

1. PAC calls for suspension of ST15 rice subsidy programme

KUALA LUMPUR: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has requested for the Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry to suspend the ST15 Rice Production Subsidy Programme meant to help low-income earners to purchase rice.

PAC chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said it call for the suspension until a new standard operating procedure is in place to ensure that the ST15 rice reach the targeted group.

"PAC found that the program was unsatisfactory," he said when met at Parliament today.

He said the programme had started since 2008 and as of last year, the ministry received RM528million subsidy given to 895 rice wholesalers.

Jazlan said it involves the supply of 60,000 metric tonne of rice, where 40,000 metric tonne was for Peninsular of Malaysia and 20,000 metric tonne for Sabah and Sarawak.

"There was no monitoring to ensure that the rice was distributed to shops that cater to low-income earners or sold to the targeted group if it was sold at hypermarket," he said.

2. More than RM29mil spent in handling illegal immigrants issues

KUALA LUMPUR: The Home Ministry had spent up to RM29.611 million in handling issues of illegal immigrants, such as the cost of raids and investigations, cost of meals in detention depots and repatriation, the Parliament was told today.

Its Deputy Minister Datuk Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said this in response to a question by Pasir Gudang MP Normala Abdul Samad, who also asked on measures taken by the ministry to reduce expenses.

"We have been constantly in discussion with involved embassies to hasten the repatriation process of their citizens back to their country of origin. By right, the immigrants are only detained for four months after which they are repatriated.

"Even so, due to some having to go through complications regarding documentation from their country, they may be forced to be detained up to eight months," he said.

When asked about 'jalan tikus' or the country's porous borders especially in northern states and in Sabah and Sarawak, Wan Junaidi was quick to say it was due to the illegal immigrants wanting to find a better life for themselves away from home.

"As long as there is sugar, ants will come. The ministry is discussing with the National Security Council to build a secure wall or barricade that will stop them from easily entering the country.

"We are coming up with the mechanisms but our main constraint is the high cost of building it, although it is very important and necessary," he said.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Thursday, 2 April, 2015

3. PAC orders audit on KTMB

KUALA LUMPUR: Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has ordered audits to be done on all procurement projects under Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (KTMB).

PAC chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan said the order came due to delay of the relocation of KTMB station at Tanjung Pagar to Woodlands and Kempas Baru.

"The contractor has failed to complete the relocation project hence this is why we see the need for KTMB to tighten up the procurement process.

"KTMB should ensure the selected contractors are able to deliver the project on time and according to the standards," he said.

Nur Jazlan said the railway relocation project from Tanjung Pagar to Woodlands has been delayed twice and the project is now 99.3 per cent completed.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Friday, 3 April, 2015

4. Govt committed to improve health service facilities: PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today assured Malaysians that the government is committed toward improving the health service facilities in the country to ensure the rakyat gets the best services.

In a radio broadcast, uploaded on his blog najibrazak.com today, Najib said the government is working to improve its efficiency in management, as well as increasing the number of health centers to accommodate more patients.

"The government is very concerned about the rakyat's health and is committed to further develop the health sector in the country.

"We constantly strive to ensure the people receive quality service at an affordable cost.

"At government hospitals, a patient only need pay RM1 for outpatient treatment and RM5 for a referral to a specialist clinic," he said.

Najib also said medications are also provided free of charge since the government to bear up to 98 per cent of medical costs for all Malaysians who are receiving treatment at government health centers.

"I know that in some hospitals and clinics, patients had to wait a long time for treatment.

"I want to emphasise that the government is working to improve management efficiency and increase the number of health centers to accommodate more patients.

"Once again I want to stress that the government is committed toward improving the health services in Malaysia."

NEW STRAITS TIMES Monday, 6 April, 2015

5. PAC to question 10 ministries

KUALA LUMPUR :The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) will question 10 ministries and several government agencies to clarify issues brought up in the 2014 (series one) of the Auditor-General report.

PAC chairman Nur Jazlan Mohamed said that the ministries and agencies involved would be called up before the next parliamentary session in June.

" It is our responsibility to look into these issues and probe further into the cases which have been highlighted in the report, this time we are also calling in some ministries which we have never called before which includes the science, technology and innovation ministry (MOSTI)." he said after a briefing by Auditor-General Tan Sri Ambrin Buang on the report in parliament today.

The urban wellbeing, housing and local government ministry is expected to provide an explanation on three people's housing projects in Sabah which has failed to be completed

PAC is also expected to investigate the Home Ministry on the issue of unsatisfactory police quarters, The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry on the implementation of its free mammogram programme, and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment on its management of Forest Research Institute Malaysia.

Other ministries that would be hauled up include the Finance Ministry, the Rural and Regional Development Ministry, the Defence Ministry, and the Domestic Trade, Co-Operatives and Consumerism Ministry.

6. AG Report: 6,000 cashed BR1M vouchers more than once since 2012

KUALA LUMPUR: About 6,000 people have cashed their 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) vouchers more than once since 2012 until early last year, the first series of the Auditor-General's Report 2014 revealed today.

It said 2,188 recipients for BR1M had cashed in their voucher more than once in 2012, which amounted to RM1.11million.

While, a total of 2,490 recipients for BR1M 2013 that amounted RM1.14 million and a total of 1,899 recipients for the first phase of BR1M 2014, which amounted to RM1.09 million.

The report said as of Dec 31, last year the number of recipients who cashed their voucher more than once and failed to refund the Finance Ministry stood at 1,555 people for BR1M 2012, 1,850 people for BR1M 2013 and 1,401 people for BR1M 2014.

It noted that the Audit carried out at three selected state coordinators' office namely Selangor, Johor and Sabah found irregularities in their BR1M vouchers distribution process in 2012 and 2013.

In efforts to address the issue, the report has recommended to the Finance Ministry and the Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia to increase awareness among recipients on the requirement to open a bank account to channel cash assistance directly into their account.

It also recommended to update the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) from time to time consistent with improvements made to BR1M programme each year; and to replace the BR1M voucher with an approval letter for recipients without bank accounts to prevent recurrence of recipients cashing in their BR1M voucher more than once.

7. AG Report: PDRM provides 63,963 quarters for its officers and staff

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 60 percent of Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) officers and staff are provided with accommodation.

According to the Auditor General's Report 2014 Series 1 released today, to date, 63,963 (69.6 percent) units of quarters had been provided for the staff involved in a bid to improve their wellbeing.

Of the total number, 46,589 quarters were for Bukit Aman Police Contingent headquarters, the General Operations Force (PGA) (11,939), Training Centre (2,517), the Federal Reserve Unit (1,682), PDRM Marine Base (1,179) and PDRM Air Base (57).

However, the report suggested that there were still some matters to be given consideration, including special allocation that was provided to PDRM for yearly maintenance of the quarters.

"As such, it is recommended that PDRM review the need for financial allocation related to the matter," said the report, which was tabled in Parliament here today.

The report also revealed that there exist cases of fraud and forgery of payment documents for the procurement of furniture for the redevelopment of the Simpang Renggam PGA Battalion Camp 5 in Johor.

This was said to have occurred due to the very weak internal control which resulted in falsification of support documents in payment and 'improper payment'.

"In relation to this, the Home Ministry and PDRM should establish an Inquiry Committee to investigate the matter," the report said.

The Home Ministry was also recommended to take disciplinary action or impose a surcharge on those responsible for the procurement management.

Meanwhile, the ministry in its feedback said initial investigations found that the weaknesses were in the planning stage, which led to the acquisition of the furniture even before the building was completed in March 2015. - BERNAMA

NEW STRAITS TIMES Monday, 6 April, 2015

8. AG Report: Home ministry to start investigation into Battalions Camp 5

KUALA LUMPUR: The Home Ministry has started investigating its new Battalions Camp 5 in Simpang Renggam, Johor building after the Auditor-General's report revealed local bidders were not invited to give in quotations and some of the payments were supported by forged documents.

Auditor-General Tan Sri Ambrin Buang in his first series of last year's audit said the forged documents were for the sale of furniture, it did not go through Panel System of Central Contract and items supplied to the camp were not specified.

Full payments were done on 24th and 27th December 2013, and although the furniture was not delivered but the payments were supported on forged documents.

The camp built under three packages totaling RM320.40 mil was to be built by Pembinaan BLT Sdn Bhd, the developer approved by the government. The camp falls under the Centre Brigade.

The other four brigades are North, Southeast, Sabah and Sarawak Brigade. They are under the responsibility of General Operations Forces formerly known as Forest police Force, a branch under the State Security Department and the Police.

The report said the money to buy furniture built by the developer was not included into the agreement under Development and Management Agreement signed between the government and the developer in December five years ago.

In 2013, Economic Planning Unit (EPU) approved the allocation amounting to RM13.3 million for the year 2013, under the Furniture Procurement Project. So far, 93 per cent of the money has been used.

After being reprimanded by the Auditor-General for not managing the sale of furniture properly, the Battallion 5 General Operations Forces were quick to register, label, arrange and keep the furniture in safe and locked place.

AG has told the Ministry and the Police to practice open tender and be cautious during the procurement of furniture as the cost was not included in the agreement. It also wants the Development Division of the Ministry to verify every allocation and compared it to the personally before approving the sale. It also wants the Logistics department in the Police to monitor all procurements.

The AG also wants the Police force to develop in-house online system to replace incomplete and outdated records on its quarters. As of June last year, the Police has 63,963 units of bungalows, semi-detached, terrace houses, apartments and flats for 91,958 personnel.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Monday, 6 April, 2015

9. GST: Health Ministry hopes more medicines will be exempted

TEMERLOH: The number of medicines that are exempted from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is likely to be expanded, if the proposed plan by the Health Minister gets the green light.

Its Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said the proposed plan had been submitted to the Finance Ministry and Customs Department, and the result was expected to be announced in two or three weeks.

"If they give us the much awaited green light, almost all of the medicines will be exempted from GST. We hope this proposal would be taken into account for the benefit of the people," he told a press conference here today.

Dr Subramaniam noted that to date, there were 4,215 medicines that were GST exempted.

He also said the ministry had not received a single complaint from the public regarding the implementation of the new tax system.

Earlier, Dr Subramaniam handed over aid amounting to RM217,000 from the ministry to a total of 901 staff who were affected by massive floods in Pahang, last year.

The aid presentation ceremony took place at Hospital Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah here. Also present at the ceremony was Pahang Health, Human Resource and Special Functions committee chairman Datuk Norol Azali Sulaiman.

He said the ministry had estimated a total of RM280 million would be needed to rebuild clinics and health facilities across the country that were damaged during the floods.

"In Pahang itself, there were 12 clinics that need to be rebuilt. The number is higher in Kelantan.—
BERNAMA

10. AG Report: Management of 2 Perlis dept, GLC satisfactory

KANGAR: The Auditor-General is happy with the management of two departments and a Perlis State Government-linked company audited between July and December last year.

The Auditor-General's report which was issued today said there was no misconduct and their managements could be expanded and improved upon.

The agencies were the State Land and Mines Department and Agriculture Department audited from September to December while the subsidiary company belonging to the State Government, Hotel Brasmana Sdn Bhd was audited from July to September.

"The weakness of the State Land and Mines Department was the lack of monitoring of quarry operators resulting in uncollected revenues.

"It hoped that the Auditor-General's report would be used as a basis to improve weaknesses, strengthening and improving on management and upgrading accountability and integrity and value for every ringgit spent," said the report.

On the Agriculture Department, the report mentioned the target of planting 200 hectares of 'harum manis' mango a year in 2012 and 2013 was not met and the production dropped during the period.

"The main factor for the failure was that entrepreneurs were not keen as it is difficult to look after the mango tree, while the output of another mango fruit, Sunshine, also dropped.

"The Auditor-General suggested that to ensure the industry continues to grow, the Agriculture Department must obtain complete details of the participants, size of farm, aid distributed and achievements of project which are updated in the AgrIS GeoPortal system," said the report. The Auditor-General praised the management of the Brasmana Hotel which recorded profits in 2011, 2012 and 2013 and recorded positive cash flow statements during the period. "The hotel showed good corporate governance but must improve its facilities, and have more activities to boost income," said the Auditor-General.-- BERNAMA

11. AG Report: Weakness in KTU complex construction

KUALA LUMPUR: The objectives of constructing the Air Force College Complex (KTU) in Kepala Batas were not fully met as sections of the building and facilities could not be used or occupied, said the 2014 Auditor-General's Report First Series.

The report said sections of the building were not equipped with furniture while some had communication system problems due to weak supervision and monitoring during construction.

"Among weaknesses found were that the signed contract value of RM96.07 million and consultancy cost totalling RM10.57 million exceeded the project ceiling of RM80 million.

"Supplementary allocation was approved by the Finance Ministry and the Economic Planning Unit amounting to RM41.97 million to accommodate the cost of the project," according to the report which was tabled at Dewan Rakyat here today.

According to the report, the building could not be occupied even though it was completed as it was without furniture and the communication system was not functioning.

KTU, a training centre for Royal Malaysian Air Force officers and air crew incorporates an officers' training centre, aerospace technology institute and a flight training centre.

The existing buildings and infrastructure of KTU in Kepala Batas built in 1970's were damaged and obsolete to accommodate the capacity and need of trainees.

According to the report, construction on the KTU Complex began on Feb 9, 2010 and was scheduled to be completed by Nov 5, 2012 but audits conducted from September to November 2014 found it was completed with two extensions over 161 days.

The report also mentioned that the construction and management of the Malaysian Armed Forces Wisma Perwira (WP ATM) in Jalan Padang Tembak here was satisfactory and met its objectives in providing a modern and comfortable building.

"There were however several weaknesses in the implementation causing the government not to obtain value for money for its expenditure.

"Among the weaknesses discovered were that WP ATM was completed 389 days late and incurred an additional construction cost of RM0.33 million due to poor planning on design and job scope. The building was occupied 25 months behind schedule and by then the construction defect liability period had lapsed," the report said.

The implementation of the project began on Aug 28, 2008 and should have been completed by Feb 24 2011 (30 months). WP ATM was actually completed in May 2012 but was only fully operational in March 2014.

WP ATM provides hospitality services such as meals and other hotel related facilities to Armed Forces officers.

Apart from that, the audit report also touched on Wisma Transit Kuala Lumpur (WTKL) infrastructure and facility management which was satisfactory and met the objectives of its establishment.

"However, an audit review found several weaknesses which needed improvements to enhance WTKL infrastructure management. Among them, 287 rooms at WTKL could not be used as they were damaged," he said.

WTKL is tasked with managing the movement of army personnel and family through two-way chartered air service from the peninsula to Sabah and Sarawak. It began full operation in January 2009.- BERNAMA

New STRAITS TIMES Monday, 6 April, 2015

12. AG Report: Kelantan did not gazette premium rate for timber

KOTA BARU: The Kelantan government did not gazette the premium rate of revenue for logging activities in the state, according to the 2014 Auditor General's Report Series 1 presented in Parliament today.

The report mentioned, the audit carried out between July and October 2014 found that in terms of overall revenue collections the Department of Forestry (JPNK) is satisfied with the increase in revenue from RM50.91 million in 2012, RM59.03 million (2013) and RM64.94 million in 2014.

"However, there are some weaknesses in the management of revenue from logging activities such as the premium rate charged is not gazetted, compensation payments for timber and late payment penalties are not imposed, while forest plantations deposit imposed is not proportional to the gazetted rate.

"In addition, there are revenue arrears 'tribute' forest concession and revenue arrears of forest offences fines and loss of revenue due to timber thefts," according to the report.

The report mentioned that, in order to improve the management of logging revenue, the department recommended that the subcommittee on forestry and JPNK needed to ensure that all charges are imposed according to the gazetted rates and fines are imposed for late payment; need to ensure forest concessions 'tribute' and fines for forest offences are paid on time and improve monitoring of timber theft cases.

The report also cited that the audit carried out in August to October 2014 on Gua Musang District Council and Ketereh District Council found that the acquisition does not fully comply with financial regulations in force.

"A total of six procurement of supplies valued at RM374,807; four procurement of services valued at RM601,020 and six works procurement worth RM300,485 had no quotation offered.

"Weak planning caused the Rest and Service Area (RSA) project in Pos Brooke, Lojing, Gua Musang to be delayed, the six-unit kiosks automated teller machines (ATM) in Ketereh that is ready have yet to be rented out and 14 shoplots in Dataran Usahawan Kok Lanas have not been rented out for the last eight years causing an estimated loss of revenue amounting to RM65,800," according to the report.

Meanwhile, the audit carried out on the Kelantan Darul Naim Foundation, a subsidiary of state-owned KIAS Darulnaim Sdn Bhd (KDSB) which manages the Sultan Ismail Petra International Islamic College (KIAS), found weaknesses in the management of activities such as student intake was not in accordance with the capacity of places available, an increase in backlog of students' fees, the Corporate Integrity Pact/ Integrity Pledge had not been implemented yet, bonus payments were made without the approval of the state government authorities as well as an unsatisfactory financial and asset management.

The report recommended that KDSB creates an effective method to collect outstanding fees so that the total arrears can be reduced, to intensify campaigns to introduce KIAS and improve corporate governance practices in compliance with the best practices of the Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance and ensure effective internal control for the financial management of the company to be in line with financial regulations prescribed.--BERNAMA

NEW STRAITS TIMES Tuesday, 7 April, 2015

13. AG Report: Communication and Multimedia Ministry paid RM88.13mil for incomplete project

KUALA LUMPUR: The Communication and Multimedia Ministry paid three contractors the full amount of RM88.13 million for an incomplete broadband project in East Malaysia.

The first series of the Auditor-General's Report 2014 found that although overall project management was satisfactory, it revealed today that the ministry had paid the sum to Esajadi Sdn Bhd, Celcom Axiata Berhad and Jaring Communications Sdn Bhd, who had only completed 95.2 per cent (890.23 km) of fibre optic network installation in Sabah and Sarawak.

The three contractors have failed to abide by the contract with 45.37 km still incomplete.

"Overall project management was satisfactory in terms of budget performance, appointment of contractors through direct negotiation procedures, price negotiations outcome between the ministry and contractors as well as management of testing and commissioning session.

"However, the audit has identified several discrepancies in project management.

"Full payment amounted to RM88.13 million was paid to three contractors although the actual distance of fibre optic network connections was 890.23 km (95.2 per cent) compared to 935.60 km as specified in the contract," it said.

The report also said, among others, that there was no evidence of approval regarding the contract period extension for 35 fibre optic network connections and that an appointed contractor did not meet the eligibility requirements set by the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Tuesday, 7 April, 2015

14. AG Report: FRIM fails to utilise equipment worth over RM1m

KUALA LUMPUR: The Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) has yet to fully utilise the data observation equipment acquired at a cost of RM570,000, according to the Auditor General's Report 2014 Series 1, released today.

The report said the equipment was not even installed at FRIM's tower and gateway house as it should be.

It was also said that the gateway house, which worth RM74,200, was abandoned, neglected and badly damaged with traces of intrusion and theft.

In addition, the audit found that a solar dryer worth RM229,800 and a herb research and processing equipment worth RM243,520, which were placed in the Postharvest Technology Centre in August 2014, were unusable.

"The solar dryer can't be used because there is no clean water supply or Reverse Osmosis (RO) water supply.

"The use of ground water is not suitable because it contains microbes that could affect the quality of samples and products produced," said the report.

Until now, FRIM has yet to give any feedback on the failure to manage the three equipment worth more than RM1 million accordingly. - BERNAMA

NEW STRAITS TIMES Tuesday, 7 April, 2015

15. AG Report: ASSB suffered RM2.67mil loss

KUCHING: The first series of Audit General's reports for 2014, highlight that the Amanah Saham Sarawak Berhad (ASSB) suffered accumulated losses after tax which amounted to RM2.67 million at the end of 2013.

The report also stated that Amanah Saham Sarawak Trust Fund (ASSAR) had only been able to pay dividends between 1.5 per cent to two per cent for the period between June 2011 and June 2014.

Investments in equities also suffered net loss of RM38.51 million for the period of June 2011 to June 2014.

The report also highlighted that in order for the company to ensure sustainability, it has to review the implementation methods of minimum price guarantee mechanism of RM1 per unit in order to reduce the financial burden of the company which includes Permodalan ASSATZ Sendirian Berhad and also the state government.

ASSB are also advice to get an independent assessment by a third party in order to obtain a more objective feedback on the performance and management of the fund investment.

The report also pointed out that Public Works Department needs to step up project involving Water Treatment Plant (WTP).

Water treatment plant which has a capacity of 5 million litres per day (MLD) that has been completed in July 2011 but was still not in full operations, says the report.

The Sungai Similajau Raw Water Intake was still under construction and was behind schedule by 21 per cent, the report noted.



16. New blueprint will transform Higher Education: DPM

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015-2025 will chart the transformation of Higher Education in the country.

Speaking at the launch of the MEB-HB, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the main aim of the blueprint was to produce holistic and balanced graduates with an entrepreneurial mind.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said that this would be achieved through the MEB-HB's 10 main shifts.

These 10 shifts include developing holistic, entrepreneurial and balanced graduates, quality Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates, financial sustainability and globalised online learning among others.

"The 10 shifts will build on the foundations of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025's five aspirations on improving access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency for the pre-school to secondary education system."

"The blueprint is inclusive. Over 10,500 stakeholders from over 100 groups of stakeholders were engaged in its development," he said, adding this included input from international organisations.

He added that the blueprint took two years to develop.

Muhyiddin also said the implementation of the blueprint is what mattered most.

"I will personally oversee the implementation of the blueprint to ensure it remains on track."

"We will review progress regularly and publish annual reports."

Muhyiddin added that the reports will be shared with international bodies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Nations to ensure transparency and accountability.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Tuesday, 7 April, 2015

17. Tourism and Culture Ministry queried on over-lapping of job scope, events not meeting objectives

KUALA LUMPUR: Over-lapping of job scopes between contractors and organising events which did not meet their objectives were among issues brought up by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture in a meeting today.

PAC chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said these occurred during the time ministry events were organised especially the programmes held during the Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 2014.

"The National Audit Department has carried out an audit on the management of events between November 2013 and February 2014 to ensure they were done in an organised and efficient manner as well as achieving their objectives.

"Among the issues that we questioned was why the ministry appointed a public relations consultant when Tourism Malaysia had been assigned to carry out these tasks," he told reporters after chairing the meeting at the Parliament today.

Nur Jazlan said the appointment of the consultancy company cost the ministry RM363,000 a month for 22 months as fees for services since it was appointed in 2012.

"Whereas Tourism Malaysia has its consultant who has been appointed and paid RM39,900 a month for a 12-month contract," he said.

However, he said, the ministry explained that the appointment was for a wider job scope involving consultation on mega events during VMY 2014, including the publication of an e-bulletin, editorials and others.

Nur Jazlan said the PAC was not satisfied with the organisation of five events in Raub which were aimed at promoting the district, costing RM5.2 million, but was not well-received by the public.

He said the ministry would carry out improvements to ensure that all its events achieved their objectives.

Meanwhile, he said, the total cost of event management by the ministry was RM78.86 million in 2011, RM69.24 million in 2012 and RM89.94 million in 2013.

Among the 10 events which were audited were the 1Malaysia Citrawarna Programme, the Labuan Water Festival, the Malaysian International Shoe Festival, Fabulous Food 1Malaysia, Magic of the Night, Malaysian Open Religious Talk Ceremony and the Malaysia Cultural Week. He said the total cost of all the events was RM92.67 million. - BERNAMA

New STRAITS TIMES Thursday, 9 April, 2015

18. PAC called out to Finance Ministry

KUALA LUMPUR: The Finance Ministry has been called out by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) for not reporting the progress of its recommendations to the various government ministries.

Its chairman Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said despite the directive set by the Treasury Department for the ministry to report back all corrective actions taken by respective ministries, no official documents had been provided to PAC.

"According to Act 304(b), the ministry is supposed to get back to us in a prompt manner on the actions taken based on our recommendations.

"However, the feedback from ministries to the Treasury has never been provided to us. We do not want to hear their explanation by word of mouth in meetings. Provide the information in detailed on black and white," he said, after issuing a PAC report card on the government in Parliament today.

He said the lack of information by the ministry was unacceptable, as people demanded answers on recurring issues that crop up in the annual Auditor-General's report.

"The ministry said PAC has never asked for the information, so we are asking for it now.

"PAC represents the people and we are all tired of listening the same excuses every year," he said.

Jazlan questioned why no action had been taken yet on PAC's recommendation on KLIA2 and incinerator projects, even after they had tabled their recommendations since November last year.

"PAC has been calling for the A-G to be allowed to carry out a comprehensive audit on KLIA2 six months ago, yet nothing has been done up to today.

"PAC also demanded that action be taken against the officials and experts responsible for the incinerator project failure, but still nothing now," he said.

In the report card, PAC listed 67 recommendations on 13 different projects it had made since November.

Jazlan said some of its recommendations had been made while some were unsatisfactory, however majority were still unattended to.

He said the issue was that PAC was unaware of the progress made by the ministries involved as they had yet to receive any official reports.

19. Audit dept's online dashboard to ensure transparency PM Najib

KUALA LUMPUR: The Audit Department's online dashboard, set up to monitor responses to the issues highlighted by the annual Auditor-General's report, is part of the government's efforts to ensure full transparency in all matters.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the dashboard, now located at www.agdashboard.audit.gov.my, will list the responses and actions taken by individuals, government ministries and departments involved in the cases highlighted in the annual audit.

"The government is committed in ensuring transparency in all government efforts and operations, and actions must be taken by the authorities if there has been any wastage or loss of funds," he said on his official Facebook account.

The dashboard, Najib said, had originally been set up at www.arts.audit.gov.my two years ago, as part of the Anti-Corruption National Key Result Area under the second wave of the Government Transformation Programme (GTP 2.0).

Highlighting the 2013 A-G's report, Najib said out of 1,158 cases, 745 have been resolved while action was being taken in another 392 cases.

"This effort reflects the federal government's openness and I give my assurance that this practice will remain as a key priority for my administration."



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak facebook posting

20. Perceptions on 1MDB controversy due to irresponsible quarters

KUALA LUMPUR: The perceptions formed on the controversy surrounding 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) is due to the issue being blown out of proportion by irresponsible quarters.

Second Finance Minister, Datuk Seri Husni Hanadzlah said however he believed that not everyone has been influenced by these stories which have been featured prominently in several media.

"Certain media have been harping on the issue of businessman Jho Low who is alleged to have received USD700million from 1MDB, when this is not even mentioned in the Auditor's General report or in the audits by Deloitte or KPMG," he said in a reply to a question by Senator Datuk Yahaya Mat Ghani.

Yahaya had wanted to know the steps taken by the government to ensure that the controversy surrounding 1MDB will not be speculated on by irresponsible quarters.

Ahmad Husni elaborated that most of the spotlight shone on 1MDB focuses on its shortcomings instead of the profit the company has made.

"I am puzzled, whenever I read the reports nothing is being mentioned about the investment made by 1MDB in Petro Saudi which has generated a profit of RM1.494 billion," he said.

To a supplementary question by Senator Rahimah Mohamad, Husni said he was confident that once the audit process for 1MDB is completed all the issues will be put to rest.

"We will also forward the results of the audit to the Public Accounts Committee to be scrutinized," he added.

21. Malaysia needs 220 oncologists,

Malaysia needs another 220 oncologists to treat optimal level of cancer patients based on the 28 million total population in the country. Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said there was a shortage of oncologists and specialists to treat the disease, as good specialists doctors tend to go into private sectors. "At present there are 80 oncologists in the country serving in the government, higher education and private sectors. We don't even have enough pathologist and radiotherapist, as well as experts in the field. "We are in discussion to train doctors and nurses via a master's programme using the National Cancer Institute in Putrajaya as a training centre in collaboration with Universiti Malaya. "There are 35,000 to 40,000 new cancer cases with mostly breast, lung and colon cancers," he said after a working visit at the National Cancer Institute in Putrajaya, here, today. The ministry was thinking of its own pathway for training doctors to be specialists in general, Dr Subramaniam added. Dr Subramaniam also said that all cancer treating hospitals in Johor, Likas, Kuching and Penang required oncologist, radiotherapist and specialists.

22. Increase spot checks on government hospitals, clinics: PM Najib

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has called for increased spot checks on government hospitals and clinics following the closure of the canteen at the Hospital Tengku Ampuan Rahimah, Klang.

On his official Facebook page, Najib posted the response from the Health Ministry on the action taken against the dirty canteen.

"This should not happen again. Carry out spot checks more frequently at government hospitals and clinics," he said.

On Wednesday, Health Ministry director general, Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the canteen has been instructed to close for cleaning on Tuesday, following a report by a local daily.

The canteen was re-opened the same day after it was cleaned.

He said the Ministry has directed the State Health Office and Hospital directors to regularly inspect the canteen, cafeteria and hospital kitchen to ensure that it meets standard hygiene requirements.

He also said the in-house public health unit has been instructed to closely monitor the canteen's cleanliness.

23. MOF suggests forensic audit on 1MDB

KUALA LUMPUR: A forensic audit on 1Malaysia Development Berhad's (1MDB) financial statements was proposed to be carried out by the National Audit Department, Dewan Negara was told today.

"The forensic audit, which is a more thorough report on its financial statements can be done if there is a need," said Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah when winding up the debate on the motion of thanks on the Royal Address by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong in Dewan Negara.

When met at the Parliament lobby later he said while the previous forensic audits by Deloitte and KPMG found 1MDB in a clean state, they were done based on short financial years.

"The department should be able to carry out a forensic audit based on a longer period. If there are discrepancies in the statement, the management and board of directors will be held accountable and may face court action."

He said he would also meet the Auditor-General soon to get a time frame when the current audit can be completed.

Forensic audit is an evaluation of a firm's or individual's financial information as evidence in court. It can be done in order to prosecute a party for fraud, embezzlement or financial claims.

24. 1:1104 doctor-patient ratio in Sarawak

KUCHING: The doctor-patient ratio is 1:1104 currently in Sarawak which still lacks doctors, said state Public Health Assistant Minister Datuk Dr Jerip Susil.

He said the main challenge faced in providing medical services in Sarawak was to dispense efficient and effective health services in line with the requests of the people.

"This requires more medical officers and specialists to be placed in hospitals and health clinics statewide with sufficient health facilities," he said when replying to Hazland Abang Hipni (BN-Demak Laut) at the Sarawak state legislative assembly here today.

Dr Jerip said there were 2,237 doctors serving in Sarawak and, of the total, 1,7759 worked in government hospitals and clinics while 478 with private hospitals and clinics.

He said 30 per cent of these doctors were from the peninsular.

"Due to the lack of doctors in the state, the Health Ministry encourages more doctors from the peninsular to come and serve as well as stay longer," he said.

According to Dr Jerip, doctors and medical specialists serving in the state would receive special allowances and could get promoted faster.

"However this method has its advantages and disadvantages because normally doctors from the peninsular who are promoted while serving in the state will immediately apply to return to the peninsular," he said.

Meanwhile Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Alfred Jabu, who is also Sarawak Modernisation of Agriculture Minister, said three permanent food production parks had been implemented by the Sarawak Agriculture Department starting 2009.

Replying to Mohammad Razi Sitam (BN-Saribas), he said up to date 29 participants had been involved in bananas, papayas and vegetables cultivation with agricultural produce exceeding five metric ton from January to August last year. -Bernama

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25. EPF withdrawals retain at age 55: PM Najib

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said EPF members retain the right to withdraw their retirement savings at 55.

"The EPF will ensure that any new enhancement will only apply to new contributions if members decide to work beyond 55."

He said this when opening Invest Malaysia 2015, the annual institutional conference organised by Bursa Malaysia.

"It is clear that the vast majority of EPF members, while understanding the importance of retirement savings at the age of 60, want the right to use their retirement funds at the age of 55."

Najib said in just two days of the online consultation process that was set up recently, more than 50,000 people had given their views.

It is the largest ever public consultation carried out, he said.

The two-day event showcases listed companies with a combined market capitalisation of RM957 billion.

They represent diverse sectors namely finance, oil and gas, palm oil, rubber gloves, healthcare, property and telecommunications.

26. 113 unregistered health products worth RM2.48m seized last year

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 113 health products, worth RM2.48 million, were seized last year for not registering with the Health Ministry (KKM) or products mixed with poison.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya said the number had increased compared to only 43 health products, worth RM1.81 million, seized in 2013.

"In 2013, 82 direct sales premises were inspected nationwide while 127 premises were inspected last year.

"For the same period, 108 raids were conducted on direct sales premises found in violation of the act enforced by the ministry's pharmacy enforcement division," he told the Dewan Negara sitting here today.

He was replying to Senator Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman who wanted to know the regulatory measures taken by multi level marketing (MLM) companies who sold supplementary food and medicine that could endanger the health of consumers.

Dr Hilmi said the ministry's pharmacy enforcement division conducted regulatory activities on all premises selling health products including MLM companies.

He said pharmacy enforcement officers nationwide conducted ongoing activities such as market monitoring, routine inspection, prosecution, raids, confiscation and other enforcement measures on premises found to have violated the laws.

Throughout 2012 until last year, 194 offences relating to direct sales companies were prosecuted in court under the Sales of Drugs Act 1952, he said.

He said direct sales companies found to have committed the offences could be imposed a fine of up to RM50,000 for the first offence and fine up to RM100,000 for subsequent offences upon conviction.

"Individuals found to have committed offences under the Sales of Drugs Act 1952 are liable to a fine not exceeding RM25,000 or imprisonment not more than three years or both for the first offence and fine not exceeding RM50,000 or jail not more than five years or both for subsequent offences," he said. - BERNAMA

27. DPM announces RM400m upgrade for Seberang Jaya Hospital

SEBERANG JAYA: Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin today announced a RM400 million upgrading for the Seberang Jaya Hospital on mainland Penang.

He said work is expected to begin this year.

The upgrading work entails the construction of a new multi-storey block within the hospital compound.

The new block will offer multi-discipline services.

"With the fast growing population in the Seberang Prai Tengah district and to meet the demand in the northern region, there is an urgent need to provide better health services to the people, thus, the need for this new block.

"The government continuously strives to improve the level of services to the people," he said when launching the Seberang Jaya Hospital upgrading project here a while ago.

Besides providing the necessary infrastructure and facilities, Muhyiddin said the government would also provide the necessary human resources capability.

"With the construction of the new block, we hope that the government's aim to provide the best medical services to the people here, can be achieved," he added.

The Seberang Jaya Hospital has been in operation for the past 20 years.

Present were Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam and Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof.