

Friday November 20, 2009

'PKA should consider suggestions'

KUALA LUMPUR: The Transport Ministry should ask the Port Klang Authority's (PKA) board of directors to consider implementing the recommendations made by the ad hoc committee on governance. Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan, who is also the Special Task Force on the Port Klang Free Zone (PKFZ) Development Project chairman, said this was for recommendations which did not involve any amendments to the law. "One example is the creation of an Ethics and Integrity Monitoring Committee and the appointment of independent non-executive members to constitute one-third of the PKA Board of Directors," he said in a statement here last night.

Mohd Sidek said this was among the matters that had been agreed upon in the third meeting of the Special Task Force held on Nov 12. He said the meeting also agreed to establish the best governance practice and for a review of the composition of the Board of Directors in federal statutory bodies and government firms, such as companies under the Finance Minister Incorporated and government-linked companies. He said the meeting also agreed for PKA to focus on its role as a regulatory body and not be involved in business activities, such as the PKFZ. "As such, the focus group on the PKA restructuring, which is chaired by the Treasury Secretary-General, is asked to scrutinise the recommendations on the restructuring and present this to the Special Task Force immediately," he said.

The meeting also agreed for the decisions of the Special Task Force to be implemented in stages and not at the end of the six-month period given to it to conclude its task, he said, adding that the meeting had been briefed by the ad hoc committee on governance chairman Datuk Paul Low on its findings. The meeting was also informed of the action taken by the police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) on various issues, he said, adding that the documents pertaining to the PKFZ case had already been obtained by the MACC.

Friday November 20, 2009

Health Ministry to take over new centre

KUCHING: The Federal Government has agreed to take over the newly completed Sarawak International Medical Centre (SIMC) in Samarahan, near here. Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr George Chan Hong Nam said the Health Ministry was now evaluating the centre's buildings and facilities. "An occupation permit has been obtained, and all the essential facilities are available to start operations. "I will ensure that the Health Ministry will be able to operate the SIMC as a general hospital for the benefit of the people within the shortest possible time," he added.

Saturday November 21, 2009

PKA to implement suggestions on corporate governance

PETALING JAYA: The Port Klang Authority (PKA) will implement the suggestions of the ad hoc committee on corporate governance. Its chairman Datuk Lee Hwa Beng said the decision to accept the recommendation of the Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan to implement the suggestions was made at the PKA meeting on Thursday. He added that the suggestions would be carried out with the assistance of the ad hoc committee chairman Datuk Paul Low. "Low, who sits on the PKA board in an advisory capacity, has been asked to present further details at PKA's next board meeting in December for us to embark on the initiation of these recommendations," he said in a statement yesterday.

Lee was responding to Mohd Sidek's statement in media reports that the PKA should consider the suggestions of the ad hoc committee. He said Transport Minister Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat had also directed the PKA to organise a seminar on corporate governance together with Transparency International Malaysia sometime next year. "This seminar will involve all the port authorities in Malaysia. Relevant industry players will also be invited to participate," Lee added. Lee said the PKA would also look into strengthening PKA's internal audit section and the implementation of the whistle-blower policy.

Monday November 23, 2009

NGOs: Use A-G's report in forest care

JOHOR BARU: Several environmental groups want the state government to use the 2008 Auditor-General's report as the basis in managing its forests. World Wildlife Federation (WWF) Malaysia forest conservation manager Ivy Wong Abdullah said the state should carry out an independent study on forest reserves to ensure that they complied with international standards.

"The state should carry out a comprehensive forest management plan with sufficient data on what forest resources are available in Johor," she said, adding that it must also be able to project the timber needs of the state for downstream industries. Malaysia Nature Society Johor branch chairman Maketab Mohamed said the statistics in the A-G's report were a guiding tool that could be used to ensure ethical practices.

Monday November 23, 2009

Property - PKNS to accrue RM380m property sales next year

PETALING JAYA: The Selangor State Development Corp (PKNS) expects to accrue RM380mil from the sale of properties next year, said its deputy general manager (administration and development) Md Nasir Md Arshad. He said the corporation hoped to sell RM342mil in properties this year as demand from the upper-middle class was growing. "PKNS will continue to engage with potential customers on new projects to be launched next year through a comprehensive awareness campaign," he told *Bernama* after the official sale of Kasturi Idaman apartments here on Saturday.

Under the “luxury and comfortable” campaign set for next year, Md Nasir said the corporation aimed to sell 314 residential property units in Alam Nusantara, Shah Alam, with prices starting from RM335,000. He added that PKNS also planned to offer semi-detached luxury residential units in Kota Damansara with prices starting from RM1.2mil. Earlier, Md Nasir said the Kasturi Idaman project, launched in June 2007 and scheduled for completion in March 2010, would have a gross development value of RM42mil. “Eighty five per cent of the project is completed and everything is on schedule.” he said. — Bernama

Monday November 23, 2009

Corporate - ISO 31000 will be more helpful in supporting corporate governance

By EDY SARIF

KUALA LUMPUR: The new global standard for risk management, ISO 31000, will be more helpful in supporting corporate governance for risk management among companies and enterprises, most of which have adopted the current standard of risk management, AS/NZS 4360: 2004 (Standards Australia/New Zealand approach). Risk management standards expert Kevin Knight said ISO 31000 was a more concise, clear and flexible set of guidelines developed for risk management. Ideas to conceptualise it started in 2004 when six meetings were held among 30 countries of ISO Meeting Group to come out with better standard of guidelines.



ISO 31000 is more focus on the process of risk management: RISK MANAGEMENT STANDARDS EXPERT KEVIN KNIGHT

“ISO 31000 is more focused on the process of risk management in companies and enterprises. “By this, it gives more direction to the organisation on managing the uncertainty or risks that may happen,” he told *StarBiz*. Knight chairs the World ISO working group developing the new ISO 31000 risk management standards. Knight said one of the shift points of the new ISO 31000 to the existing standards was the way the organisation conceptualised the risk and it addressed the entire management system that supported the designs, implementation, maintenance and improvement of risk management process.

“By this, the whole process will involve every single person in the organisation, from the board of directors down to the lower levels. When the whole organisation understands how to manage risk, it will help achieve the organisation’s objectives in the business,” he said, saying that with ISO 31000, risk was now defined as “effect of uncertainty on objectives”. He added that ISO 31000 would fit into the existing risk management requirements among companies and enterprises, as they now needed only to enhance the existing standards to develop their new risk management plans.

“Companies or organisations that follow the ISO 31000 standards will not get special certificates as we believe organisations should not waste their efforts in seeking to gain a certificate. Instead, the focus should be more on efforts in improving corporate governance on risk management matters,” he said. He also said the time taken to adapt to the new approach would vary between companies and organisations. “I would say that it may take three to five years for bigger organisations to fully change their risk management standards as it will involve culture change in the organisation. We are talking about the complexity of certain big organisations here that may make it difficult for them to change their way of managing risk,” he said.

Knight said companies and enterprises could purchase a copy of the new ISO 31000 guidelines on the International Standards Organisation website (www.iso.org) or from consulting firms. ISO 31000 was published as a standard on Nov 15 and Malaysia was among the first to be exposed to this new standard at The Q-Radar Trail Blazer Alumni Conference here last Thursday.

Monday November 23, 2009

Can you work from home without going to office?



THERE was a time in my life when I was a full-time homemaker and a part-time freelancer. I left the workforce to take care of my two boys, and my wife became the sole breadwinner. I must confess that those were the most cherished years of my life. My wife was also able to take her turn at home when I went back to work. We learnt to survive on one income. And it was a lot of fun for the boys.

The Public Works Department recently allowed 35 of its draughtsmen to work from home for three months. The Chief Secretary Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan has given his nod of approval, stating that the work-from-home concept is workable if employees have the integrity to do the work at home as well as it would have been done in the office.



The Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan, says: “The civil service is a very big organisation that is outcome-driven, and if working from home will increase productivity, that is something we will definitely recommend to the Government.” “The civil service is a very big organisation that is outcome-driven, and if working from home will increase productivity, that is something we will definitely recommend to the Government,” he said.

"I also work from home. But I also work from my car, and when I go back to my hometown, I take my work with me. In this age of the Blackberry and Internet, it is not impossible to work from one's home." If you have ever sent Sidek an email, you will learn that he walks the talk because his response is virtually instant. And not just an automated reply, mind you. Although I spent most of my time at home playing with the boys, I also did the occasional part-time work to supplement the household income and also to keep my brain active.

In those days, such information technology was not available, but that did not prevent me from doing work for an overseas client whom I never even met. This was a project for a UN body in Cambodia. It involved them sending me the material via a diskette (no CDs or thumb drives in those days) by courier. I edited and laid out the publication and then couriered a draft back to them for approval. After the okay was given via fax, I proceeded to print the book in Puchong and had the order shipped to Phnom Penh. They promptly sent me a cheque by mail.

Today, such a project would have seen me fully using the whole plethora of IT tools, including SMS, email and video chat. If the client so desires, I could easily email the book files to any printer in the world. And payment would have been instant through e-banking. Technology has made so many things possible, not just for the able-bodied people, but also the disabled, and those recovering from serious illness. Yet, in reality, working from home is not something embraced by most employers.

Somehow, there is the fear that employees cannot be trusted if they are not physically around. The result is we end up with many employees, not necessarily the most productive ones, hanging around the office way after official working hours, when they could be at home enjoying family time. The work-from-home concept should be encouraged in both the public and private sectors. My son, who used to switch off my computer in the midst of work during my stay-at-home days so that I could take him to the park, is now a graduate tutor at a college. When he has to mark the papers, he has the option to do so at home.

It is about integrity, as Sidek rightfully points out. The point is that employers must start to trust their employees more and not just let those who will shirk or shortchange them determine the policy of the company.

Deputy executive editor Soo Ewe Jin believes we can marry modern technology with good old-fashioned values to truly enhance our quality of life in both the workplace and the home.

Monday November 23, 2009

Sarawak local authorities to benefit from next year

KUCHING: Starting next year, the Federal Government through the Housing and Local Government Ministry, will give an annual grant to local authorities in Sarawak based on a pre-determined formula. The formula takes into account the status of the local authorities and the area's population. Sarawak Environment and Public Health Minister Datuk Seri Wong Soon Koh said that RM28.3mil had been approved for next year and the allocation would be channelled directly to local authorities. "The uniqueness of the formula is that, the higher the status of the local authority, the smaller the grant," he added.



Serving the people: File photo of a enforcement officer standing at attention as the Jalur Gemilang is raised at the Kuching North City Hall headquarters recently.

For Sarawak, said Wong that city councils would receive 6%, municipal councils 7% and district councils 13%. He said Sarawak local authorities were governed by the Local Authorities Ordinance, 1996 and not the Local Government Act, 1976 (Act 171). "As a result, Sarawak and Sabah had not been given any annual operating grant under the State Grants (Maintenance of Local Authorities) Act, 1981 (Act 245)," he explained.

He said, after a presentation by his ministry, the Federal Government agreed to extend the grant to the two states. He said the grant would alleviate the financial shortfall, especially for smaller councils which had a big area but a small and scattered population. — Bernama

Tuesday November 24, 2009

RM165m in property tax yet to be collected

JOHOR BARU: Uncollected property tax over the last 11 months has reached more than RM165mil, said state Local Government, Housing, Arts, Culture and Heritage committee chairman Datuk Ahmad Zahri Jamil. The outstanding amount is RM165,650,767.34 while that collected was only RM40,465,739.84, he said, adding that steps had already been taken to collect the taxes. "Among the actions taken are delivering bills by hand and sending out notices to taxpayers who do not meet the dateline.

"Besides that, we are acquiring bailiff services from the Johor State Secretary to serve arrest warrants to those failing to settle their taxes," he said when replying questions by Cheong Chin Liang (BN-Bukit Batu) and Datuk Abd Hamid Rahman (BN-Machap). Ahmad Zahri added that 13 councils in the state had started online payment services for the convenience of taxpayers. "We have also increased the number of payment counters and extended the operations time," he said.

Dr Lee Hong Tee (BN-Jementah) suggested that incentives in the form of prizes should be given to encourage tax payment. He was also against a proposal to increase taxes as it would affect the people.

Tuesday November 24, 2009

Bukit Botak settlers to oppose takeover by state govt

By STUART MICHAEL

The Bukit Botak Action committee has distributed forms to the original Bukit Botak settlers to oppose the Selangor state government taking back their land. The form states that those who were given land titles want a creditable contractor to be appointed to build their houses and are opposed to the state taking back their land. The form, which was addressed to Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim, did not bear the letter head of the action committee.

According to the committee secretary, Fauzan Abdul Kadir, the letter will ensure that the state government does not take over the land. "The form can be filled here today and sent back to the action committee within a week," he said at a meeting at SRJK (Chinese) Selayang Baru in Taman Selayang Baru last Saturday that was attended by more than 2,000 settlers.



We want our land back: Fauzan speaking to the settlers while Leong (seated, middle) listens.

Selayang MP William Leong said state housing, building management and squatters chairman Iskandar Abdul Samad was handling the issue. "Let Tan Sri Khalid and Iskandar announce their decision before residents take matters into their own hands. "The previous government created this mess that was unresolved over the last 20 years. "Just give us a bit more time," said Leong.

The Bukit Botak settlement issue started in 1985, when the former squatters were promised land to build houses. Until today, some are still waiting but outsiders, politicians and 81 people below 18 were given plots of land. In a report in *StarMetro* on Nov 19, it was stated that, according to a statement from the Selangor Menteri Besar's office, the Selangor Development Corporation would incur losses totalling RM136.4mil by completing the Bukit Botak project in Selayang.