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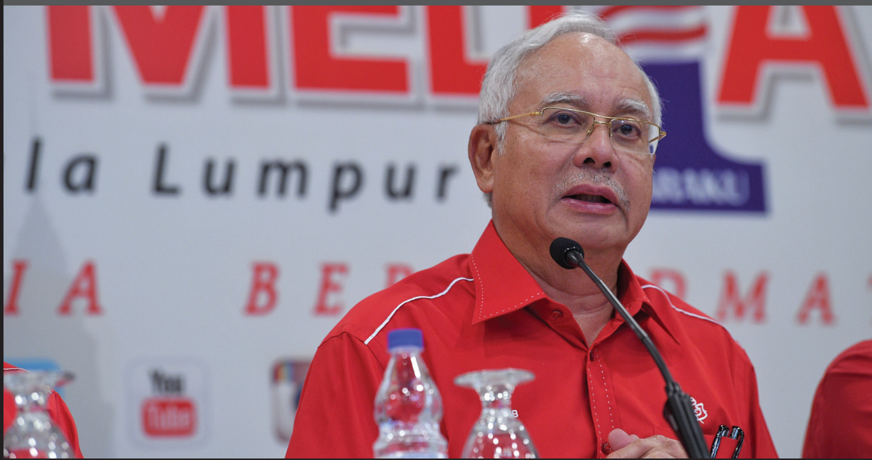
This Week's Highlight :
Business, Consumer Confidence At Higher Level - PM



UMNO President Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak speaking at a press conference after chairing the party's Supreme Council meeting at Menara Dato Onn in Kuala Lumpur Tuesday. -- fotoBERNAMA by Adib Hasri

KUALA LUMPUR -- The business and consumer confidence for Malaysia is now at a higher level, driven by the prevailing conducive economic environment, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. "The economic climate in the country, where the ringgit is strong, Bursa Malaysia at the highest level in three years, low inflation and also unemployment at around four per cent, show that the policies implemented by the government have borne encouraging results," he said after chairing the UMNO Supreme Council meeting here Tuesday.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

Be Relentless In Seeking New Markets, Malaysian Cos Told

PUTRAJAYA -- Malaysian companies should capitalise on the nation's position as one of the world's top 25 exporting nations by becoming relentless in seeking new markets, diversifying their products and creating new jobs for young people. "We cannot afford to sit still," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said at the 'Future Begins Tonight' dinner organised by the Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce (DPMM) at Seri Perdana, here Monday.

TUESDAY

Bond, Equity Markets Record RM5 Bln Inflows Last Dec

KUALA LUMPUR --The Malaysian financial markets performed strongly in December last year, with non-resident inflows into the bond and equity markets totalling RM4.1 billion and RM0.9 billion respectively, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) said Tuesday. The central bank said the increased demand for ringgit financial assets during the month was supported by improved investor sentiments amid an upward revision in Malaysia's growth outlook by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

WEDNESDAY

MAHB Implements Improvement Initiatives At KLIA

KUALA LUMPUR -- A slew of improvement initiatives are being executed at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) this year to cater to increasing growth in passenger traffic movement, said Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd Wednesday. Managing Director, Datuk Badlisham Ghazali said in a statement, the airport operator had started the year by implementing immediate quick-wins that had gained positive feedback from the public and netizens, respectively.

THURSDAY

Malaysia Heading Towards Growth This Year - Salleh Said

KUALA LUMPUR -- The 5.5 per cent economic growth forecast for this year places Malaysia in the superb nations category, said Communications and Multimedia Minister Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak. In his jotting on his official blog Thursday, he said the economic growth forecast was far better than that of the United States, 2.5 per cent, UK (1.4), Japan (1.4) Germany (2.4) and Singapore (2.5), to simultaneously dispel the impression often given by the opposition that Malaysia would go bankrupt.

FRIDAY

Nikkei Malaysia Manufacturing PMI Rises to 50.5 In Jan

KUALA LUMPUR -- The headline Nikkei Malaysia Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 50.5 in January 2018 from 49.9 in December, with a marginal improvement in operating conditions across the country's manufacturing sector. "Malaysia's goods-producing sector recorded a renewed increase in new business at the start of the first quarter," said IHS Markit, a financial information services provider Friday.

SMEbrief

Mustapa Seeks Better Access For Malaysian SMEs In India

By Shakir Husain

NEW DELHI -- International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed has sought better access for Malaysian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) keen to enter the Indian market. He said SMEs from Malaysia and other ASEAN countries faced a high bar of regulatory and compliance costs in India and this should be rectified. The problem does not affect "the big boys" as much but the cost is especially prohibitive for SMEs, he told Bernama in an interview during his visit here last week. "We would like to get better access for our SMEs. There is a perception (among ASEAN businesses) that it is difficult to sell products in India. That is the perception because of a number of compliance costs and so many regulations," he said. Mustapa said he wanted practical steps to be taken to encourage greater cooperation among Malaysian and Indian SMEs. "Malaysian big companies are in India and Indian big companies are in Malaysia. We need smaller companies, SMEs in particular," he said.

Eight Malaysian SMEs In MATRADE's EAM To Bangkok

By Mohd Haikal Mohd Isa

BANGKOK -- Eight Malaysian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) under the Best Exporters Programme are participating in the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) Export Acceleration Mission (EAM) to Bangkok. The two-day mission from Tuesday is in collaboration with the Bumiputera Agenda Steering Unit (TERAJU) and SME Bank. According to MATRADE's Trade Counsellor in Thailand, Norman Dzulkarnain Mohd Nasri, the programme was an effective platform to gain further information on the country's market and facilitate further integration into the global network. "This mission is targeting high potential sectors in Thailand, such as ICT, medical devices, lifestyle products as well as fast-moving consumer goods. There will be business-matching sessions with Thai companies and site visits arranged by MATRADE Bangkok,' he told Bernama here.

PropUP — Property update

Malaysia's Property Market To Remain Weak 1H

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian property market is expected to remain weak in the first half of this year amid flagging demand ahead of the upcoming general election, an independent property consultant said. Knight Frank Malaysia, a unit of London-based Knight Frank LLP, said Monday, the property market was expected to continue its lacklustre momentum from the second half of last year as the performance was derailed by oversupplied position in the main sub-sectors such as high-end residential, office and retail.

57 Pct Of Malaysians To Buy Properties This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- PropertyGuru Malaysia's latest consumer sentiment survey showed that 57 per cent of buyers in the country looking to transact properties in the next six months. Country Manager, Sheldon Fernandez said a significant number of buyers had modified their budgets and more prepared to transact. "With smaller budgets, they perhaps are better able to buy a property, which may have contributed to improving sentiment," he said in a statement Monday.

Amprop JV Acquires Madrid Residential Project

KUALA LUMPUR -- Amcorp Properties Bhd (Amprop) and its joint-venture (JV) partner, Grosvenor Europe Investments Limited, have acquired a residential development project in the sought-after Chamberi district in Madrid, Spain. "The JV will develop 15 exclusive apartments and two penthouses set in a seven-storey building in consultation with the prestigious architectural firm, Cano Y Escario," Amprop said in a statement Tuesday.

Hilton To Open 3 More Garden Inns In Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR -- Global hotel brand Hilton plans to open another three Hilton Garden Inn in the country within the next two years, after the opening of the hotel in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman North here last December. Hilton Malaysia Regional General Manager Jamie Mead said Tuesday, the hotel has been getting good response since it began operations, given its good value, strategic location and Hilton quality hospitality.

80,000 Units RUMAWIP Housing Target Achievable This Year

PUTRAJAYA -- The target of developing 80,000 units under the Federal Territories Affordable Housing (RUMAWIP) programme can be achieved this year, ahead of the initial deadline of 2020, said Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor Wednesday. He said that so far more than 80 per cent of the target had been achieved in the three territories of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan in the 'ready', 'under construction' and 'development order' categories.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard
Gainers - 404
Losers - 610
Not Traded - 441
Unchanged - 404
Value - 3250682081
Volume - 26124411

Bursa Malaysia Ends Mixed

KUALA LUMPUR Bursa Malaysia finished mixed on the last day of a short trading week, as negative sentiments in global equities have spilled over to the local stock market, however, the stronger ringgit and crude oil prices provided some support for oil and gas counters. Market breadth was negative with losers thumping gainers 610 to 404, while 404 counters were unchanged, 441 untraded and 45 others suspended. Turnover was lower at 2.61 billion units worth RM3.25 billion from Tuesday's 3.25 billion units valued at RM2.89 billion. Malaysian shares resumed trading Friday after markets were closed on Wednesday and Thursday due to the Thaipusam and Federal Territory Day public holidays, respectively. Hong Leong Investment Bank Bhd said the resumption of foreign buying and local positive sentiment could lend support to the local bourse. The Main Market volume declined to 1.70 billion units valued at RM3.09 billion from Tuesday's 1.97 billion units valued at RM2.70 billion.

FOREX: Ringgit Closes Higher Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit closed higher against the US dollar Friday on improved sentiment after the US Federal Reserve kept its interest rate unchanged, a dealer said. At 6 pm, the local note ended at 3.8850/8880 against the greenback from 3.8975/8995 on Tuesday. FXTM Research Analyst, Lukman Otunuga, said the US dollar weakened against its major peers as investors closely evaluated the fundamental factors that were weighing heavily on the currency. He said key event risk would be the US jobs report for January, which should offer fresh insights into the health of the US labour market. "With the US dollar clearly in need of a lifeline, it will be interesting to see if January's US jobs report comes to the rescue," he said in a statement Friday. The ringgit closed mixed against a basket of major currencies. It strengthened against the Singapore dollar to 2.9575/9618 from Tuesday's 2.9711/9731 and appreciated versus the yen to 3.5354/5387 from 3.5869/5897 previously. It went down against the euro to 4.8508/8553 from 4.8317/8358 on Tuesday and depreciated against the British pound to 5.5229/5283 from 5.4842/4889 previously.

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	3.8850	3.8880
EUR	4.8508	4.8553
GBP	5.5229	5.5283
100 YEN	3.5354	3.5387
SGD	2.9575	2.9618

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

Money-Market: Short-Term Rates Close Steady On BNM's Intervention

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates closed steady Friday on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention to reduce surplus liquidity from the financial system. The liquidity surplus in the conventional system declined to RM30.89 billion from RM43.8 billion in the morning, while in the Islamic system, it fell to RM12.3 billion from RM18.09 billion. BNM earlier called for two tenders comprising a Range Maturity Auction and an Islamic Range Maturity Auction. The central bank also conducted a RM30.1 billion conventional money market tender and a RM11.8 billion Qard money market tender, both for three-day money. BNM revised its conventional overnight tender to RM30.1 billion from RM28.8 billion. The overnight Islamic reference rate was at 3.19 per cent, while the one-week, two and three-week rates stood at 3.26 per cent, 3.30 per cent and 3.34 per cent respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Contract Closes Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended untraded Friday. Spot month February 2018, March 2018, April 2018 and June 2018 were pegged at 96.35, 96.32, 96.30 and 96.27, respectively. Both volume and open interest remained nil. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.69 per cent versus 3.68 per cent previously.

KLCI Futures Contract Ends Lower

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended lower Friday despite the mixed performance of the cash market. At the close, February 2018 and March 2018 erased 3.5 points to 1,862 and 1,860, respectively while June 2018 was one point lower at 1,859 and new contract month, September 2018, fell 1.5 points to 1,861. Turnover declined to 5,644 lots from 10,657 lots on Tuesday, while open interest eased to 36,634 contracts from 44,703 contracts. The underlying benchmark FBM KLCI finished 1.90 points lower at 1,870.48.

Hong Leong Bank Announces Increase In Base Rate

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hong Leong Bank Bhd and its wholly-owned subsidiary, Hong Leong Islamic Bank Bhd have increased their Base Rate / Islamic Base Rate (BR) and Fixed Deposit Rate/Fixed Deposit-i Rate by 0.25 per cent, effective Jan 30, 2018. This is in line with Bank Negara Malaysia's Overnight Policy Rate increase from 3.00 per cent to 3.25 per cent, Hong Leong Bank announced in a statement Monday.

PTPTN Declares Four Pct Dividend For SSPN1M In 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- The National Higher Education Fund Corporation (PTPTN) has declared a four per cent dividend for its two savings products SSPN-i and SSPN-i Plus under its 1Malaysia National Education Savings Scheme (SSPN1M) 2017. Its chairman Datuk Dr Shamsul Anuar Nasarah said on Monday, the dividends amounted to RM92.56 million and will benefit more than 3.2 million SSPN1M depositors.

Poor Planning Main Cause Of Financial Problems - AKPK

KUALA LUMPUR -- The two main culprits of the financial problems faced by individuals seeking help from the Debt Management and Counselling Agency (AKPK) are poor planning and high cost of living, said Chief Executive Officer, Azaddin Ngah Tasir. He said on Monday, AKPK's data showed that 43.3 per cent of those seeking help was due to poor financial planning, followed by high cost of living at 21.8 per cent, and business slowdown and failure (14.5 per cent).

OCBC To Raise Lending And FD Rates By 0.25 Pct

KUALA LUMPUR -- OCBC Bank (Malaysia) Bhd and its subsidiary, OCBC Al-Amin Bank Bhd, will increase the base rate, base lending rate (BLR) and base financing rate (BFR) by 0.25 per cent, effective Feb 2, 2018. This was in line with Bank Negara Malaysia's recent overnight policy rate increase, it said in a statement here Monday.

RHB Eyes 15,000 Cardholders For New Corporate MyDebit Card

KUALA LUMPUR -- RHB Banking Group targets to secure a five per cent take-up rate from the estimated 300,000 small and medium enterprise and corporate customer base to sign up for its new RHB Corporate MyDebit Card this year. The Corporate MyDebit Card was meant for business payments made to local government agencies, RHB Banking Group Managing Director, Datuk Khairussaleh Ramli said on Monday.

AKPK Expands Role To Help Potential Bankrupts

KUALA LUMPUR -- Debt Management and Counselling Agency (AKPK) has expanded its role to become a nominee under the Voluntary Arrangement (VA) service, a rescue mechanism to help potential bankrupts. Chief Executive Officer, Azaddin Ngah Tasir told reporters Monday, the new service would provide debtors an opportunity to negotiate a debt repayment plan with creditors and avoid bankruptcy.

PIDM Releases 2018-2020 Corporate Plan

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Deposit Insurance Corporation (PIDM) released its Corporate Plan 2018 – 2020 Summary here Monday. As an integral part of the Malaysian financial safety net system, PIDM has been mandated to protect the interest of depositors and takaful and insurance policy owners against the failure of any member institution, and to contribute to or promote financial system stability, it said in a statement Monday.

RHB Group Ups Base Rate, BLR By 25 Basis Points

KUALA LUMPUR -- RHB Banking Group will be revising its base rate (BR) and base lending rate (BLR) by 25 basis points effective Feb 2, 2018, in line with the increase in the overnight policy rate (OPR) by Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM). In a statement Tuesday, RHB Banking said, RHB Bank Bhd, RHB Islamic Bank Bhd and RHB Investment Bank Bhd woult raise their BRs from 3.65 per cent to 3.90 per cent per annum, and would also revise the BLRs from 6.60 per cent to 6.85 per cent per annum.

Affin Bank To Replace Affin Holdings' Listing On Feb 2

KUALA LUMPUR -- Affin Bank Bhd will be listed on Bursa Malaysia on Feb 2 in place of Affin Holdings Bhd. This follows the completion of its reorganisation exercise, which saw Affin Holdings distributing all of its shares in Affin Bank to its shareholders. In a statement Tuesday, Affin Bank said hence, Affin Holdings has become a dormant company, to be wound up in due course, while the bank would spearhead the future growth of the Affin Bank Group.

Bank Muamalat Clarifies New Rates

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Maumalat clarifies that in line with Bank Negara Malaysia's decision to increase the overnight policy rate to 3.25 per cent, effective Feb 6, 2018, it would increase its base rate (BR) from 3.75 per cent to 3.95 per cent per annum, and not 4.00 per cent as announced earlier. The base financing rate (BFR) was revised to 6.95 per cent from 6.75 per cent per annum and not to 7.00 per annum, the bank said in a statement Friday.

Prestariang Unit Bags RM222.6 Mln Contract From MoF

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prestariang Bhd's wholly-owned unit, Prestariang Systems Sdn Bhd (PSSB), will continue to be the sole Microsoft licensing solutions provider for all government agencies after bagging a contract extension worth about RM222.6 million from the Ministry of Finance (MoF). In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, Prestariang said the contract extension is for a period of three years from Feb 1, 2018 to Jan 31, 2021.

MPI Pre-Tax Profit Slips To RM59.4 Mln In Q2

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian Pacific Industries Bhd's (MPI) pre-tax profit for the second quarter (Q2) ended Dec 31, 2017 eased to RM59.4 million from RM79.6 million in the same period a year ago. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, MPI said revenue also declined to RM395.3 million in the quarter under review from RM401.4 million previously.

Mercedes-Benz Malaysia Commercial Vehicles Records Sales Of 2,469 In 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Mercedes-Benz Malaysia Commercial Vehicles (MBM CV) delivered a strong performance, recording a total of 2,469 vehicles sold in 2017, despite the 7.9 per cent dip in Total Industry Volume (TIV) last year. The commercial vehicles comprised FUSO light-duty and heavy-duty trucks, as well as Mercedes-Benz trucks and vans. "Despite the dip in TIV, MBM CV continues to be a strong supporter of the transport and haulage industry, attributing its robust performance in 2017 to its strategy of placing customers at the centre of its initiatives," it said in a statement Monday.

TMC Life Eyeing More M&As In FY18

PETALING JAYA -- Healthcare provider TMC Life Sciences Bhd (TMC Life) is planning for more mergers and acquisitions (M&A) in the medical and healthcare-related business for the financial year ending Aug 31, 2018 (FY18). Group Chief Executive Officer/ Executive Director, Roy Quek told reporters Monday, the group was eyeing more M&A activities in both Malaysia and overseas, especially Southeast Asia and China, to expand its scale and to serve more patients.

MBSB Pre-Tax Profit Soars To RM550.7 Mln In FY17

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Building Society Bhd (MBSB) announced its pre-tax profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2017 (FY17) surged 62.74 per cent to RM550.73 million from RM338.42 million in FY16. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, MBSB said the substantial increase in profit was mainly attributed to the lower cost of funds and lower allowances for the impairment losses on financing, loans and advances. Revenue, however, declined slightly to RM3.26 billion from RM3.27 billion previously.

Pintaras Jaya Unit Bags RM68.5 Mln Bina Puri Job

KUALA LUMPUR -- Pintaras Geotechnics Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned unit of Pintaras Jaya Bhd, has secured a RM68.5 million contract for the execution and completion of piling and sub-structure works for Bina Puri Development Sdn Bhd. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, the company said, the contract works were for a proposed project comprising 54-level office suites with roof-top recreational facilities, two blocks of 63-level serviced apartments with roof-top recreational facilities, food

court, commercial lots and car parks located at Section 69, Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

Lotte Chemical Titan's FY17 Pre-Tax Profit Falls To RM1.14 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Lotte Chemical Titan Holding Bhd's pre-tax profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2017 fell to RM1.14 billion from RM1.71 billion in FY2016. Revenue declined to RM7.82 billion from RM8.13 billion previously primarily due to reduced plant load at its Indonesian polyethylene plant and decreased sales volume of by-products, it said in filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday.

IATA Optimistic Over Global Air Freight Outlook In 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- The outlook for global air freight in 2018 is optimistic with expectations of a very healthy 4.5 per cent expansion of demand. International Air Transport Association (IATA) Director-General and Chief Executive Officer Alexandre de Juniac said in a statement Thursday, consumer confidence is buoyant. "We see growing strength in international e-commerce and the transport of time- and temperature-sensitive goods such as pharmaceuticals," de Juniac said.

Hoya Recorded High Revenue In 3rd Quarter Of 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hoya Corp, a Tokyo-based global medical technology company, has announced its financial results for the third quarter ending Dec 31, 2017. Hoya, in a statement Friday said revenue increased by 11.6 per cent year on year, reaching US$1.25 million while the profit growth led to quarterly profit before tax of US$316, 309 with US$252,870 in profit, representing increases of 6.8 per cent and 10.6 per cent, respectively.

Shinsegae Mamee To Develop Korean Flavours For Halal Market

KUALA LUMPUR -- Shinsegae Mamee Sdn Bhd, a joint-venture between Mamee-Double Decker Sdn Bhd and South Korea's Shinsegae Food, will produce authentic Korean flavours for the regional halal market. Mamee Executive Chef Faizul Hazly was sent on a 52-day mission to Korea since Jan 26, 2018 to understand Korean culture, flavour palette and food, Shinsegae Mamee said in a statement Monday. Chief Executive Officer Vuitton Pang said the global halal food market is anticipated to reach US$2.55 trillion (US$1=RM3.87) by 2024.

Malaysia Becomes World's First AI-Enabled Stethoscope Production Base

KUALA LUMPUR -- M3DICINE, an Australian private medical device design and manufacturing company, has made Malaysia the production base for Stethee - the world's first Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled stethoscope system. In a joint statement Monday, the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), M3DICINE and Collaborative Research in Engineering, Science and Technology (CREST) stated that M3DICINE Technology Sdn Bhd, the Malaysian unit of M3DICINE, together with its strategic partner, CREST, has launched the high technology product.

Lelong.my Acquires Full-Fledged Digital Marketing Agency, Mataris Agency

KUALA LUMPUR -- Lelong.my, a Malaysian e-commerce player, has acquired Mataris Agency, a digital marketing agency, paving the way for the 20-year-old online marketplace with over 1.3 million products, to put its best foot forward in the area of digital marketing. In a statement Tuesday, Lelong.my's Managing Director, Richard Tan, said the acquisition of Mataris Agency and appointment of its Founder, Cyril Dhenaut, as Lelong.my's Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) were strategic approaches to the company's business direction.

Kuantan Port Gets Approval To Set Up Free Port Zone

KUANTAN -- The Finance Ministry has given approval to Kuantan Port to set up a free port zone, according to Kuantan Port Consortium Sdn Bhd (KPC). In a statement here Tuesday, the company said work on the zone was already underway together with the expansion of the port and was expected to operational by the end of this year.

QSR Brands To Invest RM100 Mln To Open 35 KFC Outlets This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- QSR Brands (M) Holdings Bhd plans to open over 35 new KFC outlets nationwide this year with investments of over RM100 million, said Managing Director, Datuk Mohamed Azahari Mohamed Kamil. He told reporters Tuesday the company would spend between RM3 million and RM4 million for each outlet. "We have the financial and operation capacity as well as the commitment of our shareholders to expand our business this year, in line with the country's strong economic growth," he said.

Int'l Reserves As At End-Dec 2017 Remained Usable -- BNM

KUALA LUMPUR -- The detailed breakdown of international reserves under the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (IMF SDDS) format indicated that as of end-December last year, the country's reserves remained usable, said Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Tuesday. The central bank said in accordance with the format, the detailed breakdown of international reserves provided forward-looking information on the size, composition and usability of reserves and other foreign currency assets. Bank Negara said official reserve assets amounted to US$102.44 billion (US$1=RM3.89), while other foreign currency assets amounted to US$1.79 billion as of end-Dec 2017.

Licensed Money Changers Have Adequate Supply Of Currencies -- BNM

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) has assured the public that the recent incident of currency theft as reported in the media has not affected the overall supply of currencies for money changers to meet demand. In a statement Tuesday, BNM said consumers could continue to obtain and exchange foreign currencies at licensed money changers located throughout the country.

Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd Raises BR To 3.90 Pct

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd (BIMB) is revising its Base Rate (BR) from 3.65 per cent to 3.90 per cent and Base Financing Rate from 6.60 per cent to 6.85 per cent, effective Tuesday. Chief Executive Officer, Khairul Kamarudin said in a statement Tuesday, the rate revision was due to the rise in Bank Negara Malaysia's Overnight Policy Rate by 25 basis points to 3.25 per cent.

Honda Malaysia Invests RM11 Mln To Expand Parts Warehouse

KUALA LUMPUR -- Honda Malaysia Sdn Bhd has completed phase two expansion of its parts warehouse in Shah Alam to further support rising after-sales demand, which grows in tandem with the increased sales and service intakes. In a statement Friday, the company said it had invested RM11 million to expand the storage capacity of the current warehouse to a total built-up area of 21,700 square metres, to support the parts requirements of its 93 dealers in Malaysia.

Opening Of Dream Zone In MAPS Postponed To March

IPOH -- Theme park lovers have to wait a little bit longer as the opening of the Dream Zone, which features Dreamworks animated characters at the Movie Animation Park Studios (MAPS) here has been postponed from mid-January to March. Chairman of the State Industry, Investment and Corridor Development Committee Datuk Mohamad Zahir Abdul Khalid told reporters Monday, this was because certain things, including the technical aspects, still had to be improved.

Quill City Mall To Introduce Asia Music City

KUALA LUMPUR -- Quill City Mall Kuala Lumpur will introduce a new concept, Asia Music City, to attract more visitors and to give a new vibe to the mall's identity at Asia's first integrated lifestyle hub that offers music and entertainment retail. Quill Retail Malls Sdn Bhd centre manager, Alan Cheong said a press conference Monday, the hub would consist of more than 50 music and entertainment-related outlets that would be available in the mall beginning April.

MDEC, DBKL, Alibaba Team Up To Launch Malaysia City Brain

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) has announced a collaboration with Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and Alibaba Cloud to catalyst Malaysia's artificial intelligence (AI) ecosystem through the introduction of the Malaysia City Brain initiative. MDEC Chief Executive Officer Datuk Yasmin Mahmood told reporters Monday, the Malaysia City Brain platform is currently undergoing a pilot phase, after obtaining the proof of concept (POC) from the government in August last year.

SMTrack Enters Into JV To Serve O&G Market

KUALA LUMPUR -- Online track and trace solutions provider, SMTrack Bhd, is entering into a joint venture (JV) with VFTech Sdn Bhd to provide a vessel fuel intelligent tracking system for the oil and gas (O&G) market. SMTrack Executive Director, Azmi Osman told a media briefing Monday, the collaboration was still at a preliminary stage, with more discussions required before the system could be commercialised.

TPM, South Korean Firm To Collaborate On Re Power Generation

KUALA LUMPUR -- Technology Park Malaysia Corporation Sdn Bhd (TPM) and Green Planet Energy Co. Ltd. (GPE) of South Korea Tuesday inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly collaborate in the renewable energy (RE) large-scale solar farm and biomass projects. Upon the signing of a definitive agreement between both parties, TPM was expected to become the exclusive distributor representative/ resources of GPE's solar-powered products, with technical support, in Malaysia for the next 10 years, TPM said in a statement Tuesday.

BIMB Appoints Ambrin Buang As New Chairman

KUALA LUMPUR -- BIMB Holdings Bhd has appointed the former Auditor-General, Tan Sri Ambrin Buang, as its new Independent and Non-Executive Chairman. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, BIMB said the appointment would take effect on Feb 2, 2018. Ambrin currently holds the position of Chairman for Alliance IFA (M) Sdn Bhd and Lingkaran Trans Kota Holdings Bhd.

Fitbit Unveils Smartwatch For Health, Fitness Enthusiasts

KUALA LUMPUR -- Fitbit Tuesday launched its latest advanced flagship smartwatch for health and fitness enthusiasts – Fitbit Ionic. Fitbit Southeast Asia, Hong Kong, and Taiwan Country Manager, Louis Lye said at the launch Tuesday, Ionic was built on Fitbit's health and fitness expertise with a new relative sensor, making it possible to track deeper health insights like sleep apnea, industry-leading global positioning system tracking, improved heart rate technology and other advanced features.

Malaysia In Belt & Road Int'l Food Expo 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will be holding the first Belt and Road International Food Expo (BRIFE 2018) at AsiaWord-Expo, Hong Kong on June 27 to 29. Under the theme, 'Steering World Food Industries to New Opportunities', the expo aims to facilitate trade and provide an international platform for buyers, sellers and service providers in the food industry to gather and explore opportunities. BRI, in a statement Tuesday said the expo would provide 1,200 booths with the participation of exhibitors and buyers from over 35 countries, including Malaysia.

CIPPE 2018 Gathers 1,800 Petroleum & Petrochemical Cos

KUALA LUMPUR -- The 18th China International Petroleum and Petrochemical Technology and Equipment Exhibition (CIPPE 2018) will be held on March 27 to 29, gathering almost 1,800 companies at New China International Exhibition Centre, Beijing. In a statement Tuesday, it said over 300 professional buyer delegations would converge at the 90,000- square metre exhibition space with the world's top 50 oil companies including Malaysia's fully integrated oil and gas multinational company, Petroliam Nasional Berhad (Petronas).

Ringgit To Oscillate Between 3.80 To 3.95 Q1

By Sharifah Pirdaus Syed Ali

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- The Malaysian ringgit is expected to gradually strengthen against the US dollar in the near term and oscillate between 3.80 to 3.95 in the first quarter, if the upward momentum continues, said economists. MIDF Amanah Investment Bank Bhd Chief Economist, Dr Kamaruddin Mohd Nor said in general, Asian currencies including the ringgit, were gaining traction again the US dollar in recent weeks as the weaker trend of the greenback continued.

Ringgit Expected To Gradually Strengthen Against US Dollar. -- fotoBERNAMA by Dayana Nabila Shaipul Anuar

“This has resulted in investors shifting their perception towards changes in monetary policies and growth expectations, to influence their investment decision. “The weaker US dollar, as well as a host of other supporting factors like the positive macroeconomics performance and favourable outlook of the country, supported the strengthening of the ringgit,” he told Bernama.

However, moving forward, the upward momentum of the ringgit could be hindered by weaker than expected growth, weakening commodity prices, a slow down in international trade and heightened political risk, he said.

6-8 PER CENT UNDERVALUED

Meanwhile, RHB Banking Group’s Chief Economist and Head of Research, Dr Arup Raha said as the ringgit was believed to be about 6-8 per cent undervalued at current levels, and with currencies typically overshot, the local unit could further strengthen. But, he said the movement of the ringgit would depend a lot on overseas developments, in particular in the US and in oil markets. Although the recent US government shutdown was viewed as temporary and not something to be worried about by the market, Arup said the US debt ceiling which had to be raised in March, remained a nettlesome problem and would spook markets if a deal was ever in doubt. “A lot depends on how toxic the politics is in the US and against this backdrop, the US dollar could weaken or the ringgit strengthen. “On the other hand if you got strong inflation numbers in the US, and markets started recalculating their projections for US rates, that would be US dollar positive or ringgit negative,” he added.

NET EXPORTER

On another note, against regional peers, Arup said the main factor that distinguishing the ringgit from other regional currencies was the oil price given Malaysia’s position as a net exporter of the commodity. In 2017, for example, the ringgit weakened versus the Singapore dollar in the first half and strengthened in the second half, largely due to the run up in oil prices, he said.

“It tells you that while the ringgit has been strong versus the greenback , it was not viewed as a strong currency on a regional basis, until oil prices rallied,” Arup added. Moving forward, he said, oil prices were not expected to firm much from here, and over the medium term, should, in fact, come down. Arup projected Brent crude prices to average around US$64 a barrel for this year.

-- BERNAMA

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

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

Bursa Malaysia To Consolidate Next Week

By Harizah Hanim Mohamed

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia is expected to consolidate next week as investors price in the probability of a US interest rate hike from the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting scheduled for March. Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research, Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said investors were forecasting four interest rate hikes for the year, although the FOMC meeting held this week, left the interest rate unchanged.

"The day of low interest rates has ended and Bank Negara Malaysia has also revised the overnight policy rate.The US is also expected to do the same, especially with inflation anticipated to rise this year," he told Bernama.

For next week, he said, the benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) would likely be at the 1,860-level. Commenting on the stocks, Nazri Khan said banking stocks would receive a spillover effect, as the local banking industry's loan growth was expected to rise by four per cent.

MIXED TRADING

For the week just-ended, Bursa Malaysia traded mixed, reflecting its Asian peers. Bursa Malaysia was closed on Wednesday and Thursday for the Thaipusam and Federal Territory Day holidays respectively. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the FBM KLCI rose 16.56 points to end the week at 1,870.48. The FBM Emas Index added 2.08 points to 13,376.58 and the FBMT 100 Index increased 25.0 points to 13,071.72, as the FBM Emas Shariah Index gained 605.10 points to 13,651.82.The FBM 70 was down 274.98 points to 16,468.18 and the FBM Ace fell 177.80 points to 6,496.13. On a sectoral basis, the Finance Index surged 308.21 points to 17,979.58, the Plantation Index slid 24.81 points to 8,056.40 and the Industrial Index fell 10.80 points to 3,387.41.

MARKET TURNOVER

Total turnover slipped to 6.52 billion units valued at RM6.15 billion from 17.38 billion units valued at RM12.98 billion last week. The Main Market narrowed to 5.63 billion units worth RM8.11 billion from 11.21 billion units valued at RM11.77 billion. Warrants turnover fell to 1.61 billion units valued at RM243 million from 3.35 billion units worth at RM1.40 billion. The ACE Market narrowed to 1.60 billion units worth RM275.57 million from 2.45 billion shares valued at RM628.96 million.

Ringgit's Movement To Be Influenced By External Factors Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit's movement next week is expected to be influenced by external factors, especially economic data from the US, dealers said. FXTM Research Analyst, Lukman

Otunuga said key events would be the US jobs report for January, which should offer fresh insights into the health of the US labor market. “While every detail about the US jobs report is critical, there will be a strong focus on wage growth. “Any signs of wage growth accelerating could stimulate expectations of rising inflation, ultimately lifting the prospects for further US interest rate increases this year,” he said in a statement. He said with the Federal Reserve expecting inflation to rise this year and a brighter outlook for the economy, the non-farm payroll report would be in sharp focus.

UPSIDE SURPRISES

“A scenario where the headline jobs number and wage growth both dish out upside surprises may offer the US dollar some support,” he said. During the week-just-ended, the ringgit started the week lower against the US dollar ahead of the US Federal Open Market Committee meeting and two consecutive days of local holidays – the Thaipusam celebration and Federal Territory Day.

The ringgit recovered after the holiday as US central bank decided to retain their interest rate. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the local note finished at 3.8850/8880 against the greenback from 3.8690/8720 in the previous week. The ringgit was, however, mixed against a basket of major currencies. It rose against the Singapore dollar to 2.9575/9618 from 2.9607/9648 the previous week and appreciated against the yen to 3.5354/5387 from 3.5456/5490. The local unit went down against the euro to 4.8508/8553 from 4.8185/8234 and eased against the British pound to 5.5229/5283 from 5.5160/5222.

Short-Term Rates Likely To Stay Stable Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term rates are expected to remain stable next week with Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) expected to intervene by offering tenders to absorb surplus liquidity from the system. For the week just-ended, the overnight rate was at 3.19 per cent, while the one-week, two and three-week rates stood at 3.26 per cent, 3.30 per cent and 3.34 per cent respectively. BNM intervened on a daily basis to mop up excess liquidity by conducting conventional money market tenders, range maturity auction tenders, Islamic range maturity auction tenders, Qard tenders, repo tenders and reverse repo tenders.

It also held Commodity Murabahah Programme tenders, Qard tenders and Qard money market tenders. Trading days for the week were reduced by the Thaipusam celebration on Wednesday and Federal Territory day on Thursday. The total liquidity surplus in the conventional system for the week declined to RM30.89 billion from RM41.54 billion last week, while in the Islamic system, it rose to RM12.3 billion from RM9.32 billion previously. The benchmark three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rates stood at 3.69 per cent.

KLCI Futures Expected To Trade Sideways Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract is expected to trade sideways next week, tracking the performance of the underlying cash market, a dealer said. The dealer said the benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) would likely consolidate at 1,860. For the week just-ended, the futures market was mostly higher in tandem with the cash market. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, due to the holiday-shortened week, February 2018 and June 2018 both gained five points to 1,862 and 1,859, March 2018 advanced 4.5 points to

1,860, while new spot month September 2018, stood at 1,861. Weekly turnover declined to 40,659 lots versus 63,568 lots last week, while open interest narrowed to 36,634 contracts from 69,936 contracts previously. For the week just-ended, the FBM KLCI ended slightly higher, gaining 1.9 points to 1,870.48 compared with last Friday's 1,868.58.

CPO Futures To See Profit-Taking Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Crude palm oil (CPO) futures prices are expected to trade lower at between RM2,350 and RM2,400 a tonne next week on profit-taking ahead of the Chinese New Year holidays next week. Interband Group of Companies Senior Palm Oil Trader, Jim Teh, said as the festive season drew nearer, physical buying, especially from China, would likely decline as Malaysia's third-largest palm oil importer had stocked up on the commodity earlier this month.

"Weaker soyabean oil prices and the strong ringgit will also curb gains in prices," he told Bernama. He said the demand for CPO next week would likely come from India and Pakistan. Meanwhile, according to cargo surveyor Intertek Testing Services report, exports of Malaysian palm oil products from Jan 1-Jan 31 fell 9.3 per cent to 1,289,518 tonnes, down from the 1,422,070 tonnes in December 2017.

CONCERNS OVER WEAK EXPORTS

For the week just-ended, the market was traded lower on concerns over weak exports and a higher stockpile. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, February 2018 eased RM7 to RM2,475 per tonne, March 2018 fell by RM13 to RM2,470 per tonne, April 2018 decreased RM15 to RM2,469 and May 2018 slipped RM17 to RM2,474 per tonne. Weekly turnover decreased to 90,023 lots from 198,239 lots last Friday and open interest slid to 261,795 contracts from 275,123 contracts. On the physical market, February South was unchanged and stood at RM2,490 per tonne.

Rubber Market Expected To Be Quiet Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is expected to see quiet trading next week, with players likely to adopt a wait-and-see stance as they await fresh catalysts, dealers said. A dealer said sentiment was also expected to remain cautious amid a stronger ringgit as well as global crude oil prices movement. "Rubber prices may improve slightly towards the end of the week on fresh leads and also likely to track the movement on regional futures markets.

For week just-ended, the market traded lower to mixed in tracking external factors, mainly the movement on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM). On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the Malaysian Rubber Board's official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 slipped 20 sen to 571.5 sen a kg, and latex-in-bulk dropped 10 sen to 458.0 sen a kg. The 5 pm closing price for tyre-grade SMR 20 was 12 sen lower at 571.0 sen a kg and latex-in-bulk dipped 3.5 sen to 460.5 sen a kg.

KLIBOR Futures Contract To Remain Quiet Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is expected to remain quiet next week as investors continued to look for market catalysts. A dealer said the market might look to external factors to drive the movement in the local market. He said among the possible market movers is US jobs data that could give some insight into the timing of an interest rate hike in the world's largest economy. For the week just-ended, the market was untraded with open interest remaining nil. The market trading day was shortened by the the Thaipusam celebration on Wednesday and Federal Territory Day on Thursday. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, settlement prices for February 2018, March 2018, April 2018 and June 2018 stood at 96.35, 96.32, 96.30 and 96.27 respectively. The underlying three-month KLIBOR increased to 3.69 per cent from 3.68 per cent previously.

KLTM To See Range-Bound Trade Next Week

By Azlee Nor Mahmud

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) is expected to see range-bound trade, amid a firmer undertone bias next week on the back of a positive economic scenario, said a dealer. He said it had been a good holiday-shortened week for the commodity in ending January on a high note, while pushing the price to its highest for the month at US$21,900, and reaching a moderately high position of US$21,450 (US$1 = RM3.88) on Friday. He said the tin price had been on an uptrend since Jan 5 this year, and demand was strong on the KLTM, as the commodity price was comparatively lower compared to that on the London Metal Exchange (LME). "The tin price took the cue from other metal-based commodities like zinc and nickel, which rallied to multi-year highs, the previous week, amid a subdued US dollar.

"The price has peaked and we expected it to maintain firm and range-bound for the coming week," he told Bernama.

HOLIDAYS

The market was closed on Wednesday and Thursday for the Thaipusam and Federal Territory Day holidays. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the price on the KLTM rose by US$220 to US$21,450 a tonne from US$21,230 a tonne last week. On the LME, it increased by US$570 to end at US$21,950 a tonne from US$21,380 a tonne previously. Turnover for the week fell to 137 tonnes from 239 tonnes.The price differential between the KLTM and LME was at a discount of US$500 a tonne from a discount of US$150 per tonne last week.

Gold Futures Contract To Track Comex Movement Next Week

By Mohd Khairi Idham Amran

KUALA LUMPUR -- The gold futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is expected to track gold prices movement on the New York Commodity Exchange (Comex) next week, a dealer said. Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd Dealer, Amberlyn How said the Comex movement was expected to be influenced by the US non-farm payrolls report to be released late Friday."The data is highly anticipated by the market in the search for more clues as to the outlook of any US interest rate hike," she told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, February 2018 advanced 20 ticks to RM170 a gramme, March 2018 and April 2018 increased seven ticks each to RM170.05 and RM170.35 a gramme respectively, and May 2018 went up 22 ticks to RM170.1 a gramme. January 2018 ended on Tuesday at RM168.65 a gramme. Weekly turnover for the holiday-shortened-week slipped 13 lots valued at RM220,075 from 17 lots valued at RM288,000, while open interest on Friday fell to 66 contracts from 71 contracts previously.