

Tuesday August 25, 2009

KTMB seeks to get back on track

KUALA LUMPUR: Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (KTMB) will consult the Finance Ministry to restructure the national railway operator's debts, its newly-appointed managing director Dr Aminuddin Adnan said. He said he would look into various options to improve the financial situation of KTMB. "It is a little too complicated to elaborate here," he said after giving breaking of fast food packets to KTM Komuter passengers at KL Sentral station yesterday. Yesterday's function was the first for Dr Aminuddin as KTMB managing director. He was appointed three weeks ago.

Dr Aminuddin was previously the chief executive officer of Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd which operates the KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit train services to KL International Airport (KLIA). It was earlier reported that KTMB has been running at a loss since it was privatised in 1992 due to the high operating costs of RM200mil a year. Dr Aminuddin said that besides looking into the finances of the company, he would also work towards improving KTMB's services. "We are in the midst of acquiring spare parts and restoring idle carriages to be fit for operation," he said.

Dr Aminuddin said KTMB recently rented five locomotives from the Indian Railway Construction Company as a short-term measure to meet a shortage of trains in operation. On KTMB's preparations to meet passengers' demands for *Hari Raya*, Dr Aminuddin said KTMB was ready to handle the exodus. "We have increased our capacity by 20%. A total of 100,734 tickets have been made available by KTMB for the festive season from Sept 15 to Sept 27 and 35,073 tickets have already been sold," he said.

Tuesday August 25, 2009

Tee Keat files suit

By NG CHENG YEE

 [Ong sues Tiong for defamation](#)

KUALA LUMPUR: Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat has filed a RM500mil defamation suit against Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing. The suit was filed over "unfounded and malicious defamatory allegations" made by Tiong that Ong had received RM10mil from him for MCA activities – claims that Tiong had made following the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) disclosure. The suit was filed at the High Court registry here yesterday.



Legal team: Ong's lawyers gathering at the Kuala Lumpur Court before filling a RM500mil suit against Tiong Monday.

Counsel for the MCA president, Ronnie Tan, said that whatever the amount awarded by the KL High Court would be given for education aid and other charities. He said Ong reserved the right to seek an interim injunction to restrain Tiong from making further allegations. In his statement of claim, Ong demanded that Tiong fully withdraw his defamatory remarks and publish an apology in all major Malaysian newspapers of all languages.

Ong said the allegations made by Tiong were baseless, untrue and defamatory and had damaged his reputation, image, integrity and good name in the eyes of the public. The purpose of such statements, he said, was to tarnish his name as a national leader and caused him to be hated, humiliated and condemned by the public. Such remarks, he said, were published with elements of *mala fide* (bad faith) by Tiong to obstruct the fair and just investigation into the misuse of funds in the PKFZ issue and the role played by Tiong's company in the controversy.

Wednesday August 26, 2009

MACC report lodged against five parties linked to PKFZ issue

By TEH ENG HOCK

 [PKA lodges report with MACC over Port Klang Free Zone scandal](#)

PUTRAJAYA: PKA chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng revealed Wednesday the possibility of a conspiracy among five parties, including former Port Klang Authority general manager over the Port Klang Free Zone scandal. Besides former PKA general manager Datin Paduka O.C. Phang, Lee said those involved in the conspiracy were Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, its president and CEO Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, BTA Architect and PKFZ development works consultant Bernard Tan Seng Swee. Lee said various parties had also made disputed claims from the PKFZ project amounting to about RM1.5bil. This was revealed in his report which he lodged with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency (MACC) at the commission's headquarters here Wednesday.

Wednesday August 26, 2009

New blog making claims and allegations on PKFZ issue

KUALA LUMPUR: More big names are being implicated and new allegations made concerning the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) scandal in a newly-launched blog. The blog www.truthabout-pkfz.blogspot.com was set up by a group describing themselves as “non-partisan Malaysians disgusted with the wrongdoings of corrupt businessmen, politicians and civil servants.” Unnamed writers of the blog have made allegations regarding the issue, ranging from gangsterism involving a prominent businessman-politician to the purported involvement of several other politicians.

As of yesterday evening, it has posted a message from the group managing the blog and two articles, both dated Aug 24. In one of the postings, it published a letter written by an anonymous person who claimed to be close to Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing. In the letter, Tiong was described as a powerful person in Sarawak and as the “boss of Umno and MCA”. The blog said those involved had links with Selangor bigshots and that Kuala Dimensi had bought the land cheaply from Koperasi Pembangunan Pulau Lumut Berhad (KPPL). The report also claimed that Tan Sri Onn Ismail, who was then with KPPL, was the father-in-law of Kuala Dimensi deputy CEO Datuk Faisal Abdullah and that a part of the 202ha land of was bought for only RM3.1mil.

Kuala Dimensi eventually sold some 404ha of land to Port Klang Authority (PKA) for a whopping RM1.088bil. There were also allegations of PKA staff being bullied by their superior and the hurried manner in which they were told to pursue matters relating to the purchase of the land even at a high price. The writer of the blog posting who questioned the astronomical price paid for the land at RM25 psf said sarcastically that it took him two weeks to deliberate on all aspects before purchasing his car although it cost only RM45,000. Other interesting revelations in the blog include the question of ownership of land at the time of sale in 2002 by Kuala Dimensi.

The writer claimed that Kuala Dimensi had on Nov 24, 1997, sold 305ha of the land to Great Profile Sdn Bhd and questioned how it was possible for the company to effect the land transaction with PKA if the land was not its. The group managing the blog also appealed to those who could substantiate the allegations to forward their views. On Aug 11, PKA lodged a police report against Kuala Dimensi, the turnkey contractor of PKFZ over alleged billing discrepancies ranging between RM500mil and RM1bil. The discrepancies were uncovered by a special task force set up following the audit report on PKFZ by PricewaterhouseCoopers. It discovered that Kuala Dimensi had possibly, among others, overclaimed and made fraudulent and unsubstantiated claims.

Thursday August 27, 2009

Lee claims conspiracy in PKFZ scandal

 [PKA lodges report with MACC over Port Klang Free Zone scandal](#)


PUTRAJAYA: Port Klang Authority chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng revealed there was possible conspiracy among five parties in connection with the Port Klang Free Zone scandal. The five are Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, its CEO Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, former PKA general manager Datin Paduka O.C. Phang, BTA Architect and the consultant for development work Bernard Tan Seng Swee. He also revealed that some of the parties had made unsubstantiated claims amounting to about RM1.5bil. Lee revealed this in his report to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission against the five here yesterday. Various organisations welcomed Lee's move, saying the MACC should probe the matter because it involved public funds.

ALLEGED UNSUBSTANTIATED CLAIMS BY KUALA DIMENSI

- Procurement of Performance Bond and Insurance Premiums which Kuala Dimensi was not entitled to claim - RM5,016,000
- Monsoon drain works and water supply works which Kuala Dimensi was not entitled to claim under Development Agreement 3 (DA3) - RM254,850,000
- Overclaiming of professional fees based on Public Works Department (JKR) Standard Form of Agreement For Consultancy Services Between Contractor And Consultants For Design & Build Contract - RM76,056,101.08
- Physical construction of the electrical infrastructure for 33kv system works which had yet to commence - RM55,767,000
- Overclaiming for the hotel works - RM24,934,244.14
- Variation works claim which Kuala Dimensi was not entitled to as the procedural requirement under the additional development works (ADW) has not been complied with - RM62,189,000.00
- Providing 33kv supply to Precinct 2 and 8 and the civil and infrastructure work to Main Intake Station which had yet to be carried out - RM83,000,000.00
- Cost difference from remeasurement by JUBC Sdn Bhd by of the Office Blocks and Light Industries Units - RM93,000,000
- Failure to make contributions to authorities for the basic infrastructure works as required under Land Agreement 1 - RM2,249,742.29

ALLEGED WRONGDOINGS BY DATIN PADUKA OC PHANG

- Failing to consider PKA's ability to self-finance the purchase of the land and continuing to enter into significant and expensive development contracts with Kuala Dimensi on Nov 30, 2005, and April 26, 2006, totalling RM1.055bil
- Failing to consider that the special value of RM25 psf had included interest, instead of RM25 psf on a deferred basis with further or additional interest of 7.5%;
- Refusing to heed the advice of her officers and other professionals, to appoint quantity surveyors for Development Agreement 3, Additional development works 1 and New addition development works delaying the appointment of the quantity surveyors and thereafter limiting and restricting their role;
- Insisting that Perunding BE Sdn Bhd be appointed as the sole quantity surveyor with the knowledge that the firm had a conflict of interest, having been engaged by KDSB and/or its subcontractor for the same Project;
- And, generally, in making unilateral decisions without the approval of the PKA members

 S&P GRAPHICS © 2009



Thursday August 27, 2009

Various parties made disputed claims amounting to RM1.5bil

By TEH ENG HOCK and LESTER KONG

 [PKA lodges report with MACC over Port Klang Free Zone scandal](#)

PUTRAJAYA: There was possible conspiracy among five parties, including a former Port Klang Authority general manager, over the Port Klang Free Zone scandal, PKA chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng revealed. He said various parties had also made disputed claims that amounted to about RM1.5bil from the PKFZ project.



Revelations: Lee (centre) and lawyer Lim Chee Wee (right) heading for the MACC office to lodge the report Wednesday. — Bernama.

Lee revealed this in his report lodged with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency (MACC) at the commission's headquarters here yesterday. The five parties are Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, its CEO Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, former PKA general manager Datin Paduka O.C. Phang, BTA Architect and consultant for development works Bernard Tan Seng Swee. "Based on the instances set out, we have strong reason to believe that there was a possible conspiracy between the five parties," he said in a statement issued to reporters after lodging the report.

Lee said PKA would use every legal means possible to challenge the RM1.5bil disputed claims. His report also detailed the alleged irregularities by the five parties. Lee said Kuala Dimensi had made notices of payments which were fraudulent because they were claims for work which "in reality was not carried out".

ALLEGED UNSUBSTANTIATED CLAIMS BY KUALA DIMENSI

- Procurement of Performance Bond and Insurance Premiums which Kuala Dimensi was not entitled to claim - RM5,016,000
- Monsoon drain works and water supply works which Kuala Dimensi was not entitled to claim under Development Agreement 3 (DA3) - RM254,850,000
- Overclaiming of professional fees based on Public Works Department (JKR) Standard Form of Agreement For Consultancy Services Between Contractor And Consultants For Design & Build Contract - RM76,056,101.08
- Physical construction of the electrical infrastructure for 33kv system works which had yet to commence - RM55,767,000
- Overclaiming for the hotel works - RM24,934,244.14
- Variation works claim which Kuala Dimensi was not entitled to as the procedural requirement under the additional development works (ADW) has not been complied with - RM62,189,000.00
- Providing 33kv supply to Precinct 2 and 8 and the civil and infrastructure work to Main Intake Station which had yet to be carried out - RM83,000,000.00
- Cost difference from remeasurement by JU8C Sdn Bhd by of the Office Blocks and Light Industries Units - RM93,000,000
- Failure to make contributions to authorities for the basic infrastructure works as required under Land Agreement 1 - RM2,249,742.29

ALLEGED WRONGDOINGS BY DATIN PADUKA OC PHANG

- Failing to consider PKA's ability to self-finance the purchase of the land and continuing to enter into significant and expensive development contracts with Kuala Dimensi on Nov 30, 2005, and April 26, 2006, totalling RM1.055bil
- Failing to consider that the special value of RM25 psf had included interest, instead of RM25 psf on a deferred basis with further or additional interest of 7.5%;
- Refusing to heed the advice of her officers and other professionals, to appoint quantity surveyors for Development Agreement 3, Additional development works 1 and New addition development works delaying the appointment of the quantity surveyors and thereafter limiting and restricting their role;
- Insisting that Perunding BE Sdn Bhd be appointed as the sole quantity surveyor with the knowledge that the firm had a conflict of interest, having been engaged by KDSB and/or its subcontractor for the same Project;
- And, generally, in making unilateral decisions without the approval of the PKA members

GRAPHICS © 2009



"Kuala Dimensi, along with BTA Architect, issued notices of payment to PKA which are false, erroneous or defective and which the port authority believe were intended to mislead PKA. "Tiong, being the CEO of Kuala Dimensi, would have known that these notices of payment were issued wrongfully," he added.

Lee said details of these irregularities were reported to police on Aug 11 in Klang. As for Phang, Lee said PKA wanted MACC to investigate her actions which were detrimental to the port authority and "apparently beneficial" to Kuala Dimensi. He said Phang failed to consider PKA's ability to self-finance the purchase of the land. She also continued to enter into significant and expensive development contracts with Kuala Dimensi, such as an additional development work contract on Nov 30, 2005, and new additional development work contracts on April 26, 2006. The two agreements totalled RM1.055bil and resulted in PKA's financial liabilities escalating further, said Lee.

"PKA was notified by the Auditor-General as early as May 27, 2004, that it was not in a position to self-finance the project. "However, Phang failed to alert the Government of this and take immediate steps to alleviate its financial predicament." Lee arrived at the MACC headquarters at 2.26pm, accompanied by PKA lawyer Lim Chee Wee. He left 15 minutes later after submitting two volumes of the report to an MACC officer.

"The two volumes are actually not the special task force's report but basically ours which were lodged against the five parties to MACC. "It is based on directors' meetings, available evidence and documents that we have from our staff, task forces and committees. "The special task force report has not been given to anybody, including the MACC," he added. Lee said, after the board had held two long meetings, each lasting five to seven hours, he had been authorised to lodge the reports with the police, MACC, and also to commence legal proceedings. "When I lodged (a report) at the Klang police station, the figure was RM657mil then. Today, we added another RM720mil, so the total is around RM1.5bil. "So there is a dispute over the RM1.5bil part of the contract," he said.

When contacted, both Tiong and Phang declined to comment. Tan could not be reached. Tiong, meanwhile lodged a report against MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat at the Dang Wangi police station in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. The report was over Ong's RM500mil defamation suit against him.

Thursday August 27, 2009

Groups laud PKA's move

PUTRAJAYA: Various organisations have thrown their support behind Port Klang Authority (PKA) chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng for lodging a Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) report against five parties for possible conspiracy over the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) scandal. They said the port authority had no choice but to do this and the anti-graft body should probe the matter as it involved public funds. Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations secretary-general Muhd Sha'ani Abdullah said the report should not be viewed from a political perspective. This was because it was done in the name of transparency, proper governance and accountability. "Currently, the Government's credibility is at stake because of poor handling of these kinds of publicly funded projects which had gone awry," he said.

Lee lodged the report at the MACC headquarters here yesterday against Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, its CEO Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, former PKA general manager Datin Paduka O.C. Phang, BTA Architect and consultant for development works Bernard Tan Seng Swee. Sha'ani added that the current Transport Minister and PKA should not be made the scapegoats in the controversy. He said the people's economic hardship was partly due to wastage of public funds as exemplified by the PKFZ scandal. "The MACC has no basis to disregard this kind of misuse of enormous amounts of public funds. There should be equal emphasis to ensure that this (PKFZ controversy) is not repeated," he added.

Suhakam commissioner Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam questioned why the report had not been lodged earlier as it would have taken a different turn otherwise. He said the management of the port authority should have taken steps earlier to look into the ballooning costs of the project. However, he added that it was good of Lee to lodge the MACC report as it was the port authority's right to find out the truth. MTUC president Syed Shahir Syed Mohamud said the public had waited long enough for the commission to determine the parties responsible in the scandal. "I think MACC ought to take this issue seriously." "They must be seen to be impartial because the people want to know what has happened to the billions of public money involved," he said.

Thursday August 27, 2009

PAC: Developer wants bond redeemed early to cut cost

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd, the turnkey developer of the controversial Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ), has proposed that the Government redeemed bonds earlier to slash the cost of the project, said Public Accounts Committee chairman Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid. He said he believed that the Government was also exploring the matter as early bond redemption would reduce costs to between RM3.2bil and RM3.5bil. "Kuala Dimensi has suggested that there are ways to cut costs. I think the Government is also studying that.



Key figure: Tiong declining to talk to reporters at the Parliament lobby Wednesday.

“The figure of RM4.6bil can be reduced if the bond is redeemed now especially with the current financial situation,” he told reporters after an about three-hour inquiry with Kuala Dimensi deputy chief executive officer Datuk Faisal Abdullah. Azmi said Kuala Dimensi CEO Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing informed the PAC at 10am that he had to attend another questioning session either by the police or the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC). Azmi said Kuala Dimensi said costs could be reduced to between RM3.2bil and RM3.5bil based on the company’s estimated calculation. He said the developer claimed that of the RM4.6bil project cost, they only get between RM1.6bil and RM1.7bil, while the remaining went towards interest.

The Port Klang Authority (PKA) had obtained a soft loan of RM4.6bil from the Finance Ministry for the project. Azmi also said that Kuala Dimensi was willing to go for arbitration to resolve the dispute over unpaid instalments of between RM500mil and RM1bil. “They say they are willing to go for arbitration. They are waiting for the claims from PKA. If there is such a dispute, they can either go to court or arbitration,” he said, adding that there was a provision in the contract stating that such matters could be resolved through arbitration. However, he said that some questions about the alleged overbilling were not answered by Kuala Dimensi because the matter had been brought to court.

Thursday August 27, 2009

Low: Ray of hope for transparency

By NG CHENG YEE

PETALING JAYA: When Transparency International (TI) president Datuk Paul Low accepted the job as head of the ad hoc committee on corporate governance for the controversial PKFZ project, many opposed his decision to take up the post. These critics were sceptical if anything would be uncovered and worried that the reputation of TI would be spoilt. However, Low had a different view and believed that his participation would ensure that transparency was practised. “If the Government feels we can help by actively participating, we should accept it and not just be armchair critics,” he said.



Staying neutral: Low (left) gesturing during a press conference on PKFZ in Petaling Jaya recently.

Low, who has been invited to sit on the Port Klang Authority (PKA) board for the next six months as the committee's representative to ensure that its recommendations to the board are adopted, said he has no regrets being an independent director in the board. "From what I have observed so far, things are being done in a proper manner," he said.

He said the conduct of the board had been excellent as it was transparent and professional. "The board members are allowed to speak their minds and we are allowed to help formulate decisions in the best interest of PKA." As head of the committee, Low said his duty was to ensure that the board gave due consideration to its recommendations and implement them. He said part of its recommendations included the restructuring of the board. "We have recommended that one third of the board be made up of independent directors. "We have to ensure that the right people are put in the right place," he said.

He said these independent directors would have to be people of good reputation, integrity, and be competent and professional. He said the committee had also recommended certain key officers to be appointed. "We asked for the appointment of an internal audit chief to be seconded from the Auditor-General's office. "Other than that, a chief governance officer will also be recruited to ensure that all the recommendations in regards with ethics and integrity are complied with," he said.

Low said that as a government agency, PKA had landed itself in trouble because of the PKFZ project. "Internationally, it does affect our reputation in the eyes of investors and people who do business with Malaysia. "It is extremely important for PKA to put in measures that are not superficial but substantial in the area of integrity to improve its image." He said the public were sceptical if the real culprits behind the controversy would be uncovered. "Public perception is being formed from previous cases including the Lingam case, where nothing has been done. However, they cannot be blamed as they have lost confidence that PKA would be able to correct itself. "At the same time, I can see what is being done in the PKFZ controversy, there is a ray of hope that things will be uncovered and be dealt with," he said.

"At the moment, for the things being disclosed and the action being taken, evidence points to the Transport Minister being serious. "If he is not serious, he would not have gone so far as having the auditors examine what went wrong and he would not have asked for the help of TI. "However, when you do such things, you will offend certain parties. "You are bound to get reactions but the point is if you know the right thing to do, in terms of ethics and integrity, you must stand firm and not compromise." On how he would stay neutral when sitting on the board, Low said he was accountable to the TI executive council. "In the deliberation of the ad hoc committee, I have TI observers - one from the secretariat and

two other TI council members who observe how the meeting is conducted and how I chair the meeting. "If they think my conduct is compromised, they will have to tell me and there is nothing to stop them from reporting to the council. "And if things warrant it, I can be rebuked or worse, removed," he said.

Friday August 28, 2009

Plan to set up innovation centres

MIRI: The Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry (MOSTI) will propose the setting up of six national innovation centres in the country before the end of this year to the Cabinet, Minister Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili said recently. He said the idea for such centres, with the aim of promoting creativity and innovation among Malaysians, was conceived by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. It was originally proposed that one innovation centre be set up but the ministry felt that more centres would have a greater impact, he said after attending a briefing at Curtin University of Technology Sarawak Campus (Curtin Sarawak) at Senadin, about 30km from here.

Dr Ongkili said four of the centres would be set up in Peninsular Malaysia and one each in Sabah and Sarawak. He said the centres, to be operated by MOSTI, would be located at selected campuses of institutions of higher learning, closely linked to their centres of research and excellence as well as to the public and private sectors.

Dr Ongkili also said that the ministry would allocate RM2mil to fund Curtin Sarawak's research and development activities under the ongoing Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010). He said that so far, RM1.4mil had been disbursed to fund seven research projects by the university in the state. He also announced the offer of six places for suitable nominees from Curtin Sarawak to pursue masters or doctorate degrees through the ministry's National Science Fellowship programme. - Bernama

Saturday August 29, 2009

Recover funds, Ong urged

TANGKAK: More than 400 MCA leaders and grassroots members from 15 divisions in Johor have urged party president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat to recover some RM1.5bil claims made by some parties in the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) scandal. Speaking to reporters here, Ong said it was a spontaneous effort by division leaders and grassroots members in the state to spearhead a campaign to support his move to solve the PKFZ debacle. He said he was touched by their open support for him. I'm with you: Ong meeting the crowd upon arriving for the meeting with division leaders and members in Tangkak in Johor Friday. "I was going to Segamat to attend functions today (yesterday) and many division leaders in

the state, including Wanita and Youth leaders, asked me to stop over in Tangkak. "We discussed current issues and they decided to launch a signature-collecting campaign to support my endeavour in the PKFZ issue," he said after a closed-door meeting with division leaders and members here yesterday.

Ong, who is also the Transport Minister, said the alleged fraudulent claims concerned public funds, which party leaders and members in Johor wanted him to recover. He said when he decided to allow PricewaterhouseCoopers to audit and release the report he was exposing himself to all kinds of smearing and unfounded allegations. He said he then had to resort to law suits to seek justice and to clear his name, adding that in doing so he was also risking his political career. To a question on six MCA divisions in Johor protesting against him in Johor Baru on Thursday, Ong said the party practised democracy and he could not stop the protest. "In a democratic society, we cannot stop anyone from expressing his views. "And it is also democratic that many leaders and members have urged me to recover the RM1.5bil claims."

Sunday August 30, 2009

Tee Keat takes the hard – but right – course

Comment by BARADAN KUPPUSAMY

Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat could have taken the easy way out and swept the PKFZ issue under the carpet. Instead, he chose the more difficult path in the name of greater accountability and transparency.

As far as whistle blowing goes, there is simply no comparison to what MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat has done with the Port Klang Free Zone issue. Ong's battle for transparency and accountability over the PKFZ fiasco is significant as his actions tally with the new mood in the country post 2008 – to punish culprits and make them accountable for massive loss of public funds and, if possible, recover the losses. For that, he is now facing enemies within and without as he battles to make the people behind the PKFZ fiasco own up for the huge losses.

As MCA president, Cabinet member and dogged reformer, Ong has no comparison in the higher reaches of Government for his single-minded mission to reveal the truth behind the PKFZ fiasco and punish the culprits. He has initiated one probe after another since becoming Transport Minister just 17 months ago, briefed the Cabinet numerous times on the findings, and made public, as he had promised, the findings. How the PKFZ was managed, or rather mismanaged, and how the public funds were overspent and how millions in cost overruns happened, are all there on the Internet to be read and digested by any citizen.

Not since the independent commission report on the Bumiputra Malaysia Finance scandal that was made public in 1984 has there been a revelation from the Government of such significance. At that time, public pressure had forced the Government to release the report. This time, too, public demand is high for an accounting of the PKFZ fiasco. Ong, mindful of the changed political landscape, not only pressed ahead with his probe into PKFZ but also met demands to make public the findings. For some baffling reason, however, Ong, who is Cabinet member and president of a party, seems to be fighting a lone battle for transparency and accountability.

Thus far, he has only got lukewarm support from the Barisan Nasional and the Government, both of which are pinning their hopes on re-inventing themselves to regain lost political support. Here is an ideal issue and a committed crusader to convince the people of the Barisan's reform agenda. While Ong is putting words and promises into practice and winning hearts and minds of ordinary Malaysians, others are still mouthing slogans.

Ong's unabashed crusade is a pointer for others in Barisan to catch on and for the civil service to emulate. Instead, we see Ong under brazen attack by the very individuals who managed the PKFZ for the past decade. One accusation after another has been hurled at him – from taking free rides in planes owned by PKFZ turnkey contractor Kuala Dimensi Sdn Bhd to receiving an astounding RM10mil from the company's CEO, Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, who is also Bintulu MP. Ong has done the right thing by filing a RM500mil defamation suit to clear his name and has vowed to press on with unveiling the PKFZ fiasco and ensure the people behind it take the rap. At the same time, a faction in the MCA allegedly allied with a top MCA leader is threatening to unseat Ong. And if Internet reports are to be believed, this faction has a war chest of some RM100mil to buy their way to success.

No minister has ever been in such an unenviable position as Ong – battling high corruption, trying to convince a Government still in apathy and facing an internal rebellion in the party he heads. But he still vows to keep at it. Foremost in the minds of many people is why Ong would want to battle with Tiong and his group if Ong or the MCA had received RM10mil in cash. The logic is not sound, they say. Besides, it is a huge sum and few people have the means to raise it in cash and carry it around to give it to the MCA. Another question that hurts is why the system and its main players who preach reform are not rallying behind Ong and his crusade which is exactly what the new, post 2008 Malaysia is all about. Ong, who became Transport Minister many years after the PKFZ was launched, and after two transport ministers had overseen the project and retired, could have taken the easy way out by sweeping everything under the carpet and playing dumb. Instead, he grabbed the bull by its horns and is paying a heavy price for his guts. He deserves public understanding, support and encouragement.

Monday August 31, 2009

Out-of-date info on government websites

By BAVANI M

The Prime Minister says the culture of excellence is the one “over-arching value” that will take Malaysia to greater heights, but a check on the websites of various government departments tells us that deeply rooted in the public sector is the culture of indifference and mediocrity.

MALAYSIANS like to go gaga over new and grand projects. But what is equally typically Malaysian is our *hangat hangat tahi ayam* (short-lived enthusiasm) attitude that deprives us from having the will to “follow through” our tasks to achieve excellence.



Redundant: The Immigration Department’s website (www.imi.gov.my) has been frequently criticised for being outdated and unfriendly.

We are talking about the numerous government websites that have not been kept up-to-date. *StarMetro* checked some of these websites, and discovered that many are not user-friendly and lacked information — especially those relating to activities and programmes of its ministries and agencies. A perfect example is the Immigration Department’s website (www.imi.gov.my) which has been frequently criticised for being outdated and unfriendly.

A reader of *The Star* who did not wish to be identified had called the paper to complain how she was taken on a wild goose chase from Kuala Lumpur to Putrajaya when trying to get her husband’s visa done. “Naturally I started with their website, and soon discovered that many of their activities and programmes such as the spouse programme, though still listed in the website, have long been discontinued,” she said.

She also related how she had called the visa pass and permit hotline (03-88801380) listed in the website countless times, but no one picked up the phone. Another good example is the newly launched Commercial Vehicles Licensing Board (CVLB) portal [cwww.imi.gov.my](http://www.imi.gov.my)" target="_blank">