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This Week's Highlight : Govt Offers Various Financial Aid For Higher Education

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak delivering his speech at an Evening With Malaysian Students in Beijing, China. fotoBernama by Noraini Ahmad (File photo on Nov 4, 2016).

KUALA LUMPUR -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Friday, the government offered a range of financial assistance to the people, especially the young, to pursue higher education. Generally the government bore 90 per cent of the cost of education at institutions of higher learning and the students only had to pay 10 per cent, said the prime minister in a recording on his blog.

This Week's Top Stories

Monday

PNB Appoints Zarinah, Awang Adek As Directors

KUALA LUMPUR -- Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB) has appointed Tan Sri Zarinah Anwar, Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin, Datuk Dr Mohd Yaakub Johari and Soedirman Aini as new members of the board of directors. In a statement Monday, PNB said the appointments were to replace board members who retired on Dec 31, 2016.

Tuesday

MEF Seeks Najib's Intervention Over Levy Issue

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has urged Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to intervene in the foreign worker levy issue, which requires employers to pay a new quantum effective Jan 1. Its Executive Director, Datuk Shamsuddin Bardan said Tuesday, nearly all industries were unhappy over the decision forcing employers to pay the annual levy for the foreign workers as the government did not discussed the move with them before enforcing it.

Tuesday

TRX Shaping Up Well With Better Investor Confidence

By M.Saraswathi

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Tun Razak Exchange (TRX), an iconic 28 hectare mixed development in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, is shaping up well amid better investor confidence with the first phase on track for completion as scheduled. No doubt the ambitious project experienced some set back, amid issues related to 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), it had undergone complete restructuring which resulted in TRX coming under the full control of the Ministry of Finance.

Thursday

RAM Reaffirms Brunei's G A 1(PI) Rating

KUALA LUMPUR -- RAM Rating Services Bhd has reaffirmed Brunei's respective global- and ASEAN-scale ratings of g A 1(pi)/stable and sea AAA (pi)/stable. The ratings reflect the country's solid net asset position, around three times the size of its gross domestic product (GDP), backed by sizeable sovereign reserves, which provide a strong buffer against near-term fiscal and external deterioration stemming from sharply lower energy prices in recent years, said RAM in a statement Thursday.

Friday

Malaysia's Nov Exports Reach RM72.83 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR Malaysia's total exports in October rose 7.8 per cent to RM72.83 billion from RM67.56 billion recorded in the same period last year, registering the highest monthly exports in the first 11 months of the year. "The achievement was supported by robust demand from major markets, mainly from ASEAN, China, European Union, the United States, Hong Kong and India," the International Trade and Industry Ministry said in a preliminary release of Malaysia's external trade statistics Friday.

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SMEbrief

Price Control, Anti-Profiteering Regulations 2016 To Curb Regulations

PUTRAJAYA -- The Price Control and Anti-Profiteering Regulations 2016 (Mechanism To Determine Unreasonably High Profits for Goods) which came into force on Jan 1, is an effort to curb profiteering.

It replaces the Price Control and Anti-Profiteering (Mechanism to Determine Unreasonably High Profit) (Net Profit Margin) Regulations 2014 which expired on Dec 31, 2016.

The Ministry of Domestic Trade, Co-operatives and Consumerism (KPDNKK) said in a statement Tuesday that the regulation applies to all goods at all levels of business within the scope of the regulation.

The statement said the enforcement and application of the regulation is instituted by two categories of goods, namely food and beverage as well as household items, that is non-durable goods, including personal care products, which have a direct impact on household spending and cost of living.

Conducive environment

The ministry said the new regulation was not only to safeguard the interests of consumers who are burdened with increasing prices of goods but also to ensure domestic business continues operating in an environment that is conducive to make a reasonable profit.

The ministry said a transitional period of three months beginning Jan 1 (2017) will be given to traders to prepare for their adherence to the regulation.

The ministry said it uses the method of calculating the 'markup' percentage or the percentage margin as the basic principle for determining the profiteering margin on goods by dealers in the course of the business year.

"This rule is not intended to set a profit rate on goods traded or sold.

However, the ministry has a fundamental mechanism in the regulation to ensure that the profits determined or acquired by the dealer for a particular product is reasonable," the statement said.

The ministry said the mechanism takes into account the 'markup' margin of goods by the trader for the preceding three years as well as the rising trend in the 'markup' or the margin of profit for the goods.

PropUP — Property *update*

Property Sector To Remain Lacklustre This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- The property industry is expected to remain lacklustre this year after the sluggish sales in 2016, driven by prolonged weak sentiment, low affordability and accelerating incoming supply. In a research note Tuesday, AllianceDBS Research Sdn Bhd said, buyers were likely to adopt a wait-and-see attitude in anticipation of lower selling prices in the near to medium term.

RM1.2 Billion Assets Salvaged Last Year - Fire Dept

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Fire and Rescue Department salvaged assets worth RM1.2 billion in 1,734 cases of fire at buildings and properties last year. Its director Khiruddin Drahman said Wednesday, during the same period losses amounting to RM83.9 million was recorded in fires involving buildings and properties.

IProperty Group Appoints Haresh GM Malaysia, S'pore

KUALA LUMPUR -- iProperty Group has appointed Haresh Khoobchandani as General Manager (GM), Malaysia and Singapore. In a statement Thursday, iProperty said, Haresh has over 20 years of sales and marketing expertise in this position, including extensive experience driving expansion in the Asia-Pacific.

LBS Bina To Launch Projects Worth RM2.35 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- LBS Bina Group Bhd is set to launch 12 new projects this year with a cumulative gross development value (GDV) of RM2.35 billion, constituting approximately 5,543 units, nationwide. Group Managing Director Tan Sri Lim Hock San said Thursday, on the back of the new launches, LBS Bina targeted to achieve RM1.5 billion in sales this year versus RM1.2 billion recorded in 2016.

Paramount, Chinese Cos JV For RM650 Mln Devt

PUTRAJAYA -- Malaysian-based Paramount Blossom Sdn Bhd has partnered Fujian Hexinyuantong Investment Co Ltd and China Railway Liuyuan Group Co Ltd to carry out a RM650 million residential development in Rasah, Negeri Sembilan. Paramount Blossom Special Project Director Datuk Jaafar Abu Hassan said Thursday, the project, claimed to be the biggest residential development in Seremban 2, would be sprawled over 31.16 hectares.

Housing Ministry To Review Strata Management Act Provisions

SHAH ALAM -- Provisions under the Strata Management Act 2013 will be reviewed to require housing developers to settle all liabilities before handing over the apartments to Joint Management Bodies (JMB). Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister, Tan Sri Noh Omar said Thursday, this is important since there is no provision under the Act which says that developers must handover the apartments to JMB with zero liability.

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MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard

Gainers - 442	
Losers - 402	
Not Traded - 531	
Unchanged - 312	
Value - 1961214804	
Volume - 19670564	

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.4710	4.4740
EUR	4.7388	4.7438
GBP	5.5373	5.5428
100 YEN	3.3850	3.8586
SGD	3.1176	3.1213

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

Bursa Malaysia Closes At Intra-Day High For Third Consecutive Day

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia wrapped up the week at an intra-day high Friday of 1,675.49, up 0.94 per cent, for the third consecutive day. The barometer index surged 39.96 points over the three day of trading. A dealer attributed the firmer close to a pre-Chinese New Year rally. Market breadth turned positive nearer to closing with advancers outnumbering decliners 442 to 402, with 312 counters unchanged, 531 untraded and 24 others suspended. Volume was slightly down at 1.97 billion shares worth RM1.96 billion from 2.51 billion shares worth RM1.84 billion. The positive sentiment on regional markets which saw Asian shares reach a four-week high also moved the local bourse to trade higher Friday. Meanwhile, Main Market turnover declined to 1.42 billion units worth RM1.88 billion from Thursday's 1.83 billion units worth RM1.76 billion.

FOREX: Ringgit Ends Higher Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit extended Thursday's gains to end higher against the US dollar Friday on continued buying interests fuelled by positive market sentiment, dealers said. At 6pm, the local unit was traded at 4.4710/4740 against the US dollar from 4.4830/4870 on Thursday. A dealer said the improved local note's performance was bolstered by better-than-expected November 2016 export data released Friday. "Malaysia's overseas sales rose 7.8 per cent to RM72.83 billion from RM67.56 billion in the same period last year, the highest monthly exports in the first 11 months of the year. "The jump has helped keep the ringgit steady," he said. He said the positive remarks from Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Othman Aziz, who agreed with bankers' forecast the ringgit would rebound to a fair value of 4.1 against the US dollar in the third quarter of the year, also supported the sentiment. Meanwhile, the ringgit was traded mostly lower against a basket of major currencies. The local note fell against the yen to 3.8550/8586 from 3.8441/8479 Thursday, eased against the British pound to 5.5373/5428 from 5.5150/5217 Thursday and declined against the euro to 4.7388/7438 from 4.7089/7140 Thursday. It, however, appreciated against the Singapore dollar to 3.1176/1213 from 3.1251/1297 on Thursday.

Money-Market: BNM's Intervention Helps Short-Term Rates Close Stable

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates closed stable Friday on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention to absorb excess liquidity from the financial system. The liquidity surplus in the conventional system fell to RM26.14 billion from RM30.76 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system, it declined to RM7.74 billion from RM9.21 billion previously. The central bank conducted a RM26.0 billion conventional and RM7.6 billion Qard money market tenders, both for three-day money. Earlier, BNM conducted three conventional money market tenders, two Qard and a repo. The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 2.96 per cent, while the one-week, two and three-week rates stood at 3.02 per cent, 3.07 per cent and 3.11 per cent respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Close Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed untraded Friday. January 2017, February 2017 and March 2017 remained pegged at 96.55, while June 2017 was unchanged at 96.50. Both volume and open interest remained at nil. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.42 per cent.

KLCI Futures End Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract (FKLI) on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed higher Friday in tandem with the firmer cash market. Spot month January 2017 added 13.5 points to 1,674.0, February 2017 improved 11.0 points to 1,671.5, March 2017 went up 12.0 points to 1,669 and June 2017 rose 11.5 points to 1,659. Turnover advanced to 8,492 lots from Thursday 7,505 lots and open interest jumped to 35,983 contracts from 35,066 contracts Thursday. The underlying benchmark FBM KLCI ended 15.67 points better at 1,675.49.

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Pacific Mutual Announces RM18.6 Mln Income Distributions For Six Funds

KUALA LUMPUR – Pacific Mutual Fund Bhd, an investment management company under the OCBC Group, has announced income distributions for six of its funds, amounting to RM18.6 million. In a statement here Tuesday, it said the funds were Pacific AsiaPac Income Fund, Pacific Dividend Fund, Pacific Cash Fund, Pacific Islamic Cash Fund, Pacific Emerging Market Bond Fund and Pacific Cash Deposit Fund. Public Mutual said it aimed to double its total assets under management by year-end to RM3 billion.

Banking Sector To Gradually Improve This Year, Says Varsity Don

By Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR -- The banking sector is poised to gradually improve this year, thanks to its stable fundamentals. Sunway University's Business School Economics Professor Dr Yeah Kim Leng said the stable fundamentals were reflected in the sector's strong capital adequacy, satisfactory asset quality, ample liquidity and reasonable profitability. "Following cost-cutting and business realignments in some banks in 2015 and 2016, we expect the industry to be better positioned to provide more loans this year, particularly to the business and small and medium enterprise segments," he told Bernama.

AMMB Launches 1st Tranche Of Subordinated Notes

KUALA LUMPUR -- AMMB Holdings Bhd on Dec 30, 2016 issued the first tranche under the Subordinated Notes Programme of RM10.0 million in nominal value. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday, AMMB said the issuance was pursuant to the subordinated notes programme of up to ERM10.0 billion. It said the first tranche has a tenure of 10 years from the date of issuance, with an interest rate of 5.50 per cent per annum, meant for the Group's working capital.

Affin, Daiwa Deal Falls Through

KUALA LUMPUR -- Japan's Daiwa Securities Group Inc or one of its wholly-owned units' plan to acquire a minority stake in Affin Hwang Investment Bank Bhd (AHIB) falls through as both parties were unable to finalise the deal within the stipulated timeframe. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Wednesday, Affin Holdings Bhd announced that both Affin and Daiwa Securities were unable to finalise the transaction documents in accordance with the terms and conditions of Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) approval letter within the stipulated timeframe which expired on Dec 31, 2016.

Ringgit To Rebound To A Fair Value Of RM4.1 Vs US Dollar In Q3

KUALA LUMPUR -- Deputy Finance Minister I Datuk Othman Aziz Thursday agreed with bankers' forecast that the ringgit will rebound to a fair value of 4.1 against the US dollar in the third quarter of the year. Bankers had forecast the rebound based on improving commodity prices such as rubber and palm oil, as well as, steady economic fundamentals, he said.

AKPK Resolves 11,935 Cases Totalling RM488 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency (AKPK) has successfully assisted 11,935 individuals to fully settle their debts totalling RM488 million through its debt management programme (DMP) as at Nov 30, 2016. Deputy Finance Minister 1 Datuk Othman Aziz told reporters here Thursday, a total of 505,069 individuals had attended AKPK's counselling services from 2006 to November 2016, and out of this number, 167,060 individuals had enrolled for the DMP.

Takaful Ikhlas Launches Ikhlas Basic Term Takaful

KUALA LUMPUR -- Takaful Ikhlas Bhd has launched the IKHLAS Basic Term Takaful which provides compensation of up to RM300,000 in the event of death and, total and permanent disability (TPD). In a statement here Thursday, Takaful Ikhlas said the product offered five different types of plans with the contribution amount from as low as RM64 a month, subject to terms and conditions.

ABM, AIBIM And ADFIM To Assist Customers Affected By Floods

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Association of Banks in Malaysia (ABM), Association of Islamic Banking Institutions Malaysia (AIBIM) and Association of Development Finance Institutions of Malaysia (ADFIM) have assured the public that their member financial institutions (FIs) would pro-actively assist customers in flood affected states. In a joint statement here Thursday, they said FIs in the affected states know that it was crucial for households and businesses to have access to their finances and would ensure that basic banking services are available.

Syukry Mohd Salleh Apppointed Chairman Of Bank Rakyat

PUTRAJAYA -- Bank Rakyat has appointed former principal private secretary to the Prime Minister Tan Sri Syukry Mohd Salleh as its Chairman, effective Jan 3. Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin said Mohd Syukry's vast experience in security management, development and management at the state and federal levels would put him in good stead in his new role. "Hopefully, his experience can help strengthen Bank Rakyat's position as the largest Islamic cooperative bank in the country," Hamzah said in a statement here Thursday.

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Qualitas To Open 3 Ambulatory Care Centres In 2017

By Azizul Ahmad

PETALING JAYA -- Qualitas Medical Group Sdn Bhd (Qualitas) plans to expand vertically by opening at least three ambulatory care centres in the Klang Valley this year. Founder, Chairman and Managing Director Datuk Dr Noorul Ameen Mohamed Ishack told Bernama, the timely expansion was part of the company's strategic plan following a conducive environment, backed up by technology and demand.

Favelle Favco Units Bags 4 Contracts Worth RM64 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Three of Favelle Favco Bhd's wholly-owned subsidiaries have bagged contracts to supply tower crane from four companies, worth a total of RM64 million. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday, Favelle Favco said its unit, Kroll Cranes A/S secured a contract from ALE UK Holdings, which is expected to be delivered by third quarter of 2017. Meanwhile, Favelle Favco Cranes Pty Ltd secured contracts from Marr Contracting Pty Ltd and Stride High Pty Ltd, both are expected to be delivered by second quarter of 2017.

Gunung Capital's Unit Gets RM 43.90 Mln Service Contract

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gunung Capital Bhd's wholly-owned subsidiary, GPB Corporation Sdn Bhd, had been awarded a service-contract by the Ministry of Defence with a value of up to RM43.904 million. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday, Gunung Capital said the tenure of the service-contract was from Jan 1, 2016 to Nov 30, 2019. The job scope entailed transporting children of armed forces personnel, nationwide, to nominated schools.

Ambang Perintis Aims To Produce 6 Mln Coconuts In 2017

ROMPIN -- Ambang Perintis Sdn Bhd, the country's largest coconut plantation owner, aims to produce six million coconuts this year from Ladang Kelapa Ambang in Kampung Kerpal here. Its Co-Director, Datuk Abdul Wahid Abd Manap told reporters here Tuesday, the projection was based on the harvest from all its farms totalling 404 hectares this year. "For the last two years, we had only 202 hectares of coconut plantation producing three million coconuts annually," he said.

KESM Confident Of Better Showing In FY17, Revenue May Surpass RM300 Mln

PETALING JAYA -- Semiconductor burn-in and test specialist, KESM Industries Bhd, is confident of delivering record revenue for the financial year ending July 31, 2017 (FY17). Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Samuel Lim Syn Soo told reporters here Wednesday, the company was revving to cross the RM300 million sales mark in FY17, by focusing on growing opportunities in the automotive segment of the semiconductor industry.

Panasonic Says Sales To Increase By 5 Pct, To Strengthen Product Line-Up

PETALING JAYA -- Panasonic Management Malaysia Sdn Bhd expects sales to increase by five per cent in the financial year ending March 31, 2017 and March 31, 2018, respectively. Managing Director Cheng Chee Chung said the company planned to strengthen its product line-up and increase activities in the shop-front as demand was expected to be nearly flat. "We are shifting our strategy to the shop-front by paying more attention to promoting product value. "We also plan to collaborate with other companies to do staff sales," he told reporters here Wednesday.

Gabungan AQRS Subsidiary Bags RM360.97 Mln Sub-Contract

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gabungan Strategik Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned unit of Gabungan AQRS Bhd, secured a RM360.97 million sub-contract from Kreatif Sinar Gabungan Sdn Bhd to develop the Sultan Ahmad Shah Administrative Centre. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Wednesday, the company said the sub-contract was to construct and complete all building, mechanical and engineering, interior design, including external

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and infrastructure works, which commenced on Dec 27, 2016, for the administrative centre. It added that the works was anticipated to be completed within 39 months from the commencement date.

SCIB Secures RM28 Mln Purchase Orders

KUALA LUMPUR -- Sarawak Consolidated Industries Bhd (SCIB) has received RM13 million purchase orders for pipes and RM15 million for square piles from several companies involved in the Pan Borneo Highway project. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Wednesday, the company said the delivery period for the purchase orders is 24 months ending Dec 31, 2018. Phase one of the highway project, which involved 11 work packages, covers some 746km from Telok Melano in South Sarawak up to Miri in the North.

UMW Offshore Gets Petronas Carigali Contract

KUALA LUMPUR -- UMW Offshore Drilling Sdn Bhd has been awarded a 18-month contract from Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd for the provision of jack-up drilling rig services. UMW Offshore is a wholly-owned unit of UMW Malaysian Ventures Sdn Bhd, which in turn is a wholly-owned subsidiary of UMW Oil and Gas Corp Bhd (UMW-OG). In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Wednesday, UMW-OG said the group would assign its UMW NAGA 7, which has a drilling depth capability of 30,000 feet (ft) and has a rated operating water depth of 375 ft.

Plantation Industry Ministry To Ensure Enhanced Revenue In 2017 From Commodity Sector

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Ministry Of Plantation Industries and Commodities and, related agencies, in pursuit of maintaining the steady income of about one million smallholders in the country, will continue to ensure higher revenue is generated from the country's commodity sector this year. Its minister, Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong, said in his New Year's message here Thursday, the ministry was optimistic strategic steps, drawn up for 2017, would maintain the growth momentum of Malaysia's oil palm, natural rubber, timber, cocoa, pepper and kenaf industries.

Amway Malaysia Banks On New Products To Continue Growth

KUALA LUMPUR -- Amway (Malaysia) Holdings Bhd is expected to sustain its healthy growth in the direct-selling market, supported by an upcoming launch of 10 products this year. Its Malaysia/Brunei General Manager, Michael Duong told a media briefing here Thursday, despite softer consumer sentiment and a weaker ringgit, the company is optimistic that the products would help boost its sales as there was demand for the product range.

QSR Brands To Open 30 More KFC Outlets This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- QSR Brands (M) Holdings Sdn Bhd (QSR Brands) is planning to expand its KFC business by adding up to 30 new outlets nationwide this year. Chandrasagran Munusamy, General Manager for KFC Operations, QSR Stores Sdn Bhd, a unit of QSR Brands, told reporters here Thursday, the expansion would materialise with or without the relisting of KFC or QSR Brands on the local bourse this year as speculated. "Thirty outlets were opened last year without any funding issue and to-date we have a franchisee of 665 KFC outlets nationwide," he said.

M'sia Grabs World's 2nd Largest Honda Market Share

KUALA LUMPUR -- Honda Malaysia achieved the second highest market share among Honda's global operations in 2016, with 91,830 vehicles sold. Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer Katsuto Hayashi said in a statement here Thursday, achievement resulted from a sterling performance last year. He said Honda Malaysia became the first non-national marque to achieve second position in overall Malaysia's 2016 Total Industry Volume.

MyEG Bags RM553.85 Mln Project From Home Ministry

KUALA LUMPUR -- My E.G. Services Bhd (MyEG) has bagged a RM553.85 million project to provide online renewal of temporary employment passes for foreign workers for the Immigration Department of Malaysia. The company received the Letter of Acceptance from the Ministry of Home Affairs here Thursday, it said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia. "The tenure of the project is five years from May 23, 2015 till May 22, 2020. The estimated total value of the project is RM553.85 million," it said.

Visa Malaysia Optimistic Of Increase In payWave-Enabled Card Usage

KUALA LUMPUR -- Visa Malaysia expects payWave contactless card transactions to increase to two million per month by year-end compared to one million transactions in November last year. Visa Country Manager, Ng Kong Boon told reporters here Thursday, he was optimistic of the increase as more merchants were now accepting the feature.

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FGV Optimistic Of Emerging Stronger In 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Plantation firm, Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd (FGV), is optimistic of emerging leaner and stronger in 2017 backed by improved plantation sector's performance and commodity prices after a challenging and tumultuous year that saw its share slipping. "We are upbeat as the industry looks forward to better commodity market sentiments in light of lower palm oil inventory levels, improving export demand, moratorium on new plantings in Indonesia and recovery in crude palm oil (CPO) prices," group President/Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Zakaria Arshad said in a statement here Monday.

Tourist Arrivals In M'sia Expected To Rise By 4.3 Pct To 31.8 Mln

ALOR GAJAH -- The number of tourist arrivals in Malaysia is expected to increase by about 4.3 per cent to 31.8 million this year with the implementation of Visit Pahang, Perak and Terengganu Year 2017. Tourism and Culture Deputy Minister, Datuk Mas Ermieyati Samsudin told reporters here Monday, the initiative in line with the 'Cuti-Cuti 1Malaysia Dekat Je' campaign could draw more domestic and foreign tourists as these three states were interesting destinations with their own uniqueness.

MCE Holdings To Bank On Sandhar To Penetrate Indian Mart

KUALA LUMPUR -- Automotive parts manufacturer, MCE Holdings Bhd is set to penetrate India's market for automotive, electronic and mechatronic parts via its tie-up with Sandhar Technologies Ltd. MCE Holdings in a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday said its wholly-owned unit, Multi-Code Electronics Industries (M) Bhd (MCEI), had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sandhar Tuesday to facilitate the cooperation.

MACC To Enhance Use Of IBI, Focus On Public Sector, GLCs, Banks

PUTRAJAYA -- The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) will enhance the use of Intelligence Based Investigation (IBI) in an effort to curb corruption in the public sector, government linked companies (GLCs) and the banking institution. Deputy Chief Commissioner (Operation) Datuk Azam Baki said in an interview here Tuesday, IBI is proactive and proven in cases such as Ops Water in Sabah, Ops Bauxite in Pahang and the embezzling of over RM100 million of government funds by a senior official of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

RM11 Mln Subsidy For Labuan-Sabah, S'wak Sea Transport Continues

LABUAN -- The federal government continues to allocate the annual RM11 million subsidy for travellers' sea transport cost from Labuan to the mainland of Sabah and Sarawak and vice versa this year, despite the economic uncertainty. The allocation granted since 2014 is to subsidise 50 per cent of the ferry and speed boat passenger fares. Labuan Corporation in a statement to Bernama here Tuesday said the subsidy was aimed at lessening the burden of travellers (Malaysian citizens) commuting via sea transport from and to the island.

Negeri Sembilan Strengthening Services, Tourism Sectors

SEREMBAN -- Negeri Sembilan is strengthening its services and tourism sectors as the main drivers of its economy as it could no longer rely on the manufacturing sector, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan told reporters here Wednesday. He said Negeri Sembilan was striving to make the services and tourism sectors as the mainstay of its economy as quickly as it could as US President-elect Donald Trump's trade policy could hurt its economy. "Trump's policy poses a big threat to us as it will directly affect our revenue in the manufacturing sector," Mohamad said.

CPO Price Expected To Strengthen Further This Year - MPOB

JASIN -- The crude palm oil (CPO) price is expected to strengthen further this year based on the price increase of up to 45 per cent last year, as well as government initiatives to venture into various markets especially in China. Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) chairman Datuk Seri Ahmad Hamzah told reporters here Thursday, the government's

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commitment to broaden existing markets and explore new markets had also supported the commodity price last year. "Currently, the commodity price has strengthened at a favourable level. As of end-2016, the price at which the oil palm smallholders sold to the middlemen had increased to up to RM650 per tonne," he said.

Top Glove To Set Aside RM220 Mln For Capex In FY2017

SHAH ALAM -- Top Glove Corporation Bhd will set aside RM220 million for capital expenditure (Capex) for the 2017 financial year. Executive Chairman Tan Sri Lim Wee Chai said at an analyst and media briefing here Thursday, about two-thirds of the amount would be used for building new capacity while the balance would be used for automation and refurbishment of existing capacity.

Labuan Port Take Measures To Reduce Congestion, Delays

By Jailani Hasan

LABUAN -- Labuan Liberty Port Management Sdn Bhd (LLPM) and the Labuan Royal Malaysian Customs Department are taking steps to reduce congestion and delays at the Labuan Port. LLPM Chief Executive Officer Datuk Seri Mohd Alias Abd Rahman said the measures included doubling the operating hours to 18 hours seven days a week, thus increasing loading and discharging rates of the equivalent to 30 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) daily from 10 TEUs previously. He said the Labuan Port has also provided up to 21 days of free storage for transhipped goods to make it more attractive to exporters.

MyHSR To Call For Ground Control Point Survey Tender Friday

KUALA LUMPUR -- MyHSR Corp Sdn Bhd (MyHSR) will call for a tender for a Ground Control Point survey Friday, said Chief Executive Officer, Mohd Nur Ismal Mohamed Kamal. In a statement here Thursday, Mohd Nur Ismal said the tender package would be opened to experienced companies registered with the Ministry of Finance and the Land Surveyors Board of Malaysia.

Pos Malaysia Issues Stamps Featuring Malaysian Serama For CNY

KUALA LUMPUR -- Pos Malaysia Bhd (Pos Malaysia) has chosen to issue stamps featuring the Malaysian Serama, a prominent breed of rooster known for its protruding chest, in conjunction with this year's Chinese New Year. The rooster is the zodiac sign for 2017 and the new stamps will be available at post offices nationwide on Jan 10. Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Mohd Shukrie Mohd Salleh in a statement here Friday urged the public, especially stamp enthusiasts, to grab the Malaysian Serama stamps.

BNM's Int'l Reserves At US$94.6 Bln As At Dec 30, 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) international reserves amounted to US$94.6 billion (equivalent to RM424.2 billion) as at Dec 30, 2016 compared with US$95.3 billion (RM409.1 billion) as at end-2015. In a statement here Friday, BNM said the reserves level as at Dec 30, 2016 had taken into account the adjustment for foreign exchange revaluation changes.

Good Prospects For RCEP To Wrap Up Negotiations In 2017 - HSBC Bank

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), involving 16 countries, including Malaysia, has good prospects to wrap up negotiations in 2017, says HSBC Bank plc. The bank's Senior Trade Economist, Dr Douglas Lippoldt said in a conference call here Thursday, the leading policymakers in RCEP member countries had stressed the importance of an early completion of the talks following additional rounds planned this year.

Shahrir Named New Felda Chairman

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad has been named the new Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) Chairman here Friday, in line with the government's aspiration to strengthen the agency's leadership. He replaces Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad whose term has ended, but remains Chairman of Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd.

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Syn Tai Hung And Lesso Home In JV To Set Up Lesso Home Syn Tai Hung

KUALA LUMPUR -- Syn Tai Hung Trading Sdn Bhd has entered into a joint venture (JV) and shareholder's agreement with Lesso Home Service Holdings Ltd to set up a company named Lesso Home Syn Tai Hung Sdn Bhd. In a statement here Tuesday, WSC said the newly formed company would operate an integrated sale and service centre for the procurement of quality building materials, architectural products and home furnishing goods primarily from China and facilitated by the Lesso Home e-commerce platform.

Muslim Scientists Set Up Online Hub To Spur S&T Cooperation

KUALA LUMPUR -- Delegates at the Science and Technology Exchange Programme among Muslim Countries (STEP) have agreed to create an online hub to be an enabling platform for science and technology collaboration and provide access to best practices. They also decided to create an endowment for the purpose of funding science and technology activities in Muslim countries. These were among the points highlighted in a joint statement issued at the end of STEP, jointly organised by Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation (MSTF) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), it said in a statement here Monday.

MSC Group Chief Operating Officer Retires

KUALA LUMPUR -- Ir Mohamed Yakub Ismail has retired as Group Chief Operating Officer of Malaysia Smelting Corp Bhd (MSC), effective Dec 31, 2016. MSC said Mohd Yakub joined the group in 2002 as Manager, Mining Operation, at its then newly-acquired subsidiary, PT Koba Tin and served until 2005. "In 2006, he assumed the role of General Manager at Rahman Hydraulic Tin Sdn Bhd (RHT), another subsidiary of the group," MSC said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday.

Malaysia To Host First World Conference On Exercise Medicine

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia will host the first ever World Conference on Exercise Medicine in Langkawi, Kedah in October, this year. Head of the Scientific Committee of the conference, Dr Lee Chee Peng told Bernama here Tuesday, the conference would gather exercise scientists, physicians, therapists and coaches to deliberate on exercise medicine, which was increasingly gaining acceptance among Malaysians.

Commuter Link Card Sold At RM2 From Thursday - KTMB

KUALA LUMPUR -- Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB) via the KTM Komuter service will sell the 'Commuter Link' card for adults at RM2 compared with the original price of RM10 from Thursday until Feb 5. A KTMB statement Wednesday said the move aimed to encourage the public, especially KTM Commuter users to use the card as the main choice to pay for their fare. "Users of the 'Komuter Link' card can save costs as they would enjoy a discount of up to 20 per cent on the fare for every journey transaction," said KTM Commuter Service general manager Azshidah Shah Shahari.

Brightstar Corp, Monster To Bring High Performance Audio Products To Consumers

KUALA LUMPUR -- Brightstar Corp, the world's leading mobile services company, has partnered with headphones and speakers manufacturer, Monster, to bring the highest performance audio products to consumers in 55 countries across six continents. In a statement here Thursday, Brightstar said exciting new products included Monster's latest super speaker, the SuperStar Monster Blaster, along with an entire new line of Superstar Bluetooth speakers and new versions of Monster's high-end elements over-ear and on-ear headphones.

Samsung Unveils New Galaxy A Series

KUALA LUMPUR -- Samsung Malaysia Electronics (SME) Sdn Bhd Thursday launched two new devices in its Galaxy A Series (2017) range -- Galaxy A5 and Galaxy A7. Vice President, IT and Mobile Business Unit, Lee Jui Siang said at the launch here Thursday, Galaxy A5 and Galaxy A7 were the latest models in the Malaysian market and would complement the needs of connected millenials who crave spontaneity and seek life's pleasures in the most fulfilling way.

AIR, AMTEC Sign MoU For Waste Water Treatment

PUTRAJAYA -- Aliran Ihsan Resources Bhd (AIR Bhd), a subsidiary of MMC Corp Bhd, Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with Advance Membrane Technology Research Centre (AMTEC) to explore the viability of developing a membrane technology system for the wastewater treatment industry. Chief Secretary to the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water Datuk Seri Dr Zaini Ujang, who witnessed the signing ceremony here Thursday, said the MoU would allow both parties not only to evaluate and explore business ties but also find advanced membrane technology solutions for water and wastewater treatment.

Mexter Teams Up With CSSB, UMCH To Commercialise Mexter Home Care

KUALA LUMPUR -- Mexter Technology Bhd's wholly-owned unit, Mexter (M) Sdn Bhd (Mexter) has signed a five-year agreement with CHIEF Solutions Sdn Bhd (CSSB) and UMCH Technology Sdn Bhd (UMCH) to commercialise Mexter Home Care, a connected fitness and health tracking solution. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Thursday, Mexter Technology said the solution was designed and developed by CSSB and UMCH. UMCH is a successful spin-off company of the UM Commercialization and Innovation Centre, University of Malaya.

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Roller Coaster Ride For Bursa Malaysia In 2016

By Siti Radziah Hamzah

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- 2016 has been a roller coaster ride for the equity market in Malaysia and also its global peers.

Political turmoil, subzero interest rates, depreciating crude oil prices and the upset victory of Donald Trump in the most contentious US election in recent history, sent shockwaves to global markets.

Zooming into the domestic market, Bursa Malaysia had experienced a fair share of volatility this year with the benchmark index FBM KLCI falling to its lowest of 1,600 points on Jan 21, as crude oil prices took a plunge for the first time since 2003.

Crude oil prices crashed below US$30 per barrel on a global supply glut and slowing China economy, and this resulted in Petronas-linked companies and refineries taking a hit from the volatility.

On Bursa Malaysia, the market barometer continued its climb in March and closed the first quarter of 2016 at 1,718 points, as foreign funds turned net buyers with a net inflow of RM4.4 billion in the said period.

VOLATILE YEAR...An investor looking at the price movement on Bursa Malaysia's giant screen. The key market barometer FBM KLCI ended at 1,641.73 on Dec 30, down 50.78 points, from 1,692.51 recorded at end-2015. fotoBERNAMA by Mazlan Samion

US INTEREST RATE HIKE

In April, the index rose to the year's high of 1,727.99 as oil markets stabilised, but volatility set in again beginning in May on anticipation of a US interest rate hike, as the world's largest economy improved on its economic activities.

Then came the referendum on June 23 on whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union (Brexit). The markets were spooked after British citizens unexpectedly voted to leave the grouping, causing the British Pound and FTSE100 benchmark index to plunge 11 per cent and 9.0 per cent respectively on the subsequent market day.

Bursa Malaysia also fell similarly along with other markets, with the index dropping to its intraday low of around 1,611 points before normalising at the 1,630-level.

However, a cabinet reshuffle on the home front on June 27 which saw the appointment of four new ministers, including a new Second Finance Minister and several deputy ministers, helped recover the sentiment and propelled the FBM KLCI to end the second quarter of 2016 at 1,654 points.

BUDGET 2017

The stock market got a further reprieve following the announcement of Budget 2017 in late October. The Budget will be premised on an average crude oil price of US$45 per barrel and there is potential upside to the government's income should the oil price be at higher levels.

Investors reacted positively to this, pushing the benchmark index back to above the 1,670-level despite the ringgit easing to RM4.20 to the US Dollar.

However, the shocking outcome of the US Presidential Election in November with the victory of Republican nominee Donald Trump had plunged global markets into a period of high volatility amidst uncertainties of how his presidency will affect US economic policies and the world economic climate.

As a result, the FBM KLCI declined to below 1,620 points for the first time since June 2016.

Meanwhile, Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd was thrust into the spotlight after the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) announced that it had relinquished all its shareholdings in the palm oil producer, with FGV shares slipping to RM1.53 per share at the close on Dec 23.

The FBM KLCI ended at 1,641.73 on Dec 30, down 50.78 points, from 1,692.51 recorded at end-2015. The local bourse ended the year with 12 initial public offerings compared to 13 the previous year.

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3. Money Market
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5. FBM KLCI Futures
6. Gold Futures
7. Crude Palm Oil (CPO) Futures
8. KLIBOR Futures
9. Rubber Futures

BURSA MALAYSIA

Bursa Malaysia To Trend Higher Next Week

By Harizah Hanim

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia is expected to trend higher and test the 1,680-point level next week, supported by bargain hunting activities and a slowdown in foreign selling, a dealer said.

“Based on the encouraging volume seen on the local bourse the past three days, we can see that investors are returning to the local market,” said Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan.

He told Bernama that volume traded, which hit 2.5 billion shares on Thursday, reflected that bargain hunting activities had taken place this week and would prolong into the following week.

In addition, Nazri said the recovery in commodity prices, especially oil and gas prices, coupled with the optimism of US President-elect Donald Trump’s tax cut plan after his inauguration on Jan 20, 2017 were also expected to bring more cheer to global stock markets.

“Besides, the anticipation of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which measures the performance of just 30 US companies, hitting over 20,000 points will spur positive sentiment in the market. While, regionally, Bank of Japan and Bank of China’s accommodative monetary policy stance would also lend support to the local bourse,” he said.

For the week just-ended, improving crude oil prices and buying momentum in heavyweight stocks saw share prices recovering lost ground. The local bourse was closed on Monday in lieu of the New Year falling on Sunday.

On a week-to-week basis, the key index FBM KLCI rose 33.76 points to 1,675.49 from 1,641.73 on Dec 30, 2016.Weekly turnover jumped to 8.13 billion units worth RM5.52 billion from 5.72 billion shares valued at RM5.64 billion, registered last Friday.Main market volume soared to 15.96 billion, worth RM6.22 billion from 4.37 billion shares valued at RM5.44 billion, recorded previously.

FOREX: Ringgit To Hover Around 4.45 Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is likely to hover around the 4.45 level against the US dollar next week with external factors continuing to influence the local unit’s movement, a dealer said.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said the ringgit and other currencies would receive a boost with recovering oil prices.

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"We believe the ringgit will eventually stabilise and strengthen considering Malaysia's strong fundamentals, coupled with improving commodity prices such as rubber and palm oil," he told Bernama.

He, however, said most people were looking ahead to the US Federal Reserve meeting, for the next big move in the foreign exchange market, in anticipation of a further interest rate hike.

For the week just-ended, the ringgit was traded at 4.4710/4740 against the greenback last Friday compared with 4.4845/4875 but ended mostly lower against other major currencies.

The ringgit fell against the Singapore dollar to 3.1176/1213 from 3.1043/1085 last Friday and slid to 3.8550/8586 versus the yen from 3.8375/8411 last week. Against the British pound, it declined to 5.5373/5428 from 5.5213/5259 previously but appreciated to 4.7388/7438 against the euro from 4.7482/7523 last Friday.

Short-Term Rates To Be Steady Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term rates are likely to be steady next week with Bank Negara Malaysia expected to offer tenders to absorb excess funds from the system.

For the week just-ended, the overnight rate was quoted at 2.96 per cent while the one-, two- and three-week rates were at 3.02 per cent, 3.07 and 3.11 per cent, respectively.

The central bank intervened on a daily basis to mop up surplus liquidity by conducting conventional money market, repo and range maturity auction money market tenders. It also conducted Qard Islamic range maturity auction tenders and Qard tenders.

The total liquidity surplus for the week just-ended was lower at RM26.14 billion in conventional operations against RM31.67 billion last Friday. Islamic funds decreased to RM7.74 billion from RM11 billion previously. The benchmark three-month interbank rate stood at 3.42 per cent.

KLCI Futures To Trend Higher Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract is expected to trend higher next week, tracking the movement of the underlying cash market.

A dealer said market sentiment would be supported by the positive updates in oil prices as well as oil supply cut.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, January 2017 added 38.5 points to 1,674, March 2017 improved 32.0 points to 1,669, June 2017 gained 29.0 points to 1,659.

Turnover for the week declined to 26,560 lots from 72,183 lots last week and open interest eased to 35,983 contracts from 39,529 contracts, previously. The benchmark FBM KLCI ended the week 33.76 points higher at 1,675.49 from 1,641.73 last on Dec 30, 2016.

MPOB Dec Data, Catalyst For CPO Futures

By Azizul Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR -- December production, stocks and export data, scheduled to be released by the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) on Tuesday, is expected to give a clear direction next week for the crude palm oil (CPO) futures, a dealer said.

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Interband Group Senior Palm Oil Trader Jim Teh said the data would provide a clue to market participants on the market's short-term trading direction.

"December's production is expected to be lower due to the monsoon effect in that month. This will prove positive for CPO futures," he told Bernama.

CPO output, as reported by MPOB, for November declined to 1.57 million tonnes from 1.68 million tonnes recorded in October.

Against this backdrop, CPO futures prices are expected to trade between RM2,900 per tonne and RM3,000 per tonne next week, with a downside bias on speculative play, in anticipation of a firmer ringgit against the US dollar.

For the week just-ended, CPO prices ended mostly lower, dampened by the volatility in ringgit, competing soybean oil prices, rising Brent and West Texas Intermediate crude oil futures prices.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, January 2017 slipped RM18 to RM3,200 a tonne, February 2017 lost RM26 to RM3,130, March 2017 declined RM34 to RM3,075 a tonne while April 2017 shed RM33 to RM3,027 a tonne.

Weekly turnover increased to 182,980 lots from 159,746 lots recorded last week while open interest widened to 269,269 contracts from 240,892 contracts, previously.On the physical market, January South added RM20 to RM3,270 per tonne.

Rubber Likely To Trade Mixed Next Week

By Azizul Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is expected to be mixed with prices consolidating on an upside bias next week, a trader said.Prices next week are expected to be steered by movements on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM), the ringgit and crude oils futures' performance.

TOCOM futures contract prices, which set the tone for tyre prices in Southeast Asia, may rise as the yen was showing signs of strengthening against the US dollar. However, he said, the ringgit, which demonstrated signs of little recovery, is anticipated to temporarily curb demand in the local rubber mart.

"This, coupled with the weak outlook for global growth and crude oil,which is still perceived as a fragile commodity, against lingering doubts of supply cut commitments by the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, will contribute to a mixed outlook next week," he told Bernama.

Meanwhile, another trader said buying interest was reportedly abound on expectation of limited supply.

"As the mixed sentiment extends, we expect ranging bound trading with prices rising after undergoing a minor correction.Price for tyre-grade SMR 20 is likely to test the 900 sen/kg level again," he added.

For the just-ended holiday shortened week, sentiment was mixed mainly dampened by the volatility in TOCOM, ringgit, Brent and West Texas Intermediate crude futures, the benchmarks for international oil prices.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the Malaysian Rubber Board's noon price for SMR 20 advanced 7.5 sen to 878.5 sen a kg but latex-in-bulk eased half-a-sen to 645.0 sen a kg.The 5 pm unofficial closing price for SMR 20 rose four sen to 888 sen a kg while latex-in-bulk remained unchanged at 645.0 sen a kg.

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KLIBOR Futures To Remain Quiet Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives will likely remain quiet next week.

For the week just-ended, the market was untraded with open interest remaining nil.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the settlement price for spot month January 2017, nearby February 2017 and March 2017 remained pegged at 96.55 while June 2017 stood at 96.50.The underlying three-month KLIBOR on the cash market remained at 3.42 per cent on Friday.

KLTM To Continue Uptrend Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) is likely to continue its bullish upward momentum next week spurred by rising demand for the metal.

A dealer said there was renewed foreign interest in the market especially from China ahead of the Chinese New Year Lunar festival.

“Buyers from China will start stocking up on inventories before taking a break from the market,” he told Bernama.

Tin price is expected to hover between US$21,000 per tonne and US$21,300 per tonne throughout next week.

On Friday, the tin price closed at US$21,100 a tonne, up US$150, from last Friday’s close of US$20,950 a tonne.The local market was closed on Monday in lieu of the New Year holiday which fell on Sunday.On the LME, the tin price rose US$5 to close at US$21,080 a tonne from US$21,075 a tonne last Friday.

Weekly volume on the KLTM was up at 199 tonnes versus 137 tonnes previously with China, South Korea, Japan and local buyers accounting for the bulk of the trade. The price differential between the KLTM and LME improved to a premium of US$20 a tonne on Friday against a discount of US$125 a tonne last Friday.

Gold Futures Likely To See Uncertain Trading

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gold futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is expected to see uncertain trading next week, tracking the US COMEX gold market and the US Federal Reserve decision on interest rates, said a dealer.

He said trading would likely be volatile, especially after the release of US non-farm payroll data.”Gold price will not go up so much or down and there is a possiblity of a technical correction,” the dealer added.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, spot month January 2017 rose 30 ticks to RM168.50 a gramme while February 2017, March 2017 and April 2017 improved 24 ticks each to RM169.10, RM169.90 and RM170.45 a gramme, respectively.

Weekly turnover advanced to 79 lots worth RM1.34 million from 49 lots worth RM747,000, recorded last week.Open interest on Friday was lower at 227 contracts from 288 contracts previously.

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