BERNAMA
MALAYSIAeBiz
WEEKLY BUSINESS ROUNDUP 11 FEBRUARY - 15 FEBRUARY 2019

Edition 248

15 FEBRUARY, 2019

This Week's Highlight :

BNM: M'sian Economy To Experience Moderate Growth In 2019

Bank Negara Malaysia governor Datuk Nor Shamsiah Mohd Yunus at a press conference to announce Malaysia's 2018 full gross domestic product (GDP) and fourth quarter results Thursday. -- fotoBERNAMA by Shazreen Zamzuri

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian economy will continue to experience moderate growth this year, supported mainly by external demand and resilience in private consumption among others, says Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) governor Datuk Nor Shamsiah Mohd Yunus. Exports, which rose to RM836.4 billion in 2018 from RM807 billion recorded in 2017, would also continue to be the growth driver for 2019, she told reporters this after announcing Malaysia's 2018 full year gross domestic product and fourth quarter results here Thursday.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

AirAsia Responds To MAHB Demand To Retract Statements

KUALA LUMPUR – AirAsia Bhd says it was Monday served with a letter of demand from Malaysia Airport Holdings Bhd (MAHB) to retract and withdraw its press statements. AirAsia Malaysia chief executive officer (CEO) Riad Asmat and AirAsia X Malaysia CEO Benyamin Ismail said in a statement, the airline was not surprised by another legal response from MAHB to its press statements.

TUESDAY

NEAC To Focus On Economic Devt, Getting Investor Confidence - PM

PUTRAJAYA — The newly set up Economic Action Council (EAC) will focus on economic development and getting investors' confidence, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad Tuesday. He said the EAC would enable the government and himself in particular to listen to other people from their own angle.

WEDNESDAY

KXP AirportCity Manages Kulim Airport - Mukhriz

ALOR SETAR -- A special entity known as KXP AirportCity Holdings Sdn Bhd has been set up to plan, coordinate and manage the development of Kulim International Airport (LTAK). Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir said Wednesday, the state government had obtained approval from the Federal Government to develop the new RM1.6 billion airport located in Kuala Muda district.

THURSDAY

Malaysia's Economy Grew 4.7 Pct In 2018 - BNM

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia posted a gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 4.7 per cent in the fourth quarter (Q4) of last year, leading to an overall economic growth of 4.7 per cent in 2018, says Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM). The growth was slower than the 5.9 per cent recorded in 2017. In 2018, the economy grew 5.4 per cent in the Q1, 4.5 per cent in Q2 and 4.4 per cent in Q3.

FRIDAY

Malaysia Looking Forward To Improving Bilateral Ties With China - Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia is looking forward to improving bilateral ties with China. Noting that China has emerged as an important economic powerhouse, he said Friday, this influenced the relationship between both countries, especially on the economic front.

Newsbriefs@7
Updated Daily

SMEbrief

AmBank Group Wins Best SME Bank Award

KUALA LUMPUR -- AmBank Group has been named the "Best Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Bank" for Malaysia by the Global Banking and Finance Awards. In a statement Monday, Ambank said the Global Banking and Finance Awards reflect the innovation, achievement, strategy, progressive and inspirational changes taking place within the Global Financial community.

SME Corp Partners World Bank To Boost Local SMEs

By Nurul Hanis Izmir

KUALA LUMPUR — SME Corporation Malaysia (SME Corp) is partnering the World Bank to make local small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) more relevant in the global economy, in adjusting to the current trends.Chief executive officer Noor Azmi Mat Said said SME Corp was in the midst of gathering data of the SMEs to be shared with the international financial institution. "The World Bank does research and studies regularly. By sharing data, it will enable the World Bank to measure our participation and results of the various communities of the (SME) industry. "They can also provide us with the outcome in terms of growth (projections) as well as recommendations on which sectors to focus on," he told Bernama on the sidelines of the National ASEAN SME Policy Index (ASPI) Dissemination Seminar here Tuesday. He said SME Corp would follow up with the World Bank and expects to get feedback by this year. Noor Azmi noted that the government wants to produce more high growth companies and at the same time give greater attention to high demand sectors. Meanwhile, Minister of Entrepreneur Development Mohd Redzuan Yusof who launched the seminar said measures provided by the World Bank would also disclose those areas in need of skill set, such as the aviation and blockchain sectors. "We want to capitalise on this and must not lose focus. When we announced the third Malaysia car project for example, it was not purely about making it, but also about applying the skill set," he added.

PropUP Propertyupdate

Trive Property Shares Rise On Acquisition News

KUALA LUMPUR -- Shares of Trive Property Group Bhd rose in the early session Monday on Bursa Malaysia on acquisition news. At 11.43 am, the shares rose 33.3 per cent or half-a-sen to two sen, with 110,500 shares traded. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia on Friday, AT Systematization Bhd said it had acquired a 9.1 per cent stake in Trive Property for RM2.9 million, as it sought to expand into the solar energy business.

Thorough Research Required To Make NHP 2.0 A Success

KUALA LUMPUR -- Thorough research is required to analyse each key action under the broad framework of the National Housing Policy (NHP) 2.0 to ensure the policy's success. Knight Frank Malaysia Managing Director Sarkunan Subramaniam said in a statement Monday, the real estate consultancy firm lauded the NHP initiatives such as the National Community Policy to create vibrant communities and the formulation of the Residential Tenancy Act to protect tenant's rights and avoid any discrimination against any race or gender.

Perak Housing Developers May Apply For Bumi Quota Release

IPOH -- The Perak state government will allow housing developers to apply for properties under the Bumiputera quota to be released to other buyers if the properties are not sold by the Perak Housing and Property Board (LPHP) within six months. Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu said Wednesday, this was incorporated in the new Perak Housing Policy which comes into effect on April 1, 2019.

LPM, DDSB To Develop RM4.22 Mln Affordable Homes

MELAKA -- The state government, through the Melaka Housing Board (LPM) and housing developer Delta Diversified Sdn Bhd (DDSB), will jointly develop affordable housing units for Bumiputeras worth RM4.22 million, said Chief Minister Adly Zahari. The housing project, comprising 23 single-storey terrace houses, would be constructed on a 0.33 hectare tract in Taman Cheng Perdana within two years, he told reporters after signing the agreement on the project at a ceremony here Wednesday.

Regus Eyes 75 Pct Occupancy Rate For Puchong Centre

PUCHONG -- Flexible working solutions provider, Regus Management Malaysia Sdn Bhd (Regus Malaysia), is aiming to achieve 75 per cent occupancy rate by year-end for its newly-opened business centre in Setia Walk, Puchong.Regus Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei country head Vijayakumar Tangarasan said Friday, Puchong offered a fast growing hub for businesses in the Klang Valley with many local and foreign businesses continuously looking to set up their headquarters in this area.

MARKETS

Scoreboard

Gainers -	354
Losers -	475
Not Traded -	640
Unchanged -	384
Value -	1900000000
Volume -	3060000000

KL Shares End Almost Flat

KUALA LUMPUR -- Share prices on Bursa Malaysia closed almost flat Friday in line with regional markets as investors awaited fresh developments in the US-China trade negotiations. Phillip Capital Management senior vice-president (investment) Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said regional markets adopted a wait-and-see approach as they waited for news from the trade talks after a weaker Wall Street in the overnight trade weighed by disappointing US retail data and Germany's gross domestic (GDP) figure. "The 1.2 per cent drop in the US retail sales data was the highest monthly drop in retail sales since the financial crisis, while Germany almost slumped to a recession during the fourth quarter after the quarter's preliminary GDP showed lower than expected numbers. "We believe both of these data highlight the current state of the global economy with investors eagerly waiting for a long-term trade consensus between the US and China, as talks between the two countries continue in Beijing today," he told Bernama. Market breadth was negative with 475 losers and 354 gainers, while 384 counters remained unchanged, 640 untraded and 35 others suspended. Total volume fell to 3.06 billion units valued at RM1.9 billion from Thursday's 3.88 billion units valued at RM2.28 billion. Main Market volume fell to 2.18 billion shares valued at RM1.81 billion from Thursday's 3.09 billion shares valued at RM2.11 billion.

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.0870	4.0900
EUR	4.6110	4.6152
GBP	5.2354	5.2409
100 YEN	3.7013	3.7050
SGD	3.0082	3.0116

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

FOREX: Ringgit Closes Lower Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit closed lower against the US dollar Friday on weaker demand as cautious sentiment clouded the market ahead of the outcome of trade talks between China and the United States. At close, the ringgit fell to 4.0870/0900 against the greenback from 4.0740/0780 Thursday. A dealer said the decline in the ringgit was in line with the weaker performance of most Asian currencies, as traders turned cautious, given the mixed signals coming from both the US and China over the trade talks scheduled to end Friday. Meanwhile, the ringgit also traded lower against other major currencies. It fell against the Singapore dollar to 3.0082/0116 from 2.9980/0014 on Thursday and weakened against the yen to 3.7013/7050 from 3.6703/6742. It declined against the euro to 4.6110/6152 from 4.5881/5947 and depreciated against the British pound to 5.2354/2409 from 5.2282/2353.

Short-Term Rates Close Stable On BNM Operations

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates closed stable Friday on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) operations to absorb excess liquidity from the financial system. The surplus in the conventional system rose to RM20 billion from RM18.96 billion this morning, while in the Islamic system, it fell to RM11.20 billion from RM15.99 billion earlier. BNM also conducted one conventional money market tender, three Qard tenders, one reverse repo tender, Bank Negara Interbank Bills (BNIB) and Bank Negara Interbank Bills Islamic (BNIBI). At 4 pm, the central bank conducted a RM19.20 billion conventional money market tender and a RM11.20 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. and 3.35 per cent, respectively.

KLIBOR Futures End Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives remained untraded Friday. February 2019 stood unchanged at 96.24, while March 2019, April 2019 and June 2019 all remained pegged at 96.22, respectively. Both volume and open interest remained nil. At the 11am 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 closed higher Friday on mild buying. Spot month February 2019 added two points to 1,686.5, March 2019 and September 2019 increased one point each to 1,681.5 and 1,669.5 respectively, and June 2019 gained 1.5 points to 1,675. Turnover increased to 4,357 lots from Thursday's 4,084 lots, while open interest widened to 24,948 contracts from 24,799 contracts. The underlying benchmark FBM KLCI ended 0.23 of-a-point lower at 1,688.83.

SC Reviews Proposals To Spur Venture Capital Industry

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Securities Commission (SC) is reviewing eight recommendations to spur the venture capital (VC) industry including making public VCs more commercially driven and liberalising VC tax incentives. In a statement Monday, the SC said the recommendations were the findings of a study by the Institute for Capital Market Research (ICMR), which the SC commissioned as part of its ongoing efforts to facilitate the intermediation of risk capital and enhance access to financing for start-ups and early stage companies in the Malaysian capital market.

Co-opbank Pertama To Launch 5 New Products This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- Co-opbank Pertama Malaysia Bhd (CBP) is introducing five new products this year that will help drive its growth in terms of profit after zakat for the 2019 financial year. Chairman Kamari Zaman Juhari told the media Monday, the five products, which are expected to reduce the cooperative bank's operating cost in the future, would be launched in stages beginning the first quarter until the fourth quarter of this year.

RM1 Bln In Foreign Funds Flow Into Malaysian Equity Market In Jan - UOB

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's equity market saw a foreign net inflow of RM1 billion in January 2019 following three straight months of outflows while foreign holdings of equities edged up to 23.5 per cent from 23.4 per cent in December 2018. United Overseas Bank Malaysia (UOB Malaysia) senior economist Julia Goh said in a research note Tuesday, January's renewed foreign inflow into equities came alongside a firmer ringgit and reversal in non-resident portfolio flows into emerging markets.

Maybank Indonesia's PATAMI Surges 21.6 Pct For FY18

KUALA LUMPUR -- PT Bank Maybank Indonesia Tbk Thursday announced that profit after tax and minority interest (PATAMI) surged 21.6 per cent, year-on-year, to a new high of IDR2.2 trillion (IDR10,000=RM2.89) for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY2018), on the back of higher net interest income and continued improvement in asset quality. In a statement, Maybank Indonesia said better asset quality, a solid growth in Shariah business combined with improvement in subsidiaries, as well as, sustained strategic cost management contributed to its improved performance.

Berjaya Sompo Insurance Eyes Close To RM1 Bln In Premiums This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- Berjaya Sompo Insurance Bhd, 70 per cent owned by Sompo Holdings (Asia) Pte Ltd, is targeting to achieve gross written premiums close to RM1 billion this year compared with an estimated RM904 million recorded in 2018. Chief distribution officer Stuart Chua told a press conference Thursday, the target would be driven by their strong bancassurance partnership with CIMB Group Holdings Bhd, as well as, several products launched recently.

Ringgit Appreciates By 1.5 Pct Year-To-Date, Says BNM

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit posted a better performance year-to-date, appreciating 1.5 per cent against the US dollar, although a dim outlook is expected going forward as external currencies will continue to weigh on the ringgit's performance. Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) governor Datuk Nor Shamsiah Mohd Yunus explained on Thursday, the ringgit depreciated by 1.8 per cent against the greenback in 2018, in line with most regional currencies.

FDI Records Larger Net Inflow Of RM12.9 Bln In Q4 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's foreign direct investment (FDI) improved in the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2018, registering a larger net inflow of RM12.9 billion from RM4.3 billion in the third quarter (Q3) of 2018. According to Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) Quarterly Bulletin for the Fourth Quarter 2018, FDI inflow was channelled mainly into the manufacturing and non-financial services sectors. It said the direct investment account registered a higher net inflow of RM2.1 billion compared with a net inflow of RM0.5 billion in Q3 2018.

Malaysia's External Debt At 64.7 Pct Of GDP At End-Dec 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's external debt stood at RM924.9 billion or 64.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) as at end-December 2018, said Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) in its Fourth Quarter 2018 Quarterly Bulletin released Thursday. At end-September 2018, the external debt stood at RM933.3 billion or 65.3 per cent of GDP. BNM said the lower external debt reflects net repayment of interbank borrowing and trade credits, as well as some liquidation of domestic debt securities by non-resident investors.

MAHB Records 3.1 Pct Growth In Passenger Movement In Jan

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) has recorded 11.1 million passenger movements in January 2019, including Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen international Airport (SGIA) in Turkey, a 3.1 per cent growth over the corresponding period last year. The airport operator said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Monday the international sector registered 2.5 per cent growth with 5.4 million passenger movements in January 2019 while the domestic sector grew 3.6 per cent, registering 5.7 million passengers.

Manufacturing Sales Value Up 7.7 Pct In 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- The sales value of the manufacturing sector increased 7.7 per cent to RM824.8 billion in 2018, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) said Monday. Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the number of employees engaged during the period went up by 1.7 per cent to 1.07 million persons. "Cumulatively, sales value per employee during the reference period rose by 5.9 per cent to RM766,840," he said in a statement Monday.

Velesto Bags RM115 Mln Contract Extension For North Malay Basin

KUALA LUMPUR -- Velesto Energy Bhd (VEB) announced that its unit has received a contract extension from Hess Exploration and Production Malaysia B.V. (Hess) for the provision of a high pressure high temperature jack-up drilling rig and services for the North Malay Basin, Malaysia for US$38 million (about RM155 million). In its filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, VEB said the contract extension was for the provision of drilling rig services for Hess' Drilling Programme, whereby VEB Group would assign one of its rigs, NAGA 8, for this contract.

Supermax's Q2 Net Profit Rises To RM38.14 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Supermax Corporation Bhd's net profit for the second quarter ended Dec 31, 2018, rose to RM38.14 million from RM35.90 million recorded in the same period a year ago. Revenue increased 14.6 per cent year-on-year to RM385.1 million from RM335.91 million previously, following the commissioning of new replacement lines at its Perak plant and full-quarter contribution from plants 10 and 11, the group said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Tuesday.

Serba Dinamik Int'l Secures Projects Worth RM448.09 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Serba Dinamik Holdings Bhd's unit, Serba Dinamik International Ltd, has secured three operations and maintenance contracts totalling RM448.09 million. Serba Dinamik Holdings said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, another unit, Serba Dinamik Sdn Bhd, secured six projects comprising one engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning contracts (EPCC), two O&M and EPCC contracts and three O&M contracts. "These contracts have no specific values as they are on a 'call-out' basis where the work orders will be awarded at the discretion of the clients based on its activities schedules and rates throughout the duration of the contracts," it said.

Hartalega's Net Profit For Q3 Increases To RM119.34 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hartalega Holdings Bhd's net profit for the third quarter ended Dec 31, 2018, increased to RM119.34 million compared with RM113.86 million recorded in the same period a year before. Revenue rose to RM723.39 million from RM603.14 million previously, the group said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Tuesday. Managing Director Kuan Mun Leong said the group expected the challenging business environment to persist, given heightening competition and increased costs such as minimum wage hike, higher natural gas tariff and additional costs associated with social compliance.

Yayasan Sabah Unit Eyes RM164 Mln Profit This Year

KOTA KINABALU -- Yayasan Sabah Group (YSG) said its subsidiary, Innoprise Corporation Sdn Bhd (ICSB), has targeted a 30 per cent increase in profit to RM164 million this year. Last year, ICSB, which operates as an investment and holding company, recorded a pre-tax profit of RM126 million. YSG director who is also ICSB chief executive officer Datuk Jamalul Kiram Mohd Zakaria said Wednesday, to achieve the target, the foundation had set a new direction for ICSB to ensure it is capable of making a huge impact on earnings through commercial sectors such as tourism and food business.

CB Industrial Unit Bags Contracts Worth RM131.71 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- CB Industrial Products Holding Bhd (CBIPH)'s wholly-owned subsidiary, PalmitEco Engineering Sdn Bhd, has bagged three contracts from Indonesia-based PT Kodeco Agrojaya Mandiri, worth RM86.96 million. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Wednesday, CBIPH said among other things, the contracts were for the design, construction and completion of a conventional palm oil mill, a kernel crushing plant and a 1,600 kilowatt biogas power generator plant to be completed in 16 months.

Sabah LHDN Targets RM400 Mln Tax Collection Under Voluntary Disclosure Scheme

KOTA KINABALU -- The Sabah Inland Revenue Board (LHDN) targets to collect RM400 million in taxes under the Special Voluntary Disclosure Programme (PKPS) until June 30 this year. Director Datuk Hajam Lajah Alam told reporters Wednesday, as of Feb 8, some 600 taxpayers have come forward, with the collection exceeding RM50 million.

Malaysia Can Post 4.8-4.9 Pct GDP Growth For 2018 - Ong

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia is capable of achieving gross domestic product (GDP) growth of between 4.8 per cent and 4.9 per cent in 2018 on the back of stronger economic figures recently, says Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry Dr Ong Kian Ming. He told reporters Wednesday, the manufacturing sector would continue to drive the country's exports and economy despite the current challenges in the US-China trade dispute.

K-Beauty Giant, AmorePacific Malaysia To Grow Sales & Profit By 20 Pct This Year
By Soraya Jamal

KUALA LUMPUR -- Global beauty company, AmorePacific Malaysia Sdn Bhd targets its sales and profit to grow by 20 per cent this year, bolstered by expanding brands portfolio and sales channels, as well as extensive marketing plans. AmorePacific Malaysia General Manager, Margaret Chin told Bernama recently, the company, a wholly-owned unit of AmorePacific Corp based in South Korea, has already surpassed its sales target for January.

Wholesale, Retail Trade Sales Record 8.2 Pct Growth To RM1.25 Tln In 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- The wholesale and retail trade sub-sector sales recorded a growth of 8.2 per cent to RM1.25 trillion in 2018 compared with the previous year, says the Department of Statistics (DoS). In a statement Wednesday, Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said for the fourth quarter 2018 (4Q18), the volume index expanded 8.1 per cent to 173.8 per cent as compared to the same period a year ago, mainly driven by the expansion in retail trade by 11.8 per cent.

Dialog Group Posts Higher Net Profit In Q2

KUALA LUMPUR -- Dialog Group Bhd posted a higher net profit of RM136.78 million in the second quarter ended Dec 31, 2018, against RM115.76 million chalked up in the same period in 2017. Revenue, however, fell to RM609.61 million from RM857.42 million previously, the integrated technical services provider said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday.

Gas Malaysia's Net Profit Rises To RM180.39 Mln In 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gas Malaysia Bhd's net profit rose to RM180.39 million in the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18), from RM161.14 million chalked up in the previous financial year. Revenue surged 17.3 per cent to RM6.23 billion from RM5.32 billion previously, thanks to the higher natural gas tariff and higher volume of natural gas sold, it said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday.

Yinson Energy Secures RM2.36 Bln O&M Contract

KUALA LUMPUR -- Yinson Holdings Bhd's indirect wholly-owned unit, Yinson Energy Sdn Bhdk, has secured a RM2.36 billion operation and maintenance (O&M) works contract for Nippon Floating Production Storage and Offloading Facilities (FPSO) from JX Nippon Oil and Gas Exploration (Malaysian) Ltd. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday, Yinson said the estimated value of the O&M contract, effective Feb 12, 2019, was based on the assumption that the extension options are fully exercised.

AmanahRaya REIT's Net Profit Rises To RM81.25 Mln In FY18

KUALA LUMPUR -- AmanahRaya Real Estate Investment Trust's (AmanahRaya REIT) net profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) rose to RM81.25 million from RM74.25 million recorded in FY17. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday, AmanahRaya-REIT said revenue increased to RM96.69 million from RM60.42 million previously, mainly due to the rental income contribution from Vista Tower following its acquisition on Jan 16, 2018.

Oil & Gas Remains Govt Focus Area

KUALA LUMPUR -- The oil and gas (O&G) industry, Malaysia's second highest export earner after electrical and electronics, will continue to be a focus area for the government this year amid the volatility in oil prices. International Trade and Industry Deputy Minister Dr Ong Kian Ming told reporters Monday, while tackling weakening crude oil prices, Malaysia was also giving attention to downstream products.

SSPI Increases To 109.2 Pts In Q4

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Services Producer Price Index (SSPI) for the fourth quarter 2018 increased 0.6 per cent to 109.2 points as compared to the same quarter in 2017. In a statement Tuesday, the Department of Statistics Malaysia said SSPI for the fourth quarter 2018 increased 0.2 per cent compared to the previous quarter.

Perodua Delivers 100,000 Units Of Perodua Myvi Since Nov 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Perodua achieved another milestone by delivering 100,000 units of third-generation of Perodua Myvi, since November 2017. Perodua Sales Sdn Bhd managing director Datuk Dr Zahari Husin said in a statement Tuesday, since the third-generation Perodua Myvi's launch in November 2017, the second national car maker has delivered over 100,000 units with an average delivery of over 1,560 units a week.

MTEM: Incorporate Long & Short-Term Measures To Reduce Economic Burden

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malay Economic Action Council (MTEM) hopes the newly minted Economic Action Council (EAC) will not only focus on renewing long-term measures but must also look at short-term plans that are able to reduce the economic burden faced by the people. In a statement Wednesday, It urged the government and the EAC not to put the reduction of Malaysia's fiscal deficit as the main priority.

EAC Will Allow MITI To Contribute Views On Economic Policies

KUALA LUMPUR -- The establishment of the Economic Action Council (EAC) will allow the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) to contribute views on the country's economic policies, says Deputy Minister Dr Ong Kian Ming. MITI Minister Datuk Darrell Leiking was appointed a member of the council. Ong told reporters Wednesday, MITI's involvement in the council would contribute to better jobs offerings in the country especially for the B40 segment.

MCCC Hopes M'sia-China Finds Common Understanding On ECRL, Other Projects

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia-China Chamber of Commerce (MCCC) hopes Malaysia and China could establish common understanding about the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) and other relevant projects to minimise losses or achieve a win-win solution. It said this would create a friendly investment and economic environment for all foreign investors including from China. "This move is expected to become a successful model for China to negotiate with other countries along the Belt and Road initiative," the chamber said in a statement Wednesday.

India To Remain An Important FDI Source For Malaysia- MIDA

KUALA LUMPUR -- India continues to be one of Malaysia's important source of foreign direct investment, particularly in the manufacturing sector, and is expected to remain among the top 20 investors in the country. As at September 2018, the Malaysian Investment Authority (MIDA) said in a statement Thursday, a total of 135 manufacturing projects, valued at RM5.5 billion, with participation from India were implemented and in the process, 15,000 jobs were created.

2019's Economy To Grow Even More Rapidly

PUTRAJAYA -- The 4.7 per cent economic growth recorded in 2018 gives an assurance that the economy will grow even more rapidly this year, says Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng. While last year's growth was 0.1 per cent lower than the targeted rate of 4.8 per cent, he told reporters Thursday, the economy's performance was satisfactory in view of the challenging global economic environment, including the ongoing trade US-China trade tensions.

MATRADE Urges Sarawak Companies To Become Halal Product Exporters

KUCHING -- The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) is urging more companies in Malaysia, particularly those from Sarawak, to become key exporters of halal products globally. Its deputy director of Halal, F&B and Agro-Based Section Khairul Nizam Moonier told reporters Thursday, Sarawak had huge potential for many of its products to be promoted in the market.

Asian Economies Monitor US-China Trade Talks

KUALA LUMPUR -- Asian economies are closely monitoring the progress of the United States and China trade talks in the hope that the disputes will be resolved amicably, said Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Secretariat executive director Tan Sri Dr Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria Thursday. She noted there were encouraging signs on the development of the US-China trade talks, especially with the ongoing negotiations between the two giant economies. "There are many aspects of trade negotiations. In the case of the US and China, the focus has to be beyond tariffs and intellectual property (IP). "They should also be looking at structural reform that is so important in facilitating trade because, at the end of the day, market access depends on many other aspects. Not just tariffs or IP," she said.

Instill Investor Confidence To Sustain Growth, Says Wahid Omar

KUALA LUMPUR -- Ensuring investor confidence in the Malaysian economy and its potential growth is crucial for the country to sustain its growth momentum, going forward, says Tan Sri Abdul Wahid Omar, chairman of the board of directors, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. While saying that more than two-thirds of the Malaysian economy was driven by investments and activities undertaken by the private sector, he added that the sector a powerful engine of growth. "So, what we need to do is to instil confidence in our economy and country so that the private sector will continue to invest, not only foreign (investors) but also the home grown private sector and government-linked companies," he said Thursday.

Kian Joo Receives Conditional Mandatory Take-Over Offer

KUALA LUMPUR -- Kian Joo Can Factory Bhd has received a notice of conditional mandatory take-over offer from Can-One International Sdn Bhd (CISB), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Can-One Bhd. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday, Kian Joo said it received the take-over notice from AmInvestment Bank today on behalf of CISB for 295.87 million shares or 66.61 per cent stake at RM3.10 per share. On Dec 13, CISB entered into a conditional share sale agreement to acquire 2.17 million ordinary shares or 0.49 per cent equity interest in Kian Joo from Tan Kim Seng.

New Japanese Investments Coming In, Re-Investments To Be Stepped Up - Darell

PUTRAJAYA -- New investments from Japan are expected to flow into the country while Japanese investors already in Malaysia will reinvest in their existing operations, which was strong evidence that investors had utmost confidence in the new government. International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Ignatius Darell Leiking said Thursday, Japanese confidence has heightened because of Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's close relations with the Japanese government while diplomacy and cooperation has been intensified by Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah who accompanied the premier on a working visit to Japan recently. Dr Mahathir visited Japan thrice since taking over office as prime minister in May 2018.

Labuan Expects Marine, Tourism Projects To Kick Off

LABUAN -- Federal Territories Minister Khalid Abdul Samad has hinted that at least one or two projects in the marine (fisheries) and tourism-related industries were expected to kick off in Labuan this year. He told reporters Thursday, the private partnerships for the marine and tourism projects would involve investors from South Korea, China and Japan.

TRX Sees Renewed Investor Confidence After "Detox" Operations - Guan Eng

KUALA LUMPUR -- The outcome of "detox" operations carried out by the Ministry of Finance on the Tun Razak Exchange (TRX), which was bogged own by the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) scandal, has made the project attractive to investors. Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said Friday, after the detox operations, the TRX was now a corrupt-free project that had gained investor confidence both locally and abroad.

Economic Action Council Formed

PUTRAJAYA -- The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Monday announced the establishment of the Economic Action Council, which is tasked with scrutinising and making decisions regarding economic and financial affairs as well as the people's well-being. The PMO said in a statement Monday that the main objectives of the council, which is chaired by Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, are promoting sustainable economic growth, ensuring equitable distribution of wealth, and enhancing the people's well-being.

Muez Abdul Aziz Is New SSM Chairman

KUALA LUMPUR -- Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry secretary-general Datuk Muez Abdul Aziz has been appointed as the new chairman of the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM). SSM in a statement here Monday said the appointment, which took effect on Jan 9, was for a two-year term. Muez was appointed to replace Datuk Seri Jamil Salleh who went on a compulsory retirement on Jan 8.

SC Chairman Elected Vice Chair Of Int'l Organisation Of Securities Commission

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) chairman Datuk Syed Zaid Albar has been elected vice-chair of the International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) Growth and Emerging Markets (GEM) Committee. IOSCO is the leading global standard setter for securities regulation and regulates more than 95 per cent of the world's securities markets in more than 115 jurisdictions, SC said in a statement Tuesday.

LHDN Launches eProcurement System, Suppliers' Portal

CYBERJAYA -- The Inland Revenue Board (LHDN) has launched the eProcurement (eP) system and the Suppliers' portal as a continuous effort to improve service delivery to suppliers or tenderers dealing with the agency. The LHDN in a statement Wednesday said the eP system is an electronic procurement management system that would serve as a platform for companies to participate in procurement of services, supplies or works.

Xin Hwa Appoints KPMG Unit To Conduct Independent Review

KUALA LUMPUR -- Xin Hwa Holdings Bhd (Xin Hwa) has appointed KPMG Management and Risk Consulting Sdn Bhd to conduct an independent review on alleged irregularities on some transactions and payments. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday, Xin Hwa said this was to ascertain whether there were any irregularities in the company. It added that the full review was expected to be completed within 10 weeks from the date of the commencement of the work, slated to start on Feb 18, 2019.

Naza Premira Unveils Vespa Notte Edition

KUALA LUMPUR -- Naza Premira Sdn Bhd, the official distributor of the Vespa brand in Malaysia, has unveiled the black Vespa Notte Edition Thursday. Naza Corporation's head of 2 Wheels Division, Nazman SHC Yusof said the special series exuded a mysterious and elegant allure, befitting its name, "Notte" (the Italian word for night). "Available in two variants, Vespa Notte GTS Super 300 ABS and Vespa Notte Sprint 150 i-Get ABS, the series was crafted based on the technical and mechanical foundation of the most recent large and small frame Vespa scooters," he said Thursday.

IJN Private To Offer New Comprehensive Treatment By This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- Institut Jantung Negara (IJN) Private is making its maiden move to enhance its services by offering new comprehensive treatment including kidneys, lungs and women's healthcare to its patients by this year. Its Head and Director of Operations, Private Healthcare Division, Datuk Dr Mohamed Ezani Md Taib told a media conference Thursday, the efforts were underway to help the patients and it could soon give a new lease of life to them.

Petronas' Wan Zulkiflee Is Among 100 Best Global Brand Guardians

KUALA LUMPUR -- Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) president and group chief executive officer Tan Sri Wan Zulkiflee Wan Ariffin has made it into the 100 best global Brand Guardians for 2019 by Brand Finance, the world's leading brand valuation authority. Petronas said Wan Zulkiflee was ranked number 95 in the world by Brand Finance. "He received the recognition due to his visionary leadership, prudent management and successful track record in steering the national oil and gas company and the industry forward through some of the most turbulent and challenging years in recent times," it said in a statement Friday.

Retail Price For RON95 And RON97 Rises One Sen, Diesel Unchanged

KUALA LUMPUR -- Petroleum retail prices for RON95 and RON97 increased by one sen per litre while the price for diesel remained at RM2.18 per litre effective at midnight Friday night until Feb 22. According to a statement from the Finance Ministry Friday, the retail price for RON97 rose to RM2.28 per litre compared with RM2.27 per litre previously while RON95 rose to RM1.98 per litre from RM1.97

4.7 Pct GDP For 2018 Is Healthy - Economists

At 4.7 per cent, Malaysia's 2018 GDP is healthy, say economists. -- fotoBERNAMA

KUALA LUMPUR -- Economists have described Malaysia's 2018 gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 4.7 per cent as healthy, although it was lower than the 5.9 per cent the country recorded in 2017.

Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd chief economist Manokaran Mottain said the 4.7 per cent growth was still considered healthy for a developing country like Malaysia, compared to 4.2 per cent expansion the country recorded in 2016 and 4.7 per cent in 2013.

"As long as the growth is still above the three per cent level, the economy may yet to experience a recession," he told Bernama.

Similarly, Bank Islam chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said Malaysia's economic growth was higher in the Q4 2018 compared with 4.5 per cent and 4.4 per cent in Q2 2018 and Q3 2018 respectively, primarily driven by consumer spending which has been growing at above-trend level.

"The turnaround in exports to 1.3 per cent in Q4 after contracting 0.8 per cent in the preceding quarter has also helped the overall growth in the final quarter of last year," he said.

TAX HOLIDAY

RHB Research Institute economist Peck Boon Soon said that although the overall 2018 GDP growth represented a slowdown in economic activities, it still considered healthy as it was underpinned by a stronger growth in private consumption and partly boosted by three months tax holiday.

However, the growth according to him, was hampered by a slowdown in exports and private investment with slackened public spending due to fiscal consolidation to contain the budget deficit exacerbating the matter.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (MIER) executive director Emeritus Professor Dr Zakariah Abdul Rashid said last year's GDP growth could be better, should public confidence was not impacted by the structural reform that took place.

"Malaysia is currently undergoing a structural reform, so when we decided to do that, the economy will slightly slow down initially, but we will be experiencing a more sustainable growth performance in the long run," he said.

On the implications of external factors, Malaysia as an open economy according to Manokaran, was more susceptible to external headwinds such as the prolong US-China trade war and a slowdown in global growth, coupled with domestic political uncertainties due to the change of government and fiscal reformations.

NEW ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

"We hoped that the newly formed Economic Action Council (EAC) will come up with new economic strategies that can steer the economy towards a stronger path and growth," he said.

Echoing Manokaran's view, Zakariah said the set-up of the EAC was good as all related ministries and experts would join forces and solve the complex economic problem facing the country.

"Our economic problem is complex, and it could not be solved by individual ministry, be it the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Finance Ministry or the Economic Affairs Ministry," he said.

He noted that the council would not solve the problem in short term, but rather improve the structure of the economy in the long term.

"Since we are not embracing National Transformation 2050 (TN50) initiated by the previous government anymore, the government should come out with some other visions to show the clearer direction for the business community or decision makers for them to move forward," he suggested.

-- BERNAMA