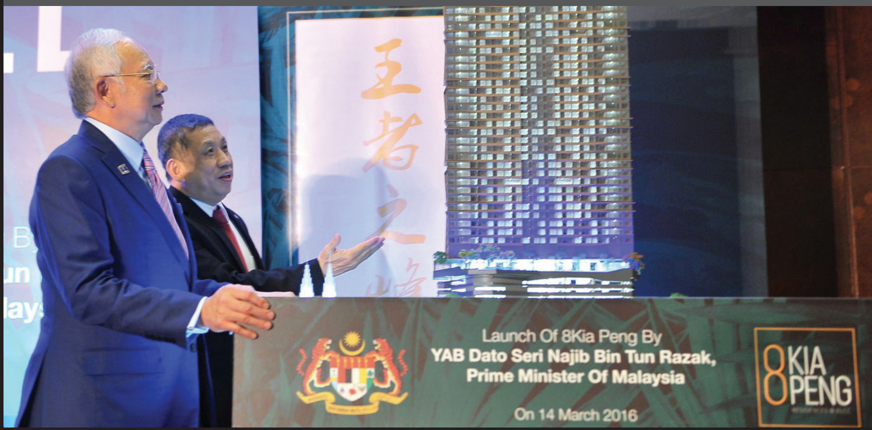
BERNAMA
MALAYSIAeBiz
WEEKLY BUSINESS ROUNDUP 14 - 18 MARCH 2016

March 18, 2016

This Week's Highlight :
KL To Become More Attractive With Private Sector Contribution: NAJIB



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and I-Berhad Executive Director Tan Sri Lim Kim Hong looking at the model of the luxurious 8Kia Peng Residen @ KLCC at the launch of the development project .

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Private businesses could be a catalyst in making Kuala Lumpur an even more attractive place for people from around the world to live in, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said. "This private sector contribution could increase tourist arrivals and stimulate the Malaysian property market by creating even greater awareness of the Malaysia My Second Home programme," the Prime Minister said when launching 8KiaPeng@KLCC, the high-end luxurious development project by I-Berhad here Monday.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

Malaysia's Exports Set To Improve

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Malaysia's exports, particularly manufactured goods, are expected to improve in tandem with the better global economic growth posted this year, RHB Research Institute Sdn Bhd said in statement Monday. It said the sharp depreciation of the ringgit will also make Malaysia's exports more competitive in international markets, setting the stage for a modest recovery in 2016. However, this decline will affect business and consumer confidence, choking private spending. The effect of the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is expected to continue to linger and hurt business spending RHB Research said.

TUESDAY

Matrade Targets 10 Per Cent Increase In Women-owned Companies In 2016

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 -- The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) expects to see a further increase of 10 per cent in women-owned companies this year, supported by higher awareness towards the entrepreneur industry. Of the 16,391 companies registered as of February 2016, only 13 per cent or 2,135 companies were women-owned. The target is driven by 105 programmes organised by Matrade such as women exporter development programme (WEDP), business coaching programme, promotion activities as well as financing schemes facilities, Matrade Chairman, Datuk Noraini Ahmasaid after attending the 'Trade Talk@Matrade: Women Defining Success' here Tuesday.

WEDNESDAY

Malaysia To Push For Closer, Integrated ASEAN Community

By Mohd Haikal Mohd Isa

BANGKOK -- Malaysia will maintain its leadership role towards ensuring the newly-established ASEAN Community grows closer in all sectors of the economy. International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said Wednesday, a closer and integrated ASEAN would drive many benefits to member countries, whether in trade, investment or tourism.

THURSDAY

Malaysia's Long-term Economic Prospects Remain Favourable, Says Moody's

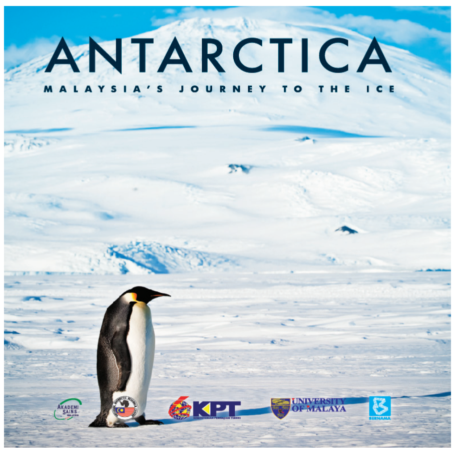
KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Malaysia's long-term economic prospects remain favourable given its structural strengths and diversified economy despite the revision of its outlook to 'stable' from 'positive', said Moody's Investors Service. In a note Thursday, Moody's said the favourable prospects were because of Malaysia's well-developed infrastructure, substantial natural resources, globally competitive services sector and manufacturing base that would likely benefit from the country's improving trade linkages.

FRIDAY

Masterplan On The Cards To Ensure Smooth Sailing For Shipping Industry

By Harizah Hanim Mohamed

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- The Shipping Industry Masterplan, which will be implemented within the next year, is being formulated to address the challenges faced by the industry, Deputy Transport Minister, Datuk Abdul Aziz Kaprawi said.Under the masterplan, the government plans to expand existing ports to ensure they meet the needs of mega-sized ships. The Transport Ministry has also forged cooperation with the Malaysian Shipowners' Association to ensure the transformation efforts for the industry can be implemented and undertaken in a holistic manner, he added.



SMEbrief

DNeX Introduces Merchant Development Programme For Halal Companies

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Dagang NeXchange Bhd's (DNeX) merchant development programme for halal companies, specifically small and medium enterprises, aims to help them further grow their businesses. Its Executive Deputy Chairman, Datuk Samsul Husin, said the company would provide marketing, business insights, ideas and funds as working capital for companies that participated in the programme. "They can use our Global Halal Exchange (GHX) portal to tap the global halal market which is currently valued at US$2.3 trillion (US$1 = RM4.08)," he told reporters at the launch of a new goat milk product by its anchor tenant, Al Ansar Health Sdn Bhd, here Thursday.

PropUP Propertyupdate

Amcorp Properties Inks JV With Kilmuir House (UK)

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- AmCorp Properties Bhd's joint venture (JV) subsidiary, Kilmuir House (UK) Ltd, has entered into an agreement with the London Mayor's office for Policing and Crime to acquire a leasehold property comprising 49 two-bedroom apartments at Kilmuir House, Ebury Street, for 45 million pounds (about RM262.35 million). AmCorp Properties Bhd in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday said the funding for Amcorp Kilmuir would be internally generated and bank borrowing.

Hua Yang Launches Citywoods Second Tower Project In Johor

KUALA LUMPUR, 14 March -- Property developer, Hua Yang Bhd, has launched Tower A, the second tower of its Citywoods serviced apartment project in Johor.Tower A offers three design layouts with prices starting from RM383,000 (Bumiputera lots) and RM446,000 (non-Bumiputera lots), it said in a statement Monday. Located along Jalan Abdul Samad, with access to major highways, Citywoods comprised two19-storey residential towers. "90 percent of the units in Tower B which was launched in September 2014 have been sold," Hua Yang Johor Branch Manager Casey Wong was quoted as saying in the statement.

8Kia Peng@KLCC To Help Make KL A Global City

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- I-Berhad's high-end luxurious project, 8Kia Peng@KLCC, which has a gross development value of RM1 billion, is expected to help the government achieve its aspiration to make Kuala Lumpur a global city. The project which comprises an elegant 50-storey residential building with 442 units, will turn Kuala Lumpur into one of the world's global cities, I-Berhad Deputy Chaiman, Datuk Eu Hong Chew said at the launching of the project here Monday.

Kwasa Land Awards RM268.9 Million Infrastructure Contract To TSR Bina

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 -- Master developer Kwasa Land Sdn Bhd (Kwasa Land) has awarded a RM268.9 million infrastructure contract to TSR Bina Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of public-listed TSR Capital Bhd. The two-year contract, to be completed by March 12, 2018, is for the construction and completion of common infrastructure works for work package contract WPC1B for the Kwasa Damansara township.

Property Sector To Reach Inflection Point Soon, Says Affin Hwang

KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 (Bernama) -- The property sector is expected to reach an inflection point soon, premised on sustained economic data, Affin Hwang Capital said. In a research note Wednesday, Affin Hwang maintained its 'overweight' view on the sector, advising investors to take position on stocks with strong fundamentals and with discounts to value.

AZRB obtains RM129 Million Contract

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Ahmad Zaki Resources Bhd's (AZRB) unit, Peninsular Medical Sdn Bhd, has received a RM129 million contract to supply equipment for the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Teaching Hospital in Kuantan, Pahang. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, AZRB said the unit received the Letter of Award for the supply of additional equipment under Group 2 and 3 from IIUM. "The contract is expected to contribute positively to the group's future earnings and net assets," it said.

First Phase Of Battersea Power Station To House Blend Of Commercial Tenants

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Battersea Power Station, a property redevelopment project in London undertaken by a Malaysian consortium, has lined up a blend of commercial tenants to move into the first phase, Circus West, slated to be opened to the public in early 2017. The Battersea Power Station site is owned by SP Setia Bhd-Sime Darby Bhd-Employees Provident Fund consortium, while the project development management has been undertaken by British-based Battersea Power Station Development Co. In a statement here Thursday, Battersea Power Station Development Co said the line-up would deliver the village feel with tenants ranging from fine dining to a butcher, baker, florist and a dedicated space for events, 'The Village Hall' in partnership with Battersea Arts Centre. The redevelopment of Battersea Power Station, once completed, will host 25,000 people living and working on site, create 17,000 new direct jobs and bring about the first major extension of the London Underground system

Bintai Kinden's Unit Secures RM31.42 Million Project

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Bintai Kinden Corporation Bhd's unit, Bintai Kindenko Pte Ltd, has received a RM31.42 million sub-contract from W'Ray Construction Pte Ltd. The project entailed the supply, delivery, installation, completion and maintenance of air-conditioning and mechanical ventilation and electrical system for the proposed additions and alterations to existing 4-storey commercial development (Northpoint Shopping Centre) in Singapore. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia, the company said the project was estimated to be completed by July 31, 2017. Bintai Kinden is an investment holding company and its core activities include the provision of specialised mechanical and electrical engineering services, facilities management services, turnkey works, property development and investment.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard
Gainers - 524
Losers - 331
Not Traded - 578
Unchanged - 293
Value - 2407914568
Volume - 15074519

BURSA MALAYSIA: KL Shares Close Higher

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- Share prices closed broadly higher on Bursa Malaysia on Friday on the back of persistent buying in selected heavyweight, small cap and finance-related counters. The benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) settled 13.15 points higher at 1,716.34 against Thursday's close of 1,703.19. The index moved between 1,705.62 and 1,716.34 throughout the day, after opening 5.94 points better at 1,709.13. Market breadth was positive as advancers outpaced decliners 538 to 349 with 317 counters unchanged, 522 untraded and 10 others suspended.

Volume rose to 2.02 billion shares valued at RM2.98 billion from the 1.81 billion shares worth RM2.31 billion transacted on Thursday. A dealer said positive sentiment towards equities was still apparent, as the United States Federal Reserve plans to defer raising interest rates and is likely to opt for two, rather than four times this year. The FBM Emas Index rose 103.58 points to 11,909.29, the FBMT100 Index gained 101.49 points to 11,612.00 and the FBM Emas Shariah Index increased 93.02 points to 12,518.62.

FOREX: Ringgit Closes Firmer Against US Dollar

Exchange Rate (Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.0500	4.0560
EUR	4.5611	4.5695
GBP	5.8381	5.8475
100 YEN	3.6395	3.4658
SGD	2.9801	2.9865

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- The ringgit strengthened further against the US dollar Friday, buoyed by renewed bullish sentiment towards the oil markets and greenback weakness, an international forex broker said. At 5 pm, it was quoted at 4.0500/0560 against the greenback from 4.0565/0625 yesterday. ForexTime (FXTM) chief market analyst Jameel Ahmad said the ringgit benefited from a period of extraordinary weakness of the US dollar, following the US Federal Reserve comments that there was no realistic chance it would raise interest rates four times this year.

"The pushed back US interest rate expectations are welcome news to the emerging markets because it will prevent further outflow from these markets and might actually make investors consider putting their money back into emerging markets," he said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the ringgit ended was mixed against other major currencies. It increased against the Singapore dollar to 2.9801/9865 from Thursday's 2.9878/9940 but eased against the yen to 3.6395/4658 from 3.6303/6373. The local unit weakened against the British pound to 5.8381/8475 from 5.8004/8098 yesterday but appreciated against the euro to 4.5611/5695 from 4.5794/5874

Short-term Rates Close Steady

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- Short-term inter-bank rates closed steady today on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention to reduce surplus liquidity in the financial system. The liquidity surplus in the conventional system was reduced to RM35.36 billion from RM42.80 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system it fell to RM5.44 billion from RM10.50 billion previously. In the morning, BNM called for six tenders, comprising two conventional money market, two repos and two Qard.

The central bank conducted a late conventional money market tender for RM33 billion and a Qard money market tender for RM5.4 billion, both for three-day money. The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 3.21 per cent, while the one-week,two and three-week rates were pegged at 3.30 per cent, 3.35 per cent and 3.39 per cent respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Close Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 (Bernama) -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed untraded Friday. April 2016, May 2016, June 2016 and September 2016 were pegged at 96.31, 96.32, 96.35 and 96.35 respectively. Open interest was nil. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.71 per cent.

KLCI Futures Close Higher

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts (FKLI) on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives finished higher today, in sync with the underlying cash market. Spot month March 2016 increased five points to 1,711, April 2016 rose 4.5 points to 1,706, June 2016 improved six points to 1,694 and September 2016 added 3.5 points to 1,681.5.

Turnover increased to 9,078 lots versus 8,534 lots on Thursday while open interest widened to 43,838 contracts from 42,711 contracts yesterday. The benchmark FBM KLCI finished 13.15 points higher at 1,716.34.

BNM, Bank OF Thailand Establish Currency Cooperation

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) and Bank of Thailand Monday announced the operationalisation of local currency settlement framework to promote the use of ringgit and baht for the settlement of bilateral trade between the two countries. BNM Governor, Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, said the joint effort would deliver significant pay-off for the economies with lower cost of doing business following the lower foreign exchange (forex) conversion cost and currency risk associated with using third currency (US dollar).

Islamic Banking Industry's 2Q15 Total Assets Rose To US$1.293 Bln: IFSB

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- The total assets of the Islamic banking industry rose to US$1.293 billion (US$1.00=RM4.10) in the second quarter of 2015 from US$1.208 billion recorded in the same period in 2014. Total funding/liabilities grew to US$1.120 billion from US$1.027 billion previously while the number of full-fledged Islamic banks and Islamic windows of conventional banks in 17 countries in the second quarter of 2015 stood at 169 and 86, respectively, the Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) said in a statement Monday. "Four major financing contracts used were Murabahah (41.3 per cent), commodity Murabahah/Tawwaruq (14.6 per cent), Ijarah/Ijarah Muntahia Bittamlik (14.5 per cent) and Bay Bithaman Ajil (7.5 per cent)," it said.

Eastspring Bags 'Best Group In Equity' Award

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Eastspring Investments Bhd, has bagged the 'Best Group in Equity' award for the third consecutive year and nine fund performance awards at The Edge-Thomson Reuters Lipper Malaysia Fund Awards 2016. The awards honour funds and fund management firms that have excelled in providing consistently strong risk-adjusted performance relative to their peers, in over 20 countries. Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Yap Siok Hoon, said the company's quality winning team of fund managers worked together in a conducive environment with a bottom-up approach in stock selection, adhering to the valuation and research-driven style.

CIMB Bank, CIMB Thai Appointed As Cross Currency Dealers For RM-Bhat Trade

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) and Bank of Thailand (BOT) have respectively appointed CIMB Bank and CIMB Thai as Appointed Cross Currency Dealers (ACCD) for the settlement of ringgit-baht trade under the newly launched Local Currency Settlement Framework. This marks the first bilateral currency settlement framework within ASEAN, aimed at providing an alternative settlement framework for the US$22 billion (RM89.54 billion) trade between Malaysia and Thailand, said CIMB Group in a statement here. The framework was jointly established by BNM and BOT to promote the use of the Malaysian ringgit and Thai baht between Malaysia and Thailand to settle cross-border trade and direct investments.

EXIM Bank Appoints New President And CEO

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 -- Export-Import Bank of Malaysia Berhad (EXIM Bank) Tuesday announced the appointment of Norzilah Mohammed as its new President/Chief Executive Officer with effect from March 8. Norzilah was the Chief Operating Officer since January 2015, EXIM Bank said in a statement. She started her career with EXIM Bank Malaysia in December 2008 as the Head of Recovery Team. Prior to joining EXIM Bank she had served a few organisations namely PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Bank Bumiputra Malaysia Berhad (BBMB), Pengurusan Danaharta Nasional Berhad (Danaharta) and Prokhas Sdn. Bhd. (Prokhas).

UOB Appointed Principal Adviser For PPB's RM650 Million Sukuk Murabahah

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 -- United Overseas Bank (M) Bhd (UOB) has been appointed principal adviser/lead arranger/lead manager for Perdana Petroleum Bhd's (PPB) proposed sukuk issuance of up to RM650 million. The first issuance under the proposed sukuk issue will be guaranteed by Danajamin Nasional Bhd pursuant to an Al-Kafalah Facility. The tenure of the Sukuk Murabahah Programme shall be 12 years from the date of the first issue of the sukuk murabahah, PBB said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday.

Maybank Again Voted 'Best Private Banking Services In Malaysia'

KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 -- Malaysia largest banking group, Maybank, has been voted "Best Private Banking Services in Malaysia" for the fourth consecutive year and its seventh time, in a global wealth management poll by the Euromoney. The group also bagged 11 other awards in the 13th Euromoney Private Banking and Wealth Management Survey 2016 which involved more than 400 private banks in 69 countries. This is the first time Maybank has topped 12 categories of the Euromoney Awards in Malaysia, said Head of Community Financial Services Malaysia Datuk Hamirullah Boorhan in a statement.

Malaysia's Monetary Policy Is Effective, Says Moody's

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Malaysia's monetary policy is effective in ensuring adequate levels of liquidity, banking stability and low inflation, said Moody's Investors Service. The rating agency said the country's large domestic institutional investor base and net foreign assets also provided ample buffer against financial shocks. "Headline inflation averaged 2.6 per cent over the past decade, lower than similarly rated peers," it said in a note Thursday. Government commitment to fiscal consolidation also demonstrated high policy credibility and effectiveness with the fiscal deficit declining for the sixth consecutive year to 3.2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product in 2015, said Moody's.

RHB Bank Wins 'Highly Commended': Excellence In SME Banking Award

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- RHB Bank was accorded the "Highly Commended: Excellence in SME Banking" award at the seventh Annual Retail Banker International Asia Trailblazer Summit and Awards 2016. RHB in a statement Friday said the award recognises top innovations that go hand-in-hand with the organisation's vision, market leadership, operational efficiency and customer experience as well as business profitability. The Retail Banker International Asia Trailblazer Awards commend outstanding financial institutions that bring product development, service delivery and process improvement.

Government Needs To Announce New Central Bank Governor Soon, Says Ramon

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- The government needs to announce its choice of the new Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) governor as soon as possible in order to boost investors' confidence, Centre for Public Policy Studies Chairman, Tan Sri Ramon V. Navaratnam said. "The government must give attention to this by announcing a new governor as soon as possible.The new governor must be someone who is professional, competent, possess high integrity and non-political," he told reporters after a half-day roundtable session on "Making Markets Work for Young Entrepreneurs" Friday .

Research Houses Upbeat On BAuto Despite Poor Q3 Results

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Most research houses are upbeat on Berjaya Auto Bhd (BAuto) despite the company falling short in its recent third-quarter (Q3) financial performance results. In a research note Monday, Maybank Investment Bank (IB) Research said BAuto's perfomance was below expectations, similar with its peers -- UMW Holdings Bhd and Tan Chong Motor Holdings Bhd -- on the back of deferred purchases by dealers and unfavourable foreign exchange. "However, BAuto is still the rose among the thorns as it has a slightly better outlook due to new model launches and its thriving Philippine operation with more potentials to unlock," it said. Maybank revised its BAuto target price to RM2.40 and maintained its 'buy' call as yields remained decent at 4+ per cent.

SCGM Q3 Net Profit Surges 83.3 Pct To RM7.1 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Leading thermo-vacuum formed plastic packaging manufacturer SCGM Bhd recorded a net profit of RM7.1 million in the third quarter ended Jan 31, 2016 (3Q16), surging by 83.3 per cent from RM3.8 million previously. Its revenue rose 36.2 per cent to RM37.3 million in the same quarter from RM27.4 million a year ago. "The topline jump was boosted chiefly by export sales which increased 46.9 per cent to RM18.4 million in 3Q16 from RM12.5 million in 3Q15 while local sales improved by 27.1 per cent to RM18.9 million in 3Q16 versus RM14.8 million previously," SCGM said in a statement Monday. Managing Director Datuk Seri Lee Hock Chai attributed the improved performance to the company's sales of food and beverage (F&B) packaging.

Sushi King Eyes Annual Sales Of Rm300 Million

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 -- Japanese restaurant chain Sushi King, the largest earnings contributor to Texchem Resources Bhd's restaurant division, is eyeing annual sales of RM300 million from 2018 onwards. Speaking to reporters after the launch of its 100th outlet here Tuesday Texchem Resources Founder and Executive Chairman Tan Sri Dr Fumihiko Konishi said the restaurant chain targets RM230 million in sales this year. Shushi King is the first Japanese restaurant to seek Halal certification. "We have applied to JAKIM for Halal certification last week," he said, adding he expects Sushi King to be awarded the certification by June or July this year.

Axiata Successfully Prices US$500 Mln Sukuk

KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 -- Axiata Group Bhd has successfully priced its 10-year US$500 million sukuk, the third issuance under its multi-currency US$1.5 billion sukuk issuance programme established on July 17, 2012. The sukuk will be issued via its wholly-owned Malaysian-incorporated special purpose vehicle, Axiata SPV2 Bhd, and proceeds will be utilised to fund the proposed acquisition of Ncell Pvt Ltd, it said in a statement. The issuance by Axiata attracted interest from a diverse group of Islamic as well as conventional investors, comprising asset management companies, financial institutions, insurance companies, and sovereign wealth funds, with participation from 64 accounts.

Top Glove Q2 Pre-tax Profit Surges 89.4 Pct To RM131.8 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 -- Top Glove Corporation Bhd's pre-tax profit for the second quarter ended Feb 29, 2016 rose 89.4 per cent to RM131.8 million from RM69.6 million in the corresponding quarter a year ago, defying an intensively competitive environment to deliver a strong performance. Revenue for the same period increased 21.3 per cent to RM693.9 million versus RM572.2 million previously, Top Glove said in a statement Wednesday. "We have successfully delivered strong results and strong volume growth in spite of an increasingly competitive environment," said Executive Chairman Tan Sri Dr Lim Wee Chai.

Ranhill Eases 10 Sen On Debut

KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 -- Ranhill Holdings Bhd, which made its debut on the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia Wednesday, fell 10 sen to RM1.10 from its RM1.20 retail price, with 1.21 million shares transacted. The listing of the Malaysian conglomerate with interests in the environment and energy sectors is the second on Bursa Malaysia for 2016 after Chin Hin Group Bhd, a building materials supplier. Ranhill had cut its final retail price by 30 per cent to RM1.20 from RM1.70.

Malaysia's Debt Reaches RM630.5 Billion

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- The federal government's debt has reached RM630.5 billion, representing 54.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), as at December 2015, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) said. Of this amount, 96.6 per cent or RM609.1 billion is domestic debt, while the rest is offshore debt, the MoF said in a written reply to the Dewan Rakyat Thursday. According to the MoF, as at the end of last year, the government provided guarantees for RM177.7 billion loans or 15.4 per cent of GDP, mainly to public entities to implement infrastructure and transport projects. In addition, the government issued two Letters of Support until the end of 2015; one for US$3 billion (RM12.4 billion) and another for US$150 million (RM620.12 million).

Chinese Yuan Strengthens To 3-month High

By Samantha Tan Chiew Ting

BEIJING, March 18 -- The onshore yuan strengthened to its strongest level since December after China's central bank raised the daily reference rate by the most in four months, reported Xinhua News Agency. The onshore yuan climbed to 6.4625 to the dollar as of 9.40 am in Shanghai, up 214 basis points from

Thursday's close, according to China Foreign Exchange Trade System prices. It yuan gained more than 200 basis points to 6.4443 per dollar.

HRDF Targets Higher Women's Representation On Boards Of Directors

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- Women's representation on boards of directors is targeted to increase to 15 per cent by year-end from 13 per cent now, said Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) Chief Executive Officer, Datuk C.M. Vignaesvaran Jeyandran. He said the government's target was 30 per cent and the representation of women on the boards of directors needed to be increased from the current level."However, he said, the initial target was unlikely to be achieved this year due to slowdown in the economy," Vignaesvaran told reporters on the sidelines of Leaders InForum: Developing the Women Executive Pipeline here Friday. Vignaesvaran said at present, women's participation across all job levels was 54 per cent and the fund hoped to increase it further.

New HR-PIB Plant To Start Production In Q4 2017

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- The new highly- reactive polyisobutene (HR-PIB) production plant at the BASF Petronas Chemicals Sdn Bhd's integrated site is expected to start production in the fourth quarter of 2017. "The plant, which is the latest investment by the BASF and Petronas Chemicals Group Bhd's joint-venture (JV), will be the first of its kind in South-East Asia," Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) said in a statement Friday. Petronas said the plant will have a total annual capacity of 50,000 metric tons of HR-PIB

Maju Holdings Unveils RM2.5 Billion Mixed Development Project

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- Maju Kuala Lumpur, a mixed development project with gross development value of RM2.5 billion located in Sungai Besi here was officially launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on Friday. Developed by ASM Development Sdn Bhd, a unit under Maju Holdings Sdn Bhd, the project boasts 4,200 units of three-bedroom loft apartments set in seven 29-storey residential towers. It will also have a nine-storey commercial podium with more than two million square feet gross floor area of retail, commercial and leisure space. The development will have direct access to major highways with the KL-Seremban Expressway in the west and the Besraya Highway in the east and will benefit from an upgraded traffic interchange.

Sabah Hopes Tigerair Taiwan Will Help Achieve Tourist Arrival Target

KOTA KINABALU, March 18 -- Tigerair Taiwan's new flight, Taipei to Kota Kinabalu (KK), which starts today, would help Sabah achieve its target of 60,000 tourist arrivals this year. Sabah Tourism, Culture and Environment Assistant Minister, Datuk Pang Yuk Ming, said the Sabah Tourism Board would work closely with the airline and its liaison office in Taipei to achieve the target.

"The tourism board will also partner with the airline to explore the Japanese and Korean markets to attract more travellers to Sabah via connecting flights from Taipei," he said at a press conference prior to the inaugural flight's arrival at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport (KKIA) here Friday. The airline is based at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport and serves the Taipei-KK routes four times a week.

Sudan Invites Malaysian Investors To Tap Livestock Sector

By Noor Soraya Mohd Jamal

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- The Sudanese government, looking to enhance and expand bilateral relations with Malaysia, is inviting Malaysian investors to look at the business potential in the country especially in the livestock and tourism industry. Its Ambassador to Malaysia, Khalid Abdelgadir Shukri, said currently the volume of trade and investment between the two countries is still small with the enormous potential yet to be fully tapped. "Malaysia used to export some furniture and electrical devices in early 2000. But for several reasons, especially competition from China, we no longer see many Malaysian products in Sudan although the quality is good," he told Bernama in a recent interview at the news agency's headquarters here. Shukri said Malaysian investors can still tap into other areas and sectors, with the best area for cooperation between Malaysia and Sudan being the livestock and agriculture industry.

Mudajaya's Unit Gets Power Project In India

KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Mudajaya Group Bhd's 26 per cent-owned unit, RKM Powergen Pte Ltd, has signed a 25-year power purchase agreement (PPA) with several power distribution companies in Uttar Pradesh, India. The agreement was for the sale of 350 megawatt of electricty where the commercial delivery is targeted for October 2016, the company said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia. "However, both parties are in discussions for an early supply of electricity as allowed under the PPA, and RKM is confident that in anticipation of the higher demand for power during the summer period, Unit 1 will commence commercial delivery soon," it said.

Alam Maritim Bags RM54.2 Mln Contract From Petronas Carigali
KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Alam Maritim Resources Bhd's wholly-owned subsidiary, Alam Maritim (M) Sdn Bhd, has bagged a RM54.2 million contract from PETRONAS Carigali Sdn Bhd. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, Alam Maritim said the contract was for the provision of workboats for Petronas Carigali. The two-year contract, effective Feb 19, 2016 until Feb 18, 2018, has an extension option of one year, it added.

TM Signs Wi-Fi Roaming Agreement With British Telecommunications
KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM) has signed a Wi-Fi roaming agreement with British Telecommunications plc (BT), allowing them to leverage on each other's Wi-Fi networks in Malaysia and the UK and enable the monetising of UK-Malaysia roaming. In a statement Monday, TM said, through this agreement, its national Wi-Fi footprint will be included in BT's Global Wi-Fi roaming hub, enabling BT's customers to leverage on TM's Wi-Fi estates while roaming in the country and region.

Roadcare's Maintenance Contract Extended Another 10 Years
KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Protasco Bhd's unit, Roadcare (M) Sdn Bhd, has received an extension to the concession contract for the maintenance of Peninsular federal roads from the government. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, Protasco said the government had agreed to extend the concession for a further 10 years. The extension is expected to contribute positively towards the group's results for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2016, it added.

Pos Malaysia To Acquire Land And Shares From DRB-Hicom For RM818.35 Mln
KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Pos Malaysia Bhd has proposed to acquire shares and a parcel of land from DRB-Hicom Bhd for RM818.35 million. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, Pos Malaysia said the proposed acquisition involves the entire issued and paid-up capital of KL Airport Services Sdn Bhd (KLAS), a wholly-owned subsidiary of DRB-Hicom, for RM749.35 million. It also proposes to acquire 4.01 hectares of freehold industrial land from Hicom Lindungan Sdn Bhd, an indirect wholly-owned subsidiary of DRB-Hicom Shah Alam, Selangor, for RM69 million.The land is strategically located, being in close proximity to Port Klang and major highways, it said.

Ranhill Water Technologies To Increase Capacity In China
By Siti Radziah Hamzah

JIANGXI (China), March 14 -- Ranhill Water Technologies (Cayman) Ltd aims to increase its capacity in China's water management market to 1,000 million-litres-per-day (MLD) in the medium-term from 340 MLD at present, as the company expands its expertise in the republic. Executive Director Ooi Kok Ping said the company secured an industrial wastewater treatment plant project, each in Liaoning and Jiangxi, to build, operate and transfer for 29 years. Together with another contract secured in Jiangxi, which is still in the memorandum of understanding stage, the three concessions would constitute 40 MLD. Currently, Ranhill Water Technologies has 12 water, industrial waste-water, and water-recycling plants in China, with total assets worth US$128 million.

Pos Malaysia Expects To Complete KLAS Acquisition By July
PUTRAJAYA, March 15 -- Pos Malaysia Bhd expects to complete its acquisition of KL Airport Services Sdn Bhd (KLAS) the latest by July, said Pos Malaysia Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Mohd Shukrie Mohd Salleh. The acquisition of KLAS for RM749.35 million is expected to help Pos Malaysia improve its postal services especially for e-Commerce, he said after the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Pos Malaysia and the Statistics Department Monday for the development of a comprehensive national postal addressing system.

HeiTech Bags RM28.61 Mln Health Ministry Contract
KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- HeiTech Padu Bhd has bagged a RM28.61 million contract from the Health Ministry to develop a pilot module for clinical documentation in the patient management system. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, HeiTech said the contract was for the supply, delivery, installation, testing, hardware and software plus to develop and implement the pilot module. The contract is for four years beginning from March 21 this year to March 20, 2020.

Nippon Electric Glass To Add RM80 Milllion Investments In Malaysia
KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 -- Japanese specialty glass manufacturer Nippon Electric Glass (NEG) will make a further RM80 million investments to expand its production facilities in Malaysia by July this year. Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) Chief Executive Officer Datuk Azman Mahmud said the additional investment showed the capabilities of the company's plant in Malaysia in meeting the growing demand for high-quality glass tubing. "This expansion project will provide 30 more jobs for Malaysians, particularly those in Selangor," he said in a statement Tuesday.

Putera Island Resort On Pulau Besar To Resume Operations In September
MELAKA, March 16 -- Putera Island Resort on Pulau Besar is expected to resume operations in September after upgrading works costing RM5 million by Bezaar Island Development Sdn Bhd are completed, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Idris Haron said. He was speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding on the resort's lease and operations between PKNM and Bezaar Island at Seri Negeri here Wednesday.

Parliament: MITI Urged To Clarify Stand On TPPA If Trump Wins
KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 -- The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) has been urged to clarify Malaysia's stand on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) should Republican frontrunner Donald Trump

win the 2016 US Presidential election in November. Trump has said that he is not in favour of the US signing the TPPA as it would not benefit the US. Besides Malaysia and the US, the TPPA involves Mexico, New Zealand, Australia, Chile, Japan, Peru, Canada, Vietnam, Singapore and Brunei.

Government To Approve RM1.7 Billion Solar PV Investment This Year
KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 -- The government is looking to approve several more solar photovoltaic (PV) companies with a total estimated investment of RM1.7 billion this year. "We will announce it when the time comes," Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) Deputy Chief Executive Officer Datuk Phang Ah Tong said in a media conference at the PV CellTech Conference 2016 here Wednesday. Solar energy has become a popular approach to renewable energy usage as it is the easiest, compared with biomass, biogas and hydropower, he said.

Malaysian Consortium To Build Power Plant In Bangladesh
D. Arul Rajoo

KUALA LUMPUR, March 16 -- Malaysia has been given the go-ahead to build and operate a 1,320-megawatt (MW) coal-based power plant in Moheshkhali Island, Bangladesh while a mega housing project is also on the cards. Malaysia's Special Envoy to India and South Asia for Infrastructure, Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, said a consortium of Malaysian power companies -- Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) and Powertek Energy Bhd -- will undertake the project that is estimated to cost RM8 billion. The power plant, which will be built on reclaimed land, will be the biggest power plant in the country.

Malaysia's Long-term Economic Prospects Remain Favourable, Says Moody's
KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Malaysia's long-term economic prospects remain favourable given its structural strengths and diversified economy despite the revision of its 'A3' rating outlook to 'stable' from 'positive', said Moody's Investors Service. In a note Thursday, Moody's said the favourable prospects were because of Malaysia's well-developed infrastructure, substantial natural resources, globally competitive services sector and manufacturing base that would likely benefit from the country's improving trade linkages. "The change in outlook reflects the deterioration in Malaysia's growth and external credit metrics due to external pressures over the past year, such as lower commodity prices," it said.

BAT To Restructure Business Operations In Malaysia
KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- British American Tobacco Bhd (BAT) will restructure its business operations by sourcing tobacco products for the local market from other BAT factories regionally. BAT, in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, said the restructuring exercise would involve shutting down factory operations in Virginia Park, Petaling Jaya, Selangor. "The winding down exercise, targeted to completed it by the second half of 2017, will affect 230 employees and they will be provided with benefit packages and the option to undergo a career-transition programme," it said.

KPJ To Spend RM1.294 Billion To Build Eight Hospitals
KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Healthcare provider KPJ Healthcare Bhd will spend RM1.294 billion to build eight hospitals in several towns over the next few years, its President and Managing Director, Datuk Amiruddin Abdul Satar said. The new hospitals, including the Bandar Dato' Onn Specialist Hospital in Johor Baharu, KPJ Klang Bayuemas Specialist, Melaka Specialist Hospital and Port Dickson Specialist Hospital are expected to open in 2018 and 2019, he told a media briefing here Thursday.

FGV Unit Gets Nod To Proceed With Aqcuisition Of Zhong Ling
KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd's (FGV) wholly-owned unit, Felda Global Ventures Downstream Sdn Bhd, has received the requisite approval from the Ministry of Finance to proceed with its proposed acquisition of Zhong Ling Nutril-Oil Holdings Ltd. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, FGV said, the nod was one of the conditions precedent to be satisfied under sales and purchase agreement (SPA) 1 and SPA 2. It said the proposed acquisition was expected to be completed by the first quarter of this year.

AZRB obtains RM129 Million Contract
KUALA LUMPUR, March 17 -- Ahmad Zaki Resources Bhd's (AZRB) unit, Peninsular Medical Sdn Bhd, has received a RM129 million contract to supply equipment for the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Teaching Hospital in Kuantan, Pahang. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, AZRB said the unit received the Letter of Award for the supply of additional equipment under Group 2 and 3 from IIUM.

Hock Seng Lee-Led Consortium Bags RM1.7 Billion Pan Borneo Highway Contract
KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- The consortium of Hock Seng Lee Bhd-Dhaya Maju Infrastucture (Asia) Sdn Bhd Joint Venture has secured a RM1.7 billion contract from Lebuhraya Borneo Utara Sdn Bhd. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Friday, Hock Seng Lee said, the contract was to develop and upgrade the first phase of the Pan Borneo Highway in Sarawak. "The contract period for the completion of the project is 51 months and it is expected to contribute positively to our earnings," it said.

Schneider Electric Launches ASP Programme To Empower Partners In Malaysia
KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- Schneider Electric has launched an exclusive Authorised Service Provider (ASP) programme today and appointed two Malaysian companies -- Haibrotec Sdn Bhd (HAIBRO) and Sarawak Information Systems Sdn Bhd (SAINS) -- as its first authorised service providers in the country. "The programme aims to empower a small pool of capable Malaysian companies through hands-on training to offer superlative service in preventive maintenance, response to a breakdown and alarm detection diagnosis for all Schneider Electric solutions to their customer base in Malaysia," the global specialist in energy management and automation said in a statement Friday.

BSN Eyes 72,000 New Credit Card Holders This Year

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 -- Bank Simpanan Nasional (BSN) is eyeing 72,000 new credit card holders this year, up by 20-30 per cent from last year. It will continue to attract customers from the education industry as well as government servants, given the attractive rate offered for these segments. "Teachers are a huge market for us. We have introduced the 1Teacher Card with a low profit charge rate of 8.8 per cent for them. It is the lowest in the country compared to the 17.5 per cent mostly offered by other banks," Vice-President/Head Cards Business Department, Mohd Sofian said at the prize giving ceremony to winners of the BSN 'Impian Tunai 8 Kembali Lagi' campaign, here Monday.

IRDA, UKTI To Promote Smart Cities Initiative

JOHOR BAHARU, 15 March -- The Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) and the United Kingdom Trade and Investment (UKTI) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote the "smart cities" initiative. IRDA Chief Executive Datuk Ismail Ibrahim said the MoU seeks to promote and showcase pilot projects, related infrastructure and new green materials and technology. It would also promote and encourage academia and industry collaboration and training as well as implement joint projects on research and development and innovations between UK investors and local companies in Iskandar Malaysia.

Japan, Malaysia's 4th Largest Trading Partner In 2015 -- Mustapa

KUALA LUMPUR, March 15 -- Japan has been ranked as Malaysia's fourth largest trading partner after China, Singapore and the US in 2015, with bilateral trade amounting to RM127.40 billion. Minister of International Trade and Industry, Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed, said the bilateral trade accounted for 8.72 per cent of Malaysia's total global trade. A total of 355 manufacturing projects with Japanese interests, with investments of RM33.06 billion and creating 39,959 jobs had been implemented in Malaysia, he said after delivering a speech at the Japan-Malaysia Invest Symposium here Tuesday. Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro) Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Hiroyuki Ishige, said the collaboration with Malaysia in promoting the halal industry in Japan would help attract more tourists from Muslim countries.

Economic Census 2016 Will Involve 700,000 Companies

PUTRAJAYA, March 15 -- The Statistics Department will conduct a nationwide survey called the Economic Census 2016, involving 700,000 companies, beginning April, says Chief Statistician Datuk Dr Abdul Rahman Hasan. The companies would receive a set of 200 questions by post and will have to answer the questions and return the forms to us within a month. "They will be fine RM500 if they fail to do so," he told a press conference after signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the department and Pos Malaysia Bhd here Tuesday. The census' results will be used as a new benchmark to tabulate the Gross Domestic Product, Abdul Rahman said.

Rubber Board Plans Animal Feed Pilot Project In Ledang

KOTA TINGGI, March 18 -- The Malaysian Rubber Board (MRB) plans to initiate a pilot project in Ledang, Muar to turn effluent from the last stage of rubber processing into animal feed. MRB Director-General Datuk Dr Mohd Akbar Md Said said the one-year project, for which permission from the relevant minister has been applied, needs 10 tonnes of rubber a day. He made the remarks when met at a briefing on the Rubber Production Incentive (IPG) scheme organised in cooperation with the Malaysia National Association of Smallholders (NASH) at Kampung Makam here Friday.

Sime's JV Confident To Continue Tie-Up With Alexander Dennis

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- Sime Darby Industrial Sdn Bhd's joint venture (JV) subsidiary, Terberg Terminal Tractors Sdn Bhd (TTM), is confident of continuing its collaboration with Alexander Dennis Ltd (ADL), following its success in delivering the 1,000th unit of ADL's bus chassis recently. Sime Darby Industrial's Managing Director, Chong Kwea Seng, said the company had been receiving encouraging demand for ADL line of buses and was looking to increase its manufacturing capacity. "The finished ADL buses are exported throughout the region, to markets like Hong Kong and New Zealand. In Malaysia, ADL buses are a mainstay in Prasarana Malaysia Bhd's public transportation operations," he said in a statement Friday.

Astro Launches Tribe, An OTT Online Video Service For Region

KUALA LUMPUR, March 18 -- Astro Malaysia Holdings Bhd has launched Tribe, a differentiated over-the-top (OTT) online video service for the ASEAN video consumers. In a statement Friday, Astro Group Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Rohana Rozhan, said the launch marked a new milestone for the company. "Tribe will seek complementary win-win partnerships with local telecommunications and media companies in each market, to jointly build on customer reach, and relationships, while leveraging on combined invested platforms and technologies, to deliver a greater customer experience," she said.

Forest City, First Artificial Island To Get Duty-free Status

By Massita Ahmad

SINGAPORE, March 14 -- The Forest City, a mega development on four man-made islands in Iskandar Malaysia, has been accorded duty-free area status on March 6, 2016. This is the first artificial island granted the status in Malaysia compared to the natural islands like Labuan, Langkawi and Tioman.

HRH Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled and Country Garden Holdings Chaurman, Yeung Kwok Keung (third, right) looking at the replica of Forest City Pulau Satu, after the launching ceremony. Bernama IMAGES

What is in store for locals and visitors at this new duty-free area, dubbed South-East Asia's largest mixed-use green development?

Point to note is that, the ultimate objective of any duty-free area is to encourage trade and tourism in Malaysia. Labuan, Langkawi and Tioman have been declared duty-free islands on Sept 1, 1956; Jan 1, 1987; and, Sept 1, 2002 respectively. These duty-free islands are placed under different Customs Acts whereby Forest City has yet been known which Act it will be governed under. A check on Customs Department's website showed that all goods at duty-free islands normally are duty-exempt except petroleum and petroleum-manufactured products. However, all types of motorised transportation are dutiable at Tioman. For Langkawi, cement, marble, rubber and anchovies brought to the island from outside Malaysia will be dutied. According to Chief Executive Officer of Country Garden Holdings Co Ltd, Mo Bin, the first duty-free shopping mall will be ready by year-end at the Fisherman's Wharf on Island 1 of Forest City. The developer said the mall will carry a wide range of leading international brands and products.

By saying that, is the duty-free status caters only to the goods and products that are sold at the shopping mall of Forest City?

Potential buyers are talking about buying condominiums and high-rise coastal residences as offered by the island. As for now, to enjoy the tax exemption at the three islands, local and foreign visitors can stay for a certain hours.

Does Forest City offer such 'time limit' as to enjoy the tax-exemption as well?

For Labuan, they have to be in the island not less than 24 hours, while Langkawi and Tioman not less than 48 hours. A 30 per cent duty will be imposed if you buy goods beyond the stipulated limits.But for beer or liquor, cigarettes or tobacco, tyres and tubes, the tax will follow a certain rate.

In announcing it, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the status will spur business activities and tourism on the four islands. Sprawled over 1,386.05 hectares, Forest City is a joint development between Hong Kong-listed Country Garden Holdings and Johor's Esplanade Danga 88 Sdn Bhd.

With an estimated investment of S$58.3 billion (S$1 = RM3.00), the mega development would be done in stages over the next 20 years. Part of the first phase of Forest City includes condominiums and high-rise coastal residences which would open for global sale soon in Malaysia, Singapore and China. The granting of the status is one of four incentive packages announced by Najib, who is also Finance Minister.

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

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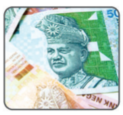
2. Forex
3. Money Market
4. FBM KLCI Futures
5. Crude Palm Oil (CPO) Futures
6. Rubber Futures
7. KLIBOR Futures
8. Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM)
9. Gold Futures

BURSA To Trade Higher Next Week On Higher Ringgit, Oil Prices

By Azlee Nor Mahmud

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia is expected to continue its upward momentum into next week, driven by an improved ringgit and rising oil and crude palm oil prices. Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President and Retail Research Head Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said positive statement from the US Federal Reserve and more global central bank stimulus (by Europe, China and Japan) will also bolster the index next week. He said the Federal Reserve on Wednesday revised its "dot plot" projections to indicate it would raise interest rates twice this year, rather than four. "This is supported by the positive performance of currencies such as the ringgit, euro, Swiss franc and yen, which were back above the levels seen in seven months, as the European Central Bank signalled further easing and the Bank of Japan announced it was adopting negative interest rates," he told Bernama. On the domestic front, Nazri said Bursa should continue to get a respite as Bank Negara Malaysia also recently cut the country's statutory reserve ratio by 0.5 per cent along the lines of "easing monetary policy", "adding to stimulus" and "boosting lending and investment". Nazri said the FBMKLCI should continue to rise, driven by plantation and banking counters -- albeit at a slower pace after being overbought after the strong momentum in commodity prices. "Overall, we are of the view that the local bourse will trend higher on potential Central Banks' stimulus and more dovish Federal Reserve statement. "We sense a good buy investment strategy now especially on emerging trading interest in plantation and oil and gas stocks," said Nazri. Weekly turnover eased to 8.26 billion units valued at RM10.3 billion, from 9.61 billion units worth RM9.99 billion last week. Main market volume decreased to 5.81 billion shares valued at RM9.87 billion, from 6.89 billion shares valued at RM9.52 billion previously.



FOREX: Ringgit Likely To Continue Uptrend

By Mohd Khairi Idham Amran

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is expected to continue its uptrend momentum next week bolstered by the further strengthening of oil prices and weakness of the US dollar, an investment bank said. Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said the greenback's weakness came after a dovish US Federal Reserve statement which projected it would raise interest rates twice this year, rather than the four increases it had estimated in December last year. "It is more in line with market expectations," he told Bernama. He said the statement lifted currencies such as the ringgit, euro, Swiss franc and yen which were back above the levels seen for seven months. For the week just ended, the ringgit was traded lower earlier in the week before the US Federal Reserve's statement on Wednesday gave a boost to the local unit later in the week. It ended at 4.0500/0560 on Friday against the greenback from 4.0860/0910 in the previous week. The local unit eased against the Singapore dollar to 2.9801/9865 from the previous Friday's 2.9656/9707 and weakened versus the yen to 3.6395/4658 from 3.5927/5981. It also weakened against the British pound to 5.8381/8475 from 5.8275/8366 previously, and depreciated against the euro to 4.5611/5695 from 4.5400/5471.

Money Market Expected To Remain Stable

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian money market is expected to remain stable next week with Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) continuing to intervene to manage surplus liquidity. The central bank is expected to conduct daily tenders to reduce excess liquidity in the financial market, said a dealer. For the week just ended, BNM intervened on a daily basis to absorb excess funds by conducting range maturity auction, money market tenders, conventional money market tenders, Qard, repo and reverse repo tenders. On Friday, the central bank's action helped reduce the market's total liquidity surplus to RM35.36 billion from RM42.80 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system, it shrank to RM5.44 billion from RM10.50 billion. The overnight rate stood at 3.21 per cent while the one-, two- and three-week rates were at 3.30 per cent, 3.35 per cent and 3.39 per cent, respectively. Meanwhile, the benchmark three-month interbank rate was pegged at 3.71 per cent.

FBM KLCI Futures To Trade Higher

By Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are likely to trade higher next week, tracking the positive cash market, dealers said. Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President and Retail Research Head, Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan, said the strengthening crude oil price was expected to be one of the key factors to support the local benchmark index. "Stimulus measures from China, Japan and Europe, which are expected to be announced soon, as well as solid recent US economic data, would also drive the local market," he told Bernama. On a week-to-week basis, June 2016 gained 22.50 points to 1,674 and September 2016 rose 18 points to 1,662. Weekly turnover slipped to 50,263 lots from 99,477 lots last week, while open interest narrowed to 40,163 contracts from 65,922 contracts. The benchmark FBM KLCI settled at 1,692.49, up 29.05 points from 1,663.44 recorded last week.

CPO Futures Likely To Trend Higher

By Harizah Hanim Mohamed

KUALA LUMPUR -- Crude palm oil (CPO) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to continue their excellent performance next week to trade at between RM2,450 and RM2,520 a tonne. Interband Group of Companies Senior Palm Oil Trader Jim Teh said the price has gone up quite well with speculators pushing it up. "In addition, the dry season in March has affected production and pushed up the price further, although in the past two days it has started to rain, which may be good for production," he told Bernama. He stressed that the producers and traders are very happy with this price level. Teh said the resumption of Malaysia's palm oil export tax would help local refiners' efforts to export the commodity to consuming countries. Malaysia has maintained a zero tax rate since May 2015. Asked on France's move to impose an additional tax on palm oil used in food, he said the plan would place a minimal impact on Malaysia as the quantity exported to France is not significant.

"However, the concern is that this move will influence other European countries to take a similar step. We hope France will reconsider their decision and hopefully the Malaysian industrial regulators will communicate with French regulators on the matter," he added. On a weekly basis, April 2016 added RM84 to RM2,633, May 2016 advanced RM73 to RM2,688, June 2016 was RM71 higher at RM2,679 and July improved RM60 to RM2,662 a tonne. Turnover increased to 273,118 lots from 263,725 lots last week, while open interest rose to 235,115 contracts from 160,687 contracts. On the physical market, March South was RM65 higher at RM2,615 a tonne from last week's RM2,550 a tonne.

Rubber Mart Likely To Trade Cautiously

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is expected to trade cautiously next week with traders on the lookout for new signals. A dealer said commodity price movements, specifically of crude oil, would continue to be the centre of attention among the traders. "Not only that, the market is closely monitoring the ringgit as rubber prices will be propped up by the weaker ringgit," the dealer said. For the week just ended, the local market was traded mixed on the first three days, and for the other two days it soared to near a level last seen in July last year, when the local SMR 20 was traded near the 552 sen a kg level. On a weekly basis, the Malaysian Rubber Board's official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 jumped 28.5 sen to 541 sen a kg, while latex-in-bulk soared 43 sen to 431.5 sen a kg. The 5 pm unofficial closing price for SMR 20 rose 32.5 sen to 532.50 sen a kg, while latex-in-bulk gained 33 sen to 433 sen a kg.

KLIBOR Futures Expected To Remain Quiet

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to remain quiet next week on lack of trading interest. For the week just ended, the market was untraded for the whole week. April 2016, May 2016, June 2016 and September 2016 were pegged at 96.31, 96.32, 96.35 and 96.35, respectively. March 2016 ended on Tuesday at 96.29. Open interest was nil. The underlying three-month KLIBOR remained at 3.71 per cent.

KLTM To Be Higher Next Week On Low Production Concerns

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) will likely trend higher next week on stronger demand due to concerns over declining production by major exporters China and Indonesia. A dealer said China and Indonesia's persistent plan to slash tin production is expected to drive the metal's price trend upwards next week. "Major tin exporters have announced production cuts in response to adverse market conditions as they have been negatively impacted by continuously declining prices through 2015," he added. For the week just ended, the metal was traded at between US$16,850 and US$17,100 per tonne with European, Japanese, South Korean, Chinese, Pakistani, and Latin American traders participating actively in the market. Turnover rose to 369 tonnes from 281 tonnes registered last week. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the price differential between the KLTM and the London Metal Exchange (LME) widened to a premium of US$95 per tonne from US$70 per tonne previously.

Gold Futures Likely To Trade Higher

By Farhana Poniman

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gold futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives will likely trade higher next week on stronger demand as expectations of further US interest rate rises this year have diminished. Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd dealer Ler Wee Liang said the US Federal Reserve expects two quarter-point increases in interest rates by year-end, down from four forecast in December last year. "For next week, we expect the Bursa gold futures to go upwards as the expectation of lower basis point increases in the US interest rates can support the gold price," he told Bernama. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, March 2016 fell 22 ticks to RM166.05 a gramme, April 2016 decreased 33 ticks to RM166.30, May 2016 rose 33 ticks to RM166.50 and June 2016 shed 33 ticks to RM166.75 a gramme. Weekly turnover decreased to 200 lots worth RM2.95 million, from 294 lots worth RM4.89 million last Friday. Open interest on Friday fell to 662 contracts from 804 contracts previously.