

1. New Contractor for police contingent HQ project

KUALA LUMPUR: The Home Ministry has appointed a new contractor to complete the Johor Police Contingent Headquarters project which had been delayed since last October.

Public Accounts Committee (PAC) chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said PAC was updated on the latest development by the ministry's (then) secretary general Datuk Mohamad Khalid Shariff.

He said PAC was made to understand that the services of the original contractor was terminated for various reasons.

"We are satisfied with the ministry's explanation as it has already taken steps to overcome further delay of the project," he said in a statement here today.

Nur Jazlan said the delay was confirmed by Home deputy minister Datuk Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar in a statement published by an English language daily in June, last year. -BERNAMA

2. Higher returns: EPF declares 6.75pc dividend

KUALA LUMPUR: The Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) strategic investments saw it declare a higher dividend compared to last year despite the slump in oil prices and weakening ringgit.

In a media statement released today, the EPF declared a dividend rate of 6.75 per cent for the year 2014, an increase from the 6.35 per cent declared for 2013.

The dividend of 6.75 per cent amounted to a total pay-out of RM36.66 billion, with every one per cent of dividend rate worth RM5.41 billion.

This was 10.53 per cent higher compared with RM4.91 billion paid for every one per cent dividend rate for 2013, in line with the rise in contributors' savings.

EPF also announced a 11.6 per cent increase in gross investment income of RM39.08 billion for 2014, compared to RM35.00 billion in 2013.

EPF Chairman Tan Sri Samsudin Osman said, despite the challenges faced due to the slump in global oil prices and the weakening ringgit, its prudent diversification in both local and global markets helped the EPF outperform itself this year.

The EPF account statement for the crediting of the 2014 dividend is available online via i-Akaun at myEPF website (www.kwsp.gov.my). Alternatively, members can obtain their statement via EPF Kiosks or visit any EPF branches beginning today

3. Food safety and quality division to be autonomous

MELAKA: The Health Ministry's Food Safety and Quality Division will be transformed into the Food Safety Authority which is independent and autonomous, said Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahya.

He said the transformation played an important role in enhancing the effectiveness of the body in tackling issues pertaining to food safety and quality which was perceived to be increasingly challenging now.

He said that by becoming an independent and autonomous body it could forge cooperation on safety and quality with equivalent agencies throughout the world.

"This transformation is in line with transformations carried out by other countries worldwide. However, the process is still at the discussion stage and many areas have yet to be scrutinised including the enforcement factor," he said at a press conference, here today.

Earlier, Dr Hilmi officially opened the 24th Session of The Codex Committee On Fats and Oils which was also attended by the Senior Director of the Food Safety and Quality Division, Noraini Mohd Othman. - BERNAMA

4. Govt open to suggestions from auditor says Najib

KUALA LUMPUR: The government takes audit findings and suggestions seriously and values their opinions.

In his keynote address at the 13th assembly of the Asian Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI), Najib said the government is open and also values the input from auditors in policy reviews and the evaluation of government projects.

"We take our responsibilities seriously to act on the findings presented to us and to take corrective measures when necessary," he said.

Najib noted that in Malaysia, auditors have played a considerable role in initiatives to strengthen governance and integrity in public service.

Najib said the Supreme Audit Institutions (SAI) Malaysia is involved in auditing large scale government projects such as the Mass Rapid Transit project, the High Speed Rail line connecting Singapore and Kuala Lumpur and the huge Integrated Petroleum and Gas project in Johor.

"SAI Malaysia's participation alongside the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission will assure the public that these projects will be efficiently and effectively implemented," he said.

The event was also attended by Auditor General Tan Sri Ambrin Buang.

ASOSAI was established in 1979 and is one of the regional groups of the international organisation of supreme audit institutions (INTOSAI).

From 11 members its membership has now grown to 46 member countries including Malaysia.

Its objectives include to serve as a centre of information and regional link with institutions in various parts of the world in the field of public audit.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Tuesday, February 10, 2015

5. PM launched world's first syariah Indeks

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today launched the Malaysian Syariah Index, which will be a benchmark for any government to measure its seriousness in implementing policies based on Islamic principles.

The indicator is the first of its kind in the world and will make Malaysia a pioneer in having a scientific measurement system to gauge the effectiveness of policies based on the teachings of Islam.

The indicator system has two key roles: to measure the level of seriousness in efforts to conform to Islamic standard and to identify things that need to be improved.

Najib said the uniqueness of the Malaysian Syariah Index model is that it comprehensively covers eight main areas- laws, politics, economy, education, health, culture, facilities and environment as well as social.

"For each area will be carried out based on the five aspects of maqasid syariah (objectives of syariah) to protect th religion, life, mind, ancestry and properties. We will measure and check if government policies and programmes adhere to the maqasid syariah, " said Najib at the launch of the Malaysian Syariah Index during Majlis Perdana Ulama-Umara here yesterday.

He said the Syariah Index's focus was on measuring efforts that were conducted by governments or policy makers in implementing syariah-compliant efforts in their work and was not merely to gauge the level of achievements.

6. Ministry and MACC busted gas syndicate

LINGGI: Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Ministry and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency (MACC) busted a syndicate selling industry sized gas by transferring gas from domestic gas cylinders operating in a Durian farm, here in Negeri Sembilan.

The syndicate is believed to have been operating for the past two years, supplying industry sized gas cylinder to hotels and factories around the area and in Kuala Lumpur.

The ministry deputy director-general (enforcement) Datuk Iskandar Halim Sulaiman said they had been watching the syndicate for the past three months to gather evidence and obtain information on their mode of operation after tip offs from the public.

He said the syndicate were buying domestic gas cylinders priced at RM27 from a dealer or local shop and then transferring them to the industry sized cylinder .

"Industry size cylinder isn't subsidise and sold for about RM210. So through this syndicate, they use about two to two and a half domestic gas cylinder to fill up on industry sized cylinder.

"They can easily make a cool profit of RM70 to RM100 each," he said.

During the raid by the MACC and ministry early this morning, four men have been arrested and would be remanded under the Control Supplies Act 1961 and Section 17 (b) MACC Act 2009 for offering a bribe of RM5,000 to the officers.

7. RM10mil 1Malaysia Maintenance Fund is for 34 projects, not 14

GEORGE TOWN: THE Federal Government, through the 1Malaysia Maintenance Fund, has approved RM10.232 million funding for a total of 34 projects since 2012.

Penang Federal Action Council chairman Datuk Seri Zainal Abidin Osman, in a statement today, refuted a claim by State Housing, Town and Country Planning Committee chairman Jagdeep Singh Deo that funding had been approved for only 14 projects since 2012.

"Since 2012, a total of 166 maintenance projects were carried out nationwide, 34 of them in Penang.

"For this period, the federal action council has received a total of 145 applications, and for this year alone, we have forwarded 13 applications to the Housing and Local Government Ministry for consideration and approval.

"I urge Jagdeep to check his facts first before giving statements," he said today.

Jagdeep had reportedly said out of 119 applications by low-cost and low medium-cost projects both on the island and mainland, only 14 projects had been approved so far, which was less than 12 per cent of all the projects applied for.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Monday, February 16, 2015

8. Kidex developer fails to comply, Selangor state to reject project

SHAH ALAM: The Selangor state government has rejected the controversial Kinrara-Damansara Expressway project (Kidex) after the developer failed to comply with the conditions set by the state government before the Feb 14 deadline.

Menteri Besar Mohamed Azmin Ali said the decision was made because the concessionaire failed to prepare traffic, social and environmental impact assessment, disclose toll rates during the concession period including all toll increases set out in the concession and reveal the full concession agreement.

"The Selangor state government had informed the developer to comply with these conditions before Feb 14.

"Since they did not comply with any of the conditions before the deadline, the Selangor state government hereby announced the cancellation of Kidex.

"The same approach will also be used in considering any application for other expressways proposed to the Selangor state government," he said in a statement today.

The proposed construction of the 14.9km expressway costing RM2.2 billion which will go through Petaling Jaya and parts of Damansara from its starting point in Kinrara in the south to Bandar Utama in the north has resulted in vehement protests from Petaling Jaya residents whose homes would be affected by its construction.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Tuesday, February 17, 2015

9. Civil servant selling sex stimulants caught red-handed

KUALA TERENGGANU: Enforcement officers from the state health department (pharmacy division) had to impersonate themselves as customers before managed to detain a civil servant, who was actively selling 50 types of sex stimulants through the phone application WeChat and Facebook.

In the operation last Thursday, the 32-year-old suspect was caught red-handed when he was delivering the drugs in a sting operation.

It was believed the suspect had been selling the sex stimulants over the past two years.

The department director Dr Mohamad Omar said the suspect led enforcement officers to his house in Manir, where RM12,000 worth of unregistered sex stimulants were found and immediately seized.

He said officers from the Malaysian Cyber Security that were present, also seized a mobile phone during the operation.

"We discovered that the suspect was selling sex stimulants online through WeChat and Facebook and communicate with his clients through the Whatsapp application," he said.

Among the sex stimulants seized were Bestlim, Semenex, Catuaba, Tissue Super Magic Man, Vimax Men Delay Spray and Sex Love Gum.

The suspect would be charged under Poison Act 1952 which carry a fine not exceeding RM3,000 and a jail sentence of not more than a year or both, and Drug Sales Act 1952 which carry a fine of not more than RM25,000 or a jail sentence of not more than three years or both.

In other development, Dr Mohamad said during a state-wide operations on Monday, the department's enforcement unit seized unregistered medicines and cosmetics from a pharmaceutical wholesaler who has five branches in Terengganu and 16 branches in the country worth RM100,000.

"We have issued warnings to the wholesaler that is based in Kemaman to remove the unregistered medicines and cosmetics from the shelves but failed to do so. Among the items seized were Super Resdung, At-Taqwa Resdung and At-Taqwa Skyline believed to be tainted with the poisonous substances dexamethasone, chlorpheniramine and phenylpropanolamine," he said.

Dr Mohamad also revealed that throughout last year, the department seized unregistered medicines and cosmetics worth RM700,000 after inspecting 400 outlets in the state.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Tuesday, February 17, 2015

10. 24 security firms had their licences revoked

PUTRAJAYA: Home Ministry has revoked the licences of 24 security guard companies over an assortment of offences from 2014 to date.

Its deputy secretary-general (operations) Datuk Seri Adenan Ab. Rahman said the cancellations included "Ali Baba" companies who have illegally leased their licenses to other companies.

He said 774 illegal immigrants had also been arrested during operations mounted nationwide between Nov 2013 and Jan 31.

The arrests, he said, were made during some 208 operations that were jointly conducted by the Immigration and National Registration Departments, and the Police.

"They should be reminded not to overly emphasise on profiting and making light of leasing their licenses until it defeated the purpose of forming companies to protect public safety, businesses, and property," he said in a statement, this evening.

11. Health Ministry to drag 45 developers to court over Aedes offences

PUTRAJAYA: The Health Ministry has opened some 45 investigation papers to prosecute developers whose construction sites were found to be breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes.

Its director-general Datuk Dr. Noor Hisham Abdullah said this came following its "Ops Gempur Tapak Binaan" operation to inspect some 46 sites between Feb 10 and 14.

He said from the total inspected, 45 sites (97.8 per cent) were found to be positive for dengue-causing Aedes mosquitoes.

Some 39 stop-work orders were issued for developers who committed the offence to conduct clean-up in the sites.

"We instructed them to mount immediate prevention and cleaning efforts within a duration that did not exceed seven days," he said in a statement today.

12. GST will help reduce black economy: Ahmad Maslan

JOHOR BARU: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) implementation on April 1 will help reduce the black economy rate to 20 per cent from 30 per cent at present, Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan said.

"This is one of the merits of the GST and I don't understand why the opposition continues to advocate the Sales and Services Tax.

"This means they are protecting black economy, shielding tax evaders and defaulters," he told reporters after briefing police personnel on the GST, the 2015 Budget and current issues at the Johor Police Contingent Headquarters here today.

Ahmad said according to the World Bank, black economy (untraceable, and hence untaxable, business dealings) amounted to 30 per cent of the gross domestic product.

On the GST, Ahmad, who is also Umno information chief, said the nationwide GST information programme would continue until May or June to enlighten the public on the concept as it had been distorted by detractors.

Until yesterday, 319,435 companies have registered for the GST which is expected to increase the country's revenue by RM1 billion to RM24 billion. -- BERNAMA

13. NFCorp chairman fails in bid to strike out CBT charges

KUALA LUMPUR: The High Court here dismissed an application by National Feedlot Corporation chairman Datuk Dr Mohamad Salleh Ismail to strike out two CBT charges against him involving RM49.7 million of NFCorp funds.

In dismissing the bid, Judge Datuk Mohd Azman Husin said the charges were in order and was not defective and that there were certain issues that ought to be heard in a trial.

"The court finds that the Sessions Court judge has not erred in making the decision," he said.

However, the court allowed an application by Mohamad Salleh's counsel Al-Firdaus Shahrul pending disposal of an appeal at the Court of Appeal.

Deputy public prosecutor Syed Faisal Syed Amir prosecuted.

On March 12, 2012, Mohamad Salleh, 66, claimed trial to dishonestly misusing funds amounting to RM9,758,140 through four cheques to partly finance the purchase of two condominium units and transferring RM40 million into his company account, National Meat & Livestock Corporation Sdn Bhd (NMLC).

He was alleged to have committed the offence at CIMB Islamic Bank Bhd branch in Taman Tun Dr Ismail here between May 6 and Nov 16, 2009.

14.4 Mara education officers penalised with heavier fine

KUALA LUMPUR: The High Court increased to RM43,125 the fine to be paid by each four Mara education officers who were convicted of supplying false information over air tickets to Japan.

Judge Kamardin Hashim increased the fine today when he denied an appeal by the four Yayasan Pelajaran Mara (YPM) officers to set aside their conviction, three-year jail term and RM10,000 fine.

However, he allowed an application by the appellants' counsel M. Haresh to stay execution of the fine and jail sentence pending appeal.

The appellants were YPM Coordinating Unit-Higher Education Fund manager Noraidah Johar, 45; Higher Education Fund Unit III assistant finance manager Muhammad Suhaimi Ismail, 46; Administration and Personnel assistant manager Zolkefli Mohd Ali, 50; and Student and Academic Affairs assistant manager Nurmawati Redzwan, 48.

On Nov 12, 2013, the Sessions Court convicted the appellants, ruling that they had given false information via the use of two undated documents.

These two documents were a summary of claim/settlement of down payment for an official overseas trip in 2010 and an official receipt for RM12,125 issued by Sri Kedawang Travel & Tours (W) Sdn Bhd.

They were found to have approved payment of RM12,125 for business class travel to Japan when in fact it should have been for economy class costing just RM3,500.

The offence happened at YPM's finance division office here between May 18, 2010 and June 3, 2010.

Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission(MACC) deputy public prosecutor Afifah Yusof appeared for the MACC, the respondent during today's proceedings.