It is beyond our control. This is an unexpected problem, we have never had this problem before," she said.

Some lecturers had even asked for transfers, citing the water crisis as their reason for leaving and students have also sounded to the college that they too want to quit. UMS Senior Assistant Registrar of Students Affairs Zamri Haji Mohd Tuah said there were some 1,900 students currently staying in the UMS hostel. "What we are worried about now is that the lack of water could lead to other diseases. The Health Department is now monitoring the situation, day and night," he said.

A single mother, Jainah Jambul, said the water shortage had given rise to worrying concerns about sanitation risks as the situation had forced some people to use the beach and sea as toilets. However, the greater danger was the outbreak of diseases from such unhygienic practices, she added.

Another Labuan resident, Nurelaine Qistina Sibil Abdullah, who is also distressed over the health hazards, said: "To be able to wash, you need water. No point teaching about sanitation if water is not readily available. "It's mostly the women who have to wait and get water when the water tankers come. Many of us are tired from the strain of carrying large amounts of water in pails and containers daily."

Labuan MP Datuk Yussof Mahal said the problem was unexpected and the government was not ignoring the problem but doing its best to resolve it. "We cannot afford to see investors switching to other states just because the island does not have enough water. "The two higher learning institutions are important to us. We do not want parents to stop sending their children to Labuan because of that," he said.

## **14 September 20009 (Monday)**

### **Same security features in RM100 passport**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The security features in the soon-to-be-introduced two-year international passport costing RM100 will be the same as in existing passports. Home Minister Datuk Seri Hi-shammuddin Hussein said the security features in the new passport would not be compromised. "Whatever additional security features that will be added to the existing passport will apply to the new passport, too. "Having the cheaper international passport for infrequent travellers is a practical thing for them. "It makes sense. It's logical and does not cost the government that much more and does not reduce the quality of the passport," he said after launching the new uniform of the Civil Defence Department yesterday.

The new blue-coloured uniform is standardised with that of the International Civil Defence Organisation. Hishammuddin said the quality of the passport would continue to be benchmarked against international standards. "We are increasing the security features, which I cannot reveal now." The present five-year passport comes in two variations: 32 pages and 64 pages which cost RM300 and RM600, respectively. The new passport is to be introduced next month. "We are working with the British government since they have some issues with our passports. "I told them that I don't have any problem with that as we are transparent. "They can tell us which aspects of our passports that have to be improved."

Earlier, he was given a 90-minute briefing on the policing training programme for volunteers in the Civil Defence Department and Rela. He said the volunteers would be deployed to about 50 hot spots to reduce the crime rate to 20 per cent. The hot spots are in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Johor and Penang.

**22 September 2009 (Tuesday)**

### **Effect of stimulus packages to guide Budget 2010 next month**

BACHOK: Deputy Finance Minister Senator Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin expects the 2010 Budget to be tabled in parliament next month to have a more positive effect on the country's economic growth. He said the budget would be linked to the economic stimulus packages now under implementation in an effort to boost national economic growth. "We believe the two stimulus packages being implemented by the government will have a positive impact on the 2010 Budget to be tabled (in parliament) by the prime minister next month," he told reporters at his Aidilfitri open house in Kampung Perupok near here today.

Dr Awang Adek, who is also Bachok Umno Division chief, said the implementation of the first stimulus package had been almost completed while the second package was in the process of implementation. "The monitoring is very close, and we have a special monitoring committee in the Ministry of Finance which meets every week," he said.

**23 September 2009 (Wednesday)**

### **Push for higher salaries**

**By B. Suresh Ram**

PUTRAJAYA: Thousands of workers in the private sector can expect higher salaries soon after the Human Resources Ministry reviews the Wages Council Act 1947. These include those in the security, hospitality, electronic and textile sectors. The last time a review was conducted was about a decade ago. Human Resources Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam said the Wages Council had been reactivated to review salaries in several sectors. "In the next few months, you will get announcements on a few areas where we have already done our work," he told the New Straits Times.

Subramaniam said one of the areas where the salary review had been completed was in the security industry, in particular, those employed as security personnel and officers. "Previously, the salary in this field was as low as RM300 to RM400. Most of them will need to work on 12-hour shifts to get salaries of between RM700 and RM800." Subramaniam said the ministry intervened to make the changes to enable those working in the sector to earn meaningful salaries. "This move will also attract more local people to take up jobs in the sector," he said, adding that the announcement and details would be made soon.

Subramaniam said the other area the ministry was looking at was the hospitality sector. "Here we have a very peculiar situation. The basic salary is very low, which has impact and repercussion on such things as EPF, Socso contribution and their claims as well as what they get after retirement." He said the ministry was also looking at the electrical, electronic

and textile industries. Subramaniam said the review of these sectors had only begun recently and it would take between nine months and a year. "We are now on the lookout for more areas where we feel the salaries are low and see how the government can intervene through the wages council mechanism to ensure reasonable wages."

Subramaniam said apart from increasing salaries via the Wages Council, the ministry was also reviewing applications for foreign workers from prospective local employers. "The approach we have been taking is to coax the industries to increase their wages." Subramaniam said, for example, if a factory approached the ministry to seek permission to hire foreign workers, they in turn would be asked about the wages being offered. "If we find that the salary given was too low for local workers, we then tell them to go back and raise the salaries and look for local workers based on the higher salaries."

Subramaniam said if the prospective employers failed to get local workers even after taking this approach, then they would be allowed to hire foreign workers. "These are some of the steps that we are taking to ensure that the wages go up."

MINIMUM WAGE UNDER WAGES COUNCIL ACT				
SECTOR	Hotel & catering (since 1982)	Cinema workers (since 1981)	Cargo handlers (since 1977)	Shop assistants (in Klang Valley) (since 1981)
WAGE	RM185	RM175	RM120	RM250



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### Reader's Comments

(Latest Comments Displayed First)

**CHONG VUI HOK:**

The announcement is, in my opinion, long overdue. Under the present price level, it is difficult to expect any families living in the urban areas earning less than RM1,000 a month to enjoy a decent standard of living. Perhaps the ministry should conduct a more comprehensive review of all sectors where a large proportion of the workers earn less than a benchmark level, say RM600. This way, there is no need to target any specific sectors for further study. Pending the outcome of the comprehensive study, the immediate action that the ministry or the wages council can take is to require employers to pay a minimum of RM600 a month. Only if there is insufficient response from local workers will the employers be allowed to employ foreign workers. Even then, the wages of the foreign workers should be on par with local workers.

**Chandra:**

This is a news that I believe everyone will welcome. The ministry should at the Quality Assurance/Quality Control services and the veterinary products manufacturing area. A lot locals and foreigners are not paid as well as they deserve, especially chemist, microbiologist, lab techs and personnel in similar capacities.

**Anonymous :**

The ministry should consider a minimum wages for fresh graduates as well.

**Syahrin:**

Ministry and government should also look at banking industry where thousands loyal employers stand. Those especially not in any internal or industry union. Many of them whom not qualify in union most of the time had no avenue to voice concern and not govern by strong internal guideline or industry law. Within banking industry also have their own speciality such IT, Cards, Credit, Syariah and etc. Hope ministry will take a look into this situation.

**Yogeswaran:**

What about IT sector?? We also involve in 24/7 working environment. Pls advice further. Most of us is recruit by 3rd party company e.g. agencies.

**25 September 2009 (Friday)****PKA chairman files 2 suits over PKFZ claims (UPDATED)**

SHAH ALAM: Port Klang Authority chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng has filed two suits, against Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd and BTA Architect, amounting to RM920 million over the dispute of amounts claims by the two companies for works done in the Port Klang Free Zone project. Both suits were filed at 11am today at the Shah Alam high court registry. Meanwhile, Bernama reported that Lee, in a statement, said that the suits were filed for relief, including for rescission of all the development agreements, and a declaration that KDSB is only entitled to be paid the reasonable value of work properly done.

Alternatively, Lee seeks a declaration that all notices of payments issued by KDSB are null and void. He also alternatively seeks a declaration that KDSB is not entitled to, and PKA is not obliged to pay KDSB, the claims totalling RM836,758,459.92 which KDSB had made for the monsoon drain and water supply works, preliminaries, professional fees and variation works respectively under the development agreements. Alternatively, he seeks an order that the works carried out by KDSB be remeasured by an independent consultant appointed by the court and the preliminaries and professional fees payable be assessed by the court.

Lee also seeks interest, general damages and costs on an indemnity basis and damages for fraud and negligent misrepresentation, interest, costs, damages for conspiracy and any other relief deemed fit by the court. Lee said PKA had also filed an originating summons at Civil High Court registry here to seek a declaration that the increase in the interest rate from five per cent to 7.5 per cent per annum in respect of a supplementary agreement for additional development works signed in April 2006 is null and void. The total disputed amount at present totalled around RM1.64 billion, including the RM720 million suit filed by PKA on Sept 18, he said. "The PKA board is conscious of its duty to do what is right for the port authority and to exercise its duty in an appropriate manner," he added.

KDSB was appointed by PKA in 2003 to develop the PKFZ on a 405ha site adjacent to the North Port in Klang. The company was embroiled in a controversy after it was alleged to have over-charged PKA for the PKFZ project, causing PKA and the project severe losses.

## **27 September 2009 (Sunday)**

### **Felda to come up with food warehouse blueprint soon**

**KUALA TERENGGANU:** The Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) will come up with a blueprint for the setting up of a national food warehouse in the next two months. Felda chairman Tan Sri Dr Mohd Yusof Noor said the blueprint would include identifying the types of crops as well as methods of marketing the produce. He added that a National Food Warehouse unit had been set up to help Felda realise the government's aspiration for the agency to earn revenue from an alternative source. "The unit comprises professionals and experts from Felda as well as those outside the agency. The blueprint will spell out plans for the next 15 years," he said after a Hari Raya open house at the Felda Residence, here, yesterday.

"We hope to see returns on the investment by then," Yusof said the warehouse, which would store vegetables, beef and fish products, would be ready within a decade and would require a RM750 million investment. The warehouse, he said, was expected to contribute to Felda's profit, most of which was now derived from oil palm. In July, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the government planned to turn all Felda schemes into a national food warehouse as it would also ensure sufficient food supply in the country. The government is also negotiating a deal with the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority that will see Fama purchasing crops planted by Felda settlers.

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**Govt looking at ways to cut back on expenditure**

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is looking at ways to cut back on its expenditure, said Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. While there might be a slight reduction in terms of operating expenditure, it would not affect the efficiency of the government, he told a press conference after being briefed by Bank Negara's Board of Directors here today. He said government was at present spending an extra RM1 billion a month, over and above what was the normal, following the pump priming measures that were introduced. He also said that the government was committed to this spending until the end of 2010. "Beyond 2010, we hope that the external economic environment would improve considerably, with enough momentum domestically and internationally to ensure Malaysia is on a much more positive trajectory in terms of economic growth," Najib said.

According to Najib, government spending had to be more prudent in terms of value for money, which includes procurement as well. He said moving forward, more targeted subsidies, have to be given to deserving people. "We are mindful of the need to rein in the fiscal deficit," he added. The government has forecast that the budget deficit would hit 7.6 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) this year.