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This Week's Highlight : Govt Observing Prudent Spending, Not Extravagant - Najib

ONE FOR THE ALBUM...Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak (seated, centre) in a group photo before the Ministry of Finance's Excellence Service Award ceremony in Putrajaya Thursday. Also present Treasury Secretary-General Tan Sri Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah (seated, fifth, left). --Photo courtesy of Finance Ministry's Communication Unit.

PUTRAJAYA -- The government is observing prudent spending, and within limits, and was certainly not extravagant in its expenditure, says Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. "We cannot be hasty to spend and be drawn into spending. If we borrow, it must be for productive investment," said the prime minister who is also the Finance Minister at the Ministry of Finance's Excellence Service Award ceremony here Thursday.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

1MDB, IPIC Agree On Arbitration Settlement

KUALA LUMPUR – 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) and International Petroleum Investment Company (IPIC) have agreed on a settlement of the arbitration proceedings at the London Court of International Arbitration. "As per the settlement, 1MDB will, among others, make certain payments to IPIC and will assume responsibility for all future interest and principal payments for two bonds issued by 1MDB Group companies due in 2022," it said in a statement Monday.

TUESDAY

ECER's Socio-Economic Transformation Wins Global Recognition

From Rosemarie Khoo

DUBAI -- The government's socio-economic transformation agenda for the East Coast Economic Region (ECER), implemented through the East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC), has garnered international recognition when it won the Global Good Governance (3G) Awards for Best Economic Transformation Programme 2017 here on Tuesday. Three other economic transformation programmes nominated for the same award category were the 'One Belt One Road' from China, 'The China Pakistan-Economic Corridor' and 'The Transforming Kenya from Kenya'.

WEDNESDAY

ASEAN Must Maintain Ties, Cooperation - Najib

KUALA LUMPUR -- ASEAN will continue to progress and succeed as long as its members maintain close ties and cooperation, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak Wednesday. Najib, who will lead the Malaysian delegation to the 30th ASEAN Summit and Related Meetings in Metro Manila, said in his official blog, the close ties and cooperation between its 10-member countries in the region must be maintained and further improved from time to time.

THURSDAY

M'sia-EU To Discuss EU Resolution On Palm Oil

KUALA LUMPUR -- The free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations between Malaysia and the European Union (EU) will include a discussion on the recent resolution by the EU parliament to phase out the use of certain vegetable oils, including palm oil, by 2020. Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry Datuk Chua Tee Yong said Thursday, although the resolution is non-binding on EU member states, the government viewed the recent development very seriously, as it involved a major export commodity and the livelihood of about 500,000 smallholders.

FRIDAY

ASEAN Must Lower Tariff To Zero - Najib

From M. Saraswathi

MANILA -- The 10-member Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) must work vigorously to bring down tariffs in the region to zero and eliminate non-tariff barriers, as there is no other alternative to create a seamless economy, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. He said Friday, ASEAN have made great strides in the last 50 years by multiplying the economy 28 times, from US$87.2 billion (RM380 billion) in 1975 to US$2.5 trillion (RM10.88 trillion) in 2014 and it was now expected to grow to US$9.2 trillion (RM40 trillion) by 2050, making it the fourth largest economic grouping in the world.

SMEbrief

MTDC Unveils Training Academy For Technopreneurs

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian Technology Development Corporation (MTDC) unveiled its new Technopreneur Training Academy (TENTRA), which will serve as the prime capacity building entity for technopreneurs and technology commercialisation. Chief Executive Officer Datuk Norhalim Yunus said Wednesday, the training academy was aimed at reducing business failure rates among entrepreneurs, especially technopreneurs.

Maybank's Retail SME Financing To Grow 35 Pct

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) expects its financing to the Retail Small and Medium Enterprise (RSME) segment to grow by 35 per cent this year, higher than the 27 per cent recorded last year, bringing its total RSME loan portfolio to RM16.8 billion by year-end. In a statement Tuesday, Maybank Head of Community Financial Services, Datuk Hamirullah Boorhan, said the growth would likely come from business property-based loans, portfolio guarantee, trade finance, commercial cards, microcredit and SME deposits through the Maybank SME First Account and payroll accounts.

62 Women Entrepreneurs Benefit From DanaNITA Scheme

KUALA LUMPUR -- As many as 62 women entrepreneurs have benefited from the Special Business Development Programme For Women Entrepreneurs (DanaNITA) through an allocation of RM1.28 million as of last month. Deputy Minister of Rural and Regional Development Datuk Ahmad Jazlan Yaakub said Thursday, the scheme which was launched early last month targeted the involvement of 600 women.

Najib Visits Malaysian-Owned Bakery In Manila

By From M.Saraswathi

MANILA -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak Friday took time off from his busy schedule to visit the Naah!im Bakery, a Malaysian-owned enterprise in the city. "This is the kind of young entrepreneurs we want to support. We should encourage more of them to try and be adventurous. They have recovered their capital within nine months," Najib said after spending 45 minutes at the bakery. Located at the Belmont Hotel at Manila's Entertainment Centre, Resorts World, Naah!im Bakery started as a conceptual idea to bring varieties of food and beverages, particularly boulangerie, western and Asian delicacies to all the major cities on the continent. It serves almost 50 types of bread which changes daily on the bread counter. "To be honest, we also serve Malaysian food as well. I think we are the first to introduce Malaysian food here," Ungku Raad Azeraai Ungku Mohd, 39, a partner in the bakery, told the prime minister when asked how they had made themselves distinctive.

PropUP Propertyupdate

SCM Plans To Manage Additional 2,000 Property Units

KUALA LUMPUR -- SCM Property Services Sdn Bhd is looking into managing an additional 2,000 property units in various segments this year. Chief Operating Officer (Commercial) Raymond Cheah said Tuesday, SCM was currently managing about 10,000 property units across 22 projects nationwide, of which 90 per cent were owned by UEM Sunrise Bhd.

i -City To Launch Smart Living Luxurious Apartments

SHAH ALAM -- Smart-home enthusiasts can soon purchase apartments equipped with the Internet of Things (IoT) technology features, and interior design similar to that of the prestigious Hilton Hotel.i-City Director Monica Ong said Tuesday, the Hill10 Residence @i-City apartment suites would be located above the DoubleTree by Hilton i-City Hotel here. To be launched in June, the project is expected to be completed by 2020.

Sunsuria Acquires Subsidiary To Venture Into Construction

KUALA LUMPUR – Property developer Sunsuria Bhd has acquired a majority stake in Prosperspan Construction Sdn Bhd (Prosperspan) to expand its business into construction-related businesses. In a statement Wednesday, Sunsuria said through a Shares Sale and Purchase Agreement (SSA), Sunsuria Builders Sdn Bhd (formerly known as Goodwill Atlas Sdn Bhd) (SBSB), its wholly-owned subsidiary, would acquire 51 per cent equity interest in Prosperspan for RM408,000

MAPEX NS To Showcase Properties Worth RM1.78 Bln

SEREMBAN -- The three-day Malaysia Property Expo Negeri Sembilan 2017 (MAPEX NS 2017) from May 5 here will showcase over 1,988 properties worth RM1.78 billion. Real Estate and Housing Developers' Association Malaysia (REHDA) Negeri Sembilan Chairman Jenny Wang Lee Peng said Thursday, 13 developers will offer residential and commercial properties located at Seremban, Sendayan, Seremban 2, Senawang, Sikamat, Paroi, Rasah and Port Dickson.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard

Gainers - 544

Losers - 402

Not Traded - 465

Unchanged - 359

Value - 2896432430

Volume - 31025766

Bursa Malaysia Ends Marginally Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia finished the week marginally higher as mild profit-taking emerged among selective heavyweight with traders reportedly squared some positions ahead of the long weekend break. The benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) rose just 0.14 of-a-point, to end at 1,768.06, from Thursday's close of 1,767.92. The key index opened a marginal 0.06 of-a-point better at 1,767.98, and moved within a 6.64-point range of between 1,772.21 and 1,765.57 throughout the trading session. Market breadth ended positive with gainers outpacing decliners 544 to 402, while 359 counters were unchanged, 465 untraded and 46 others were suspended. Volume shed to 3.10 billion units worth RM2.89 billion from 3.45 billion units worth RM2.77 billion Thursday. "It's common to see profit-taking after a rally and to lock-in recent gains or stay squared ahead of the long weekend break," an equity dealer said, alluding to the possible consolidation after the local bourse's bullish momentum recently. The market will be closed on Monday for the Labour Day public holiday. Main Market turnover eased to 1.89 billion units worth RM2.72 billion from 2.20 billion units worth RM2.59 billion on Thursday.

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.3390	4.3430
EUR	4.7456	4.7508
GBP	5.6129	5.6129
100 YEN	3.8911	3. 8958
SGD	3.1088	3.1121

CLOSING MALAYSIAN FOREIGN EXCHANGE: APRIL 28, 2017

FOREX: Ringgit Extends Gains Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit extended its gains against the US dollar for the fourth consecutive day Friday on continued buying support for the local currency, dealers said. At 6 pm, the local note was quoted at 4.3390/3430 against the greenback from Thursday's close of 4.3450/3480. OANDA Senior Trader Stephen Innes said there had been a shift in sentiment for the ringgit after Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) timely move to increase liberalisation in the foreign exchange markets. "After last month's massive Malaysian Government Securities outflow, BNM has made tremendous efforts to reassure foreign investors that Malaysia is indeed open for business and is actively moving to greater liberalisation of onshore market. "It seems to have worked, as outflows have dropped to a trickle while the local currency has shown signs of appreciating," said Innes. At the close, the local note was traded mixed against most major currencies. It rose against the Singapore dollar to 3.1088/1121 from 3.1120/1146 and was higher against the Japanese yen at 3.8911/8958 from 3.9046/9083 on Thursday. The ringgit however weakened against the British pound to 5.6129/6198 from 5.6051/6107 and fell against the euro to 4.7456/7508 from 4.7334/7385, Thursday.

Money-Market: Short-Term Rates End Stable On BNM's Intervention

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 RM29.08 billion from RM40.33 billion in the morning, while in the Islamic system, it declined to RM10.80 billion from RM15.16 billion. Earlier, BNM conducted four tenders, comprising a range maturity auction conventional money market tender, a commodity murabahah programme, a reverse repo tender and three Qard tenders. The central bank also conducted a RM29.10 billion conventional money market tender and a RM9.8 billion Qard money market tender, both for four-day money. 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, 3.06 per cent and 3.11 per cent respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Contract Ends Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended untraded Friday. May 2017, June 2017, July 2017 and September 2017 remained pegged at 96.54, 96.52, 96.50 and 96.48, respectively. Volume and open interest remained 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 (FKLI) on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended mostly lower Friday as most players reportedly preferred to stay squared ahead of the long weekend break, dealers said. At the close, April 2017 rose half-a-point to 1,769.00, May 2017 settled four points easier at 1,759.00, June 2017 declined 3.5 points to 1,754.50, while September 2017 was five points lower at 1,751.00. Turnover declined to 10,481 lots from 11,656 lots on Thursday, while open interest shrank to 49,079 contracts from 50,695 contracts Thursday. The underlying benchmark FBM KLCI finished 0.14 of-a-point higher at 1,768.06.

FSPB To Promote Robust Culture Of Professionalism Among Financial Institutions

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Financial Services Professional Board (FSPB) aims to help promote a more robust culture of professionalism among financial institutions, said Chairman Tan Sri Dr Mohd Munir Abdul Majid Monday. He said this would be done via the board's standards – the FSPB Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct , which together would form a professional code for the industry. Mohd Munir said the codes could play a significant role in addressing concerns by industrial players.

Financial Industry Needs To Restore Culture Of Trust

KUALA LUMPUR -- Restoring a culture of trust based on strong ethical standards is vital to securing a bright future for a purposeful financial industry, says Permodalan Nasional Bhd Group Chairman Tan Sri Abdul Wahid Omar. "It is shown that by strengthening the corporate governance and investor protection frameworks, we are able to enhance the resilience of our economy to global financial shocks," he said at the Business Ethics Conference here Monday.

Step Up To Moral Obligation When Doing Business, BNM Tells Finance Community

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) has called on the finance community to step up their moral obligation that they owe to the society when conducting businesses, said Deputy Governor Shaik Abdul Rasheed Abdul Ghaffour. "We cannot afford to underestimate the power and danger of "bad barrels". The evidence demands that we focus carefully on cultivating a system and designing that encourage continuous ethical behaviour," he said in his keynote address at the AIF-FSBP Business Ethics Conference 2017 here Monday.

Takaful IKHLAS Launches Ikhlas Preferred Term Takaful

KUALA LUMPUR -- Takaful Ikhlas Bhd (Takaful IKHLAS), a wholly owned subsidiary of MNRB Holdings Bhd (MNRB), Tuesday launched another protection product named IKHLAS Preferred Term Takaful, launched by the Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi in conjunction with Minggu Saham Amanah Malaysia 2017 (MSAM 2017) in Temerloh. "Takaful IKHLAS is projecting a RM1.5 million revenue for the first year of the launch. We hope that this plan will be the main product to be marketed through our family agency channel and will be able to generate a total contribution amount that we can be proud of," Takaful Ikhlas President and Chief Executive Officer Datuk Ab Latiff Abu Bakar said in a statement Tuesday.

Malaysia's Int'l Reserves Remain Strong

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's international reserves remain strong at RM423.2 billion or US$95.7 billion as of April 14. Deputy Finance Minister Senator Datuk Lee Chee Leong said the reserves level is sufficient to finance 8.2 months of retained imports and is 1.1 times the short term external debt. "At the international level, the reserves position is sufficient to finance at least three months of retained imports and 1.0 times the short term external debt," he told the Dewan Negara here Tuesday.

RHB Islamic Bank Berhad Distributes RM200,000 Business Tithe To MAIPS

KANGAR -- RHB Islamic Bank Berhad Wednesday handed over RM200,000 in business tithe to Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Perlis (MAIPs). RHB Islamic Bank Managing Director and chief executive officer Datuk Adissadikin Ali handed the tithe to MAIPs chief executive officer Mohd Nazim Mohd Noor.

ICAEW Expects BNM To Raise Interest Rates In 2H2017

KUALA LUMPUR --The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), a London-based organisation, expects Malaysia's Central Bank (BNM) to raise interest rates in the second half of this year. In its Economic Insight: South East Asia report, ICAEW said the increase is due to rising inflation, on the back of higher fuel and import costs. "BNM's likely interest rate hike will weigh on investments within the country. The overall rise in yields and corporate loan rates, wipe out the positive impact from the central bank's policy rate cut last July," it said Wednesday.

PIAM Hopes For Affordable Insurance Premiums N 3-5 Years

KUALA LUMPUR -- The General Insurance Association of Malaysia (PIAM) hopes general insurance premiums can be reduced in three to five years, driven by liberalisation efforts put in place by Bank Negara Malaysia and the adoption of financial technology (fintech). PIAM Chairman Antony Lee told reporters Wednesday, by making insurance premiums more affordable, the industry could increase insurance penetration among the lower income group, which was, currently, a large untapped market.

AFFIN Posts 43 Pct Increase In Profit Before Tax & Zakat

KUALA LUMPUR -- AFFIN Holdings Bhd (AHB) posted an increase of 43.4 per cent in profit before tax after zakat (PBT) to RM737.7 million for the financial year ended 31 Dec 2016. The improved performance was primarily due to lower allowance of loan impairment of RM170.0 million along with an increase in other operating income, Islamic banking income and net interest income totalling RM133.4 million, it said in a statement Monday.

Takaful Malaysia's Q1 Pre-Tax Profit & Zakat Rises To RM72.57 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Syarikat Takaful Malaysia Bhd (Takaful Malaysia) has posted a higher pre-tax profit and zakat of RM72.57 million for the first quarter ended March 31, 2017, up from RM58.17 million in the same period a year ago. Revenue improved to RM659.84 million from RM633.25 million previously, it said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday. The company attributed the increase in pre-tax profit and zakat in the quarter under review to higher net wakalah fee income, while the higher revenue was mainly contributed by the general takaful segment, especially from fire and motor classes.

Aeon Credit's Pre-Tax Profit Rises To RM351.16 Mln For FY17

KUALA LUMPUR -- Aeon Credit Service (M) Bhd's pre-tax profit rose to RM351.16 million for the financial year ended Feb 28, 2017, from RM301.59 million chalked up in the same period last year. Revenue improved to RM1.1 billion from RM965.23 million previously. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, the company said total transaction and financing volume for the year increased 11.03 per cent to RM4.02 billion while financing receivables rose 19.13 per cent to RM6.44 billion.

Higher Q3 Pre-Tax Profit For Hong Leong Industries

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hong Leong Industries Bhd's pre-tax profit rose to RM102.6 million in the third quarter ended March 31, 2017, against RM82.77 million recorded in the same quarter last year. Revenue increased to RM585.82 million from RM555.03 million previously. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, the investment holding company said the higher pre-tax profit was mainly due to increased sales revenue from the customer products segment which attributed to favourable sales mix and higher profit contribution from an associate company.

Nestle's Q1 Pre-Tax Profit Rises To RM290.74 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR-- Nestle (M) Bhd's pre-tax profit for the first quarter (Q1) ended March 31, 2017 rose to RM290.74 million from RM275.86 million a year ago. Revenue improved to RM1.37 billion from RM1.31 billion previously. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, Nestle said the group increased its revenue by 4.4 per cent compared to Q1 2016, contributed by good sales growth from both domestic and export markets.

E&E Industry Records 20.6 Pct Growth In 1st Two Months Of 2017

GEORGE TOWN -- The electrical and electronics (E&E) industry grew by 20.6 per cent in the first two months of this year, says International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed. He said at a press conference Tuesday, Malaysia achieved significant progress in the E&E industry over the last decade that had resulted in the growth of new businesses and creation of jobs. Malaysia was the world's seventh largest exporter of E&E products, valued at RM287.7 billion last year, and made up 36 per cent of Malaysia's total exports.

PTPTN Achieves Record RM3.4 Bln In Loan Repayment Collection

LENGGONG -- The National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) has significantly increased its loan repayment collection from 2015, with a record RM3.4 billion collected last year. PTPTN chairman Datuk Shamsul Anuar Nasarah said among the factors contributing to the better performance was the repayment facilities coupled with various incentives to encourage borrowers. "Among the repayment methods popular with borrowers is through the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) withdrawal," he told reporters Wednesday.

PCG To Grow Production Capacity By 49 Pct By 2020

KUALA LUMPUR -- Petronas Chemicals Group Bhd (PCG) expects to grow its

production capacity by 49 per cent or an increase of 5.3 million tonnes of petrochemicals by 2020 from 10.8 million tonnes currently. Managing Director/ Chief Executive Officer Sazali Hamzah said this would be contributed mostly by the group's Pengerang Integrated Complex (PIC) which was scheduled to be operational in 2019. "As at end of March this year, PIC overall development progress was around 62 per cent, whereby, once it is completed, PCG's capacity growth is expected to be twice that of its peers by 2020," he told reporters Wednesday.

RTD Targets RM4 Billion Revenue Collection This Year

MELAKA -- The Road Transport Department (RTD) targeted to collect RM4 billion in revenue this year for all the services offered in accordance with key performance indicators (KPI) set at five per cent increase (of collection) every year. Its finance division director Datuk Kamarudin Mohamad Saad said that last year, the department had collected about RM3.9 billion, an increase of six per cent compared to RM3.7 billion in the previous year. He told reporters Wednesday, RTD was the third department with the highest grossing revenue last year, after the Inland Revenue Board and Royal Customs Department.

Bursa Malaysia's Q1 Pre-Tax Profit Rose To RM78 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia Bhd's pre-tax profit for the first quarter ended March 31, 2017 rose to RM78.72 million from from the RM70.59 million recorded in the same period last year. Revenue increased to RM142.68 million from RM133.93 million. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Wednesday, the company said the pre-tax profit comprised segment profits, which saw an increase of 10.2 per cent to RM95.2 million from RM86.4 million, less overheads.

Global Business Services Sector To Post Strong Growth In Next 3 Years

ISKANDAR PUTERI -- The Global Business Services (GBS) sector in Malaysia is expected to grow between 10 per cent and 15 per cent over the next three years, given the fact that many companies strive to run their businesses more effectively and efficiently. Malaysian Investment Development Authority Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Azman Mahmud, said Wdnesday, the growth would definitely help Malaysia to become a high-income and knowlegde-based country.

Online Recruitment Activity Declines In March - Monster.com

KUALA LUMPUR -- Online hiring in Malaysia dropped 11 per cent in March 2017 compared with a year ago, said Monster Employment Index (MEI), which measures online job posting activities compiled monthly by Monster.com. Although hiring momentum between February and March had eased, the online recruitment for the information technology, telecom/ internet service provider and business process outsourcing/information technology enabled service sector grew 13 per cent, year-on-year (y-o-y), it said in a statement Wednesday.

QNET Ranked Among 100 Solid Top Direct Selling Companies 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Asian Direct Selling Company, QNET, is now ranked 19th on the list of Global 100 Solid Top Direct Selling Companies for the 2017, curated by Business For Home, an independent online news and information portal providing information about direct selling companies. Chief Executive Officer of QNET Trevor Kuna said in a statement Monday, being picked as one of the most solid companies in the global direct selling industry was testament to its commitment to continue changing lives around the world through innovative products and a solid business opportunity.

MITI Allocates RM4.85 Mln To PSDC To Boost E&E, Medical, Aerospace Skills

GEORGE TOWN -- The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), through the Malaysian Investment Development Authority, has allocated RM4.85 million to the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) for the development of the electrical and electronics engineering (E&E), medical and aerospace ecosystem. Its minister, Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed told reporters Tuesday, the cash injection could help woo and encourage investors and industry players to invest in the local manufacturing and service industries.

MDTCC Allocates RM39.4 Mln For MyFarm Outlet Project Under CCM

TELUK INTAN -- The Ministry of Domestic trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism (MDTCC) is allocating RM39.4 million this year for implementation of the MyFarm Outlet project under the Cooperatives Commission of Malaysia (CCM). Its deputy minister, Datuk Henry Sum Agong told a media conference Tuesday, the project involved the setting up of two distribution centres and 55 cooperative sales outlets in 34 parliamentary constituencies.

Prasarana On Track To Award Main Packages For LRT3 By July

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prasarana Malaysia Bhd is on track to award its main packages for the 37 kilometre Light Rail Transit 3 project by July, said President and Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Seri Azmi Abdul Aziz. Todate, the group has completed systems work packages and was now looking into civil work package tenders. "We expect to complete the awards of tenders for all major work packages by July. As promised, 40 per cent of the total contracts would be awarded to Bumiputera contractors, " he told reporters Tuesday.

PLUS : 71 Toll Plazas Along Juru-Skudai Stretch, Elite Highway Go Cashless

KUALA LUMPUR -- A total of 71 toll plazas under the North-South Expressway (PLUS) along the Juru-Skudai stretch, including the Elite Highway have begun operating electronically Wednesday, beginning 12.30pm. PLUS Malaysia Bhd managing director Datuk Azman Ismail told reporters Wednesday, with the implementation of the final phase today, all 94 toll plazas under PLUS had been made cashless. He said there would be no more cash transactions at toll plaza and users could pay using electronic cards namely PLUSMiles, Touch 'n Go and Smart Tag which were faster.

Malaysia, Indonesia To Counter EU Resolution To Phase Out Biofuel Usage

PUTRAJAYA -- Malaysia and Indonesia will send a joint mission to Europe next month to counter the European Union (EU) resolution which proposed to curb the use of oil palm-based biofuel by 2020. Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Mah Siew Keong said he would be going to Europe with Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Darmin Nasution next month in a bid to stall the resolution. Speaking to reporters after attending the ministry's Excellent Service Awards here Wednesday, Mah said the EU resolution had been discussed at the Cabinet level.

RHB Bank Not In Merger Talks With AMMB

KUALA LUMPUR -- RHB Bank Bhd is not in any potential merger talks with AMMB Holdings Bhd, said Group Managing Director Datuk Khairussaleh Ramli. "There is no talk about merging with any bank," he told a press conference Wednesday. Khairussaleh was responding to a question on a merger talk between the two banks which resurfaced recently as reported by a local English daily.

Malaysia Ranks 24th In Huawei Global Connectivity Index 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia is progressing in its digital transformation agenda, ranking 24th in the Huawei Global Connectivity Index (GCI) 2017, a notch higher from its 25th position last year. According to a report published on the GCI website, the United States topped the index's list of 50 nations, followed by Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom respectively.

SC Releases New Malaysian Code On Corporate Governance

KUALA LUMPUR -- The new Malaysian Code on Corporate Governance (MCCG) is a set of best practices to strengthen corporate culture anchored on accountability and transparency. In releasing the MCCG here Wednesday, the Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) Chairman Tan Sri Ranjit Ajit said it placed greater emphasis on internalisation of the corporate governance culture among listed companies, as well as the non-listed entities, including state-owned enterprises, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and licensed intermediaries.

Use Spain As Gateway To EU, Latin America, Malaysian Cos Told

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) has called on Malaysian companies to leverage Spain as a gateway to the European and Latin American markets. MATRADE, in a statement Thursday, said as a member of the European Union (EU) with a population of 46.8 million, Spain was in an outstanding position worldwide in terms of the importance of its economy.

BNM To Continue Rolling Out New Measures To Strengthen Country's Fundamentals, Says Governor

LABUAN -- The central bank will continue to roll out more new measures to strengthen the country's economic fundamentals, says Malaysia's Central Bank Governor Muhammad Ibrahim. "We will continue to look into the economic situation and introduce more new measures for a deeper, more comprehensive and liquid bond and foreign exchange markets in the future," he told a press conference Friday.

BNM's Short Forward Positions At US$17.68 Bln As At End-March

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) short forward positions as at end-march stood at US$17.68 billion. In a statement Friday, the central bank said the amount reflected the management of the ringgit's liquidity in the financial system. In line with the practice adopted since April 2006, the data excluded projected foreign currency inflows arising from interest income and the drawdown of project loans amounting to US$2.18 billion in the next 12 month.

Malaysia Gaining Momentum In Aerospace Parts & Components Export - MITI

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia is gaining momentum in the export of aerospace parts and components after the industry's strong growth in 2016, said International Trade and Industry Minister, Mustapa Mohamed. He said in a statement Friday, Malaysia's exports of aerospace products recorded a significant increase of 32.6 per cent in 2016 valued at US$1.27 billion (RM5.53 billion) compared to US$959.7 million (RM4.17 billion) in 2015, with aerospace parts and

Agrobank Receives Recognition At Global Good Governance Awards 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Agrobank has received another recognition at the Global Good Governance Awards (3G Awards) for the 3G Financial Services Award category. The award was in recognition of the bank's strong contribution in financial inclusion and initiatives undertaken to broaden access to finance, it said in a statement Tuesday.

Malaysia Autoshow 2017 Set To Offer Fans Better Experience

CYBERJAYA -- The Malaysia Autoshow 2017 is set to offer fans and those planning to purchase new cars a better experience. They can test-drive potential vehicles, indulge in automated and off-track driving as well as enjoy exclusive packages. The event is Malaysia's largest annual Autoshow and will be held at the Malaysia Agro Exposition Park in Serdang (MAEPS) from Nov 9-12. Malaysia Automotive Institute Chief Executive Officer and Organising Chairman Datuk Madani Sahari told reporters Tuesday: "

IBFIM Signs MoAs, MoUs With 10 Academic Partners

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Islamic Banking and Finance Institute Malaysia (IBFIM) has signed memorandum of agreements and understandings (MoAs and MoUs) with 10 academic partners to develop market-ready talents in the Islamic finance industry. Following the signings, IBFIM Chief Executive Officer Yusry Yusoff said Tuesday, its Certified Qualification in Islamic Finance (CQIF) module would be embedded in these higher learning institutions' programmes.

AAGI Launches Unique Personalised Video

KUALA LUMPUR -- AXA Affin General insurance (AAGI) has launched a unique personalised video to welcome new health insurance customers and to issue a renewal invitation to existing customers. The new features would enable customers to receive a personalised video greetings by name and would list their specific plan benefits and sum insured, as well as, the annual premium to be paid, said AAGI in a statement Tuesday.

edotco Announces Appointment Of Its New Group Director Of Sales

KUALA LUMPUR -- edotco Group (edotco) Sdn Bhd has appointed Darryll Sinnappa, currently the Country Managing Director of edotco Bangladesh, as its Group Director of Sales effective April 1. In a statement Tuesday, the company said Darryll would be responsible for managing the group's sales and marketing division, provide strategic support and direction in customer relations, as well as increase the group's revenue market share and brand equity.

Exim Bank, CGC Take 171 Orphans To Zoo Negara

KUALA LUMPUR -- A total of 171 orphans including the ethnic Rohingya children from Madrasah Hashimiah in Selayang here, were taken on a field trip to visit the Zoo Negara Wednesday. The programme, involving children and teenagers aged between four and 18, was organised by Export-Import Bank of Malaysia Berhad (EXIM Bank) in collaboration with Credit Guarantee Coporation Malaysia Berhad (CGC).

UTP Bags 27 Medals At SIRIM Expo

By Nur Ain Nadia Ibrahim

KUALA LUMPUR -- Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) has bagged 27 medals at the SIRIM Invention, Innovation & Technology Expo (SI2TE) 2017. In a statement Wednesday, UTP said this achievement was a testimony of the university's strength in its aspiration to be a centre of innovation and creativity and global prominence. UTP won 13 gold, 11 silver, three bronze and three special awards at the event held from April 18 to April 19 in Kulim, Kedah.

EUMCCI Appoints Tan Sri Rebecca As New Chairperson

KUALA LUMPUR -- The EU-Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (EUMCCI) today announced the appointment of Tan Sri Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria as its new chairperson. Rebecca succeeds Roberto Benetello who was recently appointed the chamber's first Chief Executive Officer, a statement from EUMCCI said Wednesday.

Ab Halim Reappointed MISC Chairman

KUALA LUMPUR -- MISC Bhd has reappointed Datuk Ab Halim Mohyiddin as chairman of the shipping company, effective April 20, 2017, after retiring from the position on the same day. Ab Halim is currently a member of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants and the Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

Powerphase And PLN Sign MoU For Turbophase Application In Indonesia

KUALA LUMPUR -- Powerphase, a global leader in combustion turbine technologies, signed a memorandum of understanding with Indonesia's state power company PT Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN) in Jakarta Wednesday. The signing was in conjunction with the visit of United States Vice President Mike Pence to Indonesia. Under this agreement, both parties will cooperate on a phased implementation plan of Turbophase Dry Air Injection, beginning with a feasibility study and including two 50 MW projects, followed by a full implementation of 2 GW of additional power.

Why Are Global Players Chasing Proton?

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- In Malaysian automotive circles, the guessing game has begun in earnest, as to who would emerge as Proton's foreign strategic partner (FSP) and if a deal is now imminent.

Since bid submissions closed more than two months ago, intense negotiations had been going on behind the scene to become Proton's FSP moving forward, with sometimes volatile swings along the way.

One identified bidder, China's Zhejiang Geely Holding Group or Geely, twice told the international media it had pulled out of negotiations with Proton's parent DRB Hicom Bhd, only to backpedal later as they stayed in the race with hopes of gaining control of Proton.

Industry watchers say Geely's on-again-off-again "love affair" is a reflection of the high stakes games being played without the glare of publicity as negotiations with multiple FSP suitors enter the serious stage.

Locked in feverish talks since the Feb 15 submission deadline are France s PSA Group, which owns Peugeot, Citroen and DS, with Opel and Vauxhall brands recently added, and Zhejiang Geely, owner of Sweden s Volvo and British taxi maker, The London Taxi Company.

MARRIAGE WITH A FSCP

Market observers and analysts say this time, there is every likelihood a marriage with a FSP will happen because the profit motive surmounts all the little details and problems, towards ensuring a successful outcome.

Also, the thinking goes, any decision would be purely commercial.

REWARDS...Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar (six, left) poses with Malaysia's medal winners from the Rio Olympic Games at Proton's centre for excellence in Shah Alam. The winners received a car each from Proton Holdings Bhd -- fotoBERNAMA by Faisal Jaafar. (File picture Sept 14, 2016).

Confirming this was one of the FSPs, with PSA Group Chief Executive Carlos Tavares recently declaring that "the sale of Proton to a successful bidder would be confirmed imminently."

Tavares acknowledged that PSA is not the only party involved in purchasing Proton and that, "the Malaysian authorities say a decision will be made in the second quarter of 2017, meaning an announcement by end- June at the latest."

Proton has become PSA's latest acquisition target to fill a big gap in its ASEAN strategy.

PSA LOOKING FOR A SITE

Europe's second biggest auto manufacturer, PSA Group, is thinking of starting a greenfield automotive plant in Indonesia, to manufacture between 300,000-500,000 cars per annum to sell to the booming 10-country ASEAN market.

PSA plans to build a factory for its Southeast Asia market and is on the look-out for a site either in Indonesia, Thailand or Malaysia, so as to reduce its reliance on the challenging, slow growth European market.

This greenfield approach would cost around US$2 billion and take between three to five years because of the need to purchase large tracts of land, build factories, train several thousand staff from scratch, build an entire vendor eco-system, logistics and the list goes on.

Analysts also say the sheer complexity of setting up a new full-fledged auto manufacturing plant would have been worth it if there was no better route to get a firm footing in the booming ASEAN market.

The key to Proton's future lies in the very essence of its ongoing move in looking for a FSP to bulk up its technology, capital base, research and development, and some quick model changes.
-- BERNAMA

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

BURSA MALAYSIA

Bursa Malaysia To Consolidate Next Week

Range-Bound Play With Upside Bias Expected On Bursa

By Azizul Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia is likely to trade range bound next week with an upside bias.

A dealer said judging from Friday's market closing performance, buying power was greater than selling pressure, and there is a tendency for the local bourse to start another rally to continue its bullish momentum next week.

He said healthy profit-taking was observed with traders reportedly trimming some positions ahead of the long weekend break, but key heavyweights were holding well.

"If Wall Street performs well overnight, the benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) will start Tuesday higher.

"Buying interest had been rotationally distributed with mixed participation of foreign funds, local institutional and retail. Thus, it will be range-bound for the shorter trading week but with an upside bias," he told Bernama.

The market will be closed on Monday (May 1) for the Labour Day public holiday.

Meanwhile, Maybank Investment Bank in a note said it was maintaining the expectation that the FBM KLCI will likely trade between 1,760 and 1,775 in the near-term, with the downside support at 1,729 and 1,715.

Kenanga Investment Bank, however, said the technical indicators of the benchmark index showed signs of rolling over from the oversold levels, suggesting the bulls could take a breather soon.

"If the FBM KLCI fails to garner strength to close above the 1,770 mark, it could look to consolidate.

"Overhead resistance is seen at 1,776 and 1,800, with support at 1,743 and 1,727," it added.

Weekly turnover for the shorter week shed to 13.76 billion units, worth RM11.90 billion, from 14.29 billion units, worth RM11.31 billion recorded last week.

Main Market volume contracted to 8.93 billion shares worth RM11.19 billion, from last week's 9.85 billion shares worth RM10.65 billion.

FOREX: Ringgit To Trade Firmer Against US Dollar On Buying Support

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is likely to trade firmer on improved buying support against the US dollar next week, moreso, if the greenback loses steam over US President Donald Trump's policies.

OANDA Senior Trader Stephen Innes said the positioning of investors for the ringgit is light amid the oil market's balancing act of striving to remain at front and centre. He said the risk of weaker oil prices remains during the course of the year due to constant supply from shale oil producers.

“Next week could also offer some challenges with the US Federal Open Market Committee meeting. With so much priced out of US Federal Reserve (Fed) policy this year, the only real surprise in my view would be a more hawkish lean from it than what the market expects.

“But, with the likelihood of only two US rate increases this year, I do not think this will pose too much of concern to local sentiment and in particular, the Malaysian capital market, which is arguably undervalued compared to its ASEAN counterparts,” said Innes.

For the week just-ended, the ringgit traded higher and moved between 4.3690 and 4.3390 against the US dollar. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the ringgit was also traded higher at 4.3390/3430 against the greenback from 4.3980/4000 last week. It ended mostly higher against other major currencies.

The local note improved against the Singapore dollar at 3.1088/1121 from 3.1466/1485 last week and advanced against the yen to 3.8911/8958 from 4.0286/0315. It rose against the British pound to 5.6129/6198 from 5.6259/6298 last Friday, but declined against the euro at 4.7456/7508 from 4.7076/7111.

Money Market To Remain Stable Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The money market is expected to remain stable next week on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention to mop up surplus liquidity from the financial system. The central bank is expected to conduct daily tenders to reduce excess liquidity from the financial market.

For the week just-ended, BNM intervened on a daily basis to absorb excess funds by conducting Qard, reverse repo, range maturity auction conventional money market and Commodity Murabahah Programme tenders.

On Friday, the central bank”s action helped to reduce the market's total liquidity surplus to RM29.08 billion in the conventional system and RM10.80 billion in Islamic funds.

The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 2.96 per cent and the one-week, two and three-week rates stood at 3.02 per cent, 3.06 per cent and 3.11 per cent respectively. The benchmark three-month interbank rate was unchanged at 3.43 per cent.

KLCI Futures Likely To Trend Higher Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Technical indicators suggest that the FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract is likely to trend higher next week, RHB Research Institute said.

Based on the daily chart, it said, the immediate support level is predicted at 1,750 points and towards the upside, the near-term resistance level is maintained at 1,784 points, followed by the 1,800-point psychological spot. “Thus, we advise traders to maintain long positions.

“A new trailing-stop can be set below the 1,750-pt mark to minimise the downside risk,” it added. Meanwhile, for the week just-ended, the market was mostly higher, in tandem with the firmer underlying cash market.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, April 2017 advanced 14.5 points to 1,769.00, May 2017 rose 11.5 points to 1,759.00, June 2017 rose 7.5 points to 1,754.50, while September 2017 was three points better at 1,751.00.

Turnover for the week was significantly higher at 82,202 lots from 25,264 lots recorded last Friday, while open interest increased to 49,079 contracts from 38,863 contracts previously. On Friday, the benchmark FBM KLCI ended 0.14 of-a-point higher at 1,768.06.

CPO Futures To Trade Between RM2,400 And RM2,500

KUALA LUMPUR -- Crude palm oil (CPO) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is expected to trade between RM2,400 and RM2,500 next week, supported by overseas demand, said a dealer.

Interband Group of Companies Senior Palm Oil Trader Jim Teh said strong overseas demand would come from the Middle East and Pakistan, ahead of Ramadan, which is expected to be in late May.

Another dealer said palm oil would continue to move in tandem with soyaoil on the Chicago Board of Trade next week where both would be competing for the same export destinations.

The weekly trading will be shorter due to the market being closed on Monday for the Labour Day holiday.

CPO prices settled mixed for the week just-ended, in tracking the ringgit and crude oil movement, as well as the soybean market.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, spot month May 2017 increased RM25 to RM2,694 a tonne, June 2017 gained RM4 to RM2,592 a tonne, July 2017 decreased RM22 to RM2,508 a tonne and August 2017 went down RM36 to RM2,456 a tonne.

Weekly turnover declined to 190,325 lots from 297,183 lots last week, while open interest fell to 255,047 contracts from 275,088 contracts. On the physical market, May South remained at RM2,720 per tonne

Rubber Market To Remain Quiet Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is expected to remain quiet next week on a lack of catalysts, said a dealer.

He added that the local market's movement would depend on the performance of rubber futures prices on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM) and the Shanghai Futures Exchange, as well as the ringgit and movement of oil prices.

For the week just-ended, the market traded lower to mixed in tracking external factors, mainly the movement of TOCOM. The market was closed on Monday for the installation of the 15th Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the Malaysian Rubber Board's noon price for SMR 20 declined by 11.5 sen to 680.5 sen a kg, while latex-in-bulk eased 15.5 sen to 598.0 sen a kg.

The 5 pm unofficial closing price for SMR 20 improved 17 sen to 695.0 sen a kg, while latex-in-bulk slipped 12 sen to 600.0 sen a kg.

KLIBOR Futures To Remain Quiet Next Week

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

A dealer said this is due to the absence of market catalysts.

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

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, May 2017 stayed at 96.54, June 2017 remained pegged at 96.52, July 2017 was unchanged at 96.50 and September 2017 stood at 96.48.

The underlying three-month KLIBOR on the cash market remained at 3.43 per cent on Friday.

KLTM To See Range-Bound Trading Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) will likely see range-bound trading next week with the metal price moving between US$19,800 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).

He said the local tin price is also expected to strengthen on continued high demand momentum.

“However, with the KLTM having gone up quite high in the past two weeks , it might trigger a technical correction and price adjustment next week,” he told Bernama.

As for the week just-ended, the KLTM traded mixed. It was down for the first two days of the trading week (Tuesday and Wednesday) but rebounded on Thursday and Friday.

The market was closed on Monday for the Yang DiPertuan Agong’s coronation.

On a Friday to Friday comparison, the KLTM price closed flat at US$19,850 a tonne.

For the four-day trading week, weekly turnover increased to 193 tonnes from the 166 tonnes recorded last week, while the price differential between the KLTM and London Metal Exchange, was at a premium of US$20 a tonne compared with a discount of US$25 a tonne last Friday.

Gold Futures Likely To Consolidate With Upside Bias

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gold futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to consolidate with an upside bias next week, as investors look to the United States (US) gross domestic product (GDP) results.

News reports stated that the US economy’s output grew at the slowest pace in three years during the first quarter, underscoring the challenges facing US President Donald Trump administration, as it seeks to rev up economic growth.

Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd Dealer Ong Su Ling said gold prices may be capped at between RM176.50 and RM178.00 a gramme next week. “Due to the lacklustre performance in US growth, the greenback may further weaken and boost the gold market.

“On a political note, the upcoming run-off in the French elections may affect investor sentiment negatively towards safe-haven assets if the centrist candidate, Emmanuel Macron, who is largely favoured by financial markets is chosen in the next election,” she told Bernama.

Meanwhile, the local bourse will be closed on Monday in conjunction with the Labour Day. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, April 2017 fell 82 ticks to RM176.60 a gramme, May 2017 eased 76 ticks to RM176.40 a gramme, June 2017 dipped 66 ticks to RM176.40 a gramme and July 2017 declined 53 ticks to RM176.75 a gramme.

Turnover for the week rose to 67 lots worth RM1.192 million from 39 lots worth RM705,100 last week. Open interest on a Friday-to-Friday basis was lower at 277 contracts from 290 contracts previously.