

1. Najib: Govt policies are good but implementation needs improvement

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today acknowledged that while government policies in place were good, its implementation was still weak. Speaking at the closing of the Jati Diri seminar for 'penghulu' (village heads) here today, Najib said it was due to weak implementation that the government's aims for the people could not be properly fulfilled. "Policies are already well in place but its implementation is weak. "The government's efforts for the betterment of the people does not reach them the way it should," he said today. Najib added that the penghulu, as those closest to the people, must relay the sentiments on the ground to the government. This, he added, was to enable the government to formulate better suited policies, according to the wants and needs of the people. In his speech, Najib also said that he was confident that the ringgit would bounce back and that its fall was due to outside speculation and uncertainty in the United States' politics. "Since my visit to China, in three months, the price of crude palm oil increased from RM2,300 per tonne to RM3,002 per tonne today. "I am confident that the ringgit, too, will bounce back."

2. No talks with China on settling payment disputes, says 1MDB chairman

KUALA LUMPUR: 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) is not in talks with China about settling any payment disputes, said its chairman Tan Sri Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah. "I am the chairman of 1MDB and there is no such thing. Nothing. "As the 1MDB chairman, there is no such thing as talking to the Chinese about this," he said during a press conference at the Global Entrepreneurship Community 2016 today. Irwan was referring to a report in the Financial Times yesterday which claimed that 1MDB was preparing to make a repayment, with Chinese assistance, to Abu Dhabi's state-owned International Petroleum Investment Company, as it seeks to settle a dispute in which the Emirati fund is claiming about USD\$6.5 billion. The report had claimed that this was confirmed by two people familiar with the matter.

3. MMEA mulling laws to prosecute those stealing from sunken vessels

KUANTAN: The Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) is in talks with the Marine Department and the National Heritage Department to amend the existing provisions to prosecute those found stealing materials from sunken vessels. MMEA deputy director general (operations) Vice Admiral Datuk Zulkifli Abu Bakar said a committee, comprising representatives from the three agencies, will look into extending the protected zone beyond the shore from the existing 12 nautical

miles. He said a meeting was held earlier this week with the Marine Department and the committee will sit down to discuss the suitable measures to address the problems. "The committee will scrutinise the Merchant Shipping Ordinance (MSO), the National Heritage Act and the MMEA Act before deciding on the suitable provision. If all shipwrecks with a historical significance are safeguarded, no one can remove anything from the country's seabed. "The amendment to expand our jurisdiction will bring the illegal activities to an end and then there would be no problems in prosecuting illegal salvagers," he said. He was speaking to reporters after attending the "United Nations Convention On the Law of the Sea", which is organised to strengthen ties between MMEA and Australian Border Force at the Sultan Ahmad Shah Maritime Academy here today. Meanwhile, Zulkifli said the two decommissioned Japanese Coast Guard patrol vessels which were pledged by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe last month will arrive in Malaysia in March and June next year.

New STRAITS TIMES Thursday December 8, 2016

4. No talks with China on settling payment disputes, says 1MDB chairman

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New STRAITS TIMES Friday December 9, 2016

5. Corruption destruction: MACC aims to eliminate graft in M'sia by 2020

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has adopted a set of new goals in its aim to eliminate corruption by 2020. MACC chief commissioner Datuk Dzulkifli Ahmad said the agency will address key issues on corruption plaguing critical sectors in the country to ensure they are all graft-free. He said this encompasses public service agencies, enforcement agencies, state and local authorities, government-linked companies, the private sector and the banking sector, among others. "International Anti-Corruption Day is a platform for us to reflect on and draft new strategies and plans to combat corruption in the country. "Hence, we have come up with new goals (to create a graft-free nation, particularly in the critical sectors), in (four) years. "In order to achieve said goals, we have to focus on enforcement and confiscation of proceeds of corruption, to return them (proceeds) to the country (government). "Since I assumed my position as MACC chief commissioner in Aug 2016, we have laid out several strategies and carried out

aggressive enforcement activities, which have led to successful and positive outcomes," he said in his opening speech during a forum held in conjunction with International Anti-Corruption Day 2016 here today. Dzulkifli said the MACC wants to send a clear message across to the public that the agency is serious about stamping out corruption, and will carry out their duties without fear or favour. Malaysia ranked 54 among 168 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2015, with a score of 50 out of 100. This is a drop from rank 50 out of 175 countries in CPI 2014, when Malaysia scored 52 out of 100. During the forum, "Towards a corruption-free nation: Issues and challenges", MACC deputy chief commissioner (prevention) Datuk Shamshun Baharin Mohd Jamil said one of the challenges they face is the public's reluctance to lodge complaints, due to fear or reprisal. "Only 0.01 per cent (162 people out of 1.6 million) of the civil workforce is willing to come forth to report a corruption case in their agency. "We cannot take action if there are no reports. We have to work collectively and together in putting an end to graft," he added.

New STRAITS TIMES Monday December 12, 2016

6. Drones, DNA tests to fight illegal logging in Terengganu

KUALA TERENGGANU: THERE are eyes from the sky panning down the vast expanse of forests to root out land encroachment and illegal logging in Terengganu. The eyes — drones fitted with infrared camera — are the latest technology used by the state Forestry Department to protect logs from being stolen and forests from being destroyed by land encroachment. With only 150 officers to cover 544,000ha of forest reserve, of which 128,000ha are permanently protected as water catchment areas, the use of high technology is not a luxury, but a necessity. Department director Datuk Ahmad Fadzil Abdul Majid said illegal logging and encroachment could be addressed by catching the culprits red-handed. "Using the latest technology to outsmart spies and tontos gives officers an edge in operations," he told the New Straits Times. He said the department was also using satellite data and DNA-profiling of trees to curb illegal logging. However, he said the success of operations depended on the integrity of officers. "In every organisation, there are black sheep. Some officers have been working in the same post for more than 20 years, and there is a possibility that they have formed ties with illegal loggers." Fadzil said the DNA-profiling of trees was being developed with cooperation from the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM). When the system was ready, he said, the department would call in experts from FRIM to match the DNA of tree stumps with logs seized ex-situ or in sawmills. "This will help us strengthen our case when we charge illegal loggers. "However, it is difficult to charge masterminds unless we catch them red-handed. "Fingerprints do not stick on tree barks. Illegal logging is not like house break-ins, where fingerprints of suspects can be traced. "But, we can identify culprits by following the log trail. Every tree has a specific DNA profile." Fadzil said illegal logging not only damaged the credibility of the department, but also ruined the ecosystem and incurred losses to the state government. He said Terengganu had an annual coupe of 6,388ha until the end of the 11th Malaysia Plan in 2020, and the state had earned RM32 million from legal logging. "Although illegal logging constitutes only about 0.2 per cent of losses, the damage is glaring." The forestry sector

contributed RM22 million in premiums and RM12 million in taxes yearly to the state's coffers. "It (illegal logging) is not as bad as depicted in newspapers, but we need to highlight our operations to keep illegal loggers at bay. "Our exposure of such activities invites negative perception, but if we do not act, the entire system will collapse and result in a massive loss of revenue in the long term." The department sets aside RM11 million annually, or RM1,800 per hectare, to rehabilitate forests that have been logged. However, it spent only about RM3 million to rehabilitate about 20 per cent of 6,388ha (annual coupe) of forests. Fadzil said Terengganu had 416,000ha of productive forests, or 40 per cent of state land that could be logged over 30 years, but illegal logging could jeopardise efforts to ensure sustainability of forests.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Monday December 12, 2016

7. Forestry enforcement officer, not a job for the faint-hearted

KUALA TERENGGANU: Enforcing laws in the jungle to protect resources in forest reserves and state land is not a job for people with a weak heart and spirit. Spending days in the jungles and being exposed to venomous and dangerous critters while keeping an eye out for trespassers are not anyone's idea of spending a weekend. State Forestry Department enforcement unit head Mohd Shafie Mahamud, who leads a six-man team, said he and his men were always ready to act on short notice to go into the jungle for days to raid sites. He said protecting 544,000ha of forest reserves in the seven districts in Terengganu with only six men was a Herculean task. "But, protecting our resources is crucial. It is a major source of revenue for the government and, more importantly, we want to ensure that the biodiversity is preserved." Shafie said the forest reserves included water catchment areas, which could affect the environment when cut down. "That is why the government has introduced the sustainable forest management policy to ensure that the balance is not disturbed. "Once trees are felled, rehabilitation will take more than 30 years before the trees can be selectively cut down again." He said it was the duty of his officers to ensure that only marked trees were felled by concessionaires, but illegal loggers cared only about profits. Shafie said his team had been shot at, threatened, spat and abused by illegal loggers. "The human antics we can handle, as we have the law on our side. But, when it comes to attacks by animals, venomous snakes and accidents, they can interrupt operations. "In a 24-hour operation, we do not eat or sleep after entering the jungle," said Shafie, who led most of the 280 raids in the state and successfully stopped 11 illegal logging activities, seized 13 excavators, 13 lorries and made 26 arrests this year. He said the department had opened 27 investigation papers on five illegal logging activities. He said operations would continue during the monsoon as this was the time when illegal loggers thought that enforcement would slow down.

8. MRT Corp says Rafizi got it wrong, RM21bil for both Phase 1 and 2 of SBK Line

KUALA LUMPUR: Mass Rapid Transit Corporation Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp) has dismissed claims by PKR's Pandan MP Rafizi Ramli that the first phase of the MRT Sungai Buloh-Kajang (SBK) Line had cost RM21 billion to build. In a statement today, MRT Corp clarified that the RM21 billion figure was the cost for the entire stretch of the 51km SBK Line, which will be operational by July next year. "Rafizi's statement is totally incorrect. The RM21 billion figure that was mentioned in the speech by the prime minister was the cost for the both Phase One and Phase Two of the 51km SBK Line," MRT Corp said in the statement. In his statement entitled "Rafizi: PM actually confirmed my fears on MRT project costs", Rafizi had stated that the RM21 billion cost mentioned by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak was only for the first phase of the SBK Line. MRT Corp said the total cost was calculated based on the completion of the procurement process and the adoption of a stringent mechanism to control variation orders and claims. The first phase comprises the 21km elevated section of the SBK Line from Sungai Buloh to the Semantan Portal. The second phase includes the 9.5km underground section from the Semantan Portal to the Maluri Portal, and the 20.5km southern elevated section from the Maluri Portal to Kajang. The second phase of the MRT SBK Line is slated to start operation in July next year. Once in full operation, the entire 51km SBK line from Sungai Buloh to Kajang would take an hour from end to end.

9. Malaysia's 1MDB paid interest due in Q4 on IPIC-guaranteed bonds - minister

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian state fund 1Malaysia Development Bhd has made interest payments on one of its bond issues this quarter, after failing to pay earlier this year because of a dispute with a guarantor, Malaysia's second finance minister said on Wednesday. Abu Dhabi state investment fund International Petroleum Investment Co (IPIC) IPIC is seeking about US\$6.5 billion from 1MDB and its sole shareholder, the Malaysian finance ministry, alleging that the Malaysian fund defaulted on a 2015 debt restructuring agreement between the companies. Citing the dispute, 1MDB refused to make the interest payments due earlier this year on two bonds that IPIC had guaranteed as part of the restructuring deal. IPIC then stepped in to make those payments. This quarter, however, 1MDB made the coupon payments, Malaysian second finance minister Johari Abdul Ghani told Reuters, in what he believed was an attempt to resolve a dispute between 1MDB and IPIC. "I believe 1MDB and IPIC are trying to find a resolution to their dispute," Johari said, though he did not give further details of the payment. He said the dispute was a corporate matter and that the managements of the two entities would have to decide how to proceed. 1MDB and IPIC did not immediately respond

to Reuters' requests for comment. At the heart of the dispute between the two companies is a US\$3.5 billion payment that 1MDB claims it made to IPIC following the restructuring agreement, but one that IPIC says it never received. Under a deal signed in 2015, IPIC had agreed to lend US\$1 billion to 1MDB and assume payments on US\$3.5 billion of its debt. 1MDB is the subject of money-laundering investigations in at least six countries, with the disputed funds transfer to IPIC also under examination. "If IPIC could just acknowledge that they received the US\$3.5 billion payment made to them, then this matter could be easily resolved," Johari said. He said arbitration talks were still at the "case management stage." The US Justice Department filed lawsuits in July alleging misappropriation of over US\$3.5 billion from 1MDB and that some of those flowed into the accounts of "Malaysian Official 1", whom US and Malaysian officials have identified as Prime Minister Najib Razak. Najib has denied wrongdoing. - Reuters

NEW STRAITS TIMES Wednesday December 21, 2016

10. Education Ministry allocates RM16.5 mil, upkeep for 251 Tamil primary schools

PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Education Ministry has allocated RM16.5 mil to upkeep 251 national-type, Tamil primary schools (SJKT) in the country. Announcing the good news, Deputy Education Minister I, Datuk P Kamalanathan said the allocation was given based on the urgency of maintenance works. "These schools have applied for a maintenance budget and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) divisions have identified the schools in need," he said. There are currently 524 national Tamil schools across the country and according to Kamalanathan, schools that did not get the allocation for maintenance will be given due consideration when the Ministry obtains fresh budget. "We will give it to them when the budget permits," he told reporters at a press conference today. The Education Ministry has come under fire recently for an alleged mismanagement of funds, resulting in lack of funding for Tamil schools, Chinese schools and religious schools. Budget aside, six new Tamil schools will be built next year, the minister shared. He said the new school projects will start next year, after which there will be a total of 530 Tamil primary schools in the country.

NEW STRAITS TIMES Thursday December 22, 2016

11. Singapore commended for swift action on 1MDB-related money laundering

KUALA LUMPUR: Second Finance Minister Datuk Johari Abdul Ghani commended the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) for its speedy action on alleged money laundering related to 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB). "Very good. They have taken action, very good," he said when asked to comment on the three individuals who thus far were convicted for funds misappropriated

from 1MDB. It was reported that former Swiss Bank BSI employee Yeo Jiawei became the third person to be convicted in Singapore's 1MDB probe. Two other former private bankers from BSI have also been jailed in Singapore for fraud in connection with the case. Johari called on all banks to facilitate investigation related to 1MDB. "As far as Malaysia is concerned, we are going through that process (investigate)," he said on the sidelines of Prasarana Malaysia Bhd's Rapid KL-Ampang LRT Line's 20th anniversary celebration at Bukit Jalil today. Johari also reiterated that there would be no business activity at 1MDB. "Run off means we are not going to do any business in 1MDB. It becomes a shelf company," he said when asked on his previous interview with a newswire in which he stated that the government was going to 'run off with 1MDB'." - Bernama

New STRAITS TIMES Thursday December 22, 2016

12. Pahang bauxite mining moratorium to be extended once again

PUTRAJAYA: The moratorium on bauxite mining in Pahang will be extended for another three months until March 31 next year. Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said the moratorium, which was supposed to end on Dec 31, needs to be extended to give more time to stakeholders to clear their remaining stockpiles. "In line with the agreement between the federal government and the Pahang state government, the Cabinet yesterday agreed to extend the moratorium period for another three months. "We hope the moratorium period will ease the process of clearing the remaining bauxite stockpiles and allow more space for relevant agencies and industries to carry out improvements as set by the government. "We want all the bauxite that has been extracted to be exported," he told reporters at a press conference after the ministry's monthly assembly, today. As of Dec 6, a total of 2.95 million tonnes of bauxite has not been exported and most of the stockpiles are in the Felda Bukit Goh area. Wan Junaidi said the operator had failed to clear the bauxite stockpiles within the stipulated period, as it was unable to comply with all the terms and conditions to transfer the bauxite to the Kuantan Port. "We do not deny that there are illegal bauxite mining activities taking place during the moratorium period. I have discussed the matter with the ministry's secretary-general (Datuk Seri Azizan Ahmad) to intensify enforcement efforts, which include collaborating with the police, the Natural Resources Department and the Civil Defence Department, in line with the National Blue Ocean Strategy," he said. Wan Junaidi added that the environment in Kuantan looks better and more beautiful since the moratorium was imposed by the ministry in Jan. This is the fourth time the ministry has extended the moratorium period for bauxite mining in Pahang. Imposed on Jan 15 this year, the three-month moratorium called for a halt to bauxite-mining activities to address industry concerns such as pollution, a lack of regulations, as well as excessive extraction by operators. The first moratorium was supposed to end on Apr 15, and was later extended until July 15, Sept 15 and Dec 31.

13. Sultanah Aminah Hospital fire caused by capacitor in ceiling lights: Health Ministry

SEGAMAT: A burnt capacitor in one of the ceiling lights has been identified as one of the causes of the fire that damaged the intensive care unit of Sultanah Aminah Hospital on Oct 25. Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said this was revealed in the full report received by the ministry on the tragedy which killed six people. "In addition, it is also likely that there were flammable materials placed under the lighting, which caused the fire to spread quickly," said Subramaniam. He said the government has also formed a commission to study all the reports submitted by the relevant agencies such as the Fire and Rescue Department, Public Works Department and Energy Commission. "The commission will also review certain processes within the ministry and those who have been given the responsibility to maintain public hospitals in the country," said Subramaniam, who is also Segamat MP. He was speaking to the media after presenting aids to 46 recipients under the 1Azam programme in the Segamat parliamentary constituent. "Parts of the HSA that were damaged in the fire are currently in the process of being repaired and expected to be reopened within the next month," said Subramaniam. Yesterday, it was reported that safety audit report on old hospital buildings nationwide was expected to be completed and submitted to the ministry next month. Deputy Health Minister Dr Hilmi Yahaya had said that the directive was issued to five concessionaires, which handled the maintenance work, to check the hospitals under their care. The safety audit has been conducted on 48 hospitals nationwide, which were more than 50 years old, following the fire incident. The hospitals included HSA, Batu Gajah Hospital, Kuala Lumpur Hospital, Balik Pulau Hospital and Penang Hospital.

14. RM10 million bail fixed for ex-Sabah Water Dept director over money-laundering charges

KOTA KINABALU: The Sessions Court here set bail for three individuals, including an ex-Sabah Water Department director and his wife, who were charged with money-laundering. In making the decision, Judge Ummu Khalton Abdul Samad set RM10 million bail for the director Awang Mohd Tahir Mohd Talib, 54, and RM2 million bail for Fauziah Piut, 51. Meanwhile, a bail of RM1 million was fixed for former deputy director Lim Lam Beng. Ummu set the bail with two local sureties and ordered the accused to surrender their travel documents. She set Feb 28 for case management. Earlier, the trio were charged under Section 4 (1)(b) of the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act 2001 for abetting the commission of money-laundering. Awang faces 12 money-laundering charges involving RM56.9 million, while Fauziah faces 19 charges involving RM2.2

million. They pleaded not guilty. The couple also claimed trial to two counts of possessing 575 pieces of jewellery and 346 other valuable items. Meanwhile, Lim pleaded not guilty to four money-laundering charges involving RM2.38 million. The two senior officers were among 28 people arrested by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in October on suspicion of siphoning money from billion ringgit-worth federal funded projects to boost clean water supply in Sabah. Following his arrest, Awang was suspended from his post and the state government has since appointed senior officer Wilis @ Mojiron Ansoi as the new director for the Sabah Water Department. Fauziah was among those called up by MACC to give their statement during the investigation process.