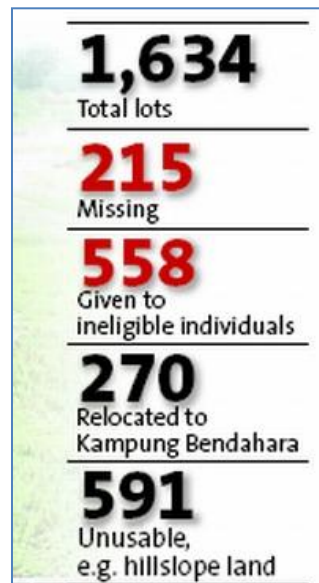


On top of that, plots were also given to grassroots politicians who were not squatters or even residing in the area. The resettlement scheme started in 1985 when large tracts of land were pledged to the 1,634 original squatters. The names of 215 original squatters went missing from the land allocation list. Of the 1,634 lots, 270 in Kampung Bendahara were given to the squatters who eventually settled there in 1990. The remaining lots were assigned to squatter families by the state government in 1995 but they are still waiting for their lots. The saga, that has been ongoing for over two decades now, has seen five Mentris Besar taking charge of the state, including the current administration of Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim.

Tan Sri Ahmad Razali Ali was Mentri Besar in 1985, followed by Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib (1986-1997), Tan Sri Abu Hassan Omar (1997-2000) and Datuk Seri Khir Toyo (2000-2008). A special committee formed under Selangor Housing, Building Management and Squatters Committee chairman Iskandar Abdul Samad revealed that 81 of the landowners were under 18 years old. Of that number, 37 were below 12 when they were assigned the plots.



As the state government investigates how these people were given approval to own land in the scheme since 1985, allegations are being made that the names of the genuine squatters are missing from the original list of people to be compensated with land. Some squatters claimed that 215 names of genuine settlers had been left out of the original list. In a special interview with a Star Probe Team, Iskandar said the state government was aware that plots had been allocated to children, youths, grassroots politicians and outsiders. Although the land approvals were granted to these people since 1985, he said the titles were only issued from 2007 onwards.



Suspecting irregularities and discrepancies in the way the plots had been allocated, Iskandar said Khalid ordered the land office last year to stop giving out titles to the remaining people. "We stopped issuing titles and only some 900 people have been successful in obtaining their titles so far. This is the best the state can do at this moment and it does not mean that we will

not release the titles to the rest of the successful candidates. “We give an assurance all those who are genuine applicants that they will get their titles,” he said.

Iskandar said the state was in a fix due to the fact that some of the titles had been given and it would be almost impossible to revoke them. He said, however, that the state was looking into the legal aspects on how action could be taken against those who had obtained the titles illegally. “We are serious about resolving the Bukit Botak squatters issue and will do everything possible to ensure justice is done,”. Meanwhile, an earlier study by the Selangor State Development Corporation (PKNS) found that only 1,049 lots were available for distribution to the 1,364 squatter families.



Barren land: Former squatters looking at the area in Bukit Botak where houses were to have been built. Until today there is still no sign of the project taking off. — AZMAN GHANI / The Star. The PKNS study showed that the names of 215 squatters who originally stayed in Bukit Botak were missing in the land allocation list of the 1,049 eligible applicants.

The original grants by the state government was a plot of 2,200 sq ft of land for each squatter family. However, it was discovered that the names of certain grassroots politicians who were not squatters were among the 1,049 successful applicants, with some of them given plots of more than 3,000 sq ft, well above the official lot size.

Delpuri Corp Sdn Bhd, the contractor appointed to handle the Bukit Botak project, was given a 22,000 sq ft plot and also a 9.6ha of land as contra payment to build low and medium-cost houses costing RM42,000 to RM79,000. Its general manager Ler Chang Koi said in an earlier statement that the company had not abandoned the project, but was told that the PKNS would take over. “But, after three years, the PKNS itself was unable to finish the job and pushed the blame to our company, saying that it had abandoned the project. “We are willing to complete the project. However, we need to get a letter of consent from PKNS or the state government,” Ler said.



Long list: Satar (left) and Kampung Selayang Baru Village Development and Security Committee chairman Azizan Md Ali showing the names of 81 people below the age of 18 who were allocated lots in Bukit Botak.

PKNS public relations manager Mohd Wazir Abdul Gani said the corporation was only given a directive by the state government in December 2005 to take over the project. “The PKNS had to follow the state directive and came up with a proposal to build houses costing only RM80,000 each, but only 20% of the squatters accepted the proposal,” he said.

According to Bukit Botak squatters spokesman Satar Md Saman, of the 1,364 lots for distribution, 270 have been given to those staying outside Selayang Baru while 160 lots were given to those who had never lived in Bukit Botak.

Chronology of events in Bukit Botak

- ☐ 1985 - Selangor state government announced that the 1,634 squatter families would be offered individual land titles.
- ☐ 1990 - Some 270 families were issued land titles in Kampung Bendahara (not too far from the area)
- ☐ 1996 - Delpuri Corp Sdn Bhd awarded contract to develop the 55.2ha of land.
- ☐ 1996 - State Government also offered Delpuri 9.6ha of land as incentive.
- ☐ 2000 - Construction agreement signed between the developer and all the squatters.
- ☐ 2000 - Three hundred of the squatter families also granted Delpuri the Power of Attorney to develop their lots.
- ☐ 2003 - Documents were stamped.
- ☐ 2003 - Completed the construction of 82 houses.
- ☐ 2005 - The Selangor Government ordered its subsidiary Selangor State Development Corporation (PKNS) to take over the scheme from Delpuri after the developer failed to complete the construction of the Semi-D homes.
- ☐ 2006 - PKNS went in and carried out infra-structure development at a cost of RM40mil.
- ☐ 2007 - Began issuing land titles.
- ☐ 2008 - Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim ordered the scheme to be reviewed and stopped issue of titles.

Thursday May 14, 2009

PSD scholarship review

By NG CHENG YEE

PUTRAJAYA: The Government will review the selection criteria for Public Services Department scholarships, said MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat. He said a meeting would be held among Barisan Nasional component party leaders, the PSD director-general and the Chief Secretary to the Government today. They will discuss the matter and reconsider rejected cases. "All four MCA ministers had met with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to discuss the cases highlighted to us regarding the selection of PSD scholarship recipients.



This is a problem: Ong replying to a question on PSD scholarships at his office in Putrajaya Wednesday. "The same issue was also brought up at the Cabinet meeting. The Prime Minister has agreed to review the criteria," he told a press conference here yesterday. The MCA, he said, received many complaints where students considered the best in certain states were not selected for the scholarships. "Instead, the moment they were informed about their unsuccessful bid to obtain scholarships to study overseas, the students were asked whether they would accept offers to study at local public universities or foreign universities based in Malaysia.

"This is a very serious situation where students do not get enough time to consider their decision," he said, adding that such circumstances must be stopped. Currently, Ong said, the selection is based on four criteria - merit (20%), race (60%), Sabah and Sarawak citizens (10%) and students from underprivileged groups (10%). He said if meritocracy was part of the criteria, the students' co-curriculum activities and interviews should not be included for consideration. "Meritocracy means it should solely be the students' results and not any other areas," he said.

On another matter, Ong said he had briefed the Cabinet on the Port Klang Free Zone issue but nothing was discussed in detail. Meanwhile, the Port Klang Authority would be holding an emergency board meeting at 10am today to approve the terms and conditions for the release of the audited report prepared by accounting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers, port authority chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng said.

Friday May 15, 2009

I want to be the people's PM, says Najib

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has voiced his preference to forgo formalities and instead be on the ground to understand the reality and needs of the people. "I want to be the people's Prime Minister. I am with the people and I will always be with them."



Plain talk: Najib speaking to workers at the public sector Workers Day gathering at Putrajaya yesterday.

I do not want formalities like the red carpet and *bunga manggar* or even media coverage (but) I want to see the rakyat. He said looking at the real situation would give him a better understanding than just listening to briefings inside air-conditioned rooms. This, he said, was why he started his walkabouts like the one to the Puduraya bus terminal recently where he got to see the actual condition of the facility that was used daily by so many people. Addressing the public sector Workers Day gathering here yesterday, Najib said he also wanted to revive the close relationship that existed between public servants and those in the government administration during the time when his father Tun Abdul Razak Hussein was prime minister. "My father even knew the names of all the district officers and their fathers. I know this is not possible now with the over 1.2 million public servants but I want to have the closeness he shared with the staff," he said.

Najib also said that he liked reading "Letters to the Editor" published in newspapers. "Recently, I came across one letter praising the Immigration Department for its efficiency in issuing passports within an hour," he said, adding however, that the next day another letter highlighted the terrible state of the toilet.

Najib announced that the Government would consider offering promotions through a personal-to-holder basis to 176,066 support group officers who had been serving in their employment grade for 15 years or more. "Also from July 1, a total of 20,637 public servants will benefit from a government effort to draft two new employment schemes and upgrade eight existing schemes,". He said the government decision, which would cost RM170.4mil, was in recognition of the hard work put in by public servants.

Friday May 15, 2009

Bukit Botak squatters state terms for PKNS takeover

PETALING JAYA: Bukit Botak squatters are willing to let the Selangor State Development Corporation (PKNS) develop their area provided it signs an agreement with them. Their spokesman Fauzan Kadir said they were also willing to cancel the contracts with Delpuri Corporation which was appointed to handle the Bukit Botak project in 1996.



Squatter's condition: Representatives of Bukit Botak squatters and their lawyer at a meeting Delpuri Corporation representatives to state their terms yesterday.

However, they wanted PKNS to fulfil certain conditions before the new agreement was inked. Fauzan said PKNS must be willing to develop the lots at RM42,000, RM69,000 and RM79,000 and pay RM142mil as a subsidy to the contractor for building the units as promised earlier in a letter in 2007. They also expected PKNS to continue paying them a monthly subsidy of RM300 which began in 2005 but was stopped last October. "If PKNS fails to develop the land and feels that it will lose out, it should build the infrastructure that consists of levelling the land, supplying water, electricity and drainage for the area," said Fauzan.

Their lawyer Maz Ridzuan Mohamad said that if PKNS wanted to pull out from the project because of high costs, it should officially inform them of it. Two years ago, PKNS offered to buy the lots for more than RM55,000 each, he said. "Why can't PKNS develop the units at RM42,000, RM69,000 and RM79,000?" he asked.

Friday May 15, 2009

A bald hill that's become barren land

PETALING JAYA: Bukit Botak in English means "barren hill". And that's exactly how the place got the name. According to the locals, the hilly area was once covered with rubber trees but the hilltop was partially barren. "People would call the place Bukit Botak as there was no specific name then," a landowner said.

"The name became popular among the settlers before it was officially recognised by the government. However, he said, the hill had been levelled now. The rubber trees had also been replaced with other crops. Bukit Botak now looks like a typical village but lacks infrastructure such proper drainage, sewage and roads. "Criminals used to be sent here under the emergency ordinance as well," he said.

Friday May 15, 2009

MACC launches probe

By LOURDES CHARLES, ELAN PERUMAL and STUART MICHAEL

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission has already started investigations into the Bukit Botak land scam in Selangor. Its director of investigations Datuk Mohd Shukri Abdull said his officers had been monitoring the dealings but needed more details. "We hope the state government and others in the know will come forward and give us more details." It is learnt the commission will be calling up several people for questioning following the expose in *The Star* on Thursday.

The Selangor Government has also asked for the commission's help in its investigations because of discrepancies and irregularities in the allocation of land to squatters in the area. State Housing, Building Management and Squatters Committee chairman Iskandar Abdul Samad said more than half of the 1,634 plots allocated in the area had been given to ineligible individuals, including underaged, outsiders and grassroots politicians who were not occupants of the land. He said their initial findings revealed that the names of eligible settlers had been left out. "The commission will be able to establish whether an organised syndicate was involved," he said.

Iskandar said the Selangor Development Corporation, called in to develop the area after the initial developer Delpuri Corp Sdn Bhd failed to complete the scheme, was also in a dilemma because the construction agreement was between the settlers and the developer. "Some 300 settlers have also given power of attorney to Delpuri Power to develop their lots.

"Delpuri must be willing to cancel the agreement, especially the power of attorney, so that corporation can move in," said Iskandar, who also sits on the corporation's board of directors. "PKNS' responsibility is to the rightful owners of the lots and not those who obtained them illegally," said Iskandar.

The corporation's public relations manager, Mohd Wazir Abdul Gani, said the agency would act according to the directive of the state government. The front-page *Starprobe* yesterday highlighted that at least two five-year-olds were among 81 youngsters allocated plots of land in a squatter settlement area in Taman Selayang Mutiara in a land scam going back 20 years.

Friday May 15, 2009

PKA seeking legal advice on indemnity issue

PORT KLANG: The Port Klang Authority (PKA) is seeking legal advice to look into the indemnity requested by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) for the release of its audit report on the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ). PKA chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng said PwC had agreed in principle to the release of the report to the public but needed indemnity from the port authority.

Lee was speaking to reporters after a PKA emergency full board meeting to discuss the issue here yesterday. Lee added that the PKFZ report was expected to be released after the sole issue at the PKA level was resolved.

It was reported earlier that Lee had written to PwC on April 30 to seek its consent following the instruction by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat to release the report within seven days. However, PwC replied on May 4 that consent would be given subject to certain terms and conditions.

Saturday May 16, 2009

RM3.54m for CTI fund

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

MANADO: Malaysia will contribute US\$1mil (RM3.54mil) to the Coral Triangle Initiative which aims to save the marine life in the region's seas, dubbed the "Amazon of the oceans." Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said that although Malaysia was only a small part of the Coral Triangle, it supported regional programmes to protect, preserve and sustainably exploit its marine resources. "We also support Indonesia's offer to host the CTI secretariat," he told Malaysian reporters covering the CTI Summit in the North Sulawesi capital yesterday.

The CTI summit which was launched here yesterday saw leaders of the six CTI countries — Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor Leste — gathering to commit themselves to protecting the area's marine biodiversity.



Manado summit: Najib speaking on sustainably exploiting the marine resources in the region at the CTI summit at the Dewan Grand Kawanua in Manado yesterday. Also present is Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili (left). — Bernama.

The 5.7 million sq km Coral Triangle comprises seas and oceans stretching from Indonesia and Malaysia in the west to the Solomon Islands in the east. It is known as the Amazon of the oceans as it is home to 76% of the world's coral species and 50% of the world's reef fish species. Malaysia's portion of the Coral Triangle is only about 38,000 sq km. Najib said other member countries had pledged between US\$1mil and US\$5mil (RM17.7mil) for the initiative. Besides monetary commitment from affected countries, CTI is expected to receive a total of US\$25.5mil (RM90.27mil) for its activities from the Asian Development Bank and the Global Environment Facility.

Najib said Malaysia would be mapping the country's seas as part of Malaysia's commitment under the CTI. He said in his keynote address at the summit that under a pilot project, the naval vessel *KD Perantau* would carry researchers on a 52-day oceanographic study trip. He said the project, called Prime Scientific Sailing Expedition 2009, was also aimed at collecting intensified data about the country's marine resources. "The studies include mapping of the marine flora and fauna such coral reef, marine mammals, fish and invertebrates that inhabit Malaysian seas in the South China Sea, Sulu and Sulawesi seas," he said.

Najib also called for the CTI to be implemented based on national priorities and in line with national policies to ensure that participating countries could contribute and benefit fully from such initiatives. He said Malaysia hoped to benefit from the programme through the creation of alternative economic activities such as seaweed and pearl cultivation and eco-tourism. At the end of the summit, Najib and the leaders signed the Coral Triangle Initiative Leaders' Declaration.

17 May 2009 (Sunday)

KPIs on Suhakam commissioners should be transparent

By SHAILA KOSHY

KUALA LUMPUR: Two human rights non-governmental organisations have called on the government to make transparent the process of assessing Suhakam commissioners by a Key Performance Index (KPI) when it asks Parliament to delete two other clauses in the newly passed Suhakam (Amendment) Act 2009. "The KPI is a good idea but what are the indicators?" asked Suaram coordinator John Liu. "The process and the indicators should be transparent and made public. They should not be a stumbling block and lead to possible self-censorship in the performance of their duties."

Empower member Honey Tan was not convinced the KPI as envisaged in Section 5(5) of the amendment Act was the way to go. "Suhakam is not a company where one can look at sales targets, cutting down expenses and improving profits. "However, if the Government feels that it must go down this route, it is important to 'measure', among other things, how pro-active commissioners are, for example, in observing and monitoring situations of arrests when our fundamental liberty of peaceful assembly are violated. "Not a single commissioner came on the night of May 7, 2009, in Brickfields, when 14 members of civil society were arrested, along with five lawyers and a reporter."

Liu and Tan said this when asked to comment on the recent statement by de facto Law Minister Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz that two other amendments would be tabled before Parliament at the June meeting to make the Suhakam Act compliant with the Paris Principles but had made no mention of the KPI clause. Nazri said Suhakam faced losing its 'A' status otherwise. He said the accreditation sub-committee of the International Coordinating Committee of National

Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had found the March amendments still falling short. On April 17, Suhakam chairman Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman told The Star that Suhakam had not known about the KPI clause. Asking for the KPIs to be made clear, human rights-related and public, he noted: "You can't deny the Government has been shown to contravene human rights principles and it is the duty of commissioners to raise this. "The KPIs should assess a commissioner's performance and not restrict his function as a commissioner." The Paris Principles are a set of core basic recommendations adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 on the status and functioning of national human rights institutions.

Tuesday May 19, 2009

MACC seizes papers on Bukit Botak land scam

By ELAN PERUMAL and STUART MICHAEL

PETALING JAYA: The state Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has conducted a raid on the Selayang Land Office in connection with a land scam dating back to the 1980s. It is learnt that officers from the commission conducted checks and seized about 1,600 files from the office at the district office building on Friday. State MACC director Moh Samsudin Yusuf confirmed that the documents were retrieved from the office but refused to reveal details. "I do not want to disclose information as it may jeopardise the investigation process," he said.

According to a state government source, various documents related to the allocation of land to a total of 1,634 individuals in the Bukit Botak squatter settlement were obtained. The list of people who allegedly obtained land via illegal means was also extracted from the land office. The source said the commission would also investigate those instrumental in initiating the scheme. Several government officials and politicians were being investigated, the source said. The raid was conducted a day after *Starprobe* reported that at least two five-year-olds were among 81 youngsters allocated plots of land in the squatter settlement in Taman Selayang Mutiara, as far back as in the 1980s. Selangor housing, building management and squatters committee chairman Iskandar Abdul Samad welcomed the commission's action. "We want this issue resolved as soon as possible," he added.

The state government has also set up a special task force to investigate the matter. Iskandar said the case was complicated as lots were given to ineligible individuals, children, outsiders and grassroots politicians who were not occupants of the land.

Tuesday May 19, 2009

Public funds shouldn't be wasted on poorly-done projects, says Shaziman

KUALA LUMPUR: Funds should not be wasted on poorly-done government projects, such as those forced to be reconstructed due to shoddy workmanship and planning, said Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor. The ministry would also not compromise on projects that cannot be completed on time. "We cannot simply waste the *rakyat's* money this way. We will find out why certain projects are delayed. "We will also continue to stress on quality and will urge contractors to complete work according to the stipulated time frame," he said.

Shaziman said this during his visit to the federal police headquarters in Bukit Aman yesterday to survey the construction of the Internal Security and Public Order and the Logistics departments complex. The 32-storey building costing RM328mil is expected to be finished by December next year. Shaziman said consultants and contractors must plan their projects to ensure there was no room for any deficiency. "We must follow standard operating procedures, and that includes ensuring the design, land and structure is inspected at every stage of the construction," he said.

The minister also said the authorities were investigating reasons for the delay in the extension of the road construction projects in Johor, Kelantan and Klang. To a question, Shaziman said he was not hurt by Murugiah's statement, who was reported to have said that Murugiah could not give out projects as he was not the Works Minister. (Murugiah, who was expelled from People's Progressive Party had on Sunday denied he was involved in money politics and in the awarding of projects as an inducement in order to secure support from party division heads. He said he was not the Works Minister as he was only in charge of the Public Complaints Bureau, Public Services Commission and Education Commission). Shaziman said Murugiah should do his homework first as there were a lot of procedures that must be adhered to and the parties concerned must be eligible for any contract.

Wednesday May 20, 2009

Danajamin gives SMEs easier access to funding

KUALA LUMPUR: The establishment of the country's first financial guarantee institution, Danajamin Nasional Bhd, will give companies, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), easier access to funding. "This will surely help the growth (of the economy)," International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed told reporters at the annual Productivity Report and Productivity Award 2008 by the Malaysia Productivity Corporation here yesterday.

He added that the government-owned institution was an important component of the second stimulus package announced in March. Danajamin, with a paid-up capital of RM1bil, can guarantee up to RM15bil of bonds to provide greater access for local companies to raise funds in the bond market.

The Prime Minister's Office had earlier released a statement that the paid-up capital would be raised to RM2bil if necessary. Later, at a press conference after a meeting with SME bumiputra entrepreneurs' associations, Mustapa said RM3mil of the RM10mil Services Sector Capacity

Development Fund (SSCDF) had been disbursed. For more information, visit <http://www.mida.gov.my> and <http://www.midf.com.my>.

Wednesday May 20, 2009

Farming permits revoked

By SALINA KHALID

As part of the measures to protect and preserve the Kuala Langat forest reserve in Selangor, all permits for agricultural activities issued to the farmers there have been revoked by the state government. According to Selangor state agriculture, natural resources and entrepreneurial development committee chairman Yaakob Sapari, the ruling covers all permits that had been issued and recently approved by the Selangor Forestry Department, which allowed the farmers to farm at the forest reserve. "We have decided not to issue any new permit and revoke all the existing ones, meaning that all the farming activities at the forest reserve are illegal from now on," Yaakob said.

"But we are allowing the farmers to collect their harvest for this season before stopping their activities. Yaakob said the state was still studying the matter before deciding on the next course of action. Yaakob said this at a meeting with the affected farmers at Jugra, Kuala Langat, on Tuesday. Also present was Selangor Forestry Department director Dr Mohd Yunus Zakaria. The two-hour meeting, which was attended by about 100 farmers and some state officials, was to allow the farmers to voice their grouses.

Yaakob said the Forestry Department had issued 134 permits to smallholders to conduct agricultural activities in the forest reserve. But nearly 380 smallholders are believed to have been farming in the area. Various crops were planted in the area, including tapioca, ginger, turmeric, galangal and even oil palm trees. The annual permit issued by the Forestry Department allows a farmer to work on the land at the forest reserve, but it is not a temporary occupancy licence (TOL) issued by the Land Office. The encroachment of the Kuala Langat forest reserve has been highlighted by *StarMetro* a few months ago.

Yaakob warned that stern action would be taken against those who started new planting activities at the forest reserve. "We will have our enforcement personnel make sure that there is no new agricultural activity in the area and if there is then we will take action against those responsible. "We will take legal action against them and destroy the crop," Yunus said.

Under Section 47 (1) of the National Forestry Act 1984 (Amendment 1993), those entering the forest will be liable for a RM10,000 fine or a three-year jail sentence or both.

Wednesday May 20, 2009

LCCT expansion work completed

Story And Photo By Charles Fernandez

MALAYSIA Airports Hold-ings Berhad (MAHB) has completed the expansion work on the low-cost carrier terminal (LCCT) at the KL Inter-national Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, which included new international departure and arrival halls, a public concourse, government offices, a curbside and a parking area. However, by 2011 the current LCCT will be converted into a cargo-handling terminal once the new terminal is completed.

Construction of the new RM2bil LCCT is expected to start by the middle of this year and scheduled for completion by the third quarter of 2011. According to MAHB chairman Tan Sri Aris Othman, it will not be a problem to convert the current LCCT into a cargo terminal without incurring much expenditure as the structure is designed for easy conversion.

Aris said this during the opening ceremony of the Marrybrown fast-food outlet at the LCCT-KLIA. He said the new LCCT, to be built near the KLIA would be able to handle up to 30 million passengers a year from the current 15 million. "We will have the potential to increase the passenger volume to 45 million a year as we have studied all angles for future expansion," Aris said.



Bigger and better: More parking bays are available at the expanded LCCT.

The new terminal was proposed to be sited near the KLIA after a joint-venture plan by the low-cost carrier AirAsia Bhd and Sime Darby Bhd to build a new LCCT costing RM1.6bil at Labu in Negri Sembilan was vetoed by the federal government.

Aris said MAHB had discussed with the airlines on a structural design which could cater to both low-cost and full service carriers. He said although a new LCCT was being planned, MAHB would not compromise on passenger comfort at the present LCCT and would continue to improve the services. "The expansion of the LCCT-KLIA allows us to receive an additional five million passengers per year from the previous 10 million passenger arrivals," he said.

Aris said MAHB was confident that the passenger traffic, especially international flights, would continue to rise despite the current economic situation as low-cost carrier operators continued to introduce new destinations and increase flight frequencies to increase the number of passengers. "This will further increase the need to encourage more retail and food and beverage activities at this terminal, so there is a need to multiply dining options," he said.

Thursday May 21, 2009

MACC begins PKFZ probe

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission has started investigations into the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) controversy. It is learnt that a team from the Putrajaya MACC has been investigating and inquiring from those in the know about the project. Sources familiar with the investigation said the MACC is expected to intensify its probe once it has obtained a copy of the report by accounting firm Pricewaterhouse-Coopers Advisory Services Sdn Bhd (PwC). They said the MACC would study the report and see if there were new elements which the commission could follow up on.

The MACC is also expected to contact several people in the Port Klang Authority (PKA) as part of its investigations. MACC director of investigations Datuk Mohd Shukri Abdull confirmed investigations were in progress but declined to elaborate. It is learnt that the report, which has yet to be made public, detailed cost overruns amounting to billions of ringgit and a trail of improper and poor decisions during the development of the PKFZ.

The PKFZ project was for a cluster of offices and light industrial buildings in the port area, originally estimated to cost RM1.9bil. However, sources said the report stated that the project cost would swell to RM7.5bil, partly due to interest costs over a 20-year period. Sources said one of the recommendations was for the PKA to restructure a RM4.6bil soft loan from the Finance Ministry to avoid a potential default in 2012. The cost would expand further to RM12.5bil if the loan from the Finance Ministry were rescheduled to match PKA's projected cash flows, the sources said.

They added that PKA's options included loan rescheduling, government grant and privatisation. The sources also said there were PKFZ development proposals which were not tabled to the Cabinet for approval. They also said development contracts totalling RM1.8bil were awarded to a company called Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd without competitive bids. Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat, meanwhile, said the PwC report was discussed by the Cabinet yesterday.

The issue was also the subject of deliberations last week. Cabinet ministers are also believed to have been given copies of the PwC report. "The Cabinet members were given the opportunity to study the report in greater detail. I understand that PKA has managed to resolve several technical issues with PwC to release the report, including the issue of indemnity," he said in his blog yesterday.

Ong said he remained committed to a policy of transparency and openness. "This is what a 'People First, Performance Now' government should be. The people not only have the right to know but should also be assured that the Government is acting in their best interest," he said.

Thursday May 21, 2009

Work to build Bakun power towers begins

By STEPHEN THEN

MIRI: The project to construct hundreds of kilometres of transmission towers to channel electricity from the Bakun hydro-electric dam in central Sarawak to the rest of the state has begun in earnest. The massive transmission towers will carry the power cables which will send electricity from the dam in the Kapit division — in the heart of central Sarawak — to the Bintulu division along the coastal belt of central Sarawak and then southwards to the Kuching division.

The last transmission tower will be in the southernmost tip of Kuching where it will meet the undersea cable which will be laid to transmit the electricity from Bakun all the way to the southern shores of Johor for onward distribution to the rest of Peninsular Malaysia. From Bakun to the tip of southern Sarawak, the cables will be more than 800km long.

The first part of this huge project to construct the towers has kicked off in the vicinity of the RM6bil Bakun dam, in areas next to the main dam wall. Two days ago, local politicians in Kapit and officials from the Sarawak Energy Bhd (the main body that will oversee the construction of the towers) visited the natives in Uma Sambop, a longhouse occupied by the Kayans and Kenyahs, and held a sacrificial peace offering ceremony to ensure “safe and trouble-free” construction of the towers.

According to a source, many native landowners had been asked to sign agreements with the state authorities to allow their land to be used to build the towers. Environmental watchdog group Borneo Resources Institute Malaysia said the natives must be informed how much land would be acquired for the building of the towers and whether any compensation would be paid to those affected. Its coordinator for Sarawak Raymond Abin said he would try to get more information from the natives on the actual route.

Thursday May 21, 2009

Hand-held convenience

The eKL Initiative to boost service delivery is centred on the ‘One Government, Many Agencies, No Wrong Door’ principle to better link the public to the ‘back-end’ services of all government agencies. Do you know that you can now check the status of your dealings with the various government agencies hassle free via your mobile phone?. Just send a text message and you will be able to find out whether your child is selected for the national service training, status of your MyKad replacement, Universiti Malaya examination results, summonses with Royal Malaysia Police Department and many more. All you need to do is to register with the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit’s (MAMPU) mySMS service.



One government: Wan Mohd Rosdi showing promotional leaflet on mySMS in Putrajaya.

Just type REG MYSMS [full name] [identity card number] and send it to 15888. Then you will receive information from government agencies for free. Working on the tagline 'Hassle Free for People on the Move', mySMS 15888 is the Government's answer to its various agencies' SMS services that include the police, Road Transport Department, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education and local councils among others.

The service launched on July 31 last year by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan, was one of the many applications developed by MAMPU under its eKL Initiative to boost service delivery through an electronic government. The eKL Initiative is centred on the 'One Government, Many Agencies, No Wrong Door' principle to better link the public to the 'back-end' services of all government agencies. To view the complete list of mySMS services, visit www.mysms.gov.my.

mySMS is aimed at standardising the usage of 15888 to access Government news and services. At last count, MAMPU's mySMS website listed 86 agencies offering more than 1500 SMS services. When it was first launched, mySMS started with services from the Treasury Department's Housing Loan unit for civil servants, National Registration Department, International Trade and Industry Ministry and the Small-Medium Industries Development Corporation.

MAMPU eKL division director Wan Mohd Rosdi Wan Dolah said without the commitment and cooperation of the other government department and agencies, the mySMS service would not have been a success. According to statistics compiled by MAMPU, the most popular service requested from January to April this year was the National Service Training Department with 105,525 hits. Others were the Road Transport Department (15,789 hits), mySMS (12,429 hits), National Registration Department (9,172 hits) and Election Commission (9,052 hits).

Wan Mohd Rosdi said mySMS introduced the '15888' number as a single gateway to make it easier for the public to get their personal information via their handphones. "There were different numbers by different agencies and providers. But we don't want the people to remember so many numbers," he said.

Wan Mohd Rosdi pointed out that while there were about 27 million Malaysians, the number of mobile phone users were estimated at 24 million. "Some children as young as "three years old" have been given mobile phones by their parents. It would be a waste not to encourage people to utilise the technology in their hands," he said.

There are generally two kinds of information that mySMS provides. "Users can retrieve general information about a registered agency including addresses, telephone numbers of a particular branch and download forms from these agencies if they were made available. "They can send an SMS to request for these documents and forms, which would be later sent to the user's registered email address for download and printing. "Users can also access and view their personal information stored on the different agencies and department's servers such as examination results, application status and personal profiles," Wan Mohd Rosdi.

In order to retrieve personal information from any particular agency, he said the user would need to be registered first with that agency before being able to receive their personal information. "15888 is only to be a source of information for the public. They only need to pay a minimal cost of sending and receiving SMS and will be charged RM0.15 for every SMS sent and RM0.20 for the replying SMS. "Sometimes, we send SMS to registered users to let them know of any new services available when we add them," he said.

Friday May 22, 2009

Cabinet to discuss PKFZ report on Wednesday

KUALA LUMPUR: The report on the controversial Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) project by an accounting firm will be discussed thoroughly at next Wednesday's Cabinet meeting. Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the Cabinet needed time to carry out a more in-depth study of the report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) so that a more-concrete discussion could be held. "The Prime Minister and the Cabinet members agreed that some time should be given to them to read the report," Muhyiddin told reporters after attending the opening of the 51st Malaysian Schools Athletics Championships at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium here yesterday. The report was tabled at last Wednesday's Cabinet meeting by Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat. Muhyiddin said the Cabinet did not discuss much on the report during the meeting. Asked when the report would be made public, Muhyiddin replied: "I don't know."

Port Klang Authority (PKA) chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng said the PKA board had resolved not to release the report for the time being because it had been brought up for discussion at Cabinet level. It will now wait until the Cabinet has completed its deliberations on the report. He said the PKA would now be able to comply with PwC's request for an indemnity letter should it be required. "But there's no necessity for us to issue the letter as the audit report has not been released at the moment," he said after chairing a PKA board meeting in Port Klang yesterday. "The PKA can still counter-sue PricewaterhouseCoopers if there is negligence in the report," he said. Lee had written to PwC on April 30 for consent to make public the report. On another matter, Lee said the PKA board had accepted the resignation of its general manager and PKFZ chief executive officer Lim Thean Shiang. "For the time being PKA deputy general manager Capt David Padman will take over Lim's duties and I will assume the position of PKFZ non-executive chairman," he said.

It was reported yesterday that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission had started investigations into the PKFZ project. Sources said the project cost would swell to RM7.5bil, partly due to interest costs over a 20-year period. They also said that there was a lack of governance of the project.

Friday May 22, 2009

All new govt buildings to go green, says Works Minister

KUALA LUMPUR: All future government buildings will aspire to be “green buildings”. Works Minister Datuk Shaziman Abu Mansor said he would propose to the Cabinet that new government buildings feature energy-saving and other pro-environment measures. Shaziman, who launched the Green Building Index (GBI) yesterday, said the rating would act as a report card for buildings to conform to the level of sustainability which had been designed and built into the structures. “Studies show that existing buildings in Malaysia use an average of 250 to 350kWh per square metre per year, while green buildings under the GBI will be designed to operate with less than 200kWh per sq m per year.” He said the rating would be reviewed every three years to ensure the buildings were well maintained in accordance to the way they were designed.

Shaziman said although the cost of developing a green building may be more than that of a conventional building, the savings in operational costs would make it “cheaper in the long run”. “Reports show the primary reason developers are asking for green buildings is because of the potential for reduced operating costs, which is by about 60%,” he said.

Asked if there would be incentives offered to the private sector for making their buildings green, he said: “We want to do it for our own good. It is not right to think of what incentives we will get”. Malaysian Institute of Architects past president Dr Tan Loke Mun said the first listing of the GBI would be out in three months, with a pilot project already conducted on 11 buildings.

Friday May 22, 2009

Speed up forest projects or lose rights, licencees told

KUCHING: The state government has warned that more of the 42 planted forest licences issued will be revoked if the holders are slow to implement the projects. State Planning and Resource Management Ministry deputy permanent secretary Datuk Len Talif Salleh said the authorities had withdrawn two licences so far. “We have to take action after the third warning if the licensee does not comply with licensing conditions,” he told reporters after opening a seminar to boost forest plantation activities here yesterday.

Len Talif, who is also the state forestry director, said the 42 licences covered 2.8 million hectares, with a plantable area of about 1.4 million hectares. About one million hectares have been earmarked for the cultivation of fast growing timber species while the other 400,000ha is for oil palm. Urging the licensees to speed up their planting programmes which had fallen short of the target, Len Talif said only 240,000ha had been cultivated so far.

The figure includes 110,000ha cultivated by the state government to supply the raw materials to a proposed paper pulp mill in Bintulu. To achieve the target of one million hectares of planted forests by 2020, an estimated 30 million seedlings a year would be required, Len Talif said.

“There is an urgent need to mass propagate quality planting material,” he said, adding that the planted forest could produce at least 25 cubic metres of wood per hectare per year, which is more than 10 times compared to natural forests. The state currently produces about 12 million cubic metres of timber, with 9.2 million of this coming from permanent forest estates.

Friday May 22, 2009

DBKL works to stabilise hillslope after landslide

By LIM CHIA YING

A landslide just above the Malaysian Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis (MAPTB) building in Kuala Lumpur last August has prompted stabilisation work to be carried out. The hillslope, part of Bukit Petaling, also houses the Kwong Tung Chinese cemetery. At the site, at Lorong Syed Putra Kiri, blue plastic sheets were seen covering the hillslope. According to some of the centre’s employees, a drain has been constructed and since the incident, no landslides have occurred despite heavy rain on several occasions.



Interim measure: The slope has also been covered with plastic sheets.

Meanwhile, levelling work to stabilise the soil were conducted and the employees added that the plastic sheets were laid for at least six to seven months. “Grass is also growing to help strengthen the earth. We had contacted the Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) when the incident happened and they promptly came to our aid and have taken the necessary measures,” an employee said. The association, a non-governmental organisation, was established in 1948 and the cemetery is said to have existed since pre-war times.

Friday May 22, 2009

Developer waiting for green light from ministry to revive project

By Elan Perumal

THE Selangor government has called on the federal government to quickly resolve the issue surrounding the halted police logistic complex project in Shah Alam. The state fears it will add on to the many existing abandoned projects if no action is taken to resolve the issue between the contractor and the government. It was reported in the *StarMetro* on Monday that the multi-million ringgit government project at Section U1 in Shah Alam has been grounded after seeing almost 70% completion. The project which is being carried out by the Home Affairs Ministry at a cost of RM45mil has been abandoned for almost a year.

State housing, building management and squatters committee chairman Iskandar Abdul Samad said his office would be writing to the Home Affairs Ministry on the issue. Iskandar said the project should go on. "It is a shame as this is not a private project and I don't understand why the project stopped halfway. "Certainly, we do not want to add a government project into our list of abandoned projects in the state," he said.

The project, which is being developed by Eastern Access Sdn Bhd, is estimated to cost RM45mil. Its executive chairman, Datuk Syed Taha Syed Mohamed, said his company had so far invested RM35mil in the project and was unable to go ahead with the project due to some technical problems. He said they had secured financing from Bank Pembangunan but was awaiting the green light from the Home Affairs Ministry. "This project is undertaken through the design-and-build concept on a privatisation basis. "We cannot finish the project unless the ministry can give me the endorsement," he said.

Previously, it had been reported that the project was a police logistics complex for the Selangor Police Contingent Headquarters and was to have involved an administrative building, a store, several types of housing, a multi-purpose hall and a kindergarten.

Saturday May 23, 2009

Only 10% of estates passed safety guidelines: Dr Subra

By SYLVIA LOOI

TELUK INTAN: Only 10% of estates audited by the Occupational Safety and Health Department passed the safety level set by the Human Resources Ministry. Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam said to date, the department had audited 581 estates but only 50 of it attained the satisfactory level. "We are worried but we are doing something to improve the figure," he said, adding that there are over 3,000 estates in the country.

Speaking to reporters after launching an occupational safety and health carnival at the Seri Intan Estate here Saturday, Dr Subramaniam said that among the steps taken by the ministry were having stringent guidelines, regular auditing and carnivals such as the one organised Saturday. Urging estate workers to take responsibility in ensuring they were safe, Dr Subramaniam lamented that, sometimes, estate owners supplied safety equipment to their workers but they did not use them. Asked whether the current economic slowdown had forced employers to put safety in the back burner, Dr Subramaniam said:

"We always emphasise to employers that safety is an investment to increase productivity and profitability. It is not a wasted expenditure." He noted that since 2004, the number of reported industrial accidents was on the decline. From 58,365 in 2004, the number had dropped to 44,918 last year, added Dr Subramaniam. "The sectors which recorded the highest number of reported accidents are manufacturing, construction and agriculture," he added.

On another matter, Dr Subramaniam said the ministry was willing to act as an intermediary for the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) with the Government on the issue of levy payment. Stressing that the Human Resources Ministry was not involved in collecting the levy, Dr Subramaniam said the federation could put forward its views to the ministry and he would bring it up during meetings with Government agencies. MEF executive director Shamsudin Bardan was quoted by Bernama as urging the Government to deduct the levy from the workers wages instead of it being borne by employers.

Sunday May 24, 2009

90% of audited estates found to be 'unsafe'

TELUK INTAN: Only 50 out of the 581 estates audited by the Occupational Safety and Health Department passed the safety level set by the Human Resources Ministry. Minister Datuk Dr S. Subramaniam said the figure was worrying as there were more than 3,000 estates in the country. "We are worried but we are doing something to improve the figure," he told reporters after launching an occupational safety and health carnival at the Seri Intan Estate yesterday.

Dr Subramaniam said among others, the ministry would conduct regular audits and hold more carnivals on occupational safety and health issues. He also urged estate workers to assume more responsibility for their own safety, adding that sometimes they did not bother to use the safety equipment supplied to them by their employers. He said the cases of reported industrial accidents had also declined from 58,365 in 2004 to 44,918 last year, with manufacturing, construction and agriculture recording the highest number.

On another matter, Dr Subramaniam said the ministry was also willing to help the Malaysian Employers Federation resolve the matter of levy payment for foreign workers with the Government. Federation executive director Shamsudin Bardan has urged the Government to deduct workers' levies from their wages instead of these being borne by employers.

Monday May 25, 2009

Nature's splendour threatened by project

By THO XIN YI

THE sound of birds chirping and insects buzzing on a cool morning is part of the tranquil surroundings residents at Bayan Hill Homes and Sri Kesidang Apartments in Bandar Puchong Jaya are used to. Birds, monkeys and wildboar that make the hill their home also make frequent appearances at the neighbourhood. But residents fear that the days are numbered for this enchanting hilly land and it might have to make way for development. The development project, a joint-venture between Permodalan Negeri Selangor Bhd (PNSB) and two other developers, has been planned on a 68.1ha plot of land near the Ayer Hitam Forest Reserve.



The plan shows 137 bungalows, 324 semi-detached houses, one commercial plot and an office site. Among the main concerns raised by the residents were losing the green lung, increase in traffic congestion, air and noise pollution and the possibility of landslides. "Currently, there is only one access road, which is Jalan Bayan – the main road for our neighbourhood.

"How will the residents cope with the traffic when heavy vehicles begin using this road to get to the construction site? "Furthermore, it took us 10 years to establish our security system and, if this road is opened for all, it will cause a lot of problems," Bayan Hill Homes Residents Association chairman Woo Fook Chin said. He added that the residents also did not wish to relive the bitter experiences of rock-blasting.



Left vacant: The residents also worry about the effects any construction work would have on their foundation. "Cracks appeared on the walls of our houses when another developer blasted the hill for development about a decade ago,". Sri Kesidang Apartment resident Steven Ng

echoed his views. “We wouldn’t know what would happen to the structure and foundation of our homes if the hill is blasted,” he said.

Some apartment residents, who are facing the problem of insufficient parking spaces within the apartment, use the vacant land as a carpark. The land spans the Kinrara and Sri Serdang state constituencies. Five apartment complexes along Persiaran Wawasan and Persiaran Indera in Pusat Bandar Puchong – Sri Penaga, D’ Palma, Saraka, Desa Tanjung and Sri Cempaka – are also located right next to the land.

Sri Penaga management corporation committee member Pang Wai Hoong expressed his worries over landslides. “During downpours, we can see water gushing down the steep slope like a mini-waterfall.



Sweet songs: The land is home for many species of birds.

“What would happen when the hill is being developed and could no longer retain the water?” he asked. The residents first heard about the project in late 2005 and had forwarded their objections to the relevant parties, including the federal government, the state government and the Subang Jaya Municipal Council. Former assemblyman for Kinrara Dr Kow Cheong Wei, when contacted, said the original development plan consisted of a mix of apartments, semi-detached houses and bungalows.

“The high density project is unfair to the residents, but at the same time, it’s also unfair if the land owners and developers are asked to forgo the project. “The developers had looked into low-density development and resubmitted their plans to the local council,” he said.

In a letter dated Nov 4, 2008, the residents were notified by the MPSJ that its one-stop centre committee had rejected the development application on Oct 14. Nonetheless, the developers filed an appeal against this decision with the Appeals Board of the Selangor Town and Country Planning Department. The hearing was supposed to be held on May 19 but has been postponed to July. The developers declined to comment.

Monday May 25, 2009

Residents find out apartments not issued CF

By Geetha Krishnan

THE recent freak storm in Kajang that party destroyed the ceiling of several apartment units in Desa Baiduri made residents aware of another problem.



Yap: 'I have been paying the monthly maintenance fees to the Desa Baiduri Residents Association'

They learnt that the five apartment blocks built in 1999 was never issued the Certificate of Fitness (CF). Resident Yap Say Heng, 49, expressed his shock after hearing the news from the Kajang Municipal Council (MPKj) when he called to complain about the incident.

"I have been living here for the past 10 years and pay the monthly maintenance fees to the Desa Baiduri Residents Association. I assumed the association will handle all the necessary repairs. "But when a few of us got together and called them to do something about the leaking roof and damaged ceiling, the association said it wasn't under its scope of responsibility," added the home tutor and father of three.

Yap who later contacted the MPKj was told no CF was issued for the apartments. Councillor Ong Seng Peng said Desa Baiduri was on the list of the council's abandoned projects and was therefore never issued the CF.



Damaged: Parts of the ceiling of several Desa Baiduri apartments were blown off during the recent freak storm in Kajang.

"The party collecting the maintenance fees now should be responsible for the building's wear and tear. I was also informed that the residents have made efforts to contact the developer but the company cannot be traced," he added. Yap also produced a letter from the association dated Oct 23, 2008, stating it was not responsible for ceiling repairs. Residents are now in a quandary and may have to fork out money for the repairs.

Monday May 25, 2009

New dam for Papar to supply water to KK until 2050

By RUBEN SARIO

KOTA KINABALU: A second dam will be built in Papar district near here to ensure sufficient water supply for this state capital and its vicinity until the year 2050. Outgoing state Infrastructure Development Minister Datuk Raymond Tan said the dam in Kampung Kaiduan, 30km from here, was the centrepiece of the Kota Kinabalu water supply masterplan. A plan for

the construction of a water treatment plant in Lok Kawi and the upgrading of two existing plants was approved by the state Cabinet on April 13, said Tan.

He said the dam and the water treatment plant would cost RM2.8bil. They would supply an additional 1,200 million litres of water a day for the city, said Tan before handing over his ministerial portfolio to Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan on Wednesday .

Tan said the dam with a capacity of 20 million litres and surface area of 12 sq km would be three times larger than the Kampung Babagon dam in Penampang district. "Water for the Kampung Kaiduan dam will come from catchment areas on the Crocker Range," he said, adding that about 100 households would be relocated to make way for the project. Tan said that other components of the masterplan, including the upgrading of the Telibong and Papar water treatment plants at a cost of RM240mil, would boost the water supply by 120 million litres a day.

Tuesday May 26, 2009

Lim's resignation linked to PKFZ's slow growth

KLANG: The slow pace of improvement at the Port Klang Free Zone as well as breach of confidentiality have been cited as the key reasons which led to the resignation of Lim Thean Shiang (pic) as PKFZ Sdn Bhd executive chairman and the port authority's general manager.

Lim, who was hired to make improvements to the Port Klang Authority (PKA), apparently did not bring in a substantial number of tenants although he had been on the job for almost a year. The occupancy rate at PKFZ remains at 14% and the port has a long way to go before more tenants could be convinced to take up leases. His resignation comes in the wake of his unauthorised briefing of government backbenchers even before the Cabinet was briefed on the audit report on PKFZ.

Ironically, Backbenchers Club chairman Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing's company, Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, was the turnkey developer of PKFZ. Lim's action was said to be viewed by Transport Ministry officials as insubordination as the Prime Minister and the Cabinet were not privy to the report yet nor had they deliberated on its contents at that time.

The general perception was that PKFZ's performance was far from satisfactory and that a stronger team needed to be in place if the port authority was seriously considering improving its financial position. It is believed even before Lim's resignation, there was already talk that he might be removed due to his unauthorised action which ministry officials regarded as highly serious.

Lim's resignation from both posts had been accepted by PKA chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng and endorsed by the board on Thursday. His resignation would take effect on June 5. His critics said

the lobbying for him to stay by certain quarters might have been orchestrated. It was reported that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission had started investigations into the PKFZ report. Sources said the project would swell to RM7.5bil, partly due to interest costs over a 20-year period. They also said there was a lack of governance of the project.

Tuesday May 26, 2009

Water tunnel project to start next Monday

By MAZWIN NIK ANIS

PUTRAJAYA: Work on a 44.6km-long tunnel to transfer almost two million litres of water daily from Pahang to Selangor will start next Monday. The Federal Government project will meet the needs of consumers for water in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya until the year 2025 at a cost of RM3.936bil. Project director Datuk Ismail Mat Noor said the tunnel, which alone cost around RM1.3bil to build, was the first and “most critical” component in the project and would take five years to complete.

Ismail said work would commence in Karak in Pahang and end in Hulu Langat, Selangor before 1.9 million litres of water could be transferred daily. “We have planned to start the project on June 1,” he told reporters at a signing ceremony for the construction of the tunnel yesterday, which was witnessed by Energy, Green Technology and Water Minister Datuk Peter Chin Fah Kui.

The project has been awarded to a consortium of four companies - IJM Corp Bhd, UEM Builders, Shimizu Corporation and Nishimatsu Construction Co. Ltd. Construction of the project’s other three components - the Klau Dam, a raw water pump station and water pipes - is expected to commence in March next year. Ismail said once completed, Selangor would pay RM80mil a year to the Pahang government for water. A large part of the project will be financed through loans by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) while the rest is funded by a Federal Government grant.

Chin said the government was confident that Nishimatsu would play its part in ensuring the project be carried out without any glitch. He said the question of public confidence should not arise as the Government was sure the company “can do the job and do it well.” “If we are not confident of them, we would not have selected them,” he said, responding to questions over the selection of the controversy-plagued Nishimatsu for the project. The Japanese construction company is said to be involved in a political controversy back home and was held responsible for the collapse of a 100m rail tunnel in Singapore in 2004.

Tuesday May 26, 2009

Cable theft causes a gridlock

By BAVANI M

THE Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) pump house at the underpass heading to Bulatan Kampung Pandan and Jalan Tun Razak failed to operate on Sunday morning after thieves stole some RM10,000 worth of electricity cables inside the pump house. Due to the theft, the pumps at the underpass failed to start when the water level went up after a downpour on Saturday evening causing a massive gridlock at the site on Sunday morning.

The pumps are used to flush out rain water from low-lying areas. City Hall corporate communications manager Anwar Zain said the pump house had three pumps to draw away water from the underpass during flash floods. "Pump houses are placed at low areas, especially underpasses, and the DBKL has 16 pump houses located at various parts in the city," he said.



Under water: The underpass was still flooded (above) as the pumps failed to clear the water, leading to a massive gridlock.

Anwar said due to the theft, the pumps failed to function, causing rain water to flood the road under the underpass and this had caused congestion in the area on Sunday. "The pumps will operate automatically when the water level goes up so we believe the theft took place on Saturday night causing the underpass to be flooded," he said.

According to Anwar, thieves had used a crow bar to break the lock and enter the pump room to steal the cables and it was the first time such an incident has happened. "We have started work to replace the cables and, in the meantime, a temporary pump has been installed," he said.

Anwar apologised for the inconvenience and said a team would be sent to check on the other pump houses in the city. The incident had caused a gridlock along Jalan Sungei Besi near the Federal Bakery on Sunday morning which resulted in a four-lane road reduced to two lanes. Motorists were caught unawares and were stuck in a bumper-to-bumper jam. "I decided to use the toll-free road because it was a Sunday so you can imagine my frustration at getting stuck in an hour-long jam," motorist A. Wong, who called *StarMetro*, said.

Wong was also unhappy that the city's Integrated Transport Information System (ITIS) failed to alert the public on the congestion and instead was flashing irrelevant messages. "I called the number to find out what was happening and an operator told me that the electronic road sign was not working properly and he informed me about the broken pump and advised me to use an alternative route. "However, it was too late. I was already stuck there and ITIS should have informed us earlier," Wong said, adding that if he had known about the problem, he would have used the SMART tunnel.

Wednesday May 27, 2009

Musa has had enough with errant builders and consultants

KOTA KINABALU: Stop the shoddy work! That is Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman's warning to contractors and consultants undertaking government projects in the state. He said there would be no structural problems with newly-constructed buildings if contractors and consultants followed the specifications.

Musa said there would have been no structural problem at the Sabah Road Transport Department headquarters here if all those involved monitored the construction closely to ensure that the building was built properly. "I hope that all contractors and consultants will work closely with each other to ensure that quality is not compromised and all specifications are followed," he told reporters after chairing the Sabah Action Council meeting here.

He added that the state government was also monitoring the progress of various development projects under the Ninth Malaysia Plan and would blacklist those who delayed the completion of projects. "Some may be delayed due to reasons like poor weather conditions but we want the contractors to complete their projects on time," he said.

He said he advised all his Cabinet ministers and officers to oversee projects under their respective ministries to ensure they were completed on schedule and according to specifications.