

Monday June 1, 2009

Ministry to probe overcharging in PKFZ project

GEORGE TOWN: The Transport Ministry will look into the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project audit report and conduct a probe on over-billing as stated in the report. Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat said if the need arose, the ministry would also try to recover some of the over-charges. He said this at a press conference after welcoming passengers of AirAsia's inaugural Singapore-Penang flight at the Penang International Airport here Monday.

The Pricewaterhouse Coopers audit report highlighted that the interest on the soft loan from the Finance Ministry would increase the project outlay from RM4.947bil to RM7.453bil. It could go as high as RM12.5bil should the Port Klang Authority (PKA) default on its loan repayments in the years ahead. On another matter, he said the RM250mil budget for the expansion of the airport was an off-budget allocation by the Finance Ministry to the Malaysia Airport Holdings Bhd (MAHB).

"The main thrust of this project is the segregation for both the domestic and international passengers. "When I took over the portfolio (Transport Minister), I wanted to ensure that there was no human trafficking." He said since the expansion project was under MAHB, he had alerted them of the increasing number of flights. "I will leave it to MAHB to make further announcements. They are aware of the new air services routes."

Tuesday June 2, 2009

Extended deadline on govt projects causing unhappiness

KUANTAN: The deadline for the completion of at least 80% of government projects has to be extended, affecting time and costs and causing public unhappiness, said Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor. He said the Public Works Department should not be too lenient in giving such extension and that the Government had tried to ensure that all the work were completed as scheduled. However, he said there were constraints such as a lack of coordination among the agencies involved, approval for land matters and increased prices of construction materials. "We will try to minimise the problems," he said yesterday after opening a meeting of the department's senior officers, aimed at finding solutions towards improving the implementation of government projects.

Shaziman said there were cases of poor coordination among the parties involved in the projects but the department tend to be blamed for any weaknesses. On another matter, Shaziman said his ministry had allocated RM2mil to upgrade 10 accident-prone areas which was expected to be completed by end of this year. He said the stretches included Section 41.8 Jalan Seriting Tengah, Negri Sembilan; Section 399 Jalan Kuala Terengganu-Kuantan; Section 35.2 Jalan Kangar-Mengkuang Layar, Perlis; Section 259.5 Jalan Gua Musang-Kuala Krai, Kelantan; and Section 35.2 Jalan Damai Laut-Pantai Remis, Perak.

Tuesday June 2, 2009

Govt agencies told not impose extra conditions

BANGI: Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan has reminded all government agencies involved in processing applications, to refrain from delays by adding extra conditions through their own discretionary powers. He added that every department and agency must inculcate the culture of enforcing monitoring control on the implementation of work done within their jurisdiction to avoid any delay. Existing rules and regulations that are adequate must however, be enforced. "Go to the ground to find out the actual situation and action must be taken on those who are negligent or careless so as to ensure it won't be repeated. "However, when enforcing whatever policies or regulations, we must be firm in the implementation of such procedures but must also show fairness and display a high level of integrity," he said after opening a Convention on Enhancing Integrity and Service Delivery in Civil Service here Tuesday.

Mohd Sidek also urged civil servants to give priority to serving the public, especially when processing tenders. If self-interest precedes over public interest when providing services, naturally there will not be fairness and civil servants will fail to dispense their duties with integrity. "For example, when processing a tender or price quoted has our vested interest, maybe our family members or relatives are involved, it is for us to withdraw from processing such a tender to ensure transparency and fairness," he said.

Such ideals emphasised by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak should not only become a part of the peoples' culture, but must also be adopted by civil servants to ensure quality efficient service. Such ideals would make Malaysia a recognisable country among countries like Japan, Switzerland and Germany which are known to practice such ideals. "Countries like Switzerland, Germany and Japan are always synonymous with product quality and efficiency and we should follow them," he said. – Bernama.

Tuesday June 2, 2009

Works Ministry to probe Gong Badak stadium roof collapse (Update 4)

By R. S. N. MURALI

KUALA TERENGGANU: The roof of the just completed RM300mil Stadium Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin collapsed early Tuesday. While no one was injured and a few cars damaged, overall damage was estimated at RM35mil. Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Mansor said his ministry would have no problems working with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission over the incident. "The CIBD (Construction and Industrial Development Board) of the Ministry has been tasked to form an investigation team with certified architects to probe why this happened," he said after visiting the site Tuesday. He said that as the stadium, popularly known as the Gong Badak stadium, was just completed, the contractor, a South Korean firm, was still responsible for repair works. "This incident has sullied Malaysia's name abroad. It shouldn't have happened," he said.

Meanwhile, a sports meet involving staff of local universities starting Wednesday has been called off following the roof collapse. The frame of the roof of the 20,000-seat stadium, popularly known as the Gong Badak Stadium, came crashing down at 8am. The worst damage was at the east wing. There were no reported injuries among the 50-odd staff of the RM300mil stadium but a few cars that were parked underneath it were damaged. Police have cordoned off the roads leading to the stadium. Batu Burok assemblyman Dr Syed Azman has called on the relevant authorities to investigate the incident. The stadium was completed in the nick of time for the state to host the Malaysia Games in June last year.

 [Photo Gallery](#)



Gong Badak stadium roof collapses – Aerial view of the collapsed roof of the Gong Badak stadium. - 2 June, 2009.



A view of the collapsed section of the roof from the track of the Gong Badak stadium. - 2 June, 2009.



Firemen inspecting the collapsed roof at the Gong Badak stadium. - 2 June, 2009.



Firemen inspecting the collapsed roof at the Gong Badak stadium. - 2 June, 2009.



A view of the collapsed section of the roof from the track of the Gong Badak stadium. - 2 June, 2009.



A view of the collapsed section of the Gong Badak stadium. - 2 June, 2009.



A view of the collapsed section of the Gong Badak stadium. - 2 June, 2009.



The roof of the Gong Badak Stadium collapsed on Tuesday morning. - 2 June, 2009.



Firemen inspect a badly damaged car at the Gong Badak stadium. - 2 June, 2009.

Wednesday June 3, 2009

Workers escape in the nick of time as roof of year-old stadium collapses

By R.S.N. MURALI

KUALA TERENGGANU: Billed as the pride of the state, the RM300mil Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Gong Badak suffered a major blow when its roof collapsed yesterday – just a year after it was opened. No one was injured in the 9am incident, but the stadium, which was the venue for Sukma (Malaysian Games) last year, has been declared unsafe.



Declared unsafe: The Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium after its roof collapsed yesterday.

The damage at the east wing has been estimated at RM25mil. The impact of the collapse was so loud that an employee at the stadium thought that a plane had crashed-landed on it. "I shivered when I heard the deafening sound," stadium administration officer Noorkumarasari Jamil, 31, said. She panicked and screamed for her colleagues to leave the office as the Sultan Mahmud Airport was situated near to the stadium. Noorkumarasari said her superior directed all the employees to vacate the office and take shelter at a nearby indoor stadium.



Damaged: Workers looking at the collapsed structure of the RM300mil Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Gong Badak, Terengganu. The affected zones are the main entrance, royal podium and the public seating area.

General worker Hajjah Shafar, 32, said she was terrified when she saw the roof structure tumbling down. "I was sweeping the floor at the west wing of the stadium when the roof collapsed," she said. "I just ran for my life." Nineteen workers, mostly cleaners, were at the stadium but they managed to flee to safety.

The stadium is part of the modern Gong Badak sports complex, which was built at an initial cost of RM250mil but the amount surged by an additional RM50mil due to soaring prices of building materials. The indoor stadium, which is also part of the complex, was built at a cost of RM160mil. The roof on the stadium's left wing was ravaged after the iron frame structure supporting the 300m-long roof destabilised, causing it to fold. The affected zones were the main entrance, royal podium and the public seating area.

A Kancil car and three motorcycles were also damaged by the debris. Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Mansor, who visited the site, said the Construction and Industrial Development Board, a wing under the ministry, had been tasked to form a team comprising architects to determine the cause of the catastrophe. "It's premature to point fingers at any party, including the contractor responsible for erecting the roof structure, until the outcome of the investigation. "The stadium is still under warranty and the contractor will bear the cost of the remedial works," he said, adding that the incident had tarnished the reputation of the country. State Fire and Rescue Department director Puazan Ahmad said they received a distress call at 9.45am, and 25 personnel were sent to the site.

Wednesday June 3, 2009

MACC men begin probe

KUALA TERENGGANU: Several Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) officers were seen photographing and interviewing witnesses at the site of the collapsed roof at the Sultan Mizan Zainal Stadium in Gong Badak. Four plainclothes officers, including state MACC director Ahmad Sabri Hussin, were spotted at the site between noon and 1pm.



Potential write-off: Several firemen inspecting a car which was damaged by the collapsed roof of the stadium yesterday. — Bernama.

When approached, one officer said a probe had been initiated into the awarding and managing of the contract to a South Korean construction firm which was responsible for the work. "We are probing whether there are elements of graft and mismanagement," said the officer who requested anonymity. He said the MACC would focus its probe on the awarding process of the contract. Asked if politicians and senior government officials had been involved in the awarding of the contract, he said: "It's still premature and I don't want to elaborate on this."

Some 60% of the stadium roof collapsed and the impact severely damaged other parts of the building. Construction of the RM300mil stadium, which began in 2005, had hit a snag midway apparently due to technical glitches. The contractor was to hand over the sports complex in April last year to the state government for Sukma, which was held from May 31 to June 6, but delivery was only made a month later. In an immediate response, Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Mansor said his ministry would cooperate with the MACC and that it would be transparent, adding that it had nothing to hide. "I am more concerned about our image being sullied abroad and I welcome MACC to investigate," he said.

Batu Burok assemblyman Dr Syed Azman Syed Ahmad Nawawi said the matter was of public interest and that the MACC should centre its probe on the involvement of "high-powered individuals". Meanwhile, some 5,000 athletes representing 20 higher learning institutions who were to converge at the stadium for a sports meet had to go to a different venue at the last minute. The organiser's spokesman Zakaria Ibrahim said the event would go ahead as planned.



Wednesday June 3, 2009

Hold public inquiry, urges Navaratnam

PETALING JAYA: There should be a public inquiry into the collapse of the roof of the one-year-old Stadium Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin in Kuala Terengganu. Centre of Public Policy Studies chairman Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam said the incident was another example of a waste of public funds and poor implementation of the tender process. "It is not surprising that we have structural collapses of this kind, which thankfully did not take lives. *Prima facie*, the collapse could be due to poor structural design and construction. "This is because there is so little competition in the tendering process. It is likely that the wrong person was given the wrong job, or an under-qualified sub-contractor was employed or ill-supervised," he said. The RM300mil stadium was completed in time for Terengganu to host the Malaysia Games in June last year. Navaratnam called for the campaign against corruption to be stepped up, or public confidence in the Government would continue to be eroded and "collapse as well".

Wednesday June 3, 2009

Contractor to face music if negligence involved, says DPM

KUALA LUMPUR: The contractor of the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin stadium in Gong Badak, Terengganu, should be taken to task if it was guilty of negligence, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said yesterday. "Professional ethics come into question when new buildings collapse just like that," he told reporters after closing the Titian Gemilang Umno alumni programme at Dewan Tunku Chancellor Universiti Malaya yesterday. He was commenting on the collapsed roof of the RM300mil stadium yesterday. "Such incidents upset us," he said.

Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Said announced that the state government would commission an independent consultant, comprising architects and civil engineers to determine the cause of the incident. He said the stadium would remain out of bounds until the consultant had certified it safe. "We are eager to know the cause of such massive destruction where the roof was ravaged," he said after visiting the site in Kuala Terengganu yesterday. The state government has yet to receive any response from the South Korean contractor which was responsible for putting up the roof. "By now, I am sure the South Korean is aware of this but we have not received any call from the contractor," he said.

Ahmad also declined to comment when asked if the contractor was pressured to complete the stadium in time for Sukma last year. "The roofing works at the stadium was valued at RM38mil and they were awarded to the contractor through an open tender. "We hosted the Games only after receiving a certificate of fitness and after receiving an approval from the Public Works Department to use the stadium for sporting events," Ahmad said.

Wednesday June 3, 2009

Fear of falling water

By LIM CHIA YING

A POTENTIAL disaster is in the making at Cheras in Kuala Lumpur unless the authorities act fast to prevent it. The water tank at Taman Cantik in Cheras, located high above the ground, is rusty and one side of the wall seems to have caved in. Cheras MP Tan Kok Wai accompanied several Syabas officials on a site visit to inspect the alarming state of the tank. "This is like a tragedy waiting to happen, because what happens if the tank finally burst or collapses?" Tan said.

According to Tan, the residents have been complaining to Syabas through many calls over the past two years but no action has been taken so far.



Alarming state: The water tank at Taman Cantik in Cheras.

“This is a total disregard of public safety. In fact, just below the tank on the grassy area, an underground cavity four feet deep has formed while the soil is also giving way with half a foot width of gap between the cemented platform and the earth surface. “The water that is continuously dripping down is also weakening the floor,” he said.

The tank is said to hold 60,000 gallons of water which is supplied to 116 units in the four Taman Cantik apartment blocks and 100 link houses in the vicinity. The Syabas officials said they would inform their management about the matter and also submit three suggestions for the company to consider. “The company can either replace the tank, repair it or build a variable speed pump system that totally bypasses the use of the tank, with water directly pumped from the source to all homes,” a Syabas official said.

Meanwhile, over the last two years till now, the residents have been complaining about murky, yellowish water and sometimes go without water supply a few times a week. It is evident that after nearly 40 years since the structure was constructed, the wear and tear has taken a toll on the tank, and is in turn affecting the quality of the water. The residents said their numerous complaints to the water concessionaire had fallen on deaf years.



Filthy: The filter on the left used by a resident shows the level of the dirty water supplied to the area.

They said the tank cover was also gone, and the monkeys in the neighbourhood would play and swim in the pool of water being supplied for their daily use. During the site visit, water could be seen dripping down from one side of the wall following the cave-in. Resident Wong Wan Wa, 73, said he had been using water filters in his home since three years back on noticing that his tap water was slightly yellowish. “If it is for our consumption, my family would buy bottled water. We only use the water supply for our showers and washing,” he said.

“The thought of the monkeys bathing in the tank is disturbing but there is not much choice, is there?” Wong said. “In fact, there are times when our skin itches and we believe this is due to the water,” said Wong, who has been living in the area for the last 30 years. Another resident, Fong Ah Moi, 50, said that she had seen the downpour of water down from the tank over the last three or four months. “The wall is already soft and it poses great danger. What if it crashes down onto the whole neighbourhood here?” she said.

Thursday June 4, 2009

Pahang MB obtains stay of RM63mil court order

KUANTAN: The High Court here Thursday allowed Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob's application to postpone the payment of RM63 million judgement sum to a logging company for allegedly breaching a concession agreement. The stay takes effect until Adnan's appeal against the mandamus order issued by Justice Datuk Abd Halim Aman on April 20 is heard by the Court of Appeal. Justice Datuk V.T. Singham said that in reaching its decision, the court had to consider the fact that the paidup capital of the company, Seruan Gemilang Makmur Sdn Bhd, was only RM100 and that it had not submitted its audited accounts to the Companies Commission since 2001. "It will cost irreparable damage to the state in the event the Mentri Besar succeeds in his appeal," he said.

Before delivering the judgement, Singham revealed that two days ago a woman claiming to be Pahang Legal Adviser Datuk Mat Zara'Ai Alias's secretary had contacted him to know his decision on the matter. He said, it was the first such incident since he became a judge. Lawyer Datuk Mohammad Shafee Abdullah who represented the Mentri Besar said he was informed that Mat Zara'Ai had never instructed anyone to contact judge Singham. The company's lawyer, Karpal Singh, told reporters later that his side would study the court's decision before deciding on next course of action.

Thursday June 4, 2009

Company sues Port Klang Authority for RM148mil (Update)

By M. MAGESWARI

KUALA LUMPUR: A private company is suing the Port Klang Authority (PKA) for RM148mil over failure to pay its bill over corporate advisory services in relation to the controversial Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project. Mega-Wan Corporate Services Sdn Bhd - the plaintiff- claimed that it has been appointed by PKA to be its corporate advisor and to provide corporate advisory services to it, its subsidiaries and all associated companies pursuant to a letter of appointment dated Jan 15, 2006. The plaintiff said it undertook various tasks including providing associated services to PKA on issues and queries related to the PKFZ project.

The company claimed that it was instrumental in assisting PKA in its appeal to the Finance Ministry to obtain a RM4.6bil loan for the project. It filed the suit at the High Court civil registry here through the law firm of Messrs Nik Saghir & Ismail on Monday. It had named PKA the sole defendant in the civil action. Sources said the law firm's official had served a copy of suit to the PKA on Wednesday. The plaintiff stated it has on numerous occasions forwarded letters to the PKA requesting payments of their bill but to date no payment has been made to the defendant. It is also seeking costs and other relief deemed fit by the court. In the statement of claim, made available to the press Thursday, the plaintiff said the PKFZ, envisaged to be a high profile project with the national interest in mind, was entrusted to PKA by the Government, to turn it into a Transshipment Mega-Hub/Free Zone area mirroring the Jebel Ali Free Zone International (JAFZI) in Dubai. It further stated that PKA appointed Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB) as project developer on Feb 27, 2003 while JAFZI was appointed managers on Oct 24 with the task to conceptualise, manage and market the project.

JAFZI was also required to manage the day-to-day operations and provide the strategic development plan for the operation and development of the project. It contended that as JAFZI had no legal entity in Malaysia, it had initially operated through PKA, which made it difficult for the company to operate. Upon JAFZI's insistence, it stated that a "vehicle" was established to cater for their operational needs in managing the PKFZ project. Accordingly, the plaintiff said PKA incorporated a company known as Port Klang Free Zone Sdn Bhd (PKFZSB) on Sept 8, 2005 which it wholly owned. The company further claimed that JAFZI refused to comply and co-operate with PKA leading to various deadlock situations including JAFZI making copyright claims on PKFZSB's structure.

The plaintiff claimed that it had advised PKA to address and review the financial and general mismanagement of PKFZSB by JAFZI which included addressing the copyright claim. It had also advised and assisted PKA to review and assert their legal rights and powers under the management agreement. However, the plaintiff contended that the non-cooperation by JAFZI to comply with the defendant's instructions and requirements had eventually led to an impasse resulting in the mutual termination of the management agreement between JAFZI and PKA without any claims for compensation made by JAFZI including payment for services rendered. It claimed that the project would have turned into a major disaster for PKA, the Transport Ministry (MOF) and the nation without their involvement to handle JAFZI. "The cost to the nation/defendant which if translated into monetary terms would have been much higher than the committed approximate development cost of RM4.6bil as it would involve the payment of management fees to JAFZI for a period of 15 years, the disbursement of funds to manage PKFZSB as per JAFZI's multi-million ringgit budgets and other costs attached to the project such as interest amount payable to KDSB and MOF," the document stated. It claimed that the plaintiff's involvement in the project since December 2005 has been the most notable factor contributing to PKA's realisation of the weaknesses and disadvantages in the management agreement with JAFZI. "It was the foresight, wisdom and untiring efforts of the plaintiff which steered the defendant out of trouble and enabled it to break free from the management agreement with JAFZI, without any form of compensation," it added.

Thursday June 4, 2009

PAC to probe Terengganu stadium roof collapse

PETALING JAYA: The Public Accounts Committee will launch a probe into the roof collapse at Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium, says its deputy chairman Dr Tan Seng Giaw. "A truly independent specialist must be appointed. It must be thoroughly investigated and its report submitted to both committee and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission. "I have heard of stadiums collapsing overseas because of a stampede. "But I have never heard of a stadium collapsing on its own until now," he said.

Dr Tan said it was important to ensure such an incident did not recur in the future. "We have to find out why it collapsed and who is responsible as almost RM300mil had been spent on the stadium," . Dr Tan also urged authorities to charge those responsible for the collapse in court as "thousands could have died." Some 5,000 athletes, who were supposed to have converged at the stadium for a sports meet, had to move their event to other venues. Wanita MCA chairman Datin Paduka Chew Mei Fun called for "quick and decisive" actions against those responsible for the wreck. The companies should be blacklisted, the officials should quit and their professional licences revoked, she said.

Transparency International Malaysia president Datuk Paul Low said a commission of inquiry should be set up to probe the collapse and its proceedings telecast live. "A lot of people could have been killed. We must find out the root cause of the problem and look into the specifications of the project," he added.

Thursday June 4, 2009

Works Ministry tasked to examine selection of contractors and consultants

By ROYCE CHEAH

KUALA LUMPUR: The Cabinet has ordered a review of the procedure on the appointment of contractors and consultants following the roof collapse of the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium's roof in Gong Badak, Kuala Terengganu. The Works Ministry has been tasked to review the rules, said Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who was commenting on the roof collapse of the newly opened RM300mil stadium. Muhyiddin said the issue was discussed at length at yesterday's Cabinet meeting and it viewed the incident as something that should not have happened. "We view this very seriously. The Works Ministry will look into reviewing the rules. Going by the current situation, when we appoint a contractor, then the contractor appoints a consultant." Muhyiddin said although this was to enable more parties to take part in the contract, quality could not be compromised. "They need to look into this and tighten the rules so that it does not happen again," he said.

As for the possibility of corruption that led to the collapse of the roof, Muhyiddin said such assumptions could not be made yet. "Action against the contractor is up to the state

government,” he said, adding that it was fortunate that the incident did not take place when the stadium was in actual use. Muhyiddin also said that the stadium was officially handed over to the state government seven months ago.

The stadium is part of the modern Gong Badak sports complex, which was built at an initial cost of RM250mil but the amount surged by an additional RM50mil due to soaring prices of building materials. The indoor stadium, which is also part of the complex, was built at a cost of RM160mil. The roof on the stadium’s left wing was ravaged after the iron frame structure supporting the 300m-long roof destabilised, causing it to fold. The affected zones were the main entrance, royal podium and the public seating area.

Thursday June 4, 2009

Defects spotted during Sukma

KUALA TERENGGANU: The defects on the roof of Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium were detected last year but there was unfortunately a “lacklustre response” from the Public Works Department, said Terengganu Mentri Besar Datuk Ahmad Said. He said the defects were spotted during the opening of Malaysian Games (Sukma) and the state PWD was alerted about it. “I don’t intend to blame anyone for Tuesday’s catastrophe but then it could have been prevented if the PWD had acted without delay,” he said yesterday.

Ahmad said he had chaired several meetings with PWD officials and told them to expedite the remedial works. He said he contacted the state PWD deputy director just three weeks ago to remind him about the flaws, voicing concerns that deficiency in the roof structure might cause. Ahmad said he was told that the PWD had summoned the main contractor responsible for the roofing works only two weeks ago.

The Armed Forces, he said, also reported that the structure was unstable when they attempted to abseil from the roof during the opening ceremony of the stadium last year. He said the servicemen resorted to using a helicopter service during the performance after discovering that the structure could give way if they were to rappel from the roof frame. The Terengganu Government has ordered the PWD to immediately inspect the state’s iconic structures which were completed between 2007 and 2008.

They are the Sultan Mahmud International Airport, the aquatic centre in Batu Burok which houses an Olympic-size swimming pool, and the indoor stadium in Gong Badak. Speaking after chairing the state exco meeting, Ahmad said the state government wanted the PWD to ensure the contractors had adhered to the specifications. “We do not want see a recurrence of Tuesday’s disgraceful chapter, particularly at the RM123mil Sultan Mahmud Airport terminal where there is heavy human traffic,” he said.

Ahmad revealed that he had personally spotted defects on the airport roof which required immediate remedial works. “The finishing at the airport looks shoddy,” he said.

Thursday June 4, 2009

Roof-collapse stadium only had a partial cert

KUALA TERENGGANU: The Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium was issued a partial work completion certificate last year as it was considered safe to host Sukma. The state Public Works Department has now declared that it would demand for compensation and remedial work from the main contractor following Tuesday's collapse of the roof. State PWD deputy director Ghazali Hashim said the certification, based on the authentication provided by an independent examiner, was given to several sections of the stadium including the track, field and certain areas outside the building. "However, we had not issued any certification for the roof as it was still under the warranty period," he said.

Because a local consultant commissioned to evaluate the safety of the roof had declared it safe, he said: "So, we allowed the Games to be held at the venue." Ghazali, who accompanied Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek on a site visit yesterday, said the department was only empowered to issue a work completion certificate once the warranty period had ended. He also said government buildings were exempted from needing the Certificate of Fitness before the premises were occupied.

Raja Datuk Kamarul Bahrin Shah of Senibahri Arkitek, the principal architect of the stadium, said he might comment on the incident in a few days. "I can't say anything now as I do not have the full facts," he said when contacted in Medinah where he is on his way to perform the umrah. He is expected to return on June 10.

Thursday June 4, 2009

Guan Eng: Check Malacca stadium first

GEORGE TOWN: Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng has instructed state Youth, Sports, Women, Family and Community Development Committee chairman Lydia Ong Kok Fooi to inspect a stadium in Malacca before sending Penang athletes there for the Sukma next year. "We have to make sure that the stadium is safe as we do not want to risk the lives of our athletes. "If the stadium is found to pose any danger, then we would not be sending our athletes to participate in the event," he told a press conference after launching the slogan and billboard countdown for Sukma XIII Malacca 2010.

Lim was commenting on the collapse of the roof of Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Gong Badak on Tuesday. In Petaling Jaya, the Malaysian Institute of Engineers has voiced concern over current newspaper comments about the collapse of Jaya Supermarket and the stadium roof collapse. The institute said that such reports might be misleading as proper investigations had yet to be done.

Thursday June 4, 2009

Ong: Team drawing up plan to aid PKFZ's recovery

PETALING JAYA: A road map leading to the recovery of Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) is in progress, said Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat. He said a team of professionals and entrepreneurs were working on the plan. They would provide their views and expertise on how to bring the port back on track. Ong said the ministry and Port Klang Authority (PKA) would put in place a series of action plans to lessen the burden on taxpayers in the weeks and months ahead. "When billions of ringgit and the future of our children are at stake, we should take this situation very seriously and make wise decisions based on the best input available from relevant parties," Ong said in his blog.

He said he would continue to update the public on the plan, adding that he welcomed constructive ideas from the Opposition. Ong updated his blog from Beijing, China, yesterday where he is accompanying Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on a four-day official visit. He chided DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang for not reading his blog or the newspapers, saying: "Lim asked me for the way forward when I have clearly spelt out that PKA will act on four fronts based on the findings, on the very day the report was released." "It will save the people a lot of time not to repeat ourselves for the benefit of self-serving politicians," he said.

Commenting on the Opposition's invitation for him to attend a forum to respond to questions asked by the public related to the port, Ong said he would not spend time on fruitless public debates that would not help to solve the problems. "Public debates are the Opposition's obvious idea of resolving all the country's ills," he said.

Thursday June 4, 2009

MB disagrees with Kit Siang's call to sell PKFZ

By WANI MUTHIAH

SHAH ALAM: The Selangor Government does not want the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) to be sold off because it is an asset to the state. Mentri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim said the state government was supportive of the zone for various reasons. He added that having the zone would encourage companies in the state to trade globally. "It will also encourage the establishment of factories given its tax-free status and this will increase job opportunities," he told a press conference after chairing the weekly exco meeting yesterday.

Khalid's statement contradicted DAP chairman Lim Kit Siang's recent suggestion that the zone be sold off and the Port Klang Authority liquidated to recover losses. Asked if the state still wanted to take over the zone, Khalid said: "The state can take over provided the excess development costs are written off." Khalid said the Federal Government must take it upon itself to write off the excesses. He also said that the state government would appoint an exco member to sit on the Port Klang Authority's board.

Friday June 5, 2009

Muhyiddin calls for audit of school facilities

KENINGAU (Sabah): Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has called for a comprehensive audit of the school facilities required nationwide, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak. Muhyiddin, who is also the education minister, said he had instructed the director-general of education to head the audit process that involved about 10,000 schools.

The audit was important to ensure effective implementation of the various educational development projects, including physical and basic facilities, he told reporters after launching the Sabah Teachers Day celebrations at the Datuk Lee Sen Hall at the Sekolah Menengah Ken Hua, here. "We want to identify the school facilities or equipment required in every district in the country, so as to facilitate the ministry's plans which will be included in the budget for the 10th Malaysia Plan (2011-2015). "An audit has been done but I want to make it thorough," he said.

On the delay in the construction of several secondary schools in the country, Muhyiddin said one of the major factors was the problem of acquiring suitable land. However, he said, the ministry was working at ways to resolve the problem. Asked to comment on a proposal by the Education Ministry to introduce a new system of evaluation to gauge the capability of students, Muhyiddin said students' performance was evaluated on their involvement in both curricular and co curricular activities. "We used to give importance to exam-oriented performance but now we want to have well-rounded students," he said. - Bernama

Friday June 5, 2009

Advisory company sues Port Klang Authority for RM148mil

KUALA LUMPUR: The controversial Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project was in the news again when a private company sued the Port Klang Authority (PKA) for RM148mil for failing to pay its bill for corporate advisory services. Mega-Wan Corporate Services Sdn Bhd claimed that it was appointed by PKA to provide corporate advisory services to it, its subsidiaries and all associated companies on Jan 15, 2006. The plaintiff said it undertook various works, which included providing associated services to PKA on issues related to the PKFZ project. It claimed that it was instrumental in assisting PKA in its appeal to the Finance Ministry to obtain a loan for RM4.6bil for the PKFZ project.

In its statement of claim filed at the High Court civil registry here, the plaintiff stated that PKFZ is a project entrusted to the PKA by the Government. Envisaged as a high-profile project with national interests in mind, PKFZ was slated to be a Transshipment Mega-Hub/Free Zone area mirroring the Jebel Ali Free Zone International (JAFZI) in Dubai. It stated that PKA appointed Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd (KDSB) as the developer for the project on Feb 27, 2003 while JAFZI was appointed as the managers for the project on Oct 24, 2003 with the task to conceptualise, manage and market the project. It contended that JAFZI had no legal entity in Malaysia and had initially operated through PKA.

Upon JAFZI's insistence, it stated that a "vehicle" was established to cater for their operational needs in managing the PKFZ project. Accordingly, the plaintiff said PKA incorporated a company known as Port Klang Free Zone Sdn Bhd (PKFZSB) on Sept 8, 2005, which is wholly owned by PKA. The company claimed that JAFZI refused to co-operate with PKA, which led to various deadlocks including JAFZI making copyright claims on the structures of PKFZSB. The plaintiff stated that it advised PKA to review and assert their legal rights under the management agreement. It contended that the impasse resulted in the mutual termination of the agreement.

Saturday June 6, 2009

Audit on stadiums for next Sukma games

JITRA: The Youth and Sports Ministry is to obtain an audit report from the Malacca government on the safety of the stadiums and sports complexes to be used for the 13th Malaysia Games (Sukma) to be hosted by the state next year. Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek said the ministry wanted an audit to be conducted although the stadiums and sports complexes in the state had been in use for a long time. He said the audit was a new measure introduced by the ministry to ensure the safety of athletes and spectators during sports events.

"From now on, the ministry will seek regular audit reports on stadiums and sports complexes in terms of safety, cleanliness and facilities. "The management of the stadiums and sports complexes are reminded to conduct the audit and provide facilities according to acceptable standards," he told reporters after the National Youth Day celebrations in Kedah on Friday night. On Wednesday, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng had said that the state would withdraw from the Sukma in Malacca if the stadiums and sports complexes were unsafe for use.

Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam said the Hang Jebat Stadium complex in Kerubong, the main venue of the games, was strong and had been in use since September 2004, even for several international sports meets. The question of the safety of stadiums arose following the collapse of a section of the roof of the yearold RM270million Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Gong Badak, Kuala Terengganu, on Tuesday. – Bernama.

Saturday June 6, 2009

Stadium roof collapse report ready in a month

KUALA LUMPUR: The initial report on the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium roof collapse in Terengganu is expected to be ready in a month, said Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor. The full report would be presented to the Cabinet in six months by an independent committee tasked with the investigation, he added.

"It will identify the causes of the collapse but will not pinpoint who is at fault. It will also submit a recommendation on the repair work," he told reporters when visiting SMK Setapak Indah that had cracks due to subsiding soil yesterday. — Bernama.

Saturday June 6, 2009

Registered surveying company

THE Star has been informed by MAA Associates yesterday that it is a registered quality surveying company and not an architecture firm involved in the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium project in Gong Badak, Terengganu.

Sunday June 7, 2009

Port Klang Authority ready to face anything, says chairman

BY CHRISTINA TAN

SHAH ALAM: Port Klang Authority (PKA) is prepared to face all eventualities including legal action from any party, board chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng said. He said PKA would do whatever it could to defend itself in the interest of the people. "Port Klang Authority is not my company; it is a federal agency. I will carry out my duty with the best of my ability because I am representing the Federal Government and the money comes from taxpayers," he said on Sunday, when asked to comment about a possible lawsuit by Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, the developer for the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ). The company's deputy chief executive officer Datuk Faizal Abdullah was quoted as saying on Saturday that the report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) was baseless and had affected the reputation of the company, which was planning to file a suit this week. Lee said he could not comment further till he received details on the suit. Asked whether he felt the PwC report was reliable, Lee said: "PKA is ready to accept challenges from any party."

On the Selangor government's request to have its exco in the PKA, Lee said the port authority did not require more than one representative from the state. He said the Transport Ministry had renewed the contract of Selangor state Economic Planning Unit (Upem) director Datuk Noordin Sulaiman, who is also the state deputy secretary (development), as one of the PKA directors. Noordin's term expired early this year. He has been PKA director for the last two years. Lee said the Selangor always had its state deputy secretary in PKA and "the practice continues till now." "For me, there is no need for an exco to be in PKA. I'm an accountant by profession, I was a chairman of a public-listed logistic company before I resigned. I know the business well."

Lee said the Selangor government also had a representative in PKFZ - Norazmie Biron, who is Upem committee member. Meanwhile, Selangor Mentri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim said the state should have a seat in PKA because that person could provide direct input compared to someone from Upem. This, he said, was not something new because the

previous government used to have its exco in PKA. "Now with the PKFZ issue, it is better to put an exco there so that they can make decisions faster and have better communication between PKA and the state government."

Sunday June 7, 2009

Tuanku Mizan upset with stadium incident, says MB

By R.S.N. MURALI

KUALA TERENGGANU: Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin is disappointed over last Tuesday's roof collapse of the stadium in Gong Badak named after him. Mentri Besar Datuk Ahmad Said, who sought an audience with the King to brief him about the mishap, said Tuanku Mizan was unhappy with the incident. Ahmad met Tuanku Mizan on two occasions, once on the same day the mishap occurred; and again Friday when he produced photographs of the devastation at the stadium. "His Highness seemed sad and disappointed over the mishap," he said after accompanying police on a crime prevention round at the city centre on Friday night.

Tuanku Mizan had opened the RM300mil stadium, with a seating capacity of 50,000 on May 10 last year — just weeks before Terengganu hosted Sukma 2008. The stadium is touted to be the biggest in the east coast and was the first in Asia to be equipped with a roof shaped like a turtle. Ahmad said Tuanku Mizan was also upset with the extent of damage at the stadium. He said the state is willing to make public the outcome of the probe conducted by Public Works Department. "We will release the final report so that those responsible (in the construction and maintenance) will not be able to repeat such blunder."

Ahmad said the state is ready to help the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission in its probe into the collapse. "So far, the commission has not contacted me or my officers on this, but we will be transparent and divulge all crucial information regarding the stadium if we are asked to do so."

Sunday June 7, 2009

Ministry wants safety audit of Sukma venues in Malacca

JITRA: The Youth and Sports Ministry will obtain an audit report from the Malacca Government on the safety of the stadiums and sports complexes to be used for the 13th Malaysia Games (Sukma). Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek said the ministry wanted an audit to be conducted though the stadiums and sports complexes in the state had been in use for a long time. The games are to be held in the state next year. Shabery said the audit was a new measure introduced by the ministry to ensure the safety of athletes and spectators during sports events. "From now on, the ministry will seek regular audit reports on stadiums and sports complexes in terms of safety, cleanliness and facilities. "The management of the stadiums and sports complexes are reminded to conduct the audit and

provide facilities according to acceptable standards,” he told reporters after the National Youth Day celebrations in Kedah on Friday night.

On Wednesday, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng said the state would withdraw from Sukma if the stadiums and sports complexes were unsafe for use. Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam said the Hang Jebat Stadium complex in Kerubong, which will be the main venue of the games, was stable and had been in use since September 2004. The question of the safety of stadiums arose following the collapse of a section of the roof of the year-old RM270mil Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Gong Badak, Kuala Terengganu, on Tuesday. — Bernama.

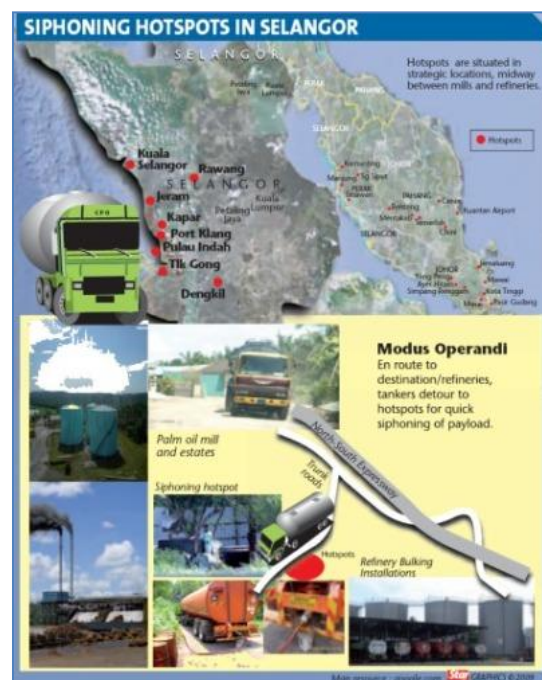
Monday June 8, 2009

Secret depots siphoning off billions of ringgit in CPO

By ELAN PERUMAL and STUART MICHAEL



PETALING JAYA: Crude palm oil worth billions of ringgit is being siphoned off by syndicates while being transported from mills to refineries. The culprits involved in the racket include tanker drivers, depot operators and transporters. Between 100 litres and 200 litres are siphoned off from each tanker which transports about 40 tonnes of crude palm oil per trip. The drivers are paid between RM100 and RM200 per operation depending on the quantity of oil siphoned from the tankers.



The amount siphoned off is replaced with liquid such as water, used oil or sludge so the end-buyer would not realise the theft. The hotspots in the Klang Valley where the siphoning is rampant include Kuala Selangor, Rantau Panjang in Port Klang, Dengkil, Jeram, Kapar, Rawang and Klang. Beyond that, the active areas include Gambang, Temerloh, Mentakab, Johor Baru, Segamat, Yong Peng, Mersing, Simpang Renggam, Kota Tinggi, Senai, Masai, Kamunting, Manjung, Sitiawan, Sungai Siput, Bahau, Batu Kikir and Tampin.

Crude palm oil is mainly exported for production of items such as cooking oil, non-dairy creamer, condensed milk, butter and margarine. Statistics provided by the Malaysian Palm Oil Board revealed that the thefts costs the industry RM325mil in losses in 2008. With the crude palm oil price averaging at RM2,600 per tonne now, the extent of losses is this year expected to match last year's figure. Over 20 transporters are said to be operating 1,500 tankers moving crude palm oil. Most people do not suspect anything amiss when they see tankers going off the road and heading to "depots" in plantations or villages, where the siphoning takes place.



Oil thieves at work: Workers transferring oil from a stationary tank into a small lorry at the 'depot' in Jalan Rantau Panjang in Klang, while inset shows a worker sitting on top of a tanker with black netting obscuring the view of passing motorists from watching the siphoning activities.

The "depots" are manned by men who look like foreign workers. Outside, along the main road, other men move in cars and keep watch. A *StarProbe* team tracked the movements of several tankers for more than two weeks to uncover the theft. Most of the "depots" have two access routes — an entrance and exit. Some of these "depots" are said to be operated by small-time transporters. The team also found that some of the "depots" operated into the late hours of the night under bright spotlights. At these "depots", workers used tubes and mini motors — similar to those used in fish aquariums — to siphon the crude palm oil into plastic buckets and drums. The thieves were also seen tampering with the oil seals at the back of the tankers.

After the siphoning is completed, the workers were seen pouring liquid believed to be water, sludge and used cooking oil, into the tankers. At one such “depot” in Kuala Selangor, the team recorded seven tankers, including four laden with crude palm oil, entering and then exiting from the site half an hour later. The siphoning process takes only between five and 10 minutes. Up to 200 litres of crude palm oil can be siphoned in that time. One “depot” in Jalan Rantau Panjang in Klang was fully covered with zinc hoarding and later put up dark nets when the thieves realised their illegal activities were visible from a flyover along the Shapadu Highway. Another “depot” located off Jalan Kem in Port Klang was strategically located in an industrial lot away from the main road.

The *StarProbe* checks revealed that between 10 and 40 tankers patronised the “depots.” The “depot operators” pay the drivers about 50% of the market price for the crude palm oil which amounted between RM100 and RM200 per trip. A “depot” can make up to RM4,000 daily from the sales of the siphoned crude palm oil. That works out to almost RM1.5mil a year.

Monday June 8, 2009

Jetty project gets RM2.8mil more for revival

THE Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Ministry has allocated an additional RM2.8mil so that the Kuala Sanglang Fisheries Development Authority (LKIM) jetty project in Kedah can be revived after it was abandoned last year. Deputy Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry Minister Datuk Mohd Johari Baharum pic said the allocation was for ground-work and the construction of the jetty terminal. “The RM1.2mil project, which started in September 2007, was supposed to be completed at the end of last year. “However, due to technical problems, the project came to halt in March last year,” he explained.

“A study by Kumpulan IKRAM Sdn Bhd showed that the soil at the site was too soft and needed to be hardened before construction work can begin. “The project was put on hold after an inspection showed that the underground level at the site was not stable and had damaged the concrete structure including the breakwater,” he said when met at the site in Kuala Sanglang, 20km from Alor Setar, yesterday. Accompanying him were LKIM director-general Datuk Mustaffa Ahmad and Kedah LKIM director Mohd Noor Had. Mohd Johari said that with the allocation, the ministry hoped that the project would start in August and be completed by the end of next year. “The jetty will be used by more than 50 fishermen including those from nearby estuaries to land their catch and buy fuel for their boats. “We are expecting a total of two metric tonnes of fish to be landed at the new jetty each day,” he added.

Tuesday June 9, 2009

New licensing rules to monitor tanker movement

PETALING JAYA: The movement of all the 1,500 tankers transporting crude palm oil (CPO) from the mills to refineries in the country will be closely monitored via a new licensing regulation. Once the proposed regulations are imposed, tankers not licensed by the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) will not be allowed to transport the raw palm oil. Board director-general Datuk Dr Mohd Basri Wahid said transporters who were found to be involved in stealing CPO would also be barred from transporting it. "We are determined to put a stop to this as it has tarnished the name of the industry and the country, considering we are the world's biggest exporter of palm oil and our products are consumed by countries like the United States, Europe, Japan, China and India. "Therefore, the transporters must take responsibility for the actions of their drivers and pay the price if their tankers are involved in the illegal activity," he said in response to the Starprobe's front-page article yesterday under the heading "Oil pirates".

Starprobe exposed that billions of ringgit worth of CPO were being siphoned by syndicates while being transported from the mills to refineries. "We will work closely with the millers and refineries to ensure that all tankers are licensed by the MPOB. This way, the transporters will be more alert to the movement of their tankers so as to prevent them from stopping at unscheduled places for the CPO to be siphoned," he added. Basri said that currently, transporters were licensed by the Commercial Vehicle Licensing Board (CVLB) and the MPOB had no control over the tankers. He hoped the new ruling would be approved by the Government soon. The board, he said, was also planning to make it compulsory for all CPO tankers to be equipped with the Global Positioning System for easy monitoring purposes.

Tuesday June 9, 2009

Firm tracks drivers to curb palm oil theft

By ELAN PERUMAL

PETALING JAYA: The theft of crude palm oil (CPO) in the country is alarming, forcing industry players to come up with their own mechanism to contain the problem. The Sidhu Brothers Group, which has been in the business of transporting CPO for more than 30 years, seems to have come up with a formula to deal with the siphoning of CPO – which takes place between the time the commodity is transported from the mill to the refinery.



Movement tracker: An FMS device installed in the cab of a CPO tanker has saved thousands for at least one transport company.

The company, which has been using the Fleet Management System (FMS) since February last year to track the route of its drivers, has managed to resolve the CPO theft problem. Its

commercial director Jimmy Sidhu said the introduction of the FMS had enabled the company to save RM36,000 a month, as previously the transporter had to bear the cost if there was a shortage of CPO when their oil tankers reached the various refineries. Sidhu said the firm also had to deal with a 10% increase in fuel cost if some of these oil tankers head for the “hot spots”, normally located in the suburbs. “The FMS system allows us to track rogue drivers. So far, we have traced 108 cases of CPO theft and terminated the services of 18 drivers,” Sidhu told the Starprobe team in an interview.

The company, which has a fleet of 80 oil tankers, transports an average of 3,000 tonnes of CPO daily. The FMS is a modified system from British company Minorplanet plc and is supplied locally by CSE Multimedia Technologies Sdn Bhd. The system marks the date and time the tankers enter a hot spot and how long they stop at rest areas and eating shops. Sidhu said the system also allowed the company to locate more than 70 hot spots in the peninsula where CPO siphoning was rampant. There is a “panic button” installed near the driver’s seat in every oil tanker which enables the driver to alert headquarters if the tankers are hijacked or experiencing any difficulty. “When our oil tankers go off the original route and head to one of the hot spots, the FMS system will detect it, so the drivers know the risks they are taking if they work with syndicates to steal CPO,” said Sidhu. He urged the Government to give incentives to transport companies to curb CPO theft such as exemption from vehicle insurance or road tax.