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This Week's Highlight : Shahrir Vows To Improve Felda's Governance, Settlers' Well-Being

VISION...Newly-appointed Felda chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad giving insights into his aspirations and directions for Felda in an exclusive interview with Bernama at Menara Felda. fotoBERNAMA Azhar Pidek

By Nurul Halawati Mohamad Azhari

KUALA LUMPUR -- Newly-appointed Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad is wasting no time in putting the 60-year-old institution back in its right track.

In a recent exclusive interview with Bernama, Shahrir spoke about his aspirations and directions for Felda, the housing woes faced by the second-generation settlers and its Private Funding Initiative which attracted controversy.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

Najib Wants Detailed Probe Into Capsized Catamaran Tragedy

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak wants a detailed investigation to be carried out to identify the cause of the capsized catamaran tragedy in Sabah. However, he said for now, focus should be given to the efforts to find the six other victims still missing. "I view seriously the capsized boat tragedy in Sabah and I want a detailed investigation to be carried out to identify the cause of the incident," he said in his latest posting on Facebook and Twitter.

TUESDAY

US Withdrawal From TPP Will Hasten RCEP Talks

By Nurul Hanis Izmir

KUALA LUMPUR -- The withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) will help hasten the process of concluding negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This will benefit all 16 participating countries, says the Malaysia-China Chamber of Commerce (MCCC).

WEDNESDAY

Brexit White Paper To Be Published Thursday

LONDON -- The British government is to publish a "White Paper" on Thursday detailing its strategy for leaving the European Union (EU), Prime Minister Theresa May told parliament on Wednesday, China's Xinhua news agency reported. The document is a summary of the government's plans, usually published for information and for a prompt discussion before a formal parliamentary bill is introduced.

THURSDAY

ACR Capital Completes ACR Malaysia, ACR ReTakaful Acquisitions

By Massita Ahmad

SINGAPORE -- ACR Capital Holdings Pte Ltd, via its wholly-owned unit, Asia Capital Reinsurance Group (Asia Capital Re), has completed the acquisitions of Asia Capital Reinsurance Malaysia Sdn Bhd (ACR Malaysia) and ACR ReTakaful Holdings Ltd. ACR Capital previously held 30 per cent of ACR Malaysia and 20 per cent of ACR ReTakaful.

FRIDAY

Tabung Haji Announces 4.2 Pct Annual Bonus

PUTRAJAYA -- Lembaga Tabung Haji (Tabung Haji) has announced depositor bonuses for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2016 (FY16), comprising an annual bonus of 4.25 per cent and an additional haj bonus of 1.5 per cent to depositors who have not performed the haj. Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom, said Friday, the bonuses involved a total payment of RM2.88 billion.

JAKIM's Landmark Certification Paves For Halal Pharmaceuticals' Expansion

KUALA LUMPUR -- The new certification for the controlled/prescriptive medicines or ethical products developed by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) will enable Halal Pharmaceuticals to enter into more local and global markets. Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir said the certification awarded to Chemical Company of Malaysia Bhd (CCM) would encourage participation from pharmaceutical companies, locally and globally. "We hope this motivates mutually recognised halal certifying bodies to do the same to ensure that prescriptive medicines, vitamins and health supplements are halal and Syariah compliant. "Halal-certified products are not only permissible to Muslims, but also manifest safe, effective, high quality and hygienic aspects," he said, adding that halal standards should be the crux of healthcare and pharmaceutical products. The government wants global players to consider the country as a new regional hub catering to the expanding global halal market, he said in a statement Thursday.

JAKIM Creates History In Global Halal Industry

KUALA LUMPUR --The Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) created yet another historic milestone in the global halal industry by being the first halal certifying body to certify controlled/prescriptive medicines (Ethical Products) based on the MS2424:2012 Halal Pharmaceuticals - General Guidelines. The halal certificate for the prescriptive pharmaceutical products was presented to Chemical Company of Malaysia Bhd (CCM) during a special award ceremony in Putrajaya Thursday. This new milestone achieved by JAKIM will enable Malaysia to command and bolster leadership in the industry, especially with the current global Halal Pharmaceuticals prospect valued at US$75 billion, and estimated to reach US$132 billion by 2021.

CCM Hopes More Business Opportunities For Bumi Pharmaceuticals

KUALA LUMPUR -- Chemical Company of Malaysia Bhd (CCM) Chairman Datuk Normala Abdul Samad says, the company hopes Halal Pharmaceuticals would create more business opportunities for Bumiputera within the pharmaceutical ecosystem. "We want to encourage Malaysian Muslim scholars, scientists and subject-matter experts in promoting the convergence of minds – Syariah and science to expand Halal Pharmaceuticals locally and internationally, contributing towards knowledge economy (K-economy)," she said.

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PropUP — Property update

Ramah Pavilion Affordable Housing Project 86 Pct Sold

GEORGE TOWN -- A total of 650 units, or 86.7 per cent, of affordable housing units at Ramah Pavilion, Teluk Kumbar here have been sold, with only 100 units of Type B and Type C left to be taken up, said Penang-based property developer M Summit Group. Its Managing Director Datuk Albert Moh said Monday, the project would also be ready ahead of its expected full completion date in May 2018. "The Ramah Pavilion project is set to be fully completed in February 2018, three months ahead of schedule, and we are targeting to host another grand celebration for the houseowners then," he said in his speech at the Topping-Off Ceremony of Ramah Pavilion here.

Initiative To Prosper FT Residents - Tengku Adnan

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Ministry of Federal Territories will undertake various initiatives to ease the burden borne by those staying in the federal territories, said its minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor. He said the focus would be on holding touch point programmes which were social and community-friendly. "Among the programmes drawn up that adopt the 'feel good factor' include the 'Kenduri 1Wilayah' programme throughout the Federal Territory Parliamentary constituency in conjunction with the 2017 Federal Territory Day celebration based on the concept of going down to the ground," he said. He disclosed this when he was consented to have an audience and read the report on developments in the Federal Territory at the Investiture Ceremony in conjunction with the 2017 Federal Territory Day celebration at Istana Negara, here Wednesday.

Qi City RM1.2 Bln Project Kicks Off Construction In Ipoh

KUALA LUMPUR -- Green Venture Capital (GVC) has commenced work on the Qi City development in Bandar Meru Raya, near Ipoh. The RM1.2 billion project, spread across 26 acres (10.52 hectares), is a mixed residential and commercial edu-city development and the first-of-its-kind fully integrated education hub in the country. The project is expected to be completed within three years. "The main sales launch is expected in June. However, we may start the soft launch in April," Wawasan QI Properties (WQIP) Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer Chandragesan Suppiah said in a statement Wednesday.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard

Gainers - 519

Losers - 317

Not Traded - 478

Unchanged - 371

Value - 2037215481

Volume - 19590517

BURSA: KL Shares Extend Gains, CI Up 0.69 Pct

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia extended gains for the second day Friday on the first week of the Year of the Rooster with the return of risk appetite. The benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) ended 11.53 points or 0.69 per cent higher at 1,685.01 points from its close of 1,673.48 on Thursday. After opening 1.32 points higher at 1,674.80 in the morning session, sentiments improved further after mid-day with more buyers wading into the market. The FBM KLCI moved within a 10.21-point range, with the opening level (1,674.80) marked the day's low and closing level (1,685.01) as its intraday high. On the broader market, gainers outpaced losers by 519 to 317 with 371 counters unchanged, 478 counters untraded and 16 others suspended. Total volume surged to 1.95 billion shares worth RM2.04 billion from 1.82 billion shares worth RM2.30 billion on Thursday. Main Market turnover expanded to 1.40 billion units worth RM1.93 billion from Thursday's 1.37 billion units worth RM2.22 billion.

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Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.4260	4.4300
EUR	4.7535	4.7600
GBP	5.5250	5.5304
100 YEN	3.9123	3.9165
SGD	3.1292	3.1330

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

FOREX: Ringgit Ends Marginally Lower Against Greenback

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit closed lower against the US dollar Friday as the greenback recovered from its weakest level against other major currencies since November last year, dealers said. At 6 pm, the local unit closed at 4.4260/4300 against the US dollar from Thursday's close of 4.4220/4260. A dealer said the dollar was steady against major rivals on Friday, as investors eyed the release of a key US employment report due later in the day for further market direction. He said however the slide in the greenback also took a breather as investors were still digesting the Federal Reserve's most recent policy statement. Meanwhile, the ringgit was traded higher against a basket of major currencies. It rose against the yen to 3.9123/9165 from 3.9314/9367 on Thursday and improved against the Singapore dollar to 3.1292/1330 from 3.1375/1424 Thursday. The local unit gained against the British pound to 5.5250/5304 from 5.6142/6197 and increased against the euro at 4.7535/7600 from 4.7815/7872 previously.

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

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates closed stable Friday as Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) intervened to absorb excess liquidity from the financial system. The liquidity surplus in the conventional system fell to RM27.74 billion from RM34.63 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system, it slid to RM8.16 billion from RM16.01 billion. The central bank conducted a RM27.70 billion conventional money market tender and a RM8.1 billion Qard tender, both for three-day money. Earlier, BNM conducted three conventional money market tenders, as well as, four Qard tenders. The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 2.95 per cent, while the one-, two and three-week rates stood at 3.02 per cent, 3.06 per cent and 3.11 per cent, respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Close Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended untraded Friday. Spot month February 2017 and March 2017 were each pegged at 96.55. Meanwhile, April 2017 stood at 96.53 and 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 3.43 per cent.

KLCI Futures Contract Ends Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended higher Friday in sync with the firmer underlying cash market. February 2017 edged up 10.5 points to 1,684.5, March 2017 went up 8.5 points to 1,682.00, June 2017 rose 10.0 points to 1,674.00 while September 2017 was 9.5 points higher at 1,669.00. Turnover however shrank to 4,288 lots from 5,301 lots on Thursday and open interest declined to 24,156 contracts from 26,445 contracts. The underlying benchmark FBM KLCI finished 11.53 points better at 1,685.01.

RAM Ratings Reaffirms AA2 Rating Of UEM's Sukuk

KUALA LUMPUR -- RAM Ratings has reaffirmed the AA2/stable rating of UEM Group Bhd's Islamic Medium Term Notes Programme of up to RM2.2 billion (2012/2042), issued through funding vehicle, United Growth Bhd. In a statement Tuesday, the rating agency said the reaffirmation of the rating takes into account the group's strong business diversity and sturdy position of key subsidiaries. "UEM has an important role by virtue of its stake in strategic local tolled roads and ownership of large tracts of land in Iskandar Puteri, a component of the government's economic corridor, Iskandar Malaysia," it said.

Maybank Investment Bank Optimistic On MAHB Financial Outlook In 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank Investment Bank is optimistic over Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd's 2017 outlook and expects an eight per cent growth in air traffic. The investment bank said MAHB's Turkish airport, however, would endure slower traffic growth due to escalating domestic disturbances. It noted that MAHB's Malaysian airports traffic had resumed to normal and unit cost had declined in the third quarter of 2016 on scalability benefits. "Malaysian carriers will deploy 17 aircraft in 2017. This is within the historical norm of 12-18 aircraft deployed per annum and sufficient for six to eight per cent traffic growth at the Malaysian airports," it said in a note Tuesday.

Broad Money (M3) Grows 3.0 Pct In Dec

KUALA LUMPUR -- Broad money or M3 recorded a stable annual growth of 3.0 per cent in December, compared to 2.9 per cent in November. In a statement Tuesday, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) said the expansion in M3 was driven mainly by the continued extension of credit to the private sector by the banking system. The expansion, however, was partially offset by the continued growth of Islamic Investment Accounts, as reflected in other influences, and decline in net foreign assets due to net capital outflows during the month.

Maybank Appoints Jamiah As Non-Executive Director

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) has appointed Datin Paduka Jamiah Abdul Hamid as a Non-Executive Director, effective Jan 26. In a statement Tuesday, Maybank said Jamiah, who has more than 30 years experience in the corporate world, is the third female director on the bank's board. Maybank Chairman Tan Sri Megat Zaharuddin Megat Mohd Nor said her appointment complements the strength of the board by bringing in a fresh outlook and required expertise to consistently deliver value to the bank's stakeholders.

Public Mutual Declares RM120 Mln Distributions For 5 Funds

KUALA LUMPUR -- Public Mutual Bhd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Public Bank Bhd, has declared distributions amounting to more than RM120 million for five funds for the financial year ended Jan 31, 2017. In a statement Tuesday, it said the total gross distribution per unit for the Public Index Fund and the Public Islamic Optimal Growth Fund was at RM1.50, respectively.

Alliance Bank Appoints Ahmad Don New Chairman

KUALA LUMPUR -- Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd has appointed Tan Sri Ahmad Mohd Don as new Chairman and Independent Non-Executive Director effective Wednesday. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, Alliance Bank said, Ahmad Don has vast experience in finance and banking and has worked in various capacities with Pernas Securities Sdn Bhd, Permodalan Nasional Bhd and Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank). "He served as Maybank's Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer from 1991 to 1994. "Ahmad, an United Kingdom-Aberystwyth University graduate, was Bank Negara Malaysia Governor from May 1994 to August 1998," it said.

2.7 Mln M'sians Have SSPN-i/ SSPN-i Plus Accounts

KUALA LUMPUR -- A total of 2.7 million account holders under the National Education Savings Scheme (SSPN-i/ SSPN-i Plus) have been recorded for the period between 2004 and Dec 31, 2016, with deposits totalling RM2.6 billion. National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) deputy executive director (Policy & Operations), Mastura Mohd Khalid said the figure showed the awareness among people of the savings schemes for education. "SSPN-i and SSPN-i Plus are the best plans that incorporate education savings and takaful protection packages that are affordable and comprehensive," she said.

TH To Allocate RM2 Bln For Real Estate Investments

PUTRAJAYA -- Lembaga Tabung Haji (Tabung Haji) will allocate RM2 billion for real estate investments in UK and Australia for the next three years. Its Group Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Seri Johan Abdullah told reporters Friday, this investment strategy would ensure Tabung Haji of recurring income in the future. "We haven't made any final decisions yet. We have identified a building which would be able to provide eight per cent returns yearly," he said. Tabung Haji would also be focussing on concessional projects for 2017, especially those which involved the government in relation to infrastructure, in order to strengthen the fund's acquisitions in the future.

2017 Looks Promising For IPOs, Says Bursa Malaysia CEO

KUALA LUMPUR -- Stock market operator Bursa Malaysia Bhd expects 2017 to be a promising year for Initial Public Offerings (IPOs), its Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Seri Tajuddin Atan said. He said the market awaited four new listings as at February this year compared with nothing for the first three months of 2016. Bursa Malaysia hopes to get more IPOs this year compared with 11 last year, he told reporters Friday.

Samsung Electronics Posts Solid 2016 Results

KUALA LUMPUR -- Samsung Electronics Co Ltd's full-year 2016 revenue increased to 201.87 trillion Korean Won (100 Korean Won = RM0.3794) from 200.65 trillion Korean Won in 2015. Operating profits, on the other hand, rose to 29.24 trillion Korean Won from 26.41 trillion Korean Won in the previous year. In a statement Tuesday, Samsung said the solid results were achieved despite the Note 7 discontinuation in the second half of the year. Moving forward, Samsung would continue to innovate both in software and hardware across its entire line-up and prioritise consumer safety.

S'pore's Gaming Revenues To Remain At US$4 Bln This Year

SINGAPORE -- Singapore's gaming revenues are expected to remain at around US$4 billion (US$1=SG$1.42) this year as the VIP segment remains weak, said Fitch Ratings. The rating firm said gaming revenues continued a downward trajectory last year due to a steep contraction in the segment, despite a 12.5 per cent gain in Chinese visitors in the first-half of the year. Fitch Ratings said Chinese visitors were the biggest source of VIP revenue to Singapore but would face pressure from Macau and the Philippines.

Supply Concerns Push Rubber Prices Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- Concerns over global supply shortage have kept Malaysian rubber prices on the rise for four straight weeks, dealers said. Global rubber supply would continue to be affected by the rainy season and floods in top producing country, Thailand, as this would disrupt rubber production for the whole country. "The wet season usually ends in November 2016 but it has prolonged to this year," the dealer told Bernama, adding the rainy season in Malaysia had also driven rubber prices higher.

Volvo M'sia Eyes 5 New Export Markets This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- Volvo Car Manufacturing Malaysia Sdn Bhd is eyeing a bigger export market in the Asian region this year following the restructuring of its plant in Shah Alam that will expand its production capacity. Managing Director Fredrik Karlsson cited Vietnam, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia and Taiwan as the five new export markets. "We will start exporting in mid-year (upon completion of the plant), starting with the XC90 luxury SUV, followed by a new car at end of the year," he told reporters Wednesday.

BLand Buys Stake In 7-Eleven From BRetail

KUALA LUMPUR -- Berjaya Land Bhd (BLand) has acquired 10 million ordinary shares from Berjaya Retail Bhd (BRetail) for 10 sen each in 7-Eleven Malaysia Holdings Bhd (SEM) via direct business transaction. The shares were acquired from Dec 30 last year up to Jan 23, 2017 for a total cash consideration of RM14 million at RM1.40 per SEM share. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, BLand said, the shares represented 0.90 per cent equity interest in SEM.

YTL Unit Acquires RW Threadneedle Street

KUALA LUMPUR -- YTL Corp Bhd's indirect unit, Threadneedles Hotel Ltd, has acquired 100 per cent stake in RW Threadneedle Street Ltd for £9.9 million (£1 = RM5.61). In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, the company said, following the acquisition, RW Threadneedle Street wouldnow be a wholly-owned subsidiary of Threadneedles and an indirect subsidiary of YTL Corp. UK-based RW Threadneedle Street is principally engaged in hotel operations.

Manulife Acquires 15.3 Mln Globetronics Technology Shares

KUALALUMPUR -- Manulife Asset Management Services Bhd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Manulife Holdings Bhd, has acquired 15.3 million shares of 50 sen each in Globetronics Technology Bhd (GTB). In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, it said the shares represented 5.43 per cent of the GTB capital. GTB manufactures a variety of electronics and components.

Demand For Air Travel Up 6.3 Pct In 2016 - IATA

KUALA LUMPUR -- Demand for air travel rose by 6.3 per cent in 2016 compared to 2015 boosted by establishments of new routes by airlines and cheaper return fares, said International Air Transport Association (IATA). Its Director-General/Chief Executive Officer, Alexandre de Juniac, said connectivity increased with the establishment of over 700 new routes while a US$44 (US$1 = RM4.42) decrease in average return fares helped make air travel even more accessible. "As a result, a record 3.7 billion passengers flew safely to their destinations," he said in a statement Thursday.

Ipsos Eyes Capacity Boost In Asia-Pacific

KUALA LUMPUR -- Leading global market research company, Ipsos Pte Ltd, aims to bolster its capabilities in the Asia-Pacific with the launch of Ipsos Public Affairs in Malaysia and Singapore. In a statement Thursday, Chief Executive Officer, Darrel Bricker, said the company was delighted to expand its Public Affairs offers in Singapore and Malaysia. Ipsos, founded in France in 1975, is controlled and managed by research professionals.

Bursa Malaysia's Pre-Tax Profit Falls By 2.93 Pct To RM270.6 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia Bhd's pre-tax profit for financial year ended Dec 31, 2016 (FY16) fell by 2.93 per cent to RM270.6 million compared with RM278.8 million in FY15 amid the challenging year for capital markets globally. Revenue eased by 2.26 per cent to RM506.78 million versus RM518.50 million in 2015. "The year was marked by greater regulatory and geopolitical changes and ambiguity. These have impacted the global economic landscape and heightened volatility in the financial markets," Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Seri Tajuddin Atan, said in a statement Friday.

DRB-HICOM's Unit To Dispose Of Entire Stake In DRB-HICOM Leasing

KUALA LUMPUR -- DRB-HICOM Bhd's indirect unit, Edaran Otomobil Nasional Bhd (EON) is disposing of its entire equity in DRB-HICOM Leasing Sdn Bhd (DLSB) to DRB-HICOM EZ-Drive for RM14.97 million. EZ-Drive and DLSB are wholly-owned subsidiary companies of EON. Upon completion of the proposed internal reorganisation, DLSB will become a wholly-owned subsidiary company of EZ-Drive. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, DRB-HICOM said the proposed internal reorganisation would enable EON to consolidate its vehicle rental and leasing business under one company to achieve greater operational efficiency and cost savings, which would contribute positively to the DRB-HICOM Group's future earnings.

Nasi Kandar Pelita Restaurants Halal - Executive Director

BUTTERWORTH -- Nasi Kandar Pelita Samudra Pertama (M) Sdn Bhd (Pelita) Tuesday denied that its restaurants are not halal because the chain is owned by non-Muslims, as was made out to be on Facebook and Whatsapp since last week. Its executive director Datuk D.Murugan told a press conference here Tuesday that as a shareholder, he was disappointed over such a claim by irresponsible people as all the 25 restaurants Pelita operated had received halal certification from the Malaysian Islamic Development Department.

RON95 & RON97 Up 20 Sen, Diesel Up 10 Sen

KUALA LUMPUR -- The retail price of RON95 and RON97 petrol will increase by 20 sen while diesel will be up by 10 sen for the month of February, according to the Petroleum Dealers Association of Malaysia president (PDAM) Datuk Khairul Annuar Abdul Aziz. He told Bernama that the new price of RON95 will be RM2.30 a litre from midnight tonight as compared to RM2.10 sen in January. With the hike, the new price of RON97 will be RM2.60/litre while diesel will be sold at RM2.15/litre.

KTMB To Impose RM100 As Surcharge For Passengers Without Valid Tickets

KUALA LUMPUR -- KTMB Berhad will impose a surcharge of RM100 for passengers who ride on the Intercity train or ETS without a valid ticket, said KTMB Tuesday. The surcharge imposed for such offenders effective March 1, is an effort to educate the public, especially passengers to ensure they had a valid ticket before coming on board the train. "Valid tickets are important to determine the comfort and safety of passengers because passengers with a valid ticket have insurance coverage," said KTMB in the statement.

S'pore Reduces Filing Fees For IP Protection From April 1

SINGAPORE -- Businesses and entrepreneurs will enjoy substantial cost savings when they file for patent and trade mark protection with the Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (IPOS) through lowered application fees, effective April 1, 2017. This is part of IPOS' efforts to support innovators and make IP protection more affordable, in keeping with its vision to help drive innovation in Singapore. "Singapore's innovation scene is becoming more vibrant, with more companies and start-ups seeking to create business value through IP," said Chief Executive of IPOS, Daren Tang in a statement Wednesday.

M'sians Not Affected By Trump's Travel Ban

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysians are not affected by President Donald Trump's travel blacklist, the United States Embassy here has confirmed. "The Executive Order stands as it was issued last week and Malaysia is not on the list of countries affected by the Executive Order. "Malaysians can continue to travel to the United States with a valid visa," the embassy's spokesman told Bernama when contacted Wednesday.

Global Halal Exchange Expands Reach To Consumers

KUALA LUMPUR -- Global Halal Exchange (GHX), an eMarketplace for the halal industry offered by Dagang NeXchange Bhd (DNeX), has signed two agreements in an effort to expand its reach to consumers looking to purchase halal products and services. In a statement Wednesday, DNeX said the agreements were between GHX and Koperasi Masyarakat Muslim Bukit Jelutong Bhd (KMMBJB) and GHX and its merchant, Food Artist Sdn Bhd (FASB).

Vizione Poised To Get More Construction Projects

KUALA LUMPUR -- Vizione Holdings Bhd, which has raised gross proceeds of RM58.92 million from its rights issue, is set to secure more construction projects to enhance its future earnings. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia, the company said it had achieved a final subscription level of 99.84 per cent comprising 582.924 million rights shares. "The funds will be utilised to continue the company's commitment to profitability and growth," said Vizione Group Managing Director, Datuk Ng Aun Hooi.

Proton Unveils New Persona, Saga In Brunei

KUALA LUMPUR -- PAD Motors Sdn Bhd, Proton Holdings Bhd's main distributor in Brunei, has released the new Proton Persona 1.6L and the third generation Proton Saga 1.3L for sale last week. Proton Chief Executive Officer Datuk Ahmad Fuaad Kenali said he was pleased that the new Persona and Saga, which have been well received in Malaysia, had generated interest among consumers in Brunei. "Both the Persona and Saga are well designed, good value for money cars - affordable, safe and complete with practical features," he said in a statement Thursday.

Palm Oil Sector Views Issue Of Process Contaminants Seriously - MPOC

KUALA LUMPUR -- The palm oil industry views seriously the issue of process contaminants that affect all refined vegetable oils although the actual risk to human health has yet to be clearly defined. Malaysian Palm Oil Council's (MPOC) Chief Executive Officer, Dr Kalyana Sundram, said various measures were in place to closely monitor and take actions to reduce the level of process contaminants in palm oil. "This is following the European Food Safety Authority's report on higher content of 3-monochloropropanediol (3-MCPD) and glycidyl fatty acid esters (GE) in palm oil as compared with other vegetable oils, making it more carcinogenic," he said Thursday.

MABHackathon Aims To Encourage Innovations

SEPANG -- Malaysia Airlines Bhd's (MAB) ideas and solution-generating exercise, MABHackathon, aims to encourage new ideas and perspectives and to find opportunities for development and innovation. MAB Chief Information Officer, Tan Kok Meng, said 100 people would take part in the event which would be held in the MAB Academy in Kelana Jaya, Selangor, from Feb 18-19, 2017. "The participants comprise mainly programmers, application developers and creative designers," he said at a media briefing here Thursday.

Cancerfly Employment Network For Patients

KUALA LUMPUR -- Cancer patients will be able to promote their products or services, or land a job through a portal established especially for them. Website, www.cancerfly.com initiator Dr M. Sri Ganesh said the portal which is also known as 'Cancerfly Employment Network' was set up with the cooperation of the Radiotherapy and Oncology Department at Kuala Lumpur Hospital and National Cancer Society Malaysia. "Through the portal, cancer patients can advertise their products and generate income or work from home through part-time employment," he told reporters Thursday.

Bernama, Ministry Intend To Reintroduce Tamil, Mandarin News Over BNC

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) and the Communications and Multimedia Ministry intend to reintroduce Tamil and Mandarin news broadcasts over the Bernama News Channel (BNC) television network, said Minister Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak. He said discussions were being held with the Bernama management for the proposal to be implemented soon. "We have received requests from the communities for these news broadcasts to be reintroduced, and we will look again at the need," he told reporters Thursday.

Shell Malaysia Launches New Scooter Oils

SHAH ALAM -- Shell Malaysia Trading Sdn Bhd has launched three new scooter oils to continue being the leader in lubricant solutions for motorcycles, said Managing Director, Shairan Huzani Husain. He said the company currently has a 30 per cent market share for vehicle and motor cycle lubricants. "Scooters make up about 11 per cent of the estimated 12 million total motorcycle population in Malaysia and we hope to cater to their demand," he told reporters Friday.

Honda Malaysia Recalls 24,962 Vehicles Over Takata Airbags

KUALA LUMPUR -- Honda Malaysia Sdn Bhd will recall 24,962 units of the 2012 year models vehicles for Takata passenger front airbag inflator replacement. In a statement Friday, Honda Malaysia said the models involved were Accord, Jazz, Jazz Hybrid, City, Freed and Insight. It said the company was extending its proactive measures to ensure customer's safety which was its priority. "We reiterate that all our current selling models are not affected and will continue to uphold transparency and stringent controls to ensure customer safety," it said.

MATRADE Appoints Mohd Shahreen As New CEO

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) has appointed Ir Dr Mohd Shahreen Zainooreen Madros as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective Feb 2. Succeeding Datuk Dzulkifli Mahmud who retired Tuesday, Shahreen, a Cambridge graduate, was an Executive Director at the Malaysia Petroleum Resources Corporation (MPRC) prior to the appointment, said Matrade in a statement Tuesday. "Moving forward, it is imperative for Matrade to continue forging strategic partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, in both the private and public sectors such as the various ministries, agencies, trade associations, Chambers of Commerce and business councils," it said.

CGC Appoints Choong Tuck Oon As Director

KUALA LUMPUR -- Credit Guarantee Corporation Malaysia Bhd (CGC) has announced the appointment of Choong Tuck Oon as its Non-Executive Director (NED). In a statement Tuesday, CGC said Choong specialised in technology, strategy and transformation in the banking and insurance sectors. Choong holds a Bachelor of Science (First Class) in Mathematics from Universiti Malaya, Masters of Science in Computer Applications from Asian Institute of Technology and Executive Diploma in Directorship from the Singapore Management University.

Bernama Bags Over 2,000 Books Since 2014 Through 3B Programme

PASIR MAS -- The Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) received over 2,000 books since the inception of its Read with Bernama (3B) Programme in 2014. The 3B Programme deputy chairman I, Hasnita Ibrahim said the reading materials were donated by the members of the public via its various activities such as 'book walk' and the Kuala Lumpur International Book Fair, in collaboration with government agencies, private sector and non-governmental organisations. "We have collected these books donated by the public and sponsors through the 3B programme before we donate back the books to the target group including orphans, the less fortunate, refugees, Orang Asli children and schools that were affected by floods," she said.

Michael Chan Appointed MYTV CEO

KUALA LUMPUR -- MYTV Broadcasting Sdn Bhd has appointed Michael Chan as its new chief executive officer, effective Feb 1, 2017. He took over from Datuk Hasnul Hassan whose tenure ended on Jan 31, 2017, MYTV said in a statement Wednesday. Chan, 47, brings with him over 20 years of experience in the broadcasting and telecommunications industry, holding key positions in the areas of marketing and management. Prior to joining MYTV, Chan was CEO of Bloomberg TV in Malaysia.

Malaysia Airlines Launches Special Promotion To London

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Airlines is offering all-in return Economy Class fares from only RM2,299 this February on the airline's double daily service to London. The promotion starts from Wednesday until Feb 7 and for immediate travel until Dec 20, 2017, it said in a statement. The all-in fare includes complimentary 30kg check-in baggage, inflight meals and is free of credit card charges. The national carrier offers passengers greater comfort on its flights, individual IFE screens, as well as comfortable Economy Class seat space.

Ahmad Razif Launches 'Bas Kite' City Bus Service

KUALA TERENGGANU -- Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Razif Abdul Rahman launched a shuttle bus service known as 'Bas Kite' (our bus) here Wednesday as part of the state government's efforts to promote the city. He said the rebranding exercise was to add value to the existing city bus service, thus promoting the local products and tourist hotspots. "The (exterior) design of these buses resemble the traditional Terengganu houses with floral motifs, unique roof shapes and wooden carvings while the interior part is decorated with garden chairs and some wooden elements," he told reporters Wednesday.

Proton Appoints Abdul Rashid Proton Edar CEO

KUALA LUMPUR -- Proton Holdings Bhd has appointed Abdul Rashid Musa as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Proton Edar Sdn Bhd, effective Wednesday. In a statement Thursday, Proton said, Abdul Rashid would replace Rohime Shafie, who had been assigned to DRB-HICOM Bhd as Head of Automotive in the Automotive Distribution and Manufacturing and Engineering Division. "Prior to this appointment, Abdul Rashid was Chief Technical Officer of Proton where he held several portfolios, including being instrumental in the development of four new models in 2016," it said.

ExcelForce Partners Ullink To Enhance Global Connectivity

KUALA LUMPUR -- ExcelForce, an IT solution provider for financial companies in South East Asia, has announced a collaboration with Ullink, a global provider of electronic trading and connectivity solutions to the financial community. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, the company said the strategic partnership will allow ExcelForce clients to leverage on Ullink's NYFIX global connectivity platform, while integrating services and technologies of both parties.

Kuala Lumpur To Host 8th Annual Nuclear Power Asia Conference

KUALA LUMPUR -- The 8th Annual Nuclear Power Asia Conference, scheduled on March 7 and 8, 2017 here, will draw regulators, nuclear energy agencies, operators and licensors from the international nuclear community and those at the forefront of nuclear development in Asia. More than 30 speakers will share their insights on new build and new capacities in Asia along with their visions on how nuclear power could reshape regional economic and energy landscape, with a specific focus on unique challenges confronting ASEAN.

Shahrir Focuses On Welfare Of Felda Settlers

By M. Saraswathi and Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR -- The announcement on the appointment of Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad as the new Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) chairman shortly after the 2017 New Year celebration has put the man under the spotlight.

Attention has since focused on the Johor Bahru Member of Parliament embarking on tasks and shouldering responsibilities in helming the federal government agency which has often made headlines for various issues involving the interest of Felda settlers nationwide.

It came as no surprise when Shahrir, 66, in his first comment as he assumed the office, pledged to look after and safeguard the interest of 112,000 settlers, as well as to strengthen the role of Felda.

"I have asked the management to focus on its original responsibility. We have to intensify our focus and assistance to the settlers as their farms are the source of their income," he said on his focus for Felda.

Shahrir, who has vast experience in government administration, used to serve as minister at three ministries. He was also once the chairman of the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) and Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

NEGATIVE PERCEPTION

The following are excerpts from an exclusive interview with Bernama at his office in Menara Felda, here, recently.

BERNAMA: Felda currently has to deal with a lot of issues and negative perception. How does the agency plan to tackle this?

SHAHRIR: The way I see it, the problem being faced by Felda is more of perception and misunderstanding as many people cannot differentiate between Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd (FGV), a listed company on Bursa Malaysia, and Felda as an authority body established under an Act of Parliament.

So, there is misunderstanding and confusion not just at the settlers' level but also among business leaders.

For instance, I met an acquaintance who is a highly knowledgeable businessman (in the world of business). He was angry at FGV, saying 'Why did FGV buy a hotel in London?' I replied, 'It wasn't FGV but a subsidiary of Felda'.

WELL-ROUNDED

Meaning, the people who are supposed to be well-rounded in business with a pretty stable position and highly recognised within the business community in Malaysia can also get confused, don't understand and cannot differentiate between Felda and FGV.

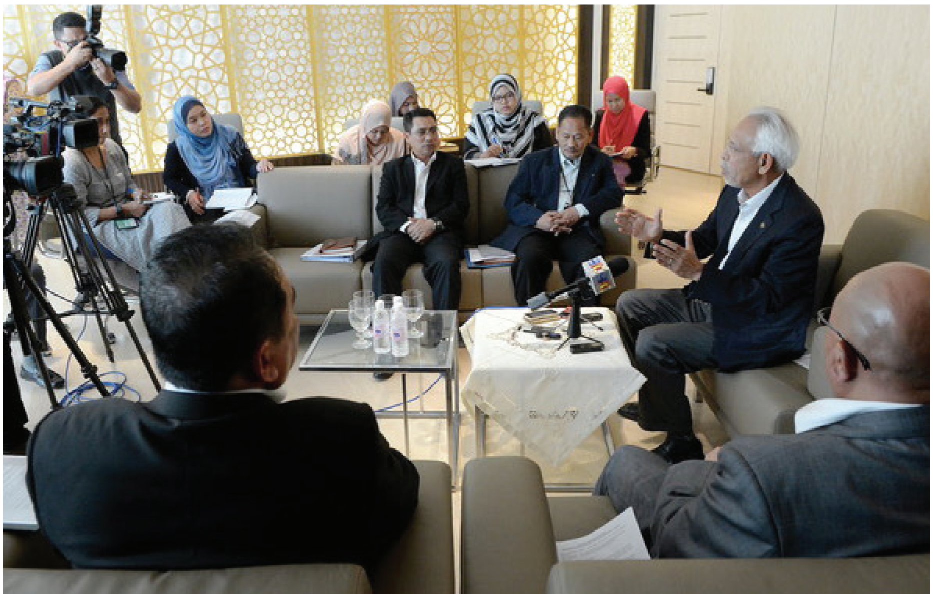
Our responsibility is to explain which is which. I am the Felda chairman while Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad is FGV chairman.

FGV is a public-listed company in Bursa Malaysia, so it has to adhere to all the governance requirements by Bursa Malaysia as a public company.

As for Felda, we must adhere to the Act and move along in accordance with the Felda Act itself.

Felda also has its own subsidiaries because it has the authority to establish such subsidiary companies. So, these subsidiaries have to be taken care of by the Felda board or Felda itself.

-- BERNAMA



IN THE LIMELIGHT... Felda chairman Tan Sri Shahrir Abdul Samad responding to questions during an exclusive interview with Bernama at Menara Felda. fotoBERNAMA Azhar Pidek

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

BURSA: Market Likely To Be Firmer Next Week
By Azizul Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia is likely to be firmer next week and the expected return of risk appetite will enable the benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia (FBM KLCI) to retest its psychological level of 1,700. Affin Investment Bank Vice President/Head of Retail Research, Dr Nazri Khan, said expectation of modest recovery in global risk sentiment will be market-supportive for the sentiment next week.

“The US Federal Reserve is not expected to raise interest rate soon. The greenback will make a pullback making ringgit gain its strength and commodities across the board will eventually recover.

“The local bourse should also get support from the buoyant Wall Street,” he told Bernama. He said US President Donald Trump’s fiscal policy, which was expected to be tabled next week, was also expected to help reduce global financial uncertainty and subsequently improve the risk appetite.

From a charting perspective, Kenanga Investment Bank Research said the FBM KLCI’s short- to medium-term trend remained modestly positive with the key index sporting rising peaks and troughs over the past two months.

“While the moving average convergence/divergence trend is still below a negative signal-line, we expect any weakness to be temporary. “Upside bias is towards resistance level of 1,690 and 1,700 while downside support levels are 1,660 and 1,650,” it said.

For the week just-ended, the trading sessions were shortened with market closed for the Chinese New Year and Federal Territory holidays on Monday and Wednesday, respectively.

Weekly turnover shrank to 4.94 billion units worth RM5.96 billion from 6.85 billion units worth RM8.60 billion last Friday.

The main market volume narrowed to 3.57 billion shares valued at RM5.72 billion from 4.71 billion shares valued at RM18.29 billion last week.

FOREX: Ringgit Likely To Strengthen Against US Dollar
By Sharifah Pirdaus Syed Ali

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is expected to further strengthen against the US dollar next week to between 4.4000 and 4.3500, riding on the greenback’s weakness in the global market, an analyst said. Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research, Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan, said the greenback has pulled back from its seven-week high.

“The weakness in the greenback was contributed by negative perception that the US economic data may not be strong enough to justify the US interest rate increase.

“The Federal Reserve’s statement after its first meeting this year was also not overly-hawkish which casts doubts on rate adjustments for next meeting in March,” he told Bernama.

He said other central banks, like Bank of Japan and

Bank of Europe, were also seen as being accomodative and did not increase their interest rates. On the local front, the rebound in crude oil prices and other commodities will also lend support to strenghten the ringgit as it has always been seen as commodity currency, said Nazri.

Meanwhile, Hong Leong Research said, the ringgit had strengthened 0.16 per cent week-on-week to 4.4230 against the greenback but slipped against the currencies of nine of the Group of 10 countries in the absence of buying interest as the Malaysian market was closed for Chinese New Year and Federal Territory holidays.

“We still hold a slightly bullish view on the ringgit against the US dollar. We acknowledged that much of next week’s direction will hinge on tonight’s US employment data and the ability of the greenback to rebound.

“The extended recovery in oil prices will be partially supportive of the ringgit,” it said.

For the week just-ended, the ringgit moved between 4.4220 and 4.4320 against the US dollar. On Friday-to-Friday basis, the ringgit was traded higher at 4.4260/4300 against the greenback from last Friday’s 4.4300/4330. The local note ended lower against other major currencies, except the British pound.

Money-Market: Short-Term Rates Likely To Be Steady

KUALA LUMPUR -- The 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 holiday-shortened week just-ended, the overnight rate remained unchanged at 2.95 per cent, while the one-, two- and three-week rates were at 3.02 per cent, 3.06 and 3.11 per cent respectively.

The market was closed on Monday for Chinese New Year celebration and Wednesday for Federal Territory holiday.

The central bank intervened on a daily basis to mop up surplus liquidity by conducting tenders, including conventional money markets, Islamic range maturity auctions, range maturity auctions, reverse repo tenders and Qard tenders.

The total liquidity surplus for the week just-ended was higher at RM27.74 billion in conventional operations against RM27.08 billion last Friday. Islamic funds increased to RM8.16 billion from RM7.60 billion previously.

The benchmark three-month interbank rate stood at 3.43 per cent. The ringgit depreciated versus the Singapore dollar to 3.1292/1330 from 3.1046/1078, decreased against the yen to 3.9123/9165 from 3.8522/8565 and declined against the euro at 4.7535/7600 from 4.7370/7411.

It rose against the British pound to 5.5250/5304 from 5.5588/5643. The underlying three-month KLIBOR on the cash market remained at 3.41 per cent on Friday.

KLCI Futures Likely To Trend Firmer

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts are likely to trend firmer next week tracking the expected positive performance of the underlying cash market.

During the just-ended holiday-shortened week, the FBM KLCI futures saw range-bound trading as most investors were absent from the market on an extended Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday before trending higher towards the end of the week.

The market was closed for the CNY and Federal Territory holidays on Monday and Wednesday, respectively. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, February 2017 decline 4.5 points to 1,684.50, March 2017 eased three points to 1,682.00 and June 2017 fell 3.5 points to 1,674.00.

Turnover for the week fell to 25,897 lots from last Friday’s 75,658 lots.

Open interests declined to 24,156 contracts from 25,428 contracts last week. The benchmark FBM KLCI ended the week 1.35 points weaker at 1,685.01 from 1,686.36 last Friday.

CPO Futures To See Range-Bound Trading

By Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR -- Crude palm oil (CPO) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to be see range-bound trading next week, with physical prices moving between RM3,100 and RM3,200, dealers said.

Weaker soyabean oil prices and strong ringgit, which has recovered slightly from its recent losses, would curb gains in the prices, they said.

Interband Group of Companies Senior Palm Oil Trader, Jim Teh, said the release of the performance report for January by Malaysian Palm Oil Board on Feb 10, 2017 would provide direction for the traders next week.

“The data are expected to be favourable,” he told Bernama. He said demand next week would likely come from India and Pakistan. Teh said the market would not see much demand from China as it has bought the commodity in advance, but the participation from the Chinese would gradually increase as the Chinese New Year holiday break has ended.

For the week just-ended, the local market was traded on a mixed note and was traded only on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

It was closed on Monday in lieu of the Chinese New Year on Sunday and on Wednesday for Federal Territory Day holiday.

The stronger ringgit and weak soyabean oil futures prices had influenced the local market to chart a downward pattern on Tuesday. However, the market rebounded on supply concern and in anticipation of a positive export performance for the previous month but the gains were then capped by profit-taking on the last day.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, February 2017 gained RM7 to RM3,250 a tonne, March 2017 added RM5 to RM3,140 and April 2017 rose RM15 to RM3,055 a tonne. May 2017 declined RM25 to RM2,982 a tonne.

The market was traded for half-day last Friday. Weekly turnover fell to 148,105 lots from 179,299 lots last week, while open interest widened to 238,017 contracts from 203,482 contracts previously.

On the physical market, February South was unchanged at RM3,320 a tonne.

RUBBER: Market Likely To See Bargain Hunting

By Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is expected to see bargain hunting in rubber futures trading next week following the recent drop in prices, dealers said. A dealer said concern over the shortage of supply due to the floods in Thailand, the world’s largest natural rubber producer, would also lift the price next week.

“The weakening of ringgit and supply disruption worries will increase demand,” he told Bernama. For the week just-ended, the local market started on a strong note and was traded only on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

It was closed on Monday in lieu of the Chinese New Year on Sunday and on Wednesday for Federal Territory Day holiday.

Last week’s high trajectory was extended to Tuesday as continuous supply disruption concerns sparked worries in the market, sending the Standard Malaysian Rubber (SMR) 20, which is the benchmark for the tyre standard, to a new high of 1,059.5 sen mark during the noon session.

This was its highest level since 2012. The SMR 20’s highest price in 2012 was 1,139 sen a kg set on Jan 26, 2012, while the all-time high was just above the 1700 sen a kg level (February 2011). However, the market retreated the next day on profit-taking and the downside continued on Friday.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the Malaysian Rubber Board's official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 at noon fell 36.5 sen to 969 sen a kg, while latex-in-bulk gained 12 sen to 812.5 sen a kg.

The unofficial closing price for tyre-grade SMR 20 and latex-in-bulk ended the week at 994.5 sen a kg and 807.5 sen a kg respectively. The market was traded half-day on last Friday for CNY holiday.

KLTM To See Range-Bound Trading

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) will likely see range-bound trading next week with the metal's prices moving between US$19,200 and US$20,000 a tonne.

A dealer said the market would continue to be heavily influenced by the tin price on the London Metal Exchange (LME). During the week-just-ended, the KLTM saw thin trading with prices mvoing between US$19,700 and US$19,830 a tonne throughout the holiday-shortened week.

The market was closed on Monday for Chinese New Year celebration and Wednesday for Federal Territory holiday.

On Friday, the tin price closed at US$19,720 a tonne, down US$330 from US$20,050 on Friday last week. On the LME, the tin price fell US$130 to US$19,845 a tonne from US$19,975 a tonne last week.

Weekly volume on the KLTM fell to 106 tonnes from 158 tonnes last week with Japanese, South Korean and Chinese players accounting for the bulk of the trade.

The price differential between the KLTM and LME narrowed to a discount of US$125 a tonne from a premium of US$425 a tonne last Friday.

Gold Futures Likely To See Cautious Trading

By Sharifah Pirdaus Syed Ali

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gold futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are likely to see cautious trading next week, tracking the performance of the US Commodity Exchange's gold futures, said a dealer.

Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd Dealer, Amberlyn How, said the players would be cautious and closely monitoring US economic data for further clues of the market's direction.

"Positive data on the US economy would likely increase the favour of US interest rate increase for first half of this year, which will dent the demand of safe-haven bullion as the metal is highly tied to the macroeconomic news," she told Bernama.

The US payrolls data for January, which would be released on Friday, would be the near term market catalyst, she added.

She said the gold trading volume was expected to increase next week with the return of the Chinese traders after the Chinese New Year (CNY) holiday. For the holiday-shortened week just-ended, the gold market was traded mixed.

It was closed on Monday for CNY and Wednesday for the Federal Territory day.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, February 2017 and March 2017 fell 11 ticks each to RM169.5 and RM170 a gramme respectively, while April 2017 and June 2017 declined 15 ticks each to RM170.5 and RM171.65 a gramme respectively.

The newly-introduced month May 2017 was traded at RM171.5 a gramme on Friday. Weekly turnover for week increased to 58 lots worth RM989,670 versus 34 lots worth RM585,800 last week.

Open interest on Friday was lower at 277 contracts from 280 contracts previously.