

This Week's Highlight : Recalibrate 2019 Budget Only If Oil Price Hits US\$30 - Economist



"The government has room to recalibrate the 2019 Budget if Brent crude oil prices dip below US\$30 per barrel." -- fotoBERNAMA by Muhammad Hazim Izam

By Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR – The government still has room to breathe and will only recalibrate the 2019 Budget if Brent crude oil prices dip below US\$30 per barrel, suggests Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd chief economist

Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid. "Perhaps, Brent crude of below US\$30 per barrel could be the yardstick before any move to alter the budget allocation," he told Bernama.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

Retail Prices Of Petrol To Go Down Next Year - Lim

KUALA LUMPUR -- Retail prices of petroleum products including RON95 are expected to go down beginning Jan 1, 2019, if the world oil price continues to decline, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said Monday. He said the reduction in prices would be better reflected as the current monthly 'Automatic Pricing Mechanism' method would be replaced by weekly pricing model to enable consumers to enjoy faster price changes in line with the world market.

TUESDAY

Tekun Continues To Provide Lifeline For Entrepreneurs

TANAH MERAH -- The National Entrepreneur Group Economic Fund (Tekun Nasional) disbursed financing of

RM5.3 billion to 419,483 entrepreneurs nationwide since its inception 20 years ago. Its chairman Datuk Seri Mohamad Suparadi Md Noor said Tuesday, most of the loan facilities were to help small and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs. "Loan facilities, between RM5,000 and RM100,000, have proven to be successful in helping entrepreneurs in expanding their businesses.

WEDNESDAY

PNB Announces New Board Line-Up

KUALA LUMPUR -- Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) Wednesday announced changes to its board with the appointment of four members effective Jan 1, 2019, to succeed three retiring members. The new board members are Treasury secretary-general Datuk Ahmad Badri Mohd Zahir, former Federal Court judge Tan Sri Zainun Ali,

former Securities Commission deputy chief executive Datuk Nik Ramlah Nik Mahmood, and Mitraland Group and Pelaburan Hartanah Nasional Bhd chairman Datuk Johan Ariffin, the fund management company said in a statement Wednesday.

THURSDAY

Proton X70 Gets Strong Support, 200-300 Daily Bookings

KUALA LUMPUR – The Proton X70, the new sport utility vehicle (SUV) introduced by Proton Holdings Bhd in partnership with China's Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, has received about 200 to 300 bookings each day since it was officially launched two weeks ago. Proton Edar Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Abdul Rashid Musa said Thursday, over 60 per cent of the bookings had been for the premium variant, indicating that buyers were attracted to the higher features and equipment levels and were of the opinion these were worth the extra cost.

FRIDAY

Malaysia Overcomes Challenges, Albeit Moderate Growth

By Nurul Jannah Kamaruddin

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's economy went through a roller coaster ride in 2018 as adverse impact from looming challenges were increasingly felt, but thanks to its domestic dynamism, continuity in growth remained, albeit, at a moderate pace. The country's economic growth which was earlier forecast to expand between 5.5 and 6.0 per cent, will likely record a growth below 5.0 per cent in 2018 as mounting challenges mainly external, sought to restrain its ascend.

SMEbrief

SME Sector In 2018 Robust Amid IR 4.0

By Siti Noor Afera Abu

KUALA LUMPUR – Malaysian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) remained robust in 2018 as the sector braced for the adoption of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR4.0), with strong and encouraging support from the government. While the performance of the sector is also affected by global volatility which has resulted in a weakening ringgit and in turn a rising cost of business, the situation is seen as temporary. SME Corporation Malaysia (SME Corp), which has been tasked with coordinating and implementing SME development, had introduced various programmes and activities to spur growth for the sector. In 2018, a total of 158 SME development programmes were

being implemented with a total financial commitment of RM14.3 billion. A total of 500 SMEs have been identified to be placed under the Industry 4.0 Readiness Assessment programme, with RM210 million allocated under this programme via the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. On the outlook for 2019, SMECorp projected the SME sector to grow by 6.0 per cent as against 5.9 per cent in 2018.

Truck It Introduces Digital Advertising On Trucks

KUALA LUMPUR -- Truck It Sdn Bhd is offering digital advertising services on its trucks as an alternative advertising edge to major corporations and affordable advertising service to Small and Medium Enterprises. "Truck It" is a concept that will encourage and engage various truck owners to provide trucks, routes used

and truck measurements and match these with the advertisers and potential clients, it said in a statement Thursday.

NFCP To Bring SMEs Out Of Their Cocoons

By Shaidathul Suhana Ros

JASIN -- The implementation of the National Fiberisation and Connectivity Plan's (NFCP) pilot project in the Jasin District can bring small and medium enterprise entrepreneurs, as well as rural entrepreneurs, out of their "cocoons" to venture into the global market. Koko Minda Food Industries (M) Sdn Bhd manager Daing Muhamad Fadzil Abd Latif said Friday, the NFCP facilities, which focused on providing high-speed Internet connectivity, could be used as a platform by entrepreneurs to become part of the global business network.

PropUP

Propertyupdate

1 Year Marks The Success Of Saja AlMadinah Hotel

JEDDAH -- Saja Hotels & Resorts, the leading Saudi hotel and condominium management and operation company, has recently celebrated the first anniversary of its Saja AlMadinah Hotel in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, marking a successful year of astounding services provided to visitors to the holy city of Madinah. Chief Executive Officer, Mohannad Bin Nabeel Khogeer, said Monday, "The past year demonstrated our success in providing visitors to Madinah with the best convenient accommodation in the city, making their Hajj and Umrah trips an unforgettable experience."

Sunway Reit Acquires RM550 Mln Properties

KUALA LUMPUR – Sunway Real Estate Investment Trust (Sunway REIT) has acquired lands and buildings worth RM550 million from Sunway Destiny Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Sunway Bhd. The acquisition include three parcels of leasehold land in Bandar Sunway, Selangor and buildings

comprising a five-storey academic block with a lower ground level (South Building), a six-storey academic block with a lower ground level (North Building), a 13-storey academic block together with a two-storey basement car park and four blocks of five-storey walk-up hostel apartment, it said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Monday.

Avillion Port Dickson Wins Three International Awards

SEREMBAN -- Avillion Port Dickson has won the World Luxury Hotel Awards 2018 in the category of "Luxury Family Beach Resort" and another two prestigious international awards. The five-star luxury hotel was also named the Best Resort Spa in Malaysia by Haute Grandeur Global Excellence Awards and Most Outstanding -- HAPA Spa of the Year Family & Recreational Resort by HAPA Malaysia Award Series 2018-2020.

Affordability Tops Housing Issues In 2018

By Rosemarie Khoo Mohd Sani

KUALA LUMPUR -- The year 2018 has

been a year of consolidation for the property industry as both the Pakatan Harapan-led government and property developers grappled with ways to offer affordable houses to resolve the housing woes especially of the Bottom 40 (B40) of the population. Lawyer, Chris Tan Chur Pim of Chur Associates, said the supply and demand mismatch in the affordable houses category remained a key issue despite various initiatives taken by the previous government.

Melati Ihsan Sees Rise In Property, Construction Activity

KUALA LUMPUR – Construction engineering company Melati Ehsan Holdings Bhd expects to see an increase in property and construction activity in 2019 amid the better economic outlook brought about by the government's initiative to uplift the people's wellbeing. Executive Chairman Tan Sri Yap Suan Chee said Friday, the outlook for the local construction sector is promising and would benefit industry players.

MARKET



Scoreboard

Gainers - 385

Losers - 343

Not Traded - 764

Unchanged - 395

Value - 1410000000

Volume - 11000000

Bursa Malaysia Ends Higher On 11th-Hr Window Dressing

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia rebounded from earlier losses to finish the last full trading week of 2018 higher, lifted by the eleventh-hour window dressing activities amid thin holiday season trading. At 5 pm, the benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) wrapped up the day 1.35 points or 0.08 per cent firmer at 1,692.07 from Thursday's close of 1,690.72. The barometer index moved between 1,684.47 and 1,694.08 throughout the day, after opening 2.81 points weaker at 1,687.91.

Inter-Pacific Research Sdn Bhd head of research Pong Teng Siew said in tandem with the global stock markets, Bursa Malaysia was traded in a lacklustre mode Friday as many investors were away from their desks for holidays. "I suspected the institutional investors were just doing a lukewarm window dressing by not purchasing the big-capitalised stocks like what they did over the past week," he told Bernama. Total volume was slightly lower Friday, with 1.41 billion shares worth RM1.10 billion being traded from 1.60 billion shares worth RM1.21 billion Thursday. Market breadth was positive with 385 gainers outpacing 343 losers, while 395 counters were unchanged, 764 untraded and 54 others suspended. The FBM Emas Index perked 13.66 points to 11,537.30, the FBMT 100 Index increased 11.82 points to 11,454.58 and the FBM Emas



Exchange Rate (Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.1500	4.1550
EUR	4.7488	4.7550
GBP	5.2468	5.2548
100 YEN	3.7597	3.7653
SGD	3.0336	3.0384

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

Shariah Index advanced 24.13 points to 11,509.42. Main Market volume slipped to 1.04 billion shares worth RM1.02 billion from 1.11 billion shares worth RM1.10 billion on Thursday. Volume on the ACE Market retreated to 125.23 million shares worth RM23.17 million from 161.66 million shares worth RM28.24 million.

Ringgit Closes Sharply Higher Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit ended sharply higher against the US dollar Friday on sustained buying interest for the local currency, said a dealer. At 6 pm, the local note stood at 4.1500/1550 against the greenback from Thursday's close of 4.1660/1700. OANDA head of trading for Asia Pacific Stephen Innes said the local currency should take solace in surging oil prices along with the bullish flip in global equity markets.

"These are two significant positives for Malaysian capital markets, despite the stronger US dollar," he added. International benchmark Brent Crude rose 1.92 per cent to US\$53.74 after the recent volatility. "The real kicker for oil markets was the reaffirmation from Russian Energy Minister Novak who voiced expectations for a more stable market in the first half of 2019 and most importantly, suggested 100 per cent cooperation among OPEC and its allies in supporting the market," said Innes. Meanwhile, the ringgit was mostly lower against major currencies. The domestic unit rose against the British pound to 5.2468/2548 against Thursday's 5.2600/2667 but declined against the euro to 4.7488/7550 from 4.7459/7521. It depreciated against the Singapore dollar to 3.0336/0384 from 3.0329/0369

and fell against the Japanese yen to 3.7597/7653 from 3.7576/7618.

Short-Term Rates Close Steady On BNM Operations

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates closed steady Friday on Bank Negara Malaysia's operations to absorb excess liquidity from the financial system. The surplus in the conventional system went down to RM22.21 billion from RM35.46 billion Friday morning, while in the Islamic system, it reduced to RM21.50 billion from RM28.18 billion. Earlier Friday, the central bank conducted a range maturity auction tender, a Qard tender and a reverse repo tender. At 4 pm, BNM conducted a RM22.2 billion conventional money market tender and a RM20.50 billion Murabahah money market tender, both for three-day money. The average Islamic overnight interest rate stood at 3.19 per cent, while the one-, two- and three-week rates were pegged at 3.26 per cent, 3.30 per cent and 3.35 per cent, respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Close Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives was untraded Friday. January 2019, February 2019, March 2019 and June 2019 remained pegged at 96.25, 96.24, 96.22 and 96.22, respectively. Both volume and open interest remained nil. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.69 per cent.

KLCI Futures End Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended higher Friday, tracking the positive performance of the underlying cash market. December 2018 and January 2019 added 7.0 points each to 1,687.0 and 1,688.5 respectively, March 2019 increased 6.5 points to 1,684.0 and June 2019 was 4.0 points better at 1,675.0. Turnover retreated to 9,130 lots from 28,169 lots on Thursday while open interest narrowed to 31,757 contracts from 54,706 contracts Thursday. The underlying benchmark FBM KLCI finished 1.35 points higher at 1,692.07.

CBP Targets RM1 Bln Share Capital By 2020

BUKIT MERTAJAM -- Co-opbank Pertama (CBP) aims to increase its share capital to RM1 billion from the current RM800 million by 2020. Its Chairman, Kamari Zaman Juhari said the current total paid-up share capital of the co-op bank was raised through 84,000 individual members and 672 co-op members.

Funding Societies Sees Big Jump In P2P Financing 2019

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's peer-to-peer (P2P) financing industry is expected to continue thriving and is anticipating to disburse RM300 million in financing next year. Funding Societies Malaysia Chief Executive Officer Wong Kah Meng said in a statement Wednesday, this was in comparison to the RM100 million disbursed in 2018.

Shift In Taxation Flaunts Focus In 2018

By Aishah Afandi

KUALA LUMPUR -- The shift in taxation in 2018 left many perplexed when the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was abolished by the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government who took power upon winning the 14th General Election on May 9, to be replaced by the Sales and Services Tax (SST) in September. Though the GST was a good tax, its abolishment was part of PH's election manifesto which had to be fulfilled. However, the SST itself had served the country well prior to the implementation of the GST on April 1, 2015, and as former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin put it, "we have done it before, (for) 57



years there was no GST, there was no problem."

Affin Hwang Reaffirms "Buy" Rating On Serba Dinamik

KUALA LUMPUR -- Affin Hwang Capital Research has reaffirmed its "buy" rating and 12-month target price of RM4.70 on Serba Dinamik Holdings Bhd, based on its 14 times earnings per share (EPS) estimated for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2019 (FY19). In a statement Thursday, Affin Hwang said the company's prospects to grow its engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning (EPCC) remained promising, with ample hydropower and utility projects up for grabs.

PIDM Provides Financial Consumer Protection

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia Deposit Insurance Corporation (PIDM) is a statutory body that provides protection against the loss of deposit and insurance or takaful benefits with its member institutions in the event of an insolvency. PIDM Chief Executive Officer Rafiz Azuan Abdullah said in statement Thursday, as part of the national financial security network, PIDM's responsibility was to strengthen the financial consumer protection.

Foreign Exchange, Labour Shortage Among Main Challenges - Homeritz

KUALA LUMPUR -- Foreign exchange, labour shortage, availability of raw materials but volatile prices were among the challenges faced this year by

furniture company, Homeritz Corporation Bhd. The group is exposed to foreign currency exchange risks as approximately 97 per cent and 60 per cent of the company's revenue and total purchases of raw materials, respectively, are denominated in US dollars, it said in its 2018 Annual Report.

Maybank's Indirect Subsidiary Rezan To Wind Up Voluntarily

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malayan Banking Bhd's (Maybank) indirect wholly-owned subsidiary, Rezan Pte Ltd (through Maybank International Holdings Sdn Bhd and Maybank Kim Eng Holdings Ltd) has resolved to wind up voluntarily. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia, it said the matter was convened in an Extraordinary General Meeting Friday.

Agrobank Hands Over 2017 Business Zakat To MAIPK

KUALA LUMPUR -- Agrobank, a government-owned agricultural development bank, has handed over RM103,00 in business zakat for 2017 to the Perak Islamic Religious Council and Malay Customs (MAIPK). Agrobank Board of Directors Chairman Tan Sri Mohamad Zabidi Zainal said in a statement Friday, the zakat contribution aimed to help ease the financial burden of eligible zakat recipients.

AirAsia's Indirect Unit To Sell Merah Aviation For RM3.22 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia Group Bhd's indirect wholly-owned subsidiary, Asia Aviation Capital Ltd (AACL) is disposing of Merah Aviation Asset Holding Ltd to AS Air Lease Holdings 5T DAC, an entity indirectly controlled by Castlake LP, for US\$768 million (US\$1=RM4.1830). AirAsia, in a statement, said the parties entered into a share purchase agreement Monday. AirAsia Group Chief Executive Officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes said the disposal would unlock significant value to the group.

TSR Capital Bags RM79.8 Mln Construction Job

KUALA LUMPUR -- TSR Capital Bhd has been awarded a road construction, upgrading, drainage and construction works by Kwasa Land Sdn Bhd valued at RM79.8 million. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, TSR said the road construction will be at Persiaran Atmosfera/ Persiaran Jati, junction upgrade at Kwasa Puteri/Persiaran Sungai Buloh and ancillary works including earthwork, drainage and infrastructure works along Jalan Sungai Buloh at the Kwasa Damansara Township Development in Sungai Buloh.

Babydash Targets 20 Pct Of RM120 Mln Online Baby Market

KUALA LUMPUR -- Babydash, Malaysia's largest online store selling the widest range of babies' daily necessities, aims to capture a 20 per cent share of the estimated RM120 million e-commerce baby market in the country in the next seven years. Babydash Sdn Bhd Founder Lavine Thiruchelvam told Bernama, her optimism and projections were based on the penchant demand for online shopping among Malaysian mothers which has boosted the country's e-commerce business.

Total Supply And Use Up 5.7 Pct Annually In 2011-2015

KUALA LUMPUR -- Total supply and use

of goods and services in the Malaysian economy grew an average of 5.7 per cent annually over the five-year period to 2015, said the Department of Statistics, Malaysia (DOSM). Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said Wednesday, the total supply and use was valued at RM3.5 trillion in 2015, up from RM2.7 trillion in 2010.

Sabah Expects 500,000 South Korean Tourists Annually

KOTA KINABALU -- Sabah expects the arrival of about 500,000 tourists from South Korea, annually, following the establishment of the Muan-Kota Kinabalu air route, says Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Christina Liew. With the connection to Muan in South Korea by Jeju Air, Sabah would enter and reach out to travellers located in secondary cities in South Korea, she said after launching the inaugural service at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport Sunday night.

Domestic Tourism Gaining Traction By Aishah Afandi

KUALA LUMPUR -- The domestic tourism market is gaining traction as more Malaysians are preferring to travel and venture locally, while the country continues to be a favourite tourism destination among travellers, especially from China and Singapore. World2Holiday Travel and Tours Manager Ashley Ng Mei Luan said most of the enquiries received by the agency were from families wanting to travel around the country.

Eversendai Secures New Jobs Worth RM321 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Eversendai Corporation Bhd has secured new jobs worth RM321 million through its group of companies in Singapore, Qatar and India. The new wins consist of a 26-storey commercial building project in Singapore, an army base camp project in Qatar, and a 49-storey tower plus another 41-storey commercial

tower and a railway bridge project in India, it said in a statement Wednesday.

Electricity Tariff Hike Negative For Steel Industry - MISIF

KUALA LUMPUR -- The iron and steel industry will see an increase in production cost from RM855 million to RM1 billion once the electricity tariff hike takes effect in March next year, said the Malaysian Iron and Steel Industry Federation (Misif) Thursday. "We are concerned that the plight and trepidations of the industry have hardly been taken into serious consideration despite numerous engagements with the Energy Commission, Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) and ministries such as the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change."

Melaka Records RM1 Bln In Investments In Jan-Sept 2018

JASIN -- The Malaysia Industrial Development Authority has approved investments worth RM1 billion in Melaka for the January-September, 2018 period, says Chief Minister Adly Zahari. He said Thursday, the investments were made in seven sectors, namely medical, food, electronics, petroleum, transportation, metal manufacturing and non-metallic mineral sectors, and comprised both local and foreign investments.

MIHAS 2019 To Attract Biggest Number Of Exhibitors

By Siti Noor Afera Abu

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) 2019, to be held from April 3 to 6 next year, is expected to attract the biggest number of exhibitors in the event's history. Around 1,000 companies are expected to participate at the 16th edition of MIHAS, dubbed the world's largest halal trade fair, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) deputy chief executive

officer Datuk Wan Latiff Wan Musa told Bernama.

EPF iAKaun Utilisation Up 83.45 Pct Q3

KUALA LUMPUR — The usage of Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) flagship electronic service, i-Akaun, surged 83.45 per cent to 11.09 million in the third quarter of 2018 (Q3 2018) versus 6.04 million in the same period a year ago. The retirement fund said Thursday, its multiple electronic and self-service channels continued to record satisfactory growth, at a time when physical visits to the counter and kiosks recorded a reduction.

Kronologi Asia To Acquire Sandz Solutions For RM75 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR — Kronologi Asia Bhd (KAB) has entered into a conditional sale and purchase agreement with Desert Streams Investments Ltd to acquire the latter's entire stake in Sandz Solutions (Singapore) Pte Ltd, comprising three million ordinary shares, for RM75 million. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, the enterprise data management (EDM) firm said the proposed acquisition would complement the group's existing business segments and allow it to expand existing businesses, thus enhancing its financial performance and position.

Proton, Perodua To Drive SUV Sales In Malaysia - Analysts

By Mohd Khairi Idham Amran

KUALA LUMPUR — The introduction of Proton new sport utility vehicle (SUV), X70, and the upcoming Perodua SUV could double the SUV segment market share in Malaysia next year, an analyst said. Automotive analyst and automotive news portal Funtasticko.net editor Shamsul Yunus said this could help to lift SUV sales in the country which currently lagged behind the global average.



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Ranhill SAJ To Reduce Non-Revenue Water In Johor

KUALA LUMPUR -- Ranhill SAJ Sdn Bhd (Ranhill SAJ), a unit of Ranhill Holdings Bhd, will undertake several measures to accelerate the reduction of non-revenue water (NRW) in Johor to five per cent by 2025 from the current 24.12 per cent. It said in a statement Thursday, about RM3.4 billion has been allocated for the accelerated NRW reduction programme in Johor over the next seven years by water asset management company Pengurusan Aset Air Sdn Bhd (PAAB) and Ranhill SAJ, the state's exclusive water services operator.

HSL Consortium Secures RM90.99 Mln Sarawak Energy Contract

KUALA LUMPUR -- The consortium of Hock Seng Lee Bhd (HSL), Larsen & Toubro Limited and Larsen & Toubro (East Asia) Sdn Bhd have been awarded a RM90.99 million contract from Sarawak Energy Bhd for a substation project in Matang, Kuching, Sarawak.

HSL, which has a 45 per cent stake in the consortium, said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday, the scope of works included earth works, piling, civil infrastructure works, building and its related mechanical and electrical works.

Telecommunications Industry Shaken Up With MSAP

By Farhana Poniman

KUALA LUMPUR — The implementation of the Mandatory Standard on Access Pricing (MSAP), aimed at reducing broadband prices in Malaysia, had shaken up the Malaysian telecommunications industry in 2018.

The MSAP was implemented on June 8 by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), fully supported by the new Communications and Multimedia Minister, Gobind Singh Deo, who was very vocal about solving existing broadband issues, including lowering prices and upgrading Streamyx customers.

Massive Changes Occuring In Transportation Sector In 2018

By Zarul Effendi Razali

KUALA LUMPUR -- The local public transportation sector has undergone a massive change in 2018 and this is further augmented by the new government as it is identified as one of the key targeted areas for 'refurbishment'. A number of mega transportation projects initiated by the previous government have either been postponed or reevaluated after the Pakatan Harapan took over the reins of the country from Barisan Nasional following its historic 14th General Election victory in May.

Automotive Industry Rejuvenates Under New Govt

By Mohd Khairi Idham Amran

KUALA LUMPUR -- It picks up momentum after the May 9 General Election and the desolated automotive industry which has been lying quiet in the last couple of years, is all of a sudden rejuvenated with a renewed interest. The election saw a change of government with the same man, who initiated the first national car project during his tenure as the fourth prime minister, making a comeback as the seventh prime minister. He is none other than Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

2018, Year of 'Slow Steaming' In Maritime Transport

By Harizah Hanim Mohamed

KUALA LUMPUR -- "Slow steaming", this year, in the maritime industry which sailed at low speed in order to survive and brave tough times, is expected to pick up steam as 2019 looks promising, as plans to revive the industry are waiting

to be executed. The first five months of the year saw maritime-related businesses, which are capital-intensive in nature, being more careful in making decisions related to major infrastructure and expansion plans, as the country was then busy preparing for the 14th general election.

Economists Say Too Early For Budget Review

By Sharifah Pirdaus Syed Ali

KUALA LUMPUR -- Economists in general say it is too early to institute any budget review given the fact that crude oil prices still remain uncertain at this juncture. Sunway University Business School Professor of Economic Dr Yeah Kim Leng said the decline in crude oil prices was a temporary phenomenon, pending further development on the supply side.

ICT Industry Sees Bright Prospects In 2018-2019

By Azlee Nor Mahmud

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bright prospects await the information and communications technology (ICT) industry in 2018 and 2019 as it looks forward to an anticipated leap, amid a renewed focus from the country's new leadership. According to the National ICT Association of Malaysia (PIKOM), the ICT industry has made remarkable progress and quadrupled in value since 2007, and would welcome any changes that further boost it.

Malaysia Sees Soft Power Sector Growth In 2018

By Nurunnasihah Ahmad Rashid

KUALA LUMPUR -- Due to adequate reserve margin at 30 per cent and flat economic fundamentals, the power sector does not see much

growth in 2018 even though the distribution side is still keeping pace with supply connections to new areas and new demands. Structural changes in the economy, depreciation of the ringgit, as well as increases in electricity tariff, have dragged electricity demand and capped earnings.

Malaysia's Economy Likely To Grow Feb-April 2019 - DOSM

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's economy is likely to grow in February to April 2019, says the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM). In the "Malaysian Economic Indicators: Leading, Coincident & Lagging Indexes for October 2018" report released Monday, Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the annual change of the Leading Index (LI) showed an improvement to negative 0.7 per cent in October 2018 from negative 1.7 per cent in September 2018.

Shipping Industry Needs Alternative Security Instruments To Ease Transactions - SAM

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian Shipping Association (SAM) is seeking to work closely with the Federation of Malaysian Freight Forwarders (FMFF) and Selangor Freight Forwarders and Logistics Association (SFFLA) towards finding alternative security instruments to facilitate trading transactions without the need to collect security deposits. "We, however, seek the understanding from SFFLA, FMFF, Malaysian National Shippers' Council (MNSC) and the import business community that our Principals' interest in terms of demurrage, detention, and container damage recoveries must also be fully protected," it said in a statement Monday.

Aviation Industry Shows Greater Operational Efficiency In 2018

By Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's aviation industry had a fairly 'stable' 2018 with airlines showing greater efficiency in operations but overall growth has been slowing down as the industry heads towards a matured phase. Maybank Kim Eng analyst Mohsin Aziz said growth in passenger movement for this year was likely to be two per cent, relatively lower than during the 17-year period in the country from 2000-2016, where growth was at almost eight per cent per annum on the back of cheap airfares and higher average flight per population.

Progressive Gas Liberalisation Ensures Long-Term Energy Security - MGA

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ongoing gas price market liberalisation will promote efficient allocation and utilisation of resources to ensure Malaysia's long-term energy security, said the Malaysian Gas Association (MGA). Hence, it commended the government on its move to maintain the course of the gas market, which would ultimately ensure wider options for Malaysian gas consumers.

Proton, UEM Edgenta Energy To Go Green

KUALA LUMPUR — National car maker Proton has engaged UEM Edgenta Bhd to manage and implement its energy efficiency initiatives, the Energy Performance Contract (EPC), at two of its facilities over a period of seven years. According to a joint statement from Proton and UEM Edgenta Wednesday, the EPC would be implemented at Proton's Centre of

Excellence (COE) at the Sime UEP Industrial Park and the Tanjung Malim manufacturing plant.

GSK Investing In New Technology Areas In Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR — GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) is investing in new technology areas such as analytics and artificial intelligence to advance its business in Malaysia with several robotic process automation pilot projects are currently underway. Its Head of Business Shared Centre, Nancy Cassiere said Wednesday, as a regional hub with over 200 shared services, Malaysia has the advantage of many opportunities for training, benchmarking and knowledge sharing among industry professionals.

CIDB To Establish IR 4.0 Roadmap For Construction Industry

By Rosemarie Khoo Mohd Sani
KUALA LUMPUR -- The Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) through its wholly-owned subsidiary, CIDB e-Construct Services Sdn Bhd (CIDBEC), is expected to establish a Fourth Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) roadmap for the construction industry by January 2020. The roadmap will cover a five-year period from 2020. CIDBEC Chief Executive Officer Rofizlan Ahmad said the roadmap aims to provide a clear direction for industry players and streamline future programmes related to IR 4.0, in particular, the Building Information Modelling (BIM).

Government Needs To Draft New Economic Plan - Economist

BANGI -- The government needs to come up with a draft or a new economic plan to determine

the direction of the nation's development, said University Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Vice-Chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dr Noor Azlan Ghazali Thursday. "We need a new plan because right now we do not know which blueprint is being referred to. With a new plan, it will be easier for industries to focus on whichever sectors and for universities to come out with new programmes relevant to the focus sectors, for example," said Noor Azlan.

F&N To Continue Focus On Growth In Malaysia, Thailand

KUALA LUMPUR -- Fraser and Neave Holdings Bhd (F&N) will continue to sharpen its focus on ensuring continuous and sustainable growth in the food and beverage (F&B) Malaysia, F&B Thailand and exports segments, said chairman Tengku Syed Badarudin Jamalullail. In financial year 2018 (FY18), the company continued on its journey to strengthen itself by identifying internal growth drivers, and preparing to be even more resilient to market uncertainties and business challenges, he said in the company's Annual Report.

Sasbadi To Step Up Focus On New Segments, Exports

KUALA LUMPUR -- Education material supplier Sasbadi Holdings Bhd is aiming to step up its focus on new segments and the export market in the financial year (FYE) ending Aug 31, 2019. Independent non-executive chairman Datuk Salleh Mohd Husein said Friday, network marketing business, non-academic print publishing, early education and private/international schools products, rights licensing and export market, which relatively new to the group, had yet to achieve the optimum efficiency desired.

International Compliance Association Sets Up Office In Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR -- The International Compliance Association (ICA) has set up an office in Malaysia to grow its global compliance community. In a statement Monday, Regional Director Andrew Glover said the local ICA office would boost the demonstrable level of professionalism among compliance officers in Malaysia.

MCE Terminates MoU With Garuda Multi Investama, Sandhar Tech

KUALA LUMPUR -- MCE Holdings Bhd has terminated the memoranda of understanding (MoU) with PT Garuda Multi Investama and Sandhar Technologies Ltd which had intended to set forth a framework for the consultation and exchange of information and technology. In separate filings to Bursa Malaysia Monday, MCE said it and the other two companies had mutually agreed to terminate the MoU with effect from Dec 21, 2018.

DMSB Relocates, Expands Ipoh 3S Centre

KUALA LUMPUR -- Daihatsu (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd (DMSB) has relocated and expanded its 3S Centre in Ipoh, Perak, which offers sales, aftersales service and spare parts, to support rapid growth. The authorised dealer of Hino Motors Sales (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd (HMSM) in a statement Monday said its former outlet, which opened in August this year, saw service intakes double month-on-month with the implementation of its Culture of Continuous Improvement initiatives or known as KAIZEN.

Pizza On Fire Plans Expansion Through Franchising

By Nor Baizura Basri

JOHORBAHRU -- Local pizza brand, Pizza On Fire is aiming to use its franchising business as the main strategy to expand in the local marketplace which will also provide opportunities to collaborate with local entrepreneurs to grow the brand. Founder Izmir Abdul Hamid, 34, started

the business together with friends Faisal Hamzah, 34, and Muhamad Alfie, 38, and they wanted to show that local pizzas can have quality comparable to the best known brands in the market and at reasonable prices.

SOCSCO Pays Out RM93.57 Mln For Commuting Accidents

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Social Security Organisation (SOCSCO) has paid RM93.57 million in compensation for accidents involving workers commuting between home and workplace for the period January to October this year. Socso in a statement to Bernama Wednesday said, the amount was for temporary disability benefits based on 25,219 cases which received an average benefit payment of RM3,710 per case

RM40 Electricity Bill Rebate For 185,000 Poor Households

PUTRAJAYA -- The government has allocated RM80 million for monthly electricity bill rebate of RM40 each for 185,000 poor and hardcore poor households registered and verified under the e-Kasih system, effective Jan 1. In a statement Wednesday, the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change (MESTECC) said under this targeted aid programme, the eligible households would get free usage of electricity up to RM40 monthly, depending on their current usage.

Gas Malaysia Revises Gas Base Tariff For Non-Power Sector

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gas Malaysia Bhd Wednesday announced the revision of natural gas base tariff for the non-power sector in Peninsular Malaysia to RM32.69/MMBtu for the period commencing Jan 1, 2019 to June 30, 2019. Under the gas cost pass through (GCPT) mechanism, a surcharge of RM0.23/MMBtu will apply to all tariff categories for the period beginning Jan 1, 2019 to June 30, 2019.

MMHE, TechnipFMC Ink Offshore Agreement With Saudi Aramco

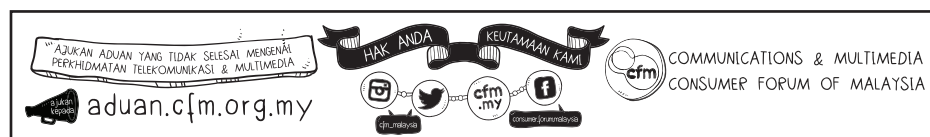
KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Marine and Heavy Engineering Holdings Bhd's (MHB) wholly-owned subsidiary, Malaysia Marine and Heavy Engineering Sdn Bhd (MMHE), in consortium with TechnipFMC plc has signed a long-term offshore agreement (LTA) with Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco). The LTA was signed during Saudi Aramco's In-Kingdom Total Value Add Annual Forum in Dammam, Saudi Arabia on Nov 26, 2018, and is valid for six years with an option to extend for another six years, MHB said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Wednesday.

Edotco Acquires 325 Towers In Cambodia

KUALA LUMPUR -- Telecommunications infrastructure services company edotco Group Sdn Bhd's Cambodian unit, edotco (Cambodia) Co Ltd, has acquired 325 towers from South East Asia Telecom (Cambodia) Co Ltd. The acquisition is in line with its expansion strategy and further strengthens the position as a leading tower company in Cambodia, said Edotco Group Chief Regional Officer, Growth Markets, Phillip Wong in a statement Thursday.

Johor Port Bags Global Performance Excellence Award 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- Johor Port Bhd, a member of MMC Group, has bagged the Global Performance Excellence Award 2018 -- World Class from the Asia Pacific Quality Organisation. The Global Performance Excellence Award, a formal international recognition of performance and business excellence, was presented in a ceremony held in Abu Dhabi on Dec 11.



Commodities Sector Sees Strong Headwinds In 2018

By Nurul Hanis Izmir



Crude palm oil, the country's second biggest contributor to the economy. -- fotoBERNAMA by Hafizi Mohamed

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) – The local commodities sector, namely crude palm oil (CPO), rubber, tin, and gold continued to face strong headwinds in 2018 as the global economy struggled to find its footing. For instance, CPO, which is the country's second biggest contributor to the economy, saw a price decline of about 20 per cent year-to-date due to weaker fundamentals, especially so as its inventory level was nearing three million tonnes as reported by the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB). Traditionally, the edible oil's lifecycle will start the year with a lower output but higher exports due to the festive seasons, namely the Chinese Lunar New Year and Hari Raya Aidilfitri, as consuming countries stock up palm oil for cooking and food products.

"The production generally tend to peak later in the year moving towards the fourth quarter, in line with seasonality pattern," said Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd's Derivative Dealer David Ng. However, other edible oils, the likes of soybean, rapeseed and sunflower, are also experiencing similar patterns, thus resulting in higher inventory for

Malaysian CPO amid lower demand, hence, pressuring the price to dip to below RM2,000 per tonne in November, the lowest in five years.

BIGGEST PALM OIL CONSUMERS

Concurring with this view, plantation veteran M R Chandran said the commodities markets worldwide were going through a recession in 2018. "China and India, the world's biggest consumers of palm oil, had slowed down their purchases as their own crop production have been much better," he said. Meanwhile, the MPOB noted that the three million tonne-mark in November was the highest stockpile level recorded in nearly two decades, and it was expected to increase further.

During the month, the CPO price also suffered its biggest fall in more than 21 months after Indonesia announced measures to increase shipments. The republic, which is the world's biggest CPO producer, had temporarily erased its export levy to zero from a range of US\$20-US\$50 per tonne, to boost its palm oil exports.

EXPORTS DOWN 4.6 PER CENT

An independent inspection company, AmSpec Agri Malaysia, said that the exports of local palm oil products for the first 15 days of December fell 4.6 per cent to 524,083 tonnes from 549,488 tonnes shipped during the same period in November. As at Dec 13, CPO futures prices ranged from RM1,700 to RM2,600 per tonne in 2018 compared with RM2,400 to RM2,900 per tonne recorded in the same period in 2017.

The CPO price is expected to average at RM2,300 per tonne in 2019 versus RM2,100 this year, owing to better fundamentals due to higher demand amidst lower output. "At RM2,300 per tonne, buying support for CPO next year will come from Indonesia, home to 264 million people. "This is especially so with the government's mandate to utilise CPO for B20 in the automotive industry, on top of using the commodity for food products. The larger consumption calls for higher demand," a dealer said.

-- BERNAMA