

Wednesday June 10, 2009

Insulated containers expensive and low quality, says fish importers

BUKIT KAYU HITAM : The high cost and low quality of insulated fish containers and expensive handling charges were reasons why fish importers and transport agents in the country refused to use insulated fish containers, said Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister Datuk Noh Omar. Noh said the reasons were identified during a dialogue to find why fish importers refused to use the system that was introduced in September 2006. "According to importers, the price of such containers sold here were very expensive when compared with those sold in Thailand. For example, a 100kg box costs RM165 in Thailand but sold at RM205 here.

"Furthermore, importers also lacked funds to buy new containers as they had invested big amounts to buy those being used now. Charges imposed for handling such boxes had also doubled up," said Noh after meeting fish importers and their transport agents at the Fish Inspection Complex of the Malaysian Fisheries Board here on Tuesday.

Noh said the ministry would try ways and means to find a solution to the long standing issue, including discussing the matter with the manufacturers to improve the quality of such boxes and at the same time reduce the price, at least to match that of those sold in Thailand. For importers who face financial problems, the ministry would discuss with the Agro Bank to provide special loans to buy the boxes, he said.

He added that once all the problems were ironed out, the ministry would make it compulsory for fish importers to use insulated fish containers to import fish from Indonesia and Thailand. – Bernama.

Thursday June 11, 2009

Task force on PKFZ to recommend 'cures' for project

KUALA LUMPUR: The task force and committees which were formed in connection with the Port Klang Free Zone issue is to recommend "cures" for the project and not conduct probes, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat said. Clarifying certain media reports, Ong said: "We have had enough of investigations and that is why we came up with the PKFZ reports." "The people named in the list which I announced are to find a solution and chart the way forward for PKFZ," he told reporters at his constituency service centre in Taman Muda in Cheras here on Thursday.

His announcement on Wednesday, he added, was a follow-up to his statements made on May 28 after the release of the PKFZ audit report to the public. "At that time, I promised and said all weaknesses and misappropriation would be followed up independently and the entrusted parties would find the cure or the solution via the admission that has been done to the Port Klang committee. "I made the promise and now I am carrying it out," he said, adding that the "road map to a new lease of life" should be ready in two months.

Ong said certain quarters had become confused by saying the task force and corporate governance committee formed by the Port Klang Authority as well as the Port Klang Free Zone executive committee were entrusted to investigate the matter. On DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang's criticisms on the handling of the PKFZ issue, Ong said: "He is barking up the wrong tree. I have been instrumental in getting the report released with the approval by the Cabinet and not Kit Siang."

When told that the Opposition was expected to raise the issue in Parliament, Ong said they could raise it anywhere and not just in Parliament. Meanwhile, the Public Accounts Committee said it would call the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to its meeting next Wednesday over the PKFZ investigations. PAC chairman Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid said PAC would also give its feedback to MACC after calling PKA officials and Pricewaterhouse Coopers auditors. Although the PAC had no power to investigate, it would work together with MACC, he said.

"PAC wants MACC to carry out a thorough investigation to determine the necessary action to be taken next," he said after chairing the two-day meeting. PKA board chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng, who appeared before the PAC, said the PKFZ report would be available online (<http://www.pkfznews.com.my/download-pka-report>) until nobody wanted to read it. "The public can also post their questions related to PKFZ and a team of officers, including myself, will answer them as soon as possible," said Lee, adding that 11 questions had been posted and answered.

Thursday June 11, 2009

Task force and two panels to act on PKFZ report

By ROYCE CHEAH, NG CHENG YEE and BEH YUEN HUI

PUTRAJAYA: The Government has set up a special task force and two committees to seriously deal with issues arising from the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) audit report, with one of the committees being headed by anti-corruption body Transparency International Malaysia. Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat said the Port Klang Authority (PKA) task force was formed together with a PKA ad hoc corporate governance committee and a PKFZ executive committee. "The PKA task force has been given two months to give its

recommendations on how to right the wrongs and pursue appropriate legal remedies,” Ong said.

When asked if the results from the task force would eventually lead to long drawn-out legal battles, Ong said it was not fair to pre-judge the matter at this juncture. According to a statement by PKA, the task force is to be headed by senior lawyer Vinayak Pradhan, from legal firm Skrine. He is to be assisted by Skrine partner Lim Chee Wee, PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Services (PwCAS) managing director Chin Kwai Fatt and PwCAS senior executive director Lim San Peen.

Ong also said he would not engage in a tit-for-tat with the Opposition, which had been harping on a number of issues surrounding the PKFZ project. “A new website, www.pkfznews.com.my, will address all these questions.” Ong said the website would be completely transparent in addressing all questions. A check on the website showed that a number of questions raised by various quarters were answered there.

“There should be no apprehensions. “I understand that the whole nation is watching the development as it unfolds. We are mindful that we must act in the best interest of the people,” Ong told a press conference yesterday. Asked whether this meant the ministry was serious in taking action against those responsible for the escalating cost, Ong said the ministry would have to work within its jurisdiction.

The PKA ad hoc corporate governance committee, led by TI-M president Datuk Paul Low, would put in place a long-term control mechanism to ensure the PKA board and management follow good governance rules and regulations. The PKFZ executive committee meanwhile is to be headed jointly by PKA chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng and Chartered Institute of Marketing Malaysia president Tan Sri Dr James Alfred. It has been tasked with reviving the PKFZ, which may see its initial cost of about RM2bil escalate to a much higher amount due to interest charges.

Lee said the only cost involved in setting up the committees and task force would be professional fees to be paid to those in the task force. “Those in the committees would only be getting meeting allowances,” he said, adding that it would take two weeks to decide on the terms of reference for the task force. In Kuala Lumpur, Bernama reports that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) queried the PKA yesterday over the escalating cost of the PKFZ project.

Its deputy chairman Dr Tan Seng Giaw said the PAC had set aside two days to enable PKA officials to shed light on the fiasco. “We want to know who decided to ignore the Attorney-General’s recommendation that the land in Pulau Indah should be acquired by the Government,” he told reporters after meeting PKA officials.



Thursday June 11, 2009

PKFZ and the public's right to know

COMMENT By WONG CHUN WAI

It had not been easy for the Transport Minister as several personalities named in the report included former MCA leaders and other powerful figures. In short, many regarded Ong's decision as politically incorrect as he would ruffle feathers but the MCA president has decided to push on, insisting that what is right would be more important than what is politically right. The report has already been submitted to the Malaysian Anti Corruption Commission, which said it had completed its preliminary findings. The press has highlighted the issue and as the pressure is being exerted, at least two newspapers have received letters from legal firms.

The impression given, rightly or wrongly, is that attempts are made to shut up the media. But the press has a duty to pursue this case because it involves the loss of billions of ringgit belonging to taxpayers. We would be failing in our responsibilities if the report is allowed to gather dust, forgotten and dismissed. The public expects those who are responsible for the fiasco to be booked, if there is any criminal element, and if it was pure negligence, the people want to know how this could have happened. Many of those named and not named

have plenty to answer to. So far, none has done so except former Port Klang Authority chairman Datuk Chor Chee Heung.

The Deputy Finance Minister said the PKFZ fiasco has taught him one lesson — that one should not simply accept any job offer. He had accepted the post as part of “national service” but he said he was being held responsible for “something which happened a long time ago.” “I wish to assure everyone that I never deviated from my moral standard and accountability. One thing I have learned from this is that I will be more prudent and not simply accept any job offers.”

Chor has made two statements and his remarks to the press was his third. Most have opted to remain silent, probably on the advice of their battery of lawyers. Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, the chief executive officer of Wijaya Baru Holdings, has also spoken to a Chinese newspaper. The Barisan Backbenchers Club chairman has denied becoming rich by raking in the people’s money, saying he had disposed of 45% of Wijaya Baru shares of RM157mil on Dec 7, 1999. He also said his company was considering taking legal action against certain individuals and not PKA.

But as the nation waits to see how the MACC and the relevant authorities will act, the Transport Ministry has taken the right steps of forming a Special Task Force and two committees to take immediate actions based on the findings of the report. Qualified personalities who are lawyers, accountants, quantity surveyors and building cost consultants have been named with PKA nominating senior lawyer Vinayak Pradhan from Skrine, one of the most reputable law firms in Malaysia. A committee of corporate governance to be led by Datuk Paul Low, the Transparency International Malaysia president, has also been set up. It will be tasked with putting in place long term control mechanisms. At PKFZ level, an executive committee has been named to look at cost effectiveness and transparency.

These measures are unprecedented and certainly in line with the reforms carried out by the Prime Minister. Such proactive measures, initiated by Ong, will go a long way in helping to fulfil the Government’s commitment to integrity and accountability. The PKA has take the right step in setting up a website to answer questions relating to the PKFZ issue, as proper and accurate information is essential. The public has the right to know what are the actions that have been taken and the updates on the issue as it involves their money. At the end of the day, politicians must be answerable to the public — that is the only right thing to do.

Thursday June 11, 2009

TI welcomes PKFZ role

PUTRAJAYA: Transparency International Malaysia has hailed the move to involve the non-governmental organisation with the Port Klang Authority (PKA) as a historic milestone. Its president, Datuk Paul Low, said the NGO's appointment as PKA's corporate governance committee chair would allow the NGO to implement the world's best practices. "We have to introduce a system of checks and balances. For example, a code of ethics or conduct relating to conflict of interests would need to be put in," he said when asked how they would approach the audit report on the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ).

Low said the NGO's experience would help to make PKA a model government agency. Chartered Institute of Marketing Malaysia president Tan Sri Dr James Alfred, who co-chairs the executive committee tasked with turning around the PKFZ, said it was going to be a tough job. "We will be meeting twice a month to discuss how to market and sell PKFZ to investors." When asked how the committee would approach the situation, considering the low tenancy in PKFZ and the general outlook by investors, Dr Alfred said: "We will have to erase the bad view that investors have and tell them we are starting with a clean slate." He said reviving the PKFZ project was also important in the sense that it would be providing job opportunities to future generations.

In Petaling Jaya, Centre of Public Policy Studies (Asli) chairman Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam said he was glad that the post-mortem of the PKFZ project was taken seriously by the formation of the three bodies. "However, there must be concrete follow-up actions based on the recommendations made by the committees."

Ramon, who is also the former Transparency International chairman, expressed his approval of Low's appointment. He also urged the Government to form a royal commission of inquiry to look into the PKFZ report as it would provide a more thorough investigation into the issue. Bar Council president Ragunath Kesavan said an independent inquiry should also be considered because the inquiry would be able to compel Transport Ministry officials to testify before a court. Institute of Corporate Responsibility Malaysia deputy chairman John Zinkin said the formation of the special task force was a wise decision as investors, both local and foreign, would need to know that the Government was taking this seriously.

Malaysian Associated Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry president Datuk K.K. Eswaran said whoever was responsible should face the consequences as soon as possible. "It's all taxpayers' funds and if there is any misuse of funds, whoever is caught should be taken to task." National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia president Syed Ali Alattas said the minister has taken the right steps.

Thursday June 11, 2009

Scandal brewing over contracts

By ELAN PERUMAL

THE Selangor government is embroiled in a brewing scandal over the issue of awarding waste management contracts in the state. Allegations are being made that the local authorities are awarding the contracts based on a quota system to accommodate the three Pakatan Rakyat coalition parties of PAS, DAP and the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR). It is alleged that contractors aligned with the PKR have been given 40% of the share while those associated with the DAP and PAS get 30% each.

StarMetro had reported on the matter last week under the headline *Contracts are given on merit, says Liu*, quoting state local government, studies and research committee chairman Ronnie Liu as denying that the state had such a quota system. Petaling Jaya councillor A. Thiruvenggam had alleged that the state had awarded the Alam Flora waste management contracts based on the political connection of the contractors. "They have done so by dividing the Alam Flora contracts into 40% for the PKR, 30% for PAS and 30% for the DAP and this is wrong and against good governance practices and will lead to corruption," Thiruvenggam said.

He claimed that most of the councillors in Selangor were taken by surprise when told about this contract arrangement between the parties. Following Thiruvenggam's allegation, the Selangor Umno Youth had taken up the matter to the state Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC). According to Selangor Umno Youth chief Suhaimi Mohd Ghazali, they have enough reasons to suspect that there was lack of transparency on the awarding of contracts by the state government. "We have urged the MACC to investigate thoroughly the councillor's allegations as we believe there is truth to his claims," he said. "Thiruvenggam is a councillor appointed by the Pakatan Rakyat and it is obvious that he knows what he is talking about. "I believe that there is no transparency in the way the contracts are awarded," Suhaimi said.

Petaling Jaya Utara MP and DAP national publicity secretary Tony Pua, meanwhile, has issued a press statement demanding that the Pakatan Rakyat-led Selangor government investigate and dispel the allegations of contracts being offered based on political patronage. Pua said the state must promote competitive and transparent tenders for public services. He said the DAP viewed with serious concerns the allegation by Thiruvenggam and wanted the state executive council to immediately investigate the veracity of his claims which posed serious credibility threats to the Pakatan Rakyat state government. Pua urged state infrastructure and public amenities committee chairman Datuk Dr Hassan Mohd Ali, who is responsible for the Alam Flora waste management services, to confirm or deny the allegations. "The allegations, if true, will put us on a slippery slope to become a government which condones patronage and cronyism, no different from the Barisan Nasional," he said.

“However, if the allegations are found to be false or misguided, then Thiruvenggam must apologise for his allegations,” . Pua said the DAP strongly condemned all political patronage practices in the awarding of public services contracts. When contacted, Liu reaffirmed and reiterated his earlier statement that there was no truth in the allegations made by Thiruvenggam. Liu said if the allegations were true, it would not be possible for those aligned with Umno to be awarded contracts under the Pakatan Rakyat state rule. “Many Umno contractors are getting contracts from the local authorities now and this would never happen if the contracts are awarded on a quota system to Pakatan parties,” he said.

Friday June 12, 2009

MACC to talk to former exco men over Terengganu stadium roof collapse

By R.S.N. MURALI

KUALA TERENGGANU: At least three former state executive councillors and senior officials from the state Public Works Department will be among those to be summoned by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) to facilitate investigations into the Stadium Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin roof collapse. A source said the former exco members could provide crucial information on the probe into the June 2 mishap.



Tourist attraction: Local tourists taking a family photo in front of the stadium in Kuala Terengganu yesterday.

The source said that documents involving the selection of the contractor responsible for work at the RM300mil stadium and installation of the roof would be obtained from those concerned. “We have identified the names of a few key individuals to aid our investigations,” said the source, who declined to reveal who the former exco members and individuals were. The three exco members responsible for ensuring the stadium’s completion in time for the Malaysian Games (Sukma) 2008 were Datuk Wan Hisham Wan Salleh (Infrastructure and Public Amenities), Datuk Din Adam (Youth and Sports) and Datuk Rosol Wahid (Islam Hadhari and Welfare). Din and Rosol are still serving as assemblymen. The three had served under previous Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh.

Yesterday, they expressed their preparedness to help with the MACC probe. “Every single transaction and our respective roles were all recorded in detail. We have nothing to hide,” said Din, who is the Bukit Besi assemblyman. Wan Hisham also said he was prepared to be investigated. “MACC is doing its job and we will assist in every possible way,” he pledged.

“So far, I have not been contacted by the MACC. If they do, I will be there (at MACC office here) the next minute.” Rosol, who is the Ajil assemblyman and former state Umno secretary, refuted talk that he had influenced the state tender committee chaired by State Secretary Datuk Mokhtar Nong on selecting the roof contractor. “I realised recently that certain quarters with malicious intentions were linking me with the mishap in such a way,”. “As such, I actually welcome the probe.” The Terengganu Government has heeded the call by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin not to set up a separate panel to investigate the mishap. Menteri Besar Datuk Ahmad Said told reporters that the state government would not intervene in the probe to be conducted by the state PWD.

Friday June 12, 2009

It's a roadmap to new lease of life for PKFZ, says Ong

By **LEE YUK PENG and YENG AI CHUN**

KUALA LUMPUR: The task force and committees which were formed in connection with the Port Klang Free Zone issue are to recommend “cures” for the project and not conduct probes, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat said. Clarifying certain media reports, Ong said: “We have had enough of investigations and that is why we came up with the PKFZ reports.”



Out in the open: Ong giving a press conference at his service centre in Taman Muda, Cheras.

“The people named in the list which I announced are to find a solution and chart the way forward for PKFZ,” he told reporters at his constituency service centre in Taman Muda, Cheras, here yesterday. His announcement on Wednesday, he added, was a follow-up to his statements made on May 28 after the release of the PKFZ audit report to the public. “At that time, I promised and said all weaknesses and misappropriation would be followed up independently and the entrusted parties would find the cure or the solution via the admission that has been done to the Port Klang committee. “I made the promise and now I am carrying it out,” he said, adding that the “road map to a new lease of life” should be ready in two months.

The day the PricewaterhouseCoopers report was released, Ong had promised that action would be taken on four fronts. The task force had been entrusted with making recommendations for two of them — legal remedies and financial restructuring. The other

two fronts — poor governance and low occupancy rate — would be addressed respectively by the ad hoc committee for good governance and the PKFZ executive committee. On DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang's criticisms on the handling of the PKFZ issue, Ong said: "He is barking up the wrong tree. I have been instrumental in getting the report released with approval from the Cabinet and not Kit Siang."

When told that the Opposition was expected to raise the issue in Parliament, Ong said they could raise it anywhere and not just in Parliament. Meanwhile, the Public Accounts Committee said it would call the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission to its meeting next Wednesday over the PKFZ investigations. "The PAC wants the MACC to carry out a thorough investigation to determine the necessary action to be taken next," PAC chairman Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid said after the two-day meeting. PKA board chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng, who appeared before the PAC, said the PKFZ report would be available online (<http://www.pkfznews.com.my/download-pka-report>) until nobody wanted to read it. "The public can also post their questions related to the PKFZ and a team of officers, including myself, will answer them as soon as possible," said Lee.

Saturday June 13, 2009

MBPJ to draft guidelines on demolition

By TAN KARR WEI

THE Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) will be the first local council in Selangor to draft building demolition guidelines. Petaling Jaya mayor Datuk Mohamad Roslan Sakiman said the orders to formulate guidelines came from the state following the Jaya Supermarket incident, in which the building that was to be demolished collapsed, killing seven construction workers. "Currently, none of the PBTs (local authorities) in the state, nor even in the country, have guidelines for building demolition work," Roslan said.

Officers from the MBPJ legal and building control departments, the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council (MPAJ), the Department of Safety and Health (DOSH), the Selangor Housing and Real Estate Board (LPHS) and the Public Works Institute of Malaysia (Ikram) attended a two-day seminar organised by the MBPJ on Thursday to discuss the guidelines. "We will come up with a draft of the guidelines and present it to the MTES (Selangor Economic Action Council) and the state executive council for approval," he said.

Roslan said the state government would then decide if it wanted to use the guidelines for all the other councils in Selangor. The guidelines would encompass the demolition of all structures, including high-rise buildings, residential units, retaining walls and bridges. Among the matters addressed by the guidelines will be the submission of the building condition survey before demolition; the need for official paperwork and site diary; and the quantum of deposit to be paid by the contractors.

Commenting on the collapsed Jaya Supermarket, MBPJ public relations officer Zainun Zakaria said the developer had finally submitted the report on the collapse and the method statement on how to demolish the remaining structure. The council received the report yesterday and will review it and send it to the MTES by next week.

Saturday June 13, 2009

Palm oil importers reassured

BY ELAN PERUMAL

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) has assured importers of palm oil from Malaysia that only the highest quality palm oil is being exported. Its director-general Datuk Dr Mohd Basri Wahid said the export of palm oil products was in compliance with the trade commercial specification by the Palm Oil Refiners Association (Poram). He also stressed that refineries practised stringent quality procedures when accepting crude palm oil for processing.

“Strict standard operating procedures practised by the refineries make it impossible for contaminated palm oil to reach the refineries. If there is any such case, the products will be returned to the seller and at the same time referred to MPOB for action,” said Basri in a statement to *The Star*. He was commenting on the Starprobe article headlined “Oil pirates” on Monday that had exposed the siphoning of crude palm oil in Malaysia, resulting in losses amounting to billions of ringgit.

The report had quoted Basri as saying that Malaysia’s reputation was at stake due to the possibility of contamination caused by the thieves adding water, used oil and sludge into the tankers after siphoning the oil. Under the MPOB Act, he said the board was empowered to take action on malpractices, including siphoning and adulteration, which led to contamination of palm oil products.

“The offence is not compoundable. A person who commits an offence is liable to a fine not exceeding RM200,000 or an imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or both. “The regulations prescribed under the Act in a way give an assurance on all palm oil products produced and exported out of the country.” He said the Enforcement and Licensing Division carried out stringent quality surveillance on the export of palm oil at the major ports such as Pasir Gudang, Port Kelang, Kuantan, Sandakan, Bintulu and Butterworth. “MPOB at all time monitors closely the activity of the independent surveyors and chemists in order to ensure the highest standard of services provided to the palm oil exporters” he said.

Monday June 15, 2009

Parliament: Motion on PKFZ rejected

By **LEE YUK PENG** and **LESTER KONG**

KUALA LUMPUR: The Dewan Rakyat rejected an emergency motion to have a royal commission of inquiry into the RM12.5bil [Port Klang Free Zone](#) (PKFZ) scandal, saying that the matter was not urgent. Speaker Tan Sri Pandikar Amin Mulia, in his ruling, said the emergency motion filed by Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur) under Order 18(1) fulfilled the criteria of being specific and of public interest. However, he dismissed the application as the matter was not urgent, one of the three criteria required for an emergency motion to be debated in the House. "A task force and two committees have already been set up to investigate PKFZ," he said.

In his application, Lim said the Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) audit report was most "unsatisfactory" as its terms of reference were restricted to "a position review" instead of a wide-ranging inquiry into how the RM1.1bil project in 2002 had ballooned into a RM12.5bil project. At a press conference in the Parliament Lobby on Monday, Lim said the PKFZ audit report and its appendices should be immediately tabled in Parliament and given to MPs without waiting for the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) report.

Lim said the PAC report would not be ready in time before the current sitting of Parliament ends on June 30. He said this was because the PAC would only have its third meeting on the PKFZ on Wednesday. "She (Parliament secretary Datuk Roosme Hamzah) informed me that the PwC report and its appendices will be tabled in the House together with the PAC report," he told the press. Lim said it was "ridiculous" that the MPs had to wait for the PAC report, which would only be tabled at year's end. Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat is working on turning the PKFZ project around and there was no reason for him *not* to confront the issue, his political secretary Simon Lim said in a statement released Monday. "The minister has been proactive and committed to making the project work," he said in **PETALING JAYA**.

He refuted Lim Kit Siang's claims that Ong was trying to "dodge the bullet" by running away from his ministerial or parliamentary duties, reports SHAUN HO. Simon Lim said veteran politicians should not jump the gun by making baseless accusations and casting aspersions on the minister. "He should give due respect to those who have honoured their promises and walked the talk." Simon Lim said the minister had been true to his stance on transparency and accountability by releasing the PwC audit report to the public and the PAC. The minister had also instructed the Port Klang Authority (PKA) to establish a special task force comprising lawyers, accountants and quantity surveyors to look into the findings of the audit, he said. The minister will be making a ministerial statement on the PKFZ in the Dewan Rakyat next Monday, June 22.

Monday June 15, 2009

Tee Keat okays 300 copies of PKFZ report to be sent to Parliament

PETALING JAYA: Every Member of Parliament will receive a copy of the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) audit report from the Transport Ministry. According to a statement on www.pkfznews.com.my, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat had agreed to distribute 300 copies of the PricewaterhouseCoopers Position Review on PKFZ, including the appendices, which run into hundreds of pages. "This follows a request on June 12 from the Parliament Secretary, and Ong has decided to meet the request in the name of transparency and accountability." The statement said the copies are being printed and will be sent to Parliament by this afternoon. "It will be up to Parliament (to decide) when the copies will be distributed to the MPs." The PwC report has been made public in its entirety, and is accessible online since its release on May 28.

Copies of the appendices were also available for public viewing over a two-week period in the Port Klang Authority office. Copies of the report, plus the appendices, were furnished to all members of the Public Accounts Committee during its hearing recently. Last Wednesday, Ong announced the formation of a special task force to look into issues raised by the report. Two committees, an ad-hoc corporate governance committee to oversee the Port Klang Authority and an executive committee to revive the PKFZ project, were formed on that day. The website www.pkfznews.com.my, also launched that day, is to be the primary source of online information to the public on PKFZ.

Tuesday June 16, 2009

PKFZ: Ong already turning things around, says secretary

PETALING JAYA: Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat is already working on turning the Port Klang Free Zone around and there is no reason for him not to confront the issue. Ong's political secretary Simon Lim said his boss has been proactive and committed to making the project work. "There is no reason for Ong not to confront the issue about the PKFZ," he said in a statement yesterday. Simon was responding to reports quoting DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang as claiming that Ong was running away from his ministerial or parliamentary duties concerning the PKFZ. "His baseless assertions are merely a self-serving political gimmick," Simon said.

Simon said veteran politicians like Kit Siang should not jump the gun by making baseless accusations and cast aspersion on the minister. "He should learn to give due respect to those who have honoured their words and walked the talk," Simon said.

He said that in line with the minister's stance on transparency and accountability, the PKFZ audit report had been made public. He added that a website www.pkfznews.com.my had been set up to answer public queries about the project. The minister had ordered a special

task force made up of lawyers, accountants and quantity surveyors to be set up by the Port Klang Authority (PKA) to look into the findings of the report, he added.

He said Ong would be making a ministerial statement on the PKFZ in the Dewan Rakyat next Monday. A ministerial statement is an oral statement made by a minister in the Dewan Rakyat and will be made after Question Time.

Tuesday June 16, 2009

First stimulus package spent

KUALA LUMPUR: Almost all of the RM6.95bil from the first stimulus package has been disbursed, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said. He told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday that of the total, RM4.02bil or 57.9%, involving 43,681 projects, had been offered to successful contractors while the remainder was being done. Until June 5, Najib who is also the Finance Minister, said a total of RM1.4bil had been spent in completing 10,979 projects, including upgrading and repairing roads, bridges, schools and hospitals. He was replying to a question from Jerantut MP Datuk Seri Tengku Azlan Sultan Abu Bakar on whether the stimulus package had reached the right target, that is helping the people, in particular those in the rural areas. The public infrastructure maintenance programme and the basic infrastructure project worth RM592mil had also been implemented, he said.

For the second economic stimulus package, a total of 7,811 projects worth RM4.2bil had been awarded until June 5, Najib said. Of this total, RM1.2bil had been spent in completing 453 projects, he added.

Najib said the government had upped the allocation of RM674mil as subsidy to stem an increase in prices of daily food products such as sugar, bread and flour. "This has reduced the inflation rate to 3% in April this year, compared to the 8.5% in July and August last year," he said. – Bernama.

Wednesday June 17, 2009

Conservative contractors won't get state projects

KUCHING: The Sarawak Housing Ministry will not award projects under the 10th Malaysia Plan to contractors who stick with conventional building methods and continued reliance on foreign workers. Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg said more weightage would be given to contractors who introduced modern technology besides adopting the integrated building system (IBS). "Reliance on foreign workers will affect the quality of houses built," he told reporters after witnessing an agreement signing ceremony here yesterday for three affordable housing projects. State-owned Housing Development

Corporation (HDC) had awarded contracts worth RM67mil to Daya Perumahan Sdn Bhd to build 617 units of single-terrace houses in Matang and Samarahan.

The funding is part of the RM100mil allocation under the Federal Government's economic stimulus package. The remaining funds will be used to build 491 similar houses in Sibul, Bintulu, Mukah, Kanowit and Song. Johari said the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) was training construction workers on how to install the IBS, components for which were now produced locally. He said the ministry planned to incorporate environment-friendly elements in the construction of affordable houses in the next Malaysia Plan. "We have to look into a better way of waste disposal and the possibility of recycling waste water for watering plants and washing cars," he added.

Johari urged developers to come up with innovative house designs that incorporate cooling effects, better air circulation and the use of sunlight to save on electricity consumption. He said this would provide a more conducive home environment for the occupants. Earlier, at the signing ceremony, HDC chairman Abdul Wahab Aziz said the three projects were expected to be completed late next year. The three-bedroom houses would be sold for RM40,000 (intermediate units) and RM47,000 (corner units).

Wednesday June 17, 2009

How did old ICs end up in dumpsite?

KUALA LUMPUR: The Home Ministry should investigate how 14 old identity cards and several Umno tags ended up in a drawer of a cupboard discarded at an illegal dumpsite in Tampoi, Johor. Johor PAS Youth chief Khairul Faizi Ahmad Kamil said it was a serious matter as these ICs could fall into the hands of syndicates selling such cards to foreigners.

"Old ICs returned to the National Registration Department should be cut up and destroyed, but the ones there are in good condition," he told reporters at the PAS headquarters here yesterday. Khairul said a holder of an IC found at the dumpsite confirmed that he had never lost his card and that he had returned his to the department after collecting his MyKad.

Wednesday June 17, 2009

Conservative contractors won't get state projects

KUCHING: The Sarawak Housing Ministry will not award projects under the 10th Malaysia Plan to contractors who stick with conventional building methods and continued reliance on foreign workers. Minister Datuk Amar Abang Johari Tun Openg said more weightage would be given to contractors who introduced modern technology besides adopting the integrated building system (IBS). "Reliance on foreign workers will affect the quality of

houses built,” he told reporters after witnessing an agreement signing ceremony here yesterday for three affordable housing projects.

State-owned Housing Development Corporation (HDC) had awarded contracts worth RM67mil to Daya Perumahan Sdn Bhd to build 617 units of single-terrace houses in Matang and Samarahan. The funding is part of the RM100mil allocation under the Federal Government’s economic stimulus package. The remaining funds will be used to build 491 similar houses in Sibul, Bintulu, Mukah, Kanowit and Song.

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Wednesday June 17, 2009

Pahang’s request for compensation

By ROSLINA MOHAMAD

KUANTAN: The Pahang government hopes the Federal Government would compensate the state for gazetting 270,000ha of land as water catchment areas. Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob said it was not a demand, but a “humble request”. “The water catchment area gazetted in 1999 was 40,000ha. An additional 230,000ha has been gazzeted over the last 10 years since I took over as Mentri Besar,” he told reporters after officially opening a seminar for Drainage and Irrigation Department (DID) senior managers at a hotel here recently.

Adnan said that once an area was gazeted as a water catchment area, it could not be developed. “It is different if an area is categorised under permanent forest reserve, as timbers can still be extracted subject to very strict guidelines,” he said.

Adnan said the state would submit a memorandum to the Federal Government on the matter as soon as the details and grounds for the goodwill compensations were finalised. However, Adnan said the state would not be too demanding in its request. In an immediate

reaction, Natural Resources and Environment Deputy Minister Tan Sri Joseph Kurup, who was present at the seminar, said the matter would be given due consideration provided there were enough grounds for the request.

Thursday June 18, 2009

Assemblyman wants MPAJ to call for tender on slope repair works

By LIM CHIA YING

THE Ampang Jaya Municipal Council (MPAJ) has been urged to call for tender for the first half of the slope repair and strengthening works at Taman Bukit Permai in Cheras. Teratai assemblyman Jenice Lee, who visited the site yesterday, said the Selangor state government has allocated RM2mil so far from the total RM4mil to repair the entire hill. "The slope maintenance was supposed to come under the previous developer (the apartment's) but the company is now defunct," said Lee.



This is it: Lee (right) showing the residents the MPAJ plan to build an earth drain to channel water out as they have been experiencing water gushing down each time it rains.

"Therefore we have no choice but to get the state to step in by providing the allocation. Since we received the first part of the money, works on the first hall will have to start first. "However, how soon would depend on when the MPAJ can call the tender." Dubbed 'Mini Genting' by many, the hill offers scenic view and cool breeze to the residents of Mutiara Court Apartments who have been living there for more than 10 years. However, land clearing and tree cutting over the years to facilitate developments on the hillslope has 'loosen up' the boulders, resulting in landslides and falling rocks onto the apartment's complex below. Rainwater also played a part in the 'boulder rains' as it would have eroded the slope.

On Monday, *The Star* reported that residents were fearful for their lives and safety with the latest development to take place at the top of a 30m-high cliff facing the back of their apartments, which according to the MPAJ report, would comprise 10 units of semi-detached houses and 16 units of bungalows. Lee said since coming into office, she has been having a lot of meetings with the council, Ikram and the Mineral and Geoscience Department and even coming down from time to time to check the rock face and the slope condition. "The project above has been approved during the time of the previous administration in 2002. I don't know if the politicians were even aware of it," she said.



Too close: The Mutiara Court Apartment residents say boulders and rocks have fallen from the hill over the years.

She added that rocks have already started falling since 2001 and there are bound to be one to two such cases every other year. Resident Tang Gek Choo said even when it is not raining, rocks will fall with the slight blow of the wind. "The rocks have previously fallen on some of our cars and damaged the windscreens. Now with the development above, we only want a safety net to be put up at least. "The rocks would have become loose with rock blastings at the other stretch of the hill previously. When I moved in here in 1996, we never feared the cliff even if it was behind us as we liked the scenery here," said Tang, 47.

Residents' association joint management board chairman S. Madhavan said with the current earthworks and later construction works, they only fear for the walls of their apartment. "We are concerned that the development may be too near the cliff since our units are just directly below. "The residents are not against the development above just as long as sufficient safety measures are taken to safeguard us," he said.

One MPAJ engineering official had said an earth drain would be constructed through the hill to be channelled out to a retention pond before being diverted out to the main drain. As residents expressed some reservations over the risk of cutting through the hill, Lee said MPAJ would have their own engineers while she would bring an independent experts to assess the situation. The apartments consist of 312 units of nearly 1,000 residents. Meanwhile, Lee and councillor S. Supiramany said they would be writing in to MPAJ the same day to ask for a temporary stop-work order on the development pending a meeting to be arranged between the council, residents, and also the developer.

Thursday June 18, 2009

Roads at Bukit Angkat in Kajang to be upgraded

Story and photo by GEETHA KRISHNAN

INFRASTRUCTURE in the Bukit Angkat Industrial Area in Sungai Chua, Kajang, will be upgraded using a RM1.2mil allocation recently approved by the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) under the Federal Government. Work under the supervision of the Kajang Municipal Council (MPKj) began on May 25 and will be completed by July 21. The scope of work mainly involves resurfacing 2km of roads bearing the brunt of frequent usage by heavy vehicles and the installation of street lights. Upgrading of the infrastructure in the Desa Serdang and Taming Jaya industrial areas also began simultaneously on May 25 albeit with

smaller allocations from the EPU under a special budget. MPKj has applied for similar allocations for the Cheras Jaya, Bandar Baru Bangi Sections 10 and 13 industrial areas.



Ongoing work: Lee (third from left) looking at the resurfacing work in progress in front of the LCL Factory in the Bukit Angkat Industrial Area in Kajang.

After visiting the Bukit Angkat Industrial Area on Tuesday, Kajang assemblyman Lee Kim Sin said he welcomed the move by the EPU to improve the infrastructure. “This will encourage more investors to the area and hopefully help the economy recover faster. There are over 100 SMIs in Bukit Angkat and more can be done to better the road conditions,” he said.

“Poor planning has resulted in narrow roads. The existing access roads do not fulfil the standard required for industrial areas. Other issues raised by factory owners concern illegal dumping and poor maintenance,” Lee added.

Kampung Bukit Angkat village head Fong Tiam Wah said the non-existence of buffer zones prompted factories to be built close to the village. “We have complained about the pollution and waste water discharged into monsoon drains cutting across the village. Moreover, surface runoff water create flash floods in our area.” “Trailers and other heavy vehicles use the roads in the village which are too narrow, endangering lives. We hope a better solution can be sought,” added Fong.