

**New Straits Times December 2017**

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**1. Penang's development spending comes under scrutiny following findings in AG's Report 2016**



**Penang state Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Seri Zainal Abidin Osman**

GEORGE TOWN: The DAP-led Penang government has come under fire for its administrative performance, as highlighted in the 2016 Auditor General's Report.

State Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Seri Zainal Abidin Osman said the report, released earlier this week, had concluded that the performance of projects implemented by the Penang did not live up to its its Competency, Accountability and Transparency (CAT) mantra.

According to the report, it was found that the state government generated large amount of revenue through sales of parcels of land to the private sector.

This is to enable the Penang government to finance its operating expenses, which had increased over 500 per cent since DAP took over in 2008.

The report also stated that between 2012 and 2016, the state government received a revenue of RM1,552.58 million from land premiums. Quit rent and change of land term premiums generated RM768.46 million.

Both of these generated a total of RM2,321.04 million.

Zainal pointed out that the revenue involving land matters were RM491.87 million for 2016, RM518.51 million for 2015, RM464.83 million for 2014, RM463.27 million for 2013 and RM383.56 million for 2012.

"We wonder why the chief minister (Lim Guan Eng) refuses to accept this fact even though it was mentioned time and time again in the Auditor General's report, which also confirmed what Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) had said previously as the truth.

"We strongly believe the sale of state land is actually bigger than these figures as the state government offers instalment schemes to land buyers.

"The Bayan Mutiara land, for instance, was sold in 2011 for RM1.1 billion, offered via a 60-month or five-year instalment," he said in a press statement today.

Zainal pointed out that in 2016, the state government had allocated RM346.12 million for 2,868 projects.

"The state government claimed it spent RM307.45 million, or 88.8 per cent of the allocation."

However, he said the AG's Report showed that RM73.61 million was transferred from the Development Vault to the state Finance Department's Trust Account and as such, was deemed 'spent'.

"This means only 67.6 per cent was actually spent for development in 2016," he said.

The AG's Report also revealed that 40 of the projects were called off and nine were postponed - projects which are under the chief minister's office and state government secretary's office, which received the largest allocation for the Development Budget in 2016.

Fifteen projects under the Public Works Department were also cancelled.

"This is clear proof that the state government had failed to plan and implement development in the state. If not, why was a large amount of funds allocated and yet not spent?

"Are they trying to mislead the people by tabling budgets with huge allocations for development? Projects did not take off and funds were not spent. Yet, there were surpluses if which they claimed were due to savings made from open tender.

"The fact is that the Penang government is not transparent. The administration is poor and not as expected by the Penangites," he added.

**2. NGO to lodge MACC complaint against Teratai rep, MPAJ over alleged abuse of power**



**JMM president Datuk Azwanddin Hamzah today produced documents that showed the plot of land had in 2012 been gazetted for a wet market to accommodate small traders who had been trading by the roadside since 1984.**

KUALA LUMPUR: Hawkers and traders in Taman Muda will lodge a report with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) over the construction of an entertainment complex on a plot of land they say has been earmarked for a wet market since 2012.

Backed by Jaringan Melayu Malaysia (JMM), Taman Muda Selangor Hawkers and Traders Association (PPPKTMS) has called on MACC to investigate the construction of the family entertainment complex.

JMM president Datuk Azwanddin Hamzah on Sunday produced documents showing that the land had been earmarked for a wet market.

The wet market, he said, was meant for small traders who had been trading by the roadside in the area since 1984.

"The traders are not at fault as they had been promised a market to run their business.

"Now, not only has that promise been broken, they are continuously pressured by MPAJ (Ampang Jaya Municipal Council) over cleanliness and obstruction of traffic in the areas where they carry out their business."

Azwanddin said JMM would file a complaint, backed by evidence, to MACC on Friday. It would provide legal assistance to the hawkers and traders.

Accompanied by PPPKTMS president Chow Chee Keen and his members, Azwanddin produced documents that contradicted MPAJ public relations officer Norhayati Ahmad's statement on Oct 12, in which she said the land was never gazetted for a wet market and that the plot was privately owned.

Chow said he had been called names when he brought the matter to the DAP service centre in Cheras here.

This came after Pandan MCA chief Datuk Leong Kok Wee visited the site and highlighted the issues faced by traders in the New Straits Times' Actionline on Oct 13.

"After the traders held a picket here, (Teratai assemblyman) Tiew (Way Keng) filed a RM1 million suit against me because of words that were displayed on the banners during the picket.

"I am just a chicken trader. How am I to find the money to pay for this? They are just using all means to pressure us to comply," said Chow.

Azwanddin assured Chow that JMM would provide legal assistance to fight his case.

Tiew, when contacted, produced his own documents that showed that the land has been under private ownership since 1980, before the traders set up base in the area.

"The land has been privately owned since 1980 and the express condition of the land is for a commercial building," said Tiew.

**3. Johor MB rubbishes graft accusations against him in 'leaked' documents**



**Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin today denied allegations made against him in supposed Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission (MACC) documents 'leaked' in social media recently.**

ISKANDAR PUTERI: Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin today denied allegations made against him in supposed Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission (MACC) documents 'leaked' in social media recently.

He said the allegations were slanderous, untrue and have nothing to do with him.

"My administration have never received any bribes, will never accept any bribes and will oppose any attempts to bribe me or my administration.

"I believe the allegations were made in bad faith (mala fide) in order to humiliate me and to muddle the good name of me personally and that of the state government," said Khaled.

He was speaking during his winding up speech for the 2018 State Budget at the state assembly here.

Last week, Senai assemblywoman Wong Shu Qi raised the issue at the State Assembly after the accusations surfaced in a blog.

Among the allegations included a supposed payment schedule allegedly made to Khaled.

Khaled said at the time Wong raised the issue, he was not aware of the existence of the documents and have no way of verifying the authenticity of the documents.

"I am grateful with MACC's quick action in confirming that the leaked documents were confidential and that they were leaked selectively and have been tampered with.

"Even though this esteemed assembly assumed that I could and should answer all the allegations in detail, suffice for me to say that on the dates mentioned in the documents, I was either overseas or at other places on various businesses and was not at the State Umno headquarters, let alone to be there to receive the bribes," said Khaled.

He said the issue was now a court matter and any statements or comments made on the issue would undermine the administration of justice and would interrupt and compromise the court process.

Khaled said he would leave it to the relevant authorities to take the appropriate actions against Wong, who must take responsibility for her actions.

Meanwhile, Wong said she was not satisfied with Khaled's denial of the allegations.

"It is not enough for him to just deny the allegations. He have to provide details," she said, adding that she was prepared to face any actions from the authorities regarding the matter.



**4. There is no criminal target in 1MDB case in the US, says Supreme Court lawyer**



Appellate Advocate The US Supreme Court Thomas C. Goldstein give talk on Criminal Litigation In The United States Of America at Auditorium Law Faculty University Teknologi Mara (UiTM).

SHAH ALAM: There is no criminal target in the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) case in the United States and it is merely efforts to trace money and property belonging to the company.

US Supreme Court Advocate Appellate Thomas Goldstein said this today during a talk on "Criminal Litigation in the United States of America" at Universiti Teknologi Mara here when asked about the civil forfeiture action against 1MDB.

"There is currently no action against 1MDB. Only against properties thought to have been procured using money belonging to 1MDB," he said.

Elaborating on civil forfeiture, he said no one should be deprived of their assets without due process of the law.

Forfeiture of assets, he said, must be preceded by a concluded hearing.

"The DoJ (US Department of Justice) has recently put on hold civil forfeiture lawsuits against assets acquired, because pursuing these may have 'an adverse effect' on its ability to conduct the criminal investigation.

"What the DoJ is doing is preventing the money from being dissipated by starting a criminal action," Goldstein said.

The DoJ, he added, was just tracing the money and think it may be linked to 1MDB.

"Right now, there is no suggestion of any criminal target.

"There is very little activity pertaining to the case and no one has been named as criminal targets."

When asked to whom the DoJ would return the seized money, Goldstein said 1MDB has said that the money is not theirs, whereas the case is based on money taken from 1MDB, made by complainants that do not represent 1MDB.

He also confirmed that 1MDB saying the money was not theirs was the reason why it had taken the DoJ this long to take action.

"A huge amount of money made its way into the US, and the DoJ is interested to know the source of this money. It is not a criminal case and an escalation into one will only make life more difficult for them as there has been no precedent.

"No one has been named in the civil forfeiture suit. If a criminal case were to be developed then it would be a classical criminal case and the burden of proof falls on the DoJ that it has to prove beyond reasonable doubt that crime has been committed," he said.

Goldstein is one of US's most experienced Supreme Court practitioners with representations spanning all of the US Federal Law.

He has prevailed in cases of arbitration, bankruptcy, civil procedure, disability law, employment discrimination, the Fourth Amendment, free speech, habeas corpus, immigration, labour, securities, and trademarks.

He also has experience teaching Supreme Court Litigation at Harvard Law School and Stanford Law School.

**5. Senai assemblywoman gives statement to police over leaked MACC documents regarding Johor MB**



Wong arrived at the Johor police headquarters at 4pm accompanied by her lawyer Gobind Singh Deo, who is also the DAP National Legal Bureau chairman, and a group of supporters.

JOHOR BARU: Senai assemblywoman Wong Shu Qi today gave her statement to the police regarding the leaked Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission (MACC) investigation documents which contained allegation of corruption against Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin.

Wong arrived at the Johor police headquarters at 4pm accompanied by her lawyer Gobind Singh Deo, who is also the DAP National Legal Bureau chairman, and a group of supporters.

Wong left the police headquarters about 40 minutes later.

Earlier, Johor deputy police chief Datuk Mohd Kamarudin Md Din confirmed that the instruction to summon Wong to have her statement recorded was issued by Bukit Aman under Section 111 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Wong was being investigated under Section 203A of the Penal Code and Section 233 of the Communication and Multimedia Act 1998.

Speaking to the media afterwards, Gobind said they do not want the case to be a precedent because Wong was carrying out her duty as an elected representative at the State Assembly.

"Under the Federal Constitution, whatever is spoken by an elected representative whether in Parliament or the State Assembly is immune from legal action, whether criminal or civil. For me, this also infringes on the rights of the elected representative to speak freely in the assembly," said Gobind.

On the issue raised by Wong in the assembly, Gobind said the MACC and the police should initiate an investigation on the matter as certain information had been revealed.

"We are not saying that any offence has been committed but what is important is that an investigation is needed. A denial does not mean that the matter has been cleared or closed," said Gobind.

He said he would personally write to the MACC and the IGP (Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Mohamad Fuzi Harun) to find out the status of the investigation on the matter as it was now a matter of public interest.

On Nov 29, MACC lodged a police report on the leakage of the documents and clarified that the documents had been tampered with in order to confuse the public.

Last Monday, Khaled denied the allegations, adding that they were slanderous, untrue and had nothing to do with him.

He also said that he would leave it to the relevant authorities to take the appropriate action against Wong, who must take responsibility for her action

**6. UNDER PROBE: JKP to cooperate fully with MACC**



JKP Sdn Bhd chairman Datuk Seri Zainal Abidin Osman said they would adopt an open approach with regards to investigation into the agency, including its chief executive officer Samrulzaman K Mohideen.

GEORGE TOWN: JKP Sdn Bhd is ready to cooperate with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in its probe into issues of conflict of interest and financial management.

Its chairman Datuk Seri Zainal Abidin Osman said they would adopt an open approach with regards to investigation into the agency, including its chief executive officer Samrulzaman K Mohideen.

"As a government agency, we adopt an open approach and are ready to work with the graft buster on any reports or complaints lodged against us.

"At the moment, we understand that the MACC has initiated investigation, including taking the necessary documentations needed in their investigation," he told reporters after the handing over of keys to buyers of the newly-completed Pangsapuri Bayu Tiara in Bayan Lepas here today.

Earlier this week, officers from the MACC allegedly "visited" the JKP office at Jalan Macalister here and taken several important documents to assist in their investigation.

JKP is a wholly-owned company of the Ministry of Finance Incorporated and is also an implementing agency for the Bumiputera Development Council of Penang as an active agency in developing Bumiputera-owned residential and commercial units.

Elaborating, Zainal said, he believed several top-ranking officers and personnel would be called in by the MACC to have their statements recorded.

"For now, no one has been called up. Nonetheless, as the chairman, I have told them to give their fullest cooperation as well as provide documents upon request by the MACC.

"However, we do not want to jump the gun. Whether or not there is a case, we will leave it to the MACC to investigate," he added.

At the same time, Zainal said JKP had set up a three-member internal inquiry to conduct their own internal investigation. The members comprised the board of directors.

"We will have a board meeting tomorrow and discuss on the internal investigation and we will provide a copy of the outcome to the MACC for further action.

"As such, those under investigations will have to go on leave pending completion of the probe. This is a normal procedure in any government agencies," he stressed.

State MACC director Datuk Abdul Aziz Aban could not be reached for comments.

Late last month, it was reported JKP had initiated an investigation into alleged conflict of interest involving Samrulzaman, noting that the board of directors had asked the CEO to go on leave pending the probe, although there was no official complaint lodged against him.

Zainal was quoted as saying that the decision was made following a complaint on social media by one Sanjay Subramaniam in October, who claimed to be a PKR member. Samrulzaman had also lodged a defamation suit against Sanjay.

The strategic adviser of Penang Chief Minister, Datuk Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, had also revealed allegations of conflict of interest due to the posts held by Samrulzaman in an engineering consultant company.

He had also demanded Zainal to explain Samrulzaman's link to SSJ Consulting Engineers that had allegedly received projects worth over RM3 million from JKP between Dec 12, 2006 and July 21, 2017.

**7. Former Sabah Water Department deputy director pleads not guilty to 146 counts of money laundering**

KOTA KINABALU: Former Sabah Water Department deputy director Teo Chee Kong claimed trial to 146 charges on money laundering involving RM32.93 million.

The accused, 52, pleaded not guilty to all charges framed under Section 4(1)(a) and Section 4(1)(b) of the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act 2001.

Sessions Court judge Nixon Kennedy Kumbong fixed RM1.5 million for bail with RM500,000 to be deposited in two sureties and ordered his passport to be surrendered.

He also ordered Teo to report to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission every Saturday between 8am and 8pm.

The judge set Jan 16 for case management.

Teo was arrested yesterday when giving his statement at the MACC here.

He arrived at the Kota Kinabalu court at about 10am and was seen covering himself with a maroon hood.

Teo, who is supposed to undergo a medical procedure at a private hospital here today, was accompanied by his family members.

On Oct 4 last year, he was arrested with his director Ag Tahir Ag Alip to assist in the investigation for alleged abuse of power and money laundering linked to contracts for RM3.3 billion worth of federal-funded projects awarded to the department since 2010.

MACC had seized RM114 million worth of assets, including RM53.7 million in cash stashed at the duo's houses and office, RM30 million stashed in foreign banks and another RM30 million in 127 land titles.

The Commission also seized nine vehicles worth RM2.7 million, jewellery worth RM3.64 million and designer handbags worth RM500,000.

Counsel Hamid Ismail said since Teo's release on Oct 17, he has been reporting to the MACC will full cooperation.

Teo is also represented by Roland Cheng.

MACC's deputy public prosecutor Tengku Amir Zaki Tengku Abdul Rahman had earlier suggested a RM10 million bail.

**8. JMM claims TMI received RM3 million from unknown source**



Jaringan Melayu Malaysia (JMM) president Datuk Azwanddin Hamzah (centre) meeting the press at Putrajaya today.

PUTRAJAYA: Jaringan Melayu Malaysia (JMM) has claimed that news portal The Malaysian Insight (TMI) had received RM3 million in funding from an unknown source this year.

JMM president Datuk Azwanddin Hamzah claimed that the fund, which was allegedly received in cash, did not show the proper source.

He claimed that the information, received through JMM's MyAduan Rasuah, was from someone inside the media organisation.

He claimed the money was deposited to the company through several bank transactions.

"We want to know why the money was given in cash, and not through cheque, invoice or other proper transaction documentations like other businesses," he told reporters outside Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) headquarters here today.

The NGO, led by Azwanddin, submitted a 12-page report to the graftbusters today.

"We hope MACC will open an investigation paper based on our report.

"We have provided documents including proof of the transactions to MACC," he said.

Azwanddin also urged MACC to investigate the accounts of the owner, the directors, the secretary, the lawyers and also all the staff including reporters.

At the same press conference, he also alleged that the board of directors of Inside Media Sdn Bhd, the holding company for TMI, were the same as Inside Asia Pte Ltd, a Hong Kong based company.



"Apart from information pertaining to the RM3 million, we also submitted documents relating to Inside Media Sdn Bhd and the Hong Kong based company for investigation," he said.

**9. MACC releases former Perak police chief, wife and businesswoman on bail**

IPOH: A former district police chief in Perak, his wife and a businesswoman who were remanded by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to facilitate investigations into suspected corruption and abuse of power, were released on bail on Saturday.

Magistrate Nurul Asyifa Redzuan ordered the trio, who were remanded on Dec 8 for nine days, released on RM20,000; RM15,000; and RM5,000 bail, respectively.

The 59-year-old former police officer with the rank of ACP (Assistant Commissioner of Police); his wife, aged 54; and the businesswoman, 34; were detained at the Perak MACC office on Dec 7.

The MACC's investigation is being carried out under Section 16 (a)(A) of the MACC Act 2009.

Following their arrest, cash amounting to almost RM1 million and jewellery were found in shoe boxes and a safe at the police officer's home.

According to a press statement from the MACC on Dec 8, the businesswoman is suspected of having corrupt dealings with the man while he was serving as district police chief.

The woman is also believed to have given a cash 'gift' for the police chief's daughter's wedding in February.

"The businesswoman is believed to have banked in RM70,000 into the account of his wife in two transactions of RM20,000 and RM50,000," MACC said.

#### **10. MACC quizzes 15 people over Kg Sg Yu land scandal**

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has recorded statements from more than 15 people to aid with investigations into the Kampung Sungai Yu, Kuala Selangor land distribution scandal.

SHAH ALAM: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has recorded statements from more than 15 people to aid with investigations into the Kampung Sungai Yu, Kuala Selangor land distribution scandal.

Sources from the anti-graft agency said, among those called in as witnesses were people from the district and land office, Select Committee on Competency, Accountability and Transparency (Selcat), residents from the area and even temples.

A state government executive committee member was also one of the witnesses called in, said sources.

MACC Investigations director Datuk Simi Abdul Ghani said more people were expected to be called up by the commission in relation to its probe into the land distribution scandal.

This, he said, was to gather evidence as well as to complete investigation papers.

He said the investigation team was still in the process of scrutinising the documents taken from the Kuala Selangor land office and several state exco members, last week.

"We are still in the process of gathering evidence and information to aid our investigations," he added.

MACC had raided the Selangor State secretariat building and took documents on the land ownership in Kampung Sungai Yu, last week.

Selangor Barisan Nasional chairman Tan Sri Noh Omar, who is also Tanjong Karang Member of Parliament, had called for MACC to re-open its investigation on the distribution of land in Kampung Sungai Yu following a statement issued by State Assembly Speaker Hannah Yeoh after chairing the Selangor state government's Selcat.

Yeoh, who is also Selcat chairman, had said that that the distribution of land to 175 individuals was not in accordance with the stipulated conditions.

The original residents of Kampung Sungai Yu, who have lived in the area for decades, claimed that there has been misappropriation of land matters, including the awarding of more than one lot per family, reselling of plots by several individuals, as well as registering using non-existent MyKad.

Kuala Selangor Member of Parliament Datuk Seri Irmohizam Ibrahim had said the Sungai Yu scandal was a problem that saw certain sections of the community being marginalised.

He had questioned the credibility of state exco Ganabatirau Veraman, who allegedly listed 18 names of land recipients with non-existent MyKad numbers. It was also alleged that many of the recipients were not from Selangor.

MACC reopened investigations into this case upon obtaining new evidences pertaining the land scandal, which involves 14.4 hectare of land

**11. MACC identifying six key witnesses over Kajang sand-mining probe**



The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) is in the midst of identifying six witnesses to aid with investigations into illegal sand and gravel-mining activities in Kajang.

SHAH ALAM: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) is in the midst of identifying six witnesses to aid with investigations into illegal sand and gravel-mining activities in Kajang.

Sources said MACC's investigation team is now in the process of identifying between five and six people, believed to be able to help with the anti-graft agency's probe into the case.

"They are the main witnesses needed to obtain more evidence and information to help MACC officers with their investigations."

It was also learnt that MACC is currently probing illegal sand and gravel-mining activities in Kajang, worth almost RM1.2 million.

On Nov 29, four people, aged between 34 and 67, were remanded after a mining company was suspected to have bribed local enforcement authorities to not take action against their illegal activities.

Following the arrests, the MACC also froze RM4 million in several bank accounts belonging to a mining company, which has operated since 2014.

The Selangor Menteri Besar's Office had, on Nov 30, confirmed that one of the four men arrested for alleged involvement in illegal sand and gravel-mining activities was a nephew of Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali.

Photographs of his nephew, Nuzul Fadhli living a luxurious life went viral on Facebook recently.

However, the Menteri Besar's office's strategic communications director Yin Shao Loong said posts on social media over the arrest of Nuzul Fadhli was an attempt to smear Azmin.

On Dec 3, it was reported that Azmin had refused to be drawn into the ongoing investigation involving his nephew.

Azmin had said he was in the dark about his nephew's alleged illegal activities, which led to the latter's arrest by the MACC.

Azmin, who is also PKR deputy president, said the MACC must substantiate its claim that the sand mining company had bribed the Kajang Municipal Council to "close an eye" on the illegal activities.

**12. ECRL will remain in govt hands**



Minister in Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Dahlan said funding domestic investments in local infrastructure projects using foreign funding is also not a new concept in Malaysia.

KUALA LUMPUR: The funding of the East Coast Rail Line will ensure the project, its control as well as its profits will be in government hands.

Minister in Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Dahlan said funding domestic investments in local infrastructure projects using foreign funding is also not a new concept in Malaysia.

He said during former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin's era, projects such as the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the Kenyir Hydroelectric Power Plant Project and the Port Dickson (Tuanku Jaafar) Power Station were funded by soft loans from Japan.

Closer to the present, he said the second Penang bridge was also funded by a soft-loan from China.

"If Tun Daim or Tun Mahathir had issues with the ECRL (East Coast Rail Line) project being a domestic investment with funding from soft loan instead of a direct foreign investment ... I suggest that they issue official statement calling for the government to sell the strategic ECRL infrastructure and place it entirely under ownership and control of the foreign ownership.

"Would Tun Daim and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) be happier if foreigners owned and operated the ECRL instead?

"If it was direct investment by China, would they still criticise the project and call it economic invasion by China just like they did to other China investments in Malaysia?" he said in a statement today.

Abdul Rahman, who oversees the Economic Planning Unit, said this in response to Daim's statement, who questioned if the RM60 billion ECRL project was a form of investment to the country or actually a loan.

Daim was quoted as saying: "if the government had to repay the cost of the project — which reportedly will be funded through a loan from the Export-Import Bank of China — then it is the latter, not an investment like Putrajaya had claimed".

Rahman said the government had made it clear that the ECRL project was a domestic investment funded with a soft loan from China with favourable rates that was lower than the government's cost of funds.

He said they were learning from past mistakes where the government of Mahathir and Daim had borrowed extensively from Japan but ended up having to pay more than double when the Yen appreciated sharply against the Ringgit.

The present government, he said made sure that the soft loan from China has built-in mechanisms to mitigate exchange rate risks.

"Whether structured as a direct foreign investment or a domestic investment with a foreign loan, the objectives of the ECRL to project to generate economic activity, create jobs and deliver a critical transportation link between the east coast and west coast of peninsular to bridge the economic divide, will still be achieved.

"However, the crucial difference is that if the ECRL was a foreign direct investment then a foreign party would own and operate the rail link.

"As this rail-line will cross peninsular Malaysia, the government had decided that the ownership and the operation of this line must remain in Malaysian hands due to national security and strategic economic reasons.

"Therefore, the ECRL is owned and operated by a 100 per cent-owned subsidiary of the Finance Ministry which will then repay the foreign soft-loan when the line starts operations.

"Had this project been a direct foreign investment instead, the foreign owner of the project would repatriate profits back to their country," he said.

Rahman said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak envisions ECRL project as a long overdue economic game-changer that will provide a land bridge that connects the east coast and west coast ports and provide safe and efficient rail transport to millions.

This project, he said, would significantly boost the economic future of our east coast states.

He said his crucial project should have had been done during their era when the consultants appointed at that time showed much lower cost.



Unfortunately, he said Mahathir preferred to build

other mega projects rather than decide to build the rail network which would have given the people of the east coast an economic boost.

He added that if the current government delayed this project further like what Mahathir did, the cost would be much higher in the future.

"Now that the ECRL project is finally taking off, it should not be derailed or worst, politicised. The people of Kelantan,

Terengganu and Pahang deserve better treatment and opportunities.

"I am confident that Daim being an experienced former finance minister under Mahathir's government would understand why the present government preferred that the ECRL project is structured as a domestic investment with foreign funding," he said.

**13. Felda handling investigation well, says Chief Secretary**



Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa (centre) signs the plaque during the opening of Ecovest elevated U-turn at EkoCheras in Kuala Lumpur. Present also are Ekovest Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Lim Kang Hoo (2nd left) and chief executive officer Tan Sri Lim Keng Cheng (left).

KUALA LUMPUR: Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa believes that the Felda investigation was being handled thoroughly by the authority.

"I think that is Felda's (internal) matter. Felda is handling it now," he said at Ecovest elevated U-turn opening ceremony here today.

However, he refused to comment further.

Yesterday, Berita Harian exposed that Felda was in danger of losing the land, which has since been earmarked for the Kuala Lumpur Vertical City (KLVC) development project.

Felda chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad said the sales and purchase agreement involving the three parcels of land were discovered in January this year when he took over from former chairman Tan Sri Isa Samad, who was chairman of Felda and Felda Investment Corporation (FIC).

The land parcels, located in Jalan Semarak here were estimated to be worth RM270 million.

**14. Education Ministry wants to do away with streaming system in pursuit of holistic education**



Education Ministry director-general Datuk Dr Amin Senin said the 'streaming system' like Year One admission test, to group the pupils based on their abilities and academic level, which is currently being carried out at certain schools must be stopped.

NILAI: The Education Ministry today has called for a 'streaming system' according to a pupil's academic level as well as 'control school' to be abolished.

Education Ministry director-general Datuk Dr Amin Senin said the 'streaming system' like Year One admission test, to group the pupils based on their abilities and academic level, which is currently being carried out at certain schools must be stopped.

"Such test is not the ministry's policy, but efforts taken by these schools to improve its academic achievement in order to get a good school average grade (GPS), which is the main key performance indicators (KPI)," he said in an interview held at Institute Aminuddin Baki here.

He said as the Primary School Assessment Report (PPSR) has been implemented beginning this year, and schools no longer have to pursue GPS, the ministry hopes that the pupils will get a solid and holistic primary education.

"We want the pupils to be taught in a more holistic manner and to not have the focus be solely on education achievement alone.

"To us, it is better for the pupils with mixed abilities to be put in the same class, so that they can help one another with their studies."

Amin also called for the state education department to stop the practise of 'control school', where the students are chosen to enrol in certain schools based on their academic and sports achievements as well as good discipline.

"Many schools have implemented these 'streaming system' and 'control school' for a long time, thus we hope the matter will be stopped starting 2019.

"We also hope that school administrators will take heed of this call and work together with the ministry with all the changes implemented in line with our education policy," he said.

**15. 1MDB has paid settlement amount in full to IPIC**



Abu Dhabi's government-owned International Petroleum Investment Co (IPIC) on Wednesday said Malaysian state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) has made all required payments as part of a settlement agreement between the two.

KUALA LUMPUR: Abu Dhabi's government-owned International Petroleum Investment Co (IPIC) on Wednesday said Malaysian state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) has made all required payments as part of a settlement agreement between the two.

1MDB was required to pay IPIC about \$600 million by Dec 31, as part of a settlement agreement reached in April after 1MDB defaulted on its bonds, causing the Abu Dhabi company to ask a London court to arbitrate over a claim totalling some \$6.5 billion.

1MDB had originally agreed to pay \$1.2 billion in two instalments to IPIC, with the first of about \$600 million due by July 31. 1MDB however missed the deadline due to the need to get "regulatory approvals" and made the payment in August instead.

"IPIC has now received all the funds required to be paid to IPIC by Dec 31 under the Settlement with the Minister of Finance (Inc) Malaysia and 1Malaysia Development Berhad and the Consent Award made on 9 May 2017," IPIC said in a statement to the London Stock Exchange on Wednesday.

1MDB also confirmed that it has remitted in full to IPIC all funds required to be paid by Dec. 31.

"All funds were paid from proceeds of the on-going rationalisation programme," 1MDB said in a statement.

**16. Children of Felda settlers want MACC to investigate Jalan Semarak's dubious deal**

PUTRAJAYA: National Felda Settlers' Children's Association (Anak) and Parti Amanah Negara have urged the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to investigate the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) land scandal in Jalan Semarak.

Anak president Mazlan Aliman said MACC should question former Felda chairman Tan Sri Isa Samad on his possible involvement in the scandal.

"We urge MACC to probe into the case and keep the investigation papers (on the land issue) open.

"We want those who are responsible for allowing Felda to lose its land in Jalan Semarak to face the music.

"As the children of Felda settlers, this issue has a great impact on us as it involves land ownership. We have lost the Felda land in Jalan Semarak. This has also caused uproar among the new generation of settlers," he told reporters after sending a memorandum to MACC, here.

Amanah Youth chief Faiz Fadzil said it was unfair for MACC deputy chief commissioner (Operations) Datuk Seri Azam Baki to conclude that there is no element of corruption in the Felda land scandal, and that it was due to weakness in governance.

"We want MACC to conduct a thorough investigation before jumping to conclusion," said Faiz.

Azam, when contacted, said the case is being investigated by the police.

"This case is under the police, not MACC. So let the police do their job," he said.

It was reported that Felda was at risk of losing ownership of the piece of land worth over RM200 million following what had been described as a 'dubious deal' in 2015.

The plot of land, which has been earmarked for the Kuala Lumpur Vertical City (KLVC) development project, will feature seven towers, including Felda's iconic tower, to be known as KLVC Tower 1A.

The ownership transfer of the land took place when Felda Investment Corporation Sdn Bhd appointed a local company as its main developer on June 3, 2014, and it was granted full power of attorney to develop the land.

Azam had said that the ownership transfer of the land was due to weakness in governance and breach of trust.

He said MACC believed that there was no bribery or abuse of power in the case.

**17. New fears of environmental degradation following MACC decision to withdraw seizure order on bauxite stockpiles**



Gerakan Hentikan Pencemaran Bauksit (Geram) chairman Ali Akhbar Othman said the decision by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to withdraw the seizure order on over 10 million tonnes of bauxite stockpiles in Kuantan has raised new fears of environmental degradation. NSTP pic.

KUANTAN: The state government and agencies must finalise the standard operating procedures (SOP) before deciding on the status of the moratorium on bauxite-mining in Pahang.

Gerakan Hentikan Pencemaran Bauksit (Geram) chairman Ali Akhbar Othman said the decision by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to withdraw the seizure order on over 10 million tonnes of bauxite stockpiles here has raised new fears of environmental degradation.

"Since the government imposed the moratorium in 2016, residents here have enjoyed a cleaner environment with no dust and presence of lorries transporting the mineral from Felda Bukit Goh, through Jalan Pintasan Kuantan-Pelabuhan and Gebeng area, to Kuantan Port.

"As long as there are no improvements and introduction of a more concrete SOP, I believe there is no need to retract the moratorium," he said.

"If you ask the residents, they do not want it (bauxite mining) to be resumed," he said today.

On Dec 24 via a media statement by the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry, the federal government ordered the extension of the existing moratorium to June 30 next year.

The decision followed on the heels of MACC's move to withdraw the seizure order on bauxite stockpiles in the state.

With the lifting of the seizure order, mining operators armed with Approved Permits (AP) are allowed to export the mineral by clearing the existing stockpiles.

Meanwhile, Ali urged the graftbusters to reveal the result of their probe into alleged corruption that facilitated fresh bauxite mining, as well as the arrests and prosecution over the issue since last year until now.

"Previously, we have read about their (MACC) operation to detain officers and personnel from state government agencies said to be involved in graft and abuse of power.

"We would like to know the outcome of their operation and arrests. How many have been charged and how many have been convicted (in court).

"We support if one wants to make a promise (to curb graft) involving all enforcement agencies directly involved in the monitoring of bauxite-mining.

"It is only that we do not know whether this is just an empty promise and not capable of preventing corruption from continuing to happen," he said.

As at press time, attempts to contact state MACC director Datuk Alias Salim to get the status of the graft probe were unsuccessful.



**18. Malaysia not beholden to anybody over 1MDB issue: Johari**



Malaysia is not beholden to anybody with regard to 1Malaysia Development Bhd's (1MDB) debt settlement, says Second Finance Minister, Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani.

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia is not beholden to anybody with regard to 1Malaysia Development Bhd's (1MDB) debt settlement, says Second Finance Minister, Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani.

"We are not beholden to anybody," he told reporters when asked whether Chinese firms had helped in the repayment of 1MDB's debt to Abu Dhabi's International Petroleum Investment Company (IPIC).

According to a Singapore's Straits Times report, 1MDB had made the final settlement of US\$602.7 million in debt obligations to IPIC, by divesting its stake in two companies to buyers linked to Chinese state-owned enterprises.

The payment, the second tranche of a US\$1.2 billion loan IPIC extended in July 2015 to the troubled 1MDB, was made on Dec 22, ahead of the end-December deadline that both parties agreed to in early April this year, the report added.

The payment made was in pursuant to the settlement deed with Minister of Finance (Inc) Malaysia and IPIC.

Asked to confirm the report, Johari said the matter should be directed to Treasury Secretary-General, Tan Sri Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah.

"I am not aware of it. You can ask Irwan Serigar as he is Chairman of 1MDB," he said to reporters after the launch of the new ePerolehan here today.

**19. Najib : The year 2017 was a year of economic growth, competitiveness, investments and resilience**



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Malaysia's economy beat all expectations as the World Bank revised upwards its estimates for the country's growth this year not once but three times to a healthy 5.8 per cent.

KUALA LUMPUR: The year 2017 was a year of economic growth, competitiveness and resilience for Malaysia beating the odds as well as attracting some of the world's top investors into the country for the betterment of the people.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Malaysia's economy beat all expectations as the World Bank revised upwards its estimates for the country's growth this year not once but three times to a healthy 5.8 per cent.

Najib said the government was commended by many respected independent global bodies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, for its prudent handling of the economy, and recognised that its resilience and competitiveness has been built up, for the good of the Malaysian people.

This sentiment was echoed by the international community which had shown their confidence to invest in Malaysia over the past year.

"In February, for example, Saudi Aramco announced that it was investing US\$7 billion in the Petronas Refinery and Petrochemical Integrated Development (Rapid) in Johor which is Aramco's largest downstream investment outside Saudi Arabia.

"HSBC meanwhile is investing more than RM1 billion to build its new regional headquarters at the Tun Razak Exchange and many more multinationals are following suit, investing and building up their presence in Malaysia," he said in his New Year's message.

For those who questioned why this was happening, Najib quoted Alibaba's founder Jack Ma's answer as to why he chose Malaysia to launch the world's first Digital Free Trade Zone (DFTZ) outside of China in 2017.

Ma had said : "Precisely because of the efficient, business-friendly environment this government has been creating".

Najib said these investments, new buildings, new businesses and new infrastructure projects - from the Pan Borneo Highway to public transport such as the new Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) in the Klang Valley - were making and will make a real difference to the Malaysian people.

He said more than 2,000 small and medium sized enterprises stand to gain easier access to the global market, especially the Chinese market, through the DFTZ, while the Sungai Buloh-Kajang MRT line have created 130,000 new jobs - 70,000 of which were direct employment.

He said MRT's success in completing the project ahead of schedule and at RM2 billion below budget showed Malaysia had the ability to handle future large scale projects such as the East Coast Rail Line (ECRL).

ECRL, Najib said, will do so much to help the people of Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan and boost their local economy.

"I am fully aware that some among us still face challenges and hardship, but the steps we have taken and continue to take will ensure that our country's growth is sustainable and inclusive, spreading to and lifting up all segments of society.

"Because I want all to share in the nation we are building, and no Malaysian will be left behind.

"This is why I announced tax cuts benefiting all middle income earners in the recent budget, allocations for farmers, fishermen, smallholders and rubber tappers, discounts on outstanding loans for students, easier working hours for pregnant women in the civil service, and a host of other measures to help ease the burden on the people and facilitate their full participation in our unique and richly diverse society," he said.

Najib cited a World Bank report which states that "The Malaysian economy is progressing from a position of strength".

"We expect healthy growth next year and further reduction of the deficit, as we continue to take all steps necessary to build the nation and promote the safety, welfare and happiness of the Malaysian people," he said.