

**Friday May 1, 2009**

### **Kedah state government opts for Perdana V6 cars**

ALOR SETAR: The Kedah state government has finally opted to buy the Perdana V6 Executive as the official car for its state executive councillors and senior officers as replacements for the older Perdana V6 Executives. Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak said several old cars, which had been used for six years, had to be replaced in view of the frequent breakdowns.

He said the cars would be acquired soon and the state treasury was negotiating the price with Proton. "We may buy four or five units of the Perdana V6 Executives. We leave it to the state treasury to buy them based on the allocations available because each vehicle costs more than RM100,000," he told reporters after a function, here on Thursday night. -Bernama

**Saturday May 2, 2009**

### **RM1bil for road linking Miri and Baram dam site**

MIRI: The Federal Government has allocated RM1.03bil for a road that would link the city to the proposed site of the Baram hydroelectric project. Baram Member of Parliament Datuk Jacob Dungau Sagan said the allocation would be disbursed in stages, with the first involving RM150mil for the upgrade of a 40km road between the Beluru and Lapok bazaars in the Baram district.

Sagan, who is also Deputy International Trade and Industries Minister, announced the approval of a RM30,000 allocation to build a community hall in the Long Aton settlement and RM4,000 each to the Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Long Aton parent-teacher association and the SK Long Sobeng. He also visited Long Luteng, Long Sebatang, Long Anap and Lio Mato. — Bernama

**Saturday May 2, 2009**

### **Kedah Govt opts for Perdana V6 as official car**

ALOR SETAR: The Kedah Government has finally opted to buy the Perdana V6 Executive as the official car for its state executive councillors and senior officers to replace the older Perdana V6 Executives. Several cars which had been used for six years had to be replaced in view of the

frequent breakdowns, said Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Azizan Abdul Razak. He said the vehicles would be acquired soon and the state treasury was now negotiating the price with Proton.

“We may buy four or five units of the Perdana V6 Executives. We will leave it to the state treasury to buy based on the allocations available because each vehicle costs more than RM100,000,” Azizan told reporters here on Thursday night. — Bernama

## **Sunday May 3, 2009**

### **No 5-star rating for local govts**

**By FOONG PEK YEE**

KUALA LUMPUR: None of the 145 local authorities in the country have secured a five-star rating for top notch performance. Almost half of those surveyed – around 47% – only secured the below par rating of two stars. Only 10 local authorities have four-star status – Kuala Lumpur, Subang Jaya, Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, Klang, Johor Baru, Alor Gajah, Melaka Bersejarah, Kuantan and Manjung. Twenty-three local authorities have three-star status, 46 two-star and 18 one-star. The local authorities were rated according to four aspects of their performance – management, services, client management, community participation – and residents’ feedback. A copy of the Housing and Local Government Ministry’s rating of the 97 local authorities was made available to *The Star*.

Forty-eight local authorities did not participate in the rating exercise – 22 from Sabah, 25 from Sarawak and one in Peninsular Malaysia. Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha said local authorities must be more sensitive of their position as frontline agencies and improve themselves. He said these authorities were independent and came more under the purview of their respective state governments rather than his ministry. Nevertheless, he said it was important for all parties to play their respective roles and provide good services. “I think the local authorities can do better from now on,” he said when commenting on the rating, which was conducted for the first time last year.

“Local authorities are in the frontline, providing services directly to the people – from rubbish collection, grass cutting, drain cleaning, maintainance of public parks to the issuance of business licences and infrastructure development. “Their performance has a direct impact on the people’s daily lives and well-being. “Public satisfaction is a measurement of the government’s delivery system,” he pointed out.

Kong, who was a councillor between 1991 and 1999, also reminded councillors on the importance of putting in place a good delivery system besides helping to solve people’s problems.

**Monday May 4, 2009**

### **RM130mil varsity project in Kelantan to go on**

JELI: The university and polytechnics planned for Kelantan will be implemented as scheduled, the global economic crisis notwithstanding, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said. The RM130mil University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) campus project, approved in 2007, is one of 20 universities approved nationwide. "The Government cannot afford to stop the projects as doing so would affect the educational needs of the people," he said yesterday, after visiting victims of a fire that razed 11 houses and shoplots at Air Lanas here.

Mustapa, the Jeli MP, added that the UMK complex, to replace the temporary campus in Pangkalan Chepa, would be built on a 232ha land in Tangok, Bachok. Infrastructure projects in rural areas for roads, village development and flood mitigation will also continue as scheduled. "These projects are important and if there is a need to increase the allocation, the Government will consider it," said Mustapa.

He said several big projects were also underway, such as the second Sultan Yahya Petra in Kota Baru costing RM150mil and the new Kota Baru-Kuala Terengganu and Jalan Selising-Tok Bok roads. "They are important to boost economic activities," he added. A total of 1,500 houses were also being built in Jeli for the poor.

**Tuesday May 5, 2009**

### **Muhyiddin wants more info on Maths & Science issue before final decision**

By KAREN CHAPMAN

#### **More time to review Maths and Science**

KUALA LUMPUR: It looks like there won't be a quick decision on the language of instruction for Mathematics and Science. The Education Ministry under its new minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin is willing to listen to more views and accept memoranda on the issue before deciding whether the subjects should be taught in English or revert to Bahasa Malaysia and mother tongue (Chinese and Tamil).

"Our national language is important but then so is English and this is the future of our children," said Muhyiddin, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, after visiting Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. "We are prepared to wait a little bit longer because I think that whatever decision the Government has to make is difficult. "We also don't want to be seen to flip-flop on this matter."

The Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (better known by its Malay acronym (PPSMI) policy was introduced in phases, beginning with Year One, Form One and Lower Six students in 2003. Former Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein had said previously that the Cabinet was expected to make a decision on the language of instruction in mid-April. On when he would submit the matter to the Cabinet for a decision, Muhyiddin said he was not fully satisfied yet with what had been done.

Muhyiddin declined to say what he was dissatisfied with, adding that he would make a detailed announcement at the right time. Asked whether the ministry would hold more roundtable discussions, he said this did not have to be so. Last year, the ministry held such discussions with researchers from public universities; representatives from associations and organisations, professional bodies, corporate, community leaders; parent-teacher associations, students, teachers and lecturers from matriculation colleges and teacher training institutes; and, politicians.

**Tuesday May 5, 2009**

## **Public satisfaction should be yardstick for KPI, says Najib**

🗂️ [KPI indicators for public satisfaction](#)

PUTRAJAYA: Public satisfaction should be the yardstick to measure Key Performance Indicators in the public sector, proposed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. Government administrative officers and public servants tend to forget that public satisfaction was the main aspect to analyse their performance, he said, urging civil servants to treat their relationship with the public as a covenant that ensures commitment to provide better service.



**Time to meet: Najib arriving for the Prime Minister's Department monthly gathering at Dataran Putra in Putrajaya yesterday. On his right is Muhyiddin.**

Najib said it was important to ensure good service as people would only back the Government if they were satisfied with the services they got and it was up to the public servants to provide this. "Public servants must use public satisfaction as a yardstick in measuring the level of their efficiency and not just look at the qualitative and quantitative values attributed to their work," he said.

He said civil servants would also have to adopt innovative and creative approaches to problem-solving to ensure an increasing level of efficiency in the public sector, especially as the nation

moved closer towards developed nation status. "If we can tie productivity with innovation and creativity, the improvements in problem solving will see a quantum leap instead of just being incremental," he said when addressing staff of the Prime Minister's Department for the first time during the monthly gathering here yesterday.

Najib said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also Education Minister, showed seriousness in wanting to create a work culture through innovative and creative approaches by introducing the concept in schools. Najib also said that the relationship between the government administration and public servants should not be limited to the former giving orders and the latter carrying them out. Public servants, he said, have to be committed in their work and serve loyally while the government administration must ensure that the welfare and interests of public servants are taken care of.

**Wednesday May 6, 2009**

### **Report on contractors' woes**

KUALA LUMPUR: The Works Ministry will present a report to the Cabinet on ways to improve job opportunities and capacity building for contractors working on Public Works Department (PWD) projects. "We are gathering information so that we can come up with a good mechanism to solve problems faced by the contractors," minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor said.

The ministry, he said, was reviewing suggestions and complaints from contractors. Issues include the distribution of its 10% value of all PWD contracts worth more than RM10mil to Class F contractors, methods in allocating projects, price in tenders, quality of projects and keeping the contractors competitive after the Government removed the 30% bumiputra equity requirement for 27 services sub-sectors.

"There are 32,000 Class F contractors in the country and they make up 70% of the contractors of all classes. It is a big number, but how many are active? "We need to reorganise the list of contractors in the country and identify if there is a need to provide training to them," he told a press conference after a dialogue with Class F contractors at the ministry yesterday.

**Thursday May 7, 2009 (Thursday)**

### **Better guidelines on projects for Class F contractors in a month**

**By BEH YUEN HUI**

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Works Ministry has temporarily stopped awarding projects to Class F contractors pending more comprehensive guidelines. Minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor said these guidelines would be ready within a month. At present, 10% of any project worth

more than RM10mil must be awarded to Class F contractors. However, the contractors have recently complained that the margin of their profits were too low.

"There are no proper guidelines on the type and size of projects to be awarded to Class F contractors. "So, we are now coming up with more comprehensive guidelines," he told reporters after the monthly gathering at his ministry here today. Currently, there are 32,000 Class F contractors in the country, making up 70% of the contractors.

## **Thursday May 7, 2009**

### **'Technical issue' delays PKFZ report**

PETALING JAYA: The keenly awaited audit report on the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) that was to be released today has been held back on a technical issue. Port Klang Authority chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng said the report could only be released with the consent of auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC).

"PwC has made it clear to the Port Klang Authority that the report is confidential and must not be reproduced or distributed, 'in whole or in part, to any other party in any way without the prior consent of PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services Sdn Bhd'," he said in a statement yesterday.

Lee said he wrote to PwC on April 30 to seek its consent following the instructions by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat to release the report within seven days. "PwC replied on May 4 that consent will be given subject to certain terms and conditions," he said.

"On Tuesday (May 5), I met with representatives from PwC and decided to call for an emergency board meeting to seek members' approval on the terms and conditions for the release of the report. "In the light of this, I've informed the Transport Minister that I have to resolve this technical issue before the report can be made public despite the deadline he gave." Lee gave his assurance that the matter would be sorted out as soon as possible, as it was his responsibility to ensure that the full report together with declassified documents were released to the public. "I am concerned with the leaks to the press and wish to state that my office and I played no part in that," he added.

## **Friday May 8, 2009**

### **Ministry lifts 10% policy for Class F contractors**

**By BEH YUEN HUI**

KUALA LUMPUR: The Works Ministry has temporarily suspended the 10% allocation policy for Class F contractors pending a comprehensive guideline which is being drawn up. A working paper to specify the contractors' job scope and other details would be drafted within a month, minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor said.

"Until then, projects that are to be tendered out will not be bound by this policy," he said.

Since last year, the ministry has required that 10% of all development projects costing more than RM10mil to be allocated for Class F contractors, who are usually engaged by the main contractors (Class A). Each Class F contractor, whose job includes laying tiles, fencing and wiring, is only entitled to take up projects of not more than RM200,000.

Speaking to reporters after attending the ministry's monthly gathering yesterday, Shaziman said the decision to temporarily suspend the policy was made following a meeting with more than 700 Class F contractors. They complained about fewer jobs, low profit margins due to higher construction costs and their problems with the main contractors, he said.

"We will find a solution that will benefit both parties," he added.

Shaziman said small contractors (Class D, E and F) would be given priority in the RM200mil project to upgrade federal roads in Felda settlements under the second stimulus package, to help them through the economic downturn. It was reported that as of last month, only 4,373 of the estimated 31,500 Class F contractors in the country had been allocated projects totalling RM860mil.

**Friday May 8, 2009**

### **Project near Gunung Stong park worries WWF**

KOTA BARU: Any forest conversion close to a protected area such as Gunung Stong State Park is cause for concern, said WWF-Malaysia chief technical officer Surin Sukswan. In an e-mail to *The Star* yesterday, he said WWF-Malaysia was trying to obtain further information on the proposed development, such as exact location, to determine its possible impact on the environment. "We would like to urge the proponents of the project and state government to be as transparent as possible with regard to this project," he added in the email.

On Wednesday, State Economic Planning, Finance and Welfare committee chairman Datuk Husam Musa disclosed that the state government had approved a 440ha tract of land in the Gunung Stong tourist belt to local company Maxson Sdn Bhd to be developed into a palm oil plantation. He declined to reveal the exact location of the area approved or to say if the land

had logging potential. Kelantan Mentri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat defended the move yesterday, saying: "We did not approve the application without any considerations, and the company had adhered to all the conditions set." Speaking after presenting Tafaquh Fiddin school certificates to recipients at BalaiIslam, Lundang here, he denied that the land was given to PAS cronies. "We considered all the criteria and approved it. Even if the company was a crony, it had complied with the conditions," he added.

Gunung Stong is a forested area totalling 21,950ha with several prominent mountain peaks and hosts one of the tallest waterfalls in Malaysia, the seven-tier Jelawang Falls. WWF Malaysia is producing a preliminary management plan for Gunung Stong State Park in collaboration with the Kelantan State Forestry Department. Gunung Stong is also an important water catchment area for the Kelantan River and plays an important role in flood and drought regulation. It is also an important wildlife habitat and is linked to the main range. Wildlife recorded in the area included elephants, tigers, tapirs and hornbills. South Kelantan where the state park is located is an area rich in wild plants, many of which can only be found in this part of the world.

**Friday May 8, 2009**

## **No building plan for project**

**By YIP YOKE TENG**

The owners of a project near Kompleks Penyayang Bakti in Sungai Buloh seem to think they are above the local authority. They have proceeded with massive earthwork several months ago without even submitting a building plan to the Petaling Jaya City Council.



**In progress: The site in Sungai Buloh where work is on-going.**

They have also ignored a stop-work order issued by the council in March and constructions have continued through rain or shine, even on Sundays. At their wit's end, councillors Chan Chee Kong and Richard Yeoh stormed the site on Tuesday with officers from the planning, engineering and enforcement departments to issue another stop-work order on the project.

Chan said the council did not know much about the project because no building plan was ever submitted. "We found out from the workers that it was a 2.4ha Federal project to build a hostel but they still need to submit plans for approval to ensure that they are abiding by all council regulations," he said.



He added that residents in the area were upset by the ongoing construction as they were not informed about the project, let alone the opportunity to voice their concerns. "Lorries and cement trucks ply the roads daily. "Some of them travel at high speed, posing a danger to residents and students who walk to the schools in this area," Chan said.

## **Friday May 8, 2009**

### **Projects at rural areas to be monitored**

MALACCA: The Rural and Regional Development Ministry will set up an operations centre to monitor the implementation of projects in the rural areas nationwide, said its minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal. He said a sum of RM1bil had been allocated for the construction of infrastructure projects and between 13,000 and 14,000 houses under the Hardcore Poor Housing Programme (PPRT).

"The operation room will keep tabs on the projects. I will be checking on progress at various stages of implementation, in two or three weeks' time. "Directives had been issued to relevant agencies to ensure that priority be given to most deserving areas by employing best practices in the implementation of the projects," he told reporters after attending a wedding at Taman Temu Jaya, Padang Temu here. He said the functions of agencies under the ministry would be revamped in an effort to step up economic activities in the rural areas. — Bernama

## **Monday May 11, 2009**

### **RM5.6bil worth of projects under stimulus packages awarded**

KUALA LUMPUR: About 42,000 projects worth RM5.6bil have been awarded and implemented under the two stimulus packages, said Project Management Unit chief operating officer Datuk Mohamad Othman Zainal Azim. He said that 39,316 projects worth RM3.4bil were under the first stimulus package while the other package comprised 2,745 projects valued at RM2.2bil. By the end of the month, all projects under the first package would be fully awarded, he added in a statement yesterday. The projects identified under the two stimulus packages include those requiring upgrading, rehabilitation and maintenance, and health projects develop to ensure the rakyat's wellbeing and projects to enhance human capital and competitiveness.

The stimulus packages which account for 9% of the Gross Domestic Product are designed to reinforce and stimulate the economy with high impact projects and those that yield direct benefit to the rakyat at local levels. They are also designed to reinforce the economy and strengthen national resilience to face challenges from the current difficult global economic environment. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak personally monitors every aspect of

the stimulus package on a weekly basis. “This hands-on approach is to ensure that the targets set out under the two stimulus packages are achieved,” said Mohamed Othman.

He also noted the overwhelming response to the website specifically dedicated to the two stimulus packages. To further enhance interaction with the general public, an English version is now also available on the website [www.rangsanganekonomi.treasury.gov.my](http://www.rangsanganekonomi.treasury.gov.my). The website offers a breakdown of allocations for the individual state and ministry, projects and thrust of the packages.

Najib, in a short message on the website, said: “We are having this website so that all Malaysians would know and be able to follow the implementation of the various initiatives and programmes that have been formulated to address the economic issues that stemmed from the global financial meltdown.

“The measures outlined in the stimulus packages, not only focus on stimulating the economy in the short-term but also on building the long-term economic capacity. This will ensure that Malaysia is well prepared to immediately seize the opportunities when the global economy recovers,” he said.

Two stimulus packages have been unveiled – the first stimulus package of RM7bil was announced last Nov 4 and the second, the RM60bil Mini Budget, was tabled in Parliament on March 10. — Bernama.

**Tuesday May 12, 2009**

## **Four fined for under-declaring logs**

**By LIM CHIA YING**

CHEATING doesn't pay and four licence holders of a mangrove forest found this out the hard way. They had tried to escape with lower tax payment but were instead fined RM5,000 each for false declaration of their goods. The four licence holders of the mangrove forest in Pulau Ketam, off Port Klang, were caught red-handed for falsely declaring the number of mangrove trunks that they had logged.

They had made lower declarations to pay lower tax, which is a mere 25 sen for each tree felled, but they were caught by the state forestry department which conducted a check at sea. State forestry assistant director (operations and enforcement) Mohd Yussainy Md Yusop said the penalty imposed on the four showed that there was no compromise when it came to enforcement and that no one should think they could get away with cheating. “There are also other authorities like the marine department or customs which constantly do cross-checking with us, as falsely-declared tax payment would mean a loss of revenue for the state,” Yussainy said.



**Laden:** A boat piled high with logs.

“Each trunk can fetch RM3 or more in the market, which means that the licence holders would already have their overheads of tax and hiring of workers covered,” he said.

For close to a decade since 1999, the state government has issued seven permits to the four, allowing them to cut trees for construction piling at the 864ha area. According to Yussainy, as the mangrove forest is classified as state land and not a forest reserve, his department could only stop the logging work if offences are committed but could not withdraw the licences to log, which is under the jurisdiction of the state government. There is also the risk that under the state land status, plots could be allocated or given out to individuals who apply, given that land matters are under the jurisdiction of the land office.

If the state government considers classifying it as a forest reserve, this could limit and protect its usage, and the state forestry department will then be responsible for managing the forest. Recently, the department officers went on an enforcement blitz and conducted random checks on specifically-marked areas where those with licences are allowed to log, along the Straits of Malacca from Port Klang.

The blitz was led by department director Dr Mohd Yunus Zakaria, and passed by a dozen or so of whale-tonne ships, smaller size junks and the Pulau Ketam village built on stilts, before plying into a quiet stream of a section in the forest where a small signboard that reads Nordin Bakar is found hanging on a tree trunk. Nordin appears to be one of the licence holders, and the officers chanced upon his fellow worker Abdul Wahab from Indonesia who said he had been following his boss for 23 years now, logging elsewhere before settling in the area.

Wahab demonstrated how a tree stem was cut, explaining that there was a certain diameter of trees only that they could use. “Also, we cannot cut trunks that bend or curl and they must be straight as required for piling,” he said.

He said he was paid an average of 50 sen per tree but that this might vary according to the size of the stem. Wahab said a person could cut between 40 and 50 trees a day.



**Sturdy:** Yunus (left) holding on to a mangrove stem during the checking session.

At the end of the day, a tongkang (a wooden junk) will come to collect the pile of logs to be shipped to Port Klang and stored in the warehouses. Another stream elsewhere is a section leased out to a Chinese licence holder. One of the Chinese workers said there was no fear of a dearth of trees as these grew very fast. "We will not fell the bigger trees since they are of no commercial value. It's the smaller ones that are easily sold," . Yunus observed that despite the forest having to feed the industry's growing needs, it has been producing, growing and regenerating at a sustainable rate. "I'm happy to see the healthy condition of the forest in the area. "There is great potential for eco-tourism since Pulau Ketam itself is already popular with visitors," he said.

"The village fishermen also know well enough not to destroy the mangrove's ecology. The forest is a habitat for sea life which in turn supports the livelihood of the fishermen so there is close inter-relation here," Yunus said.

So are the licensed loggers required to move out if the area does become a forest reserve? Yunus said the licence holders would have to apply for permits again and if given the permission by the state, the department serving as the agency responsible would allow them to log. The Selangor government could perhaps emulate the Perak way of controlling the Matang mangrove reserve, a sustainable timber production forest reserve. In Perak, it is learnt that each licence holder is allowed to log just 10ha of the reserve, and permits are issued to new people each year to minimise monopoly and so that no one person can hold on to a licence for too long.

## **Wednesday May 13, 2009**

### **Contractors: Second bridge ready by 2012**

GEORGE TOWN: Contractors involved in building the RM4.3bil Second Penang Bridge — although facing problems including contractual matters — are committed to complete the bridge by 2012. China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd (CHEC) and UEM Builders Bhd both had completed all the necessary preparatory works. The Chinese Embassy's economic and commercial counsellor Gao Wen Kuan said the general progress for the bridge foundation was "very good" despite facing many difficulties. "We are confident that once completed, the Second Penang Bridge will benefit the state's economic development as well as the people," he told reporters after visiting the CHEC office in Batu Maung.

He also visited the UEM casting yard in Batu Kawan and the dredging site. Also present was Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng. Lim hoped everything could be settled before Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's visit to China at the end of the month. "I won't go into details about the problems that are preventing these companies from expediting the bridge construction, as these are not within our powers to solve. "Casting work can take up to 600 days so we need to start soon if the project is to be completed on time," he said.

**Wednesday May 13, 2009**

**1,000 lowcost houses to be completed in Sarawak**

MIRI: The building of 1,000 low cost houses will be completed in Sarawak under the People's Housing Scheme in the next 18 months, said Sarawak Housing Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg. He said the Sarawak government had received a RM100 million allocation from the Federal Government for this and that the housing projects would be implemented in Kuching, Miri and Bintulu.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Vista Perdana Housing Scheme's 'open day' that was organised by Syarikat Perumahan Negara Berhad (SPNB) last Saturday, he said site preparation and piling work had already commenced for the projects concerned. He reminded contractors to ensure the projects were completed according to schedule. —Bernama.