MALAYSIAeBiz
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Due to the Thaipusam holiday on Friday, this week's Weekly Business Roundup will be released at 7.30 pm on Thursday while that for the Market Outlook remain unchanged.

This Week's Highlight : Aussie Trade Minister Upbeat Over TPP Accord

Photo caption: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak (front row, second right) and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed (extreme right) during the TPP negotiations in Bali recently. BERNAMA Images

MELBOURNE -- Australia's Trade Minister Andrew Robb says the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free-trade agreement (FTA) is close to being sealed. The Australian Associated Press (AAP) on Monday reported Robb as saying the Obama administration had wanted him to go to Washington DC for talks on the FTA, but he would wait for formal TPP discussions scheduled "in a couple of weeks".

The TPP is being negotiated between Australia, the United States, Japan, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Chile, New Zealand, Singapore, Brunei and Vietnam -- countries that between them comprise almost 40 per cent of the world's GDP.

Robb said among the issues that needed further deliberation was for Japan to liberalise more of its trade and the US could be more open on agriculture, including sectors such as sugar.

This Week's Top Stories

Monday
WIPO: Malaysia Has Well Established IP System
By Tengku Noor Shamsiah Tengku Abdullah

SINGAPORE -- Malaysia has a well-established intellectual property (IP) system with relevant legislation in place, says the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Singapore Office. This has allowed for a certain level of IP sophistication to be achieved within the Malaysian business and academic communities, and also the public at large, says its director, Denis Croze. The level of IP knowledge within Malaysia is illustrated by the fact that the country is the leader for aspects of the Asean IP Rights Action Plan. Malaysia is indeed active in efforts to increase awareness and respect for IP, he told Bernama in an exclusive interview, Monday. According to Croze, WIPO and the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MyIPO), regularly collaborate to increase awareness and respect for IP.

Tuesday
Bonus Payments Stay Steady In Malaysia - Hay Group Report

KUALA LUMPUR -- With the national economy showing signs of recovery amid the overall positive trade outlook globally, Malaysian employers are expected to maintain bonus levels this year at the same rate as 2013. Hay Group's "Market Remuneration Report for Malaysia" found that top achievers can look forward to getting an average of four months of basic salary and more. "The biggest beneficiaries are staff at major equity investment bodies as returns were strong last year," said Hay Group Malaysia country head for productivised services Alex Lim in a statement, Tuesday. Hay Group Malaysia is part of a global organisation that provides management consultancy services and world-class solutions to the public sector and major organisations involved in the transformation drive for Malaysia to become a fully developed nation by 2020. The report said that apart from stockbroking houses, public bodies involved in equity investments could also reward some of their key staff handsomely with high variable bonuses.

Wednesday
Credit Reporting Agencies Act Comes Into Force

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Credit Reporting Agencies Act 2010 (Act 710), which aims to regulate private credit reporting agencies in the country, has come into force Wednesday. In a statement, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) said the Act included provisions for the registration, administration, management and regulation of the private credit reporting agencies. The Act aims to safeguard the customers on the information gathered by the private agencies, it said.

Thursday
Malaysian Firms Showcasing Wide Range Of Furniture Products In Cologne Amid Fierce Competition
By Manik Mehta

COLOGNE -- A contingent of nine Malaysian furniture manufacturing companies is showcasing a wide range of furniture products and accessories at the ongoing International Furniture Fair - Interiors 2014. Popularly known by its German acronym "IMM" in Cologne, the week-long event serves as a "barometer" for trends in the global furniture trade and attracts large number of Asean suppliers, including from Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. There are also large contingents of exhibitors from other Asian countries such as India, China, Taiwan and Japan. Melaka-based DPS Industries, which is part of the DPS Resources Bhd Group, showcased dining furniture, bed sets and related items. DPS Industries, which was exhibiting alongside sister company, Shantawood Manufacturing Sdn Bhd, also based in Melaka, exports to over 100 countries through its biggest market lies in South America.

SMEbrief

Use Of Halal Verified Engine Expected To Rise
By Harizah Hanim Mohamed

KUALA LUMPUR -- Application for halal certification is now easier with the utilisation of Halal Verified Engine (HVE), which will help expedite the application process, said DagangHalal Bhd. HVE data base, which uses cloud computing, acts as a resource centre for product list, service and halal certification bodies that have been certified halal by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim). DagangHalal group chief exectuive Mohamed Hazli Mohamed Hussain said HVE has more than 100,000 products and services in the food and beverage (F&B) sector, slaughter houses, logistic, pharmaceutical, cosmetic and ingredients. Those that were imported have the approvals of the halal certification body in the country concerned, which is registered with Jakim, he told Bernama, Tuesday. He said DagangHalal had targeted the number of companies registered to use HVE to rise to 10,000 in the next two years from 260 companies currently. Launched on Dec 11, 2013, HVE is now accessible online at www.halabverified.com.

Pathlab and MXM To Collaborate With Koperasi Guru To Provide Comprehensive Medical Card For M'sian Teachers

KUALA LUMPUR -- Koperasi Yayasan Guru Malaysia Berhad, Pathlab Health Management (M) Sdn Bhd and MXM International Sdn Bhd have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to market and promote an affordable and comprehensive Healthcare Medical Card Program known as MediSihat, arranged exclusively for all teachers in Malaysia. The MoU was officiated on Wednesday by Tan Sri Datuk Alimuddin Mohd Dom, Chairman of Koperasi Yayasan Guru Malaysia Berhad and Datuk Marcus Kam, Group President & CEO of Pathlab Group of Companies & MXM International Sdn Bhd and was witnessed by Ab Latiff Abu Bakar, President & CEO of Takaful Ikhlas Sdn Bhd (Takaful IKHLAS).

PropUP — Propertyupdate

IOI Properties Debut On Main Market With 70 Sen Premium

KUALA LUMPUR -- The IOI Properties Group Bhd made its debut on the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia Wednesday, with the opening price at RM3.21 a share, a 70 sen premium from its reference price of RM2.51, with 671.5 million shares transacted. The company's listing on Bursa Malaysia is the first this year.
The listing has made IOI Properties one of the largest property companies in the country, with a market capitalisation of RM8.13 billion. Among the company's key investments are in property development, property investment, hospitality and leisure industries. Meanwhile, Hong Leong Investment Bank Research has given a "buy" rating for IOI Properties, with a target price of RM4.01.

Kwasa Land To Generate RM50 Billion GDV From Sungai Buloh Development

KUALA LUMPUR -- Kwasa Land Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned unit of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), has projected to generate RM50 billion in gross development value (GDV) over the next 20 years from its project in Sungei Buloh. Kwasa Land managing director Mohd Lotfy Mohd Noh in a statement Wednesday said the 942-hectare development, namely Kwasa Damansara, is aimed at creating 28,000 homes for 150,000 people with 4.64 million square metres of commercial space.
Mohd Lotfy said over 150 developers had submitted their credentials and applied for the opportunity to work alongside Kwasa Land during the pre-qualification exercise. He said the entire township project would be developed into eight precincts, each to have its own urban design guidelines.

MARKET

Ringgit Ends Lower Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit ended lower against the US dollar as the improved US economy revived expectations that the US Federal Reserve will continue to scale back its bond-buying programme, giving a boost to the greenback. At 5 pm Thursday, the ringgit was quoted at 3.2960/2980 against the dollar from Wednesday's 3.2850/2880. A dealer said that as the market will be closed Friday for a local public holiday, investors will remain sidelined and hold on to the greenback. Meanwhile, as against other major currencies, the local note was traded mixed. The ringgit appreciated against the yen to 3.1465/1500 from 3.1466/1503 on Wednesday, and rose versus the British pound to 5.3843/3883 from 5.3871/3933. Against the Singapore dollar, the ringgit however declined to 2.5865/5895 from 2.5821/5849, and against the euro it weakened to 4.4845/4876 from 4.4748/4799.

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit:Foreign Currency)

	BuyingS	elling
USD	3.2960	3.2980
EUR	4.4845	4.4876
GBP	5.3843	5.3883
100 YEN	3.1465	3.1500
SGD	2.5865	2.5895

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

Bursa Ends Holiday-shortened Week Easier

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia closed the holiday-shortened week easier Thursday, in tandem with the weakening ringgit, dealers said. The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) fell 11.02 points, or 0.6 per cent, to close at 1,813.01, after opening at 1,824.6. The benchmark index moved between 1,811.18 and 1,831.33 throughout the day. An analyst said despite the firmer US performance, the FBMKLCI was also affected by further foreign liquidation after it rebounded initially. Regionally, Japan's Nikkei 225 rose to 15,747.2, Hong Kong's Hang Seng increased to 22,986.41 and Singapore's Straits Times Index was up 3,140.44. Overall, losers outnumbered gainers by 571 to 245, while 306 were unchanged, 431 untraded and 18 others were suspended. Volume eased to 1.711 billion shares valued at RM2.184 billion from 2.36 billion shares worth RM2.703 billion Wednesday. The market will be closed on Friday for Thaipusam holiday and will re-open on Monday.

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard
Gainers 245
Losers 571
Not Traded 431
Unchange 306
Value - 2184940214
Volume - 17116772

Money Market: Short-term Rates Close Stable On BNM's Intervention

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates closed stable Thursday on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention in the financial system to absorb excess liquidity. The liquidity surplus in the conventional system declined to RM19.357 billion from the RM28.022 billion estimated in the morning, while in the Islamic system, it fell to RM5 billion from RM5.520 billion. In the morning, BNM called for three tenders -- one money market tender and two Al-Wadiah tenders. The central bank also called for a late conventional money market tender worth RM18 billion and a RM5 billion Al-Wadiah money market tender, both for four-day money. The overnight rate stood at 2.94 per cent, while the one-, two- and three-week rates stood at 2.98 per cent, 3.02 per cent and 3.05 per cent, respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Contracts Close Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR-- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts closed untraded Thursday. February 2014 and March 2014 were pegged at 96.74 and 96.71, respectively, while Arpil 2014 and June 2014 stood at 96.69 and 96.67, respectively. Turnover was nil while open interest totalled 3,895 contracts. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR was at 3.22 per cent.

KLCI Futures Close Lower Tracking Easier Underlying Cash Market

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed lower Thursday, tracking the easier underlying cash market, an analyst said. Spot month January 2014 dropped 14 points to 1,809 and February 2014 lost 13 points to 1,809. March 2014 shed 14 points to 1,809 and June 2014 eased 12.5 points to 1,807. Turnover totalled 9,417 lots, lower than yesterday's close of 12,465 lots, while open interest declined to 47,900 contracts from 50,743 contracts previously. The underlying FBM KLCI closed 11.02 points lower at 1,813.01.

http://images.bernama.com/foto/shopping/

Maybank Kim Eng Named Best Brokerage House In Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank Kim Eng has been named the best brokerage house in Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia in the Asset Triple A Country Awards 2013. The bank said the awards were received in an award presentation dinner in Hong Kong on Monday. The Asset Triple A Awards are Asia's defining recognition for industry's excellence advocated by the Asset's Magazine Board of Editors, the bank added.

NPLs Not At Worrying Level, Says Ahmad Maslan

KUALA LUMPUR -- The level of non- performing loans (NPLs) in the country are not at worrying stage, says Deputy Minister of Finance Datuk Ahmad Maslan. Looking at the NPLs, the unpaid credit card dues are only 4.1 per cent of the total household debts, he said. Housing loans are the highest, at 44.3 per cent, followed by vehicle loans at 17.3 per cent and personal loans at 16.8 per cent of the total household loans, he told a media conference after opening a financial education and credit management seminar Wednesday.

Maybank IB Issues Eight New Call Warrants

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank Investment Bank Bhd (Maybank IB) is issuing eight new European-style cash-settled structured warrants over ordinary shares, with an issue size of 100 million each. In a statement Wednesday, Maybank IB said the warrants, which will be listed on Jan 16, were issued to Berjaya Corp Bhd, Genting Malaysia Bhd, Genting Bhd, Hartalega Holdings Bhd, Kossan Rubber Industries Bhd, Magnum Bhd, Supermax Corp Bhd and Top Glove Corp Bhd. It said the tranches focused on the gaming and rubber glove manufacturing segments.

BNM To Recycle Near New Banknotes For CNY

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) will continue to recycle near new RM1 and RM5 banknotes, in support of the 'Go Green' initiative, for the coming Chinese New Year (CNY). In a statement Wednesday, BNM said the initiative, which was launched in July 2013, was well-received by the public, and this has enabled it to issue 35 per cent less new banknotes for Hari Raya Aidilfitri.

Moody's Assigns First-time Baa2/P-2 Ratings To CIMB Thai

SINGAPORE -- Moody's Investors Service has assigned Local currency deposit and issuer ratings of Baa2/P-2 and foreign currency deposit and issuer ratings of Baa2/P-2 to CIMB Thai Bank Public Company Ltd (CIMB Thai). Moody's said the financial strength rating (BFSR) of D, is equivalent to a baseline credit assessment (BCA) of ba2, whilst the adjusted BCA, incorporating parental support, is baa2. The outlook on all the ratings is stable. This is the first time it has assigned international ratings for CIMB Thai, the rating agency said in a statement, Wednesday.

SC, MSWG Seek Public Feedback On Code For Institutional Investors

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Securities Commission and the Minority Shareholder Watchdog Group (MSWG) Wednesday issued a joint consultation paper, seeking public feedback on the Malaysian Code for Institutional Investors 2014 (Code). The code sets out eight principles together with the guidance for institutional investors on effective exercise of stewardship responsibilities towards the delivery of sustainable long-term value to the institutional investors' ultimate beneficiaries or clients. The public are invited to e-mail comments on the code to mcii@mswg.org.my before Feb 28.

Special Committee Should Address Rising Cost Of Living, Goods, Says Ahmad Maslan

KUALA LUMPUR -- The special Cabinet committee established to tackle the cost of living should address the spiraling cost of goods offered by traders, says Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Ahmad Maslan. The committee should also decide on stern action to be taken against traders who raised prices exorbitantly through the effective implementation of the Price Control and Anti-Profiteering Act, he said at the pre-launch of the World Banjar Socioeconomy Convention here Wednesday.

Scomi Energy Secures RM75 Million Virginia Indonesia Contract

KUALA LUMPUR -- Scomi Energy Services Bhd has secured a RM75 million contract from Virginia Indonesia Co for the provision of solids control equipment and environmental handling services for a period of 36 months. Scomi Energy's working relationship with Virginia Indonesia, which has spanned over 15 years, was testament to the latter's continued confidence in the company's capabilities, Scomi Chief Executive Officer, Shah Hakim Zain said Monday. Scomi Energy said in addition to recent Petronas contract in Myanmar worth over RM90 million, its order book now has exceeded RM5.2 billion.

Petronas' Overseas Investments Driven By Value, Adhere To Strict Criteria

By Mohd Khairi Idham Amran

KUALA LUMPUR -- Petroliam Nasional Bhd's (Petronas) decision to invest overseas is driven by value while adhering to very strict and disciplined investment criteria and processes, Executive Vice-President (Exploration and Production Business) Datuk Wee Yiaw Hin said. The company would continue to scout for opportunities that would bring value as well as meeting the stringent investment criteria, he told Bernama, Tuesday. Petronas has a presence in over 30 countries in a myriad of upstream and downstream activities including the recent RM16 billion acquisition of Canada's natural gas producer, Progress Energy Resources. Wee said while expanding its overseas footprint, Petronas is aggressively increasing domestic exploration and production activities through the implementation of new contract mechanism and advanced technology. Among the improvement is the introduction of progressive volume-based (PVB) terms on new production sharing contract (PSC), which is currently applied to Kinabalu Oil PSC awarded to Talisman Malaysia Ltd and Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd. He said the implementation of the PVB PSC was expected to contribute to the overall increase of Malaysia's production output in the medium to long term.

AcadiaSoft Surpasses 60,000 Active Agreements On MarginSphere In 2003, Up 600 Per Cent

SINGAPORE -- AcadiaSoft Inc. announced today that at the end 2013 the company surpassed 60,000 active agreements on MarginSphere - representing a 600 per cent increase over the 10,000 live agreements announced in April 2013. In a statement Wednesday, AcadiaSoft said MarginSphere is a margin confirmation community that streamlines and standardizes communications between counterparties engaged in collateral management. MarginSphere provides a margin automation standard for a wide range of products including those covered under ISDA, Repo, MSFTA, Futures and OTC Clearing agreements. Headquartered in Boston and London, AcadiaSoft was founded through collaboration between major financial institutions, including eight Fed 14 banks, to create solutions that support full implementation of documented ISDA Collateral Requirements.

Sungai Buloh Land Development To Benefit Construction Sector

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hong Leong Investment Bank Research (HLIB Research) expects the development of 942 hectares of land in Sungai Buloh by the Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) wholly-owned unit, Kwasa Land Sdn Bhd, to benefit the construction sector. The proposed township, namely Kwasa Damansara, is expected to generate RM50 billion in gross development value over the next 20 years and will be a source of jobs flow for the construction sector, the research house said in a research note, Thursday.

TM Signs Second Agreement With Axis AME On HSBB Services

KULAIJAYA -- Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM) has signed a second service agreement with Axis AME IP Sdn Bhd (Axis AME) for the deployment and provision of high-speed broadband (HSBB) network infrastructure and services to iPark Phase 3 and SME City developments in Indahpura here. TM's presence in both iPark and SME City but would also enable factory owners and tenants experience the new era of digital lifestyle and help boost the development of the industry TM Johor State Vice President, Mohd Roslan Mohd Rashidi said after the ceremony to sign the agreement here Wednesday.

Bio-XCell Appoints 2 New Board Members

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian Bio-XCell Sdn Bhd (Bio-XCell) announced the appointment of two new members to its board of directors to further harness their expertise at the company. The new directors are Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation Sdn Bhd Chief Operating Officer Razwin Sulairee Hasnan Termizi and Nusajaya Senior General Manager Mohd Nadzari Bachek, who joined the board as a nominee. "Bio-XCell is moving on to the next phase of its developmental plan and the new addition of members to the board of directors will assist in propelling the management of the park forward," Chairman Datuk Dr Mohd Nazlee Kamal was quoted as saying in a statement, Monday. Meanwhile, Bio-XCell Chief Executive Officer Rizatuddin Ramli said with the inclusion of the two new members, the company would be able to benefit from their knowledge in the property and biotechnology sector.

KBM Cluster Commences First Oil Production Dec 16 - Petronas

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kapal, Banang and Meranti (KBM) cluster fields, offshore Peninsular Malaysia, has commenced its first oil production on December 16 last year, Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) said. The national oil company said the KBM cluster, operated by Coastal Energy KBM Sdn Bhd, has been developed with JV partner Petra Energy under a risk service contract (RSC) since June 2012. "This is the third RSC that has successfully achieved oil production, after the Balai Cluster and Berantai Fields," it said in a statement, Monday. The KBM cluster is an eight-year development project with Kapal being in its first development and production phase. The Kapal field facilities consist of one mobile offshore production unit (MOPU), one storage tanker with approximately 600,000-barrel capacity, one drilling rig with an attached well bay module and two flexible flow lines, Petronas it said. To date, Petronas has awarded 10 fields in four clusters under the RSC arrangement.

Telco Sector To Continue Data Demand-driven Expansion, Says Research House

KUALA LUMPUR -- The telecommunications sector will continue to expand strongly this year, driven by insatiable data demand on the back of resiliency of domestic consumerism, Hong Leong Investment Bank (HLIB) said in a note Monday. The research house expects the country's smartphone penetration to reach 44.5 per cent by end-2014 as the average selling price plummet and continue to drive data revenue. It also said newer smartphone models also stimulate higher data usage. HLIB expect telecommunication companies to continue to invest in IT and 4G to beef up their charging and billing mechanisms as well as business intelligence.

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foodpanda.my To Broaden Services To Sabah, Sarawak In Q1 2014

By Fauzan Abdul Kadir

KUALA LUMPUR -- foodpanda.my, which provides online food delivery services for over 300 restaurants including Starbucks, Tony Roma's and Chicken Rice Shop, expects to expand its services to Sabah and Sarawak, including Brunei, in the first quarter of this year. "We are aggressive in expanding our markets and thorough plans should be outlined first before we decide to start and provide our services there," foodpanda.my founder and managing director Claudio Abitante told Bernama, Tuesday. Abitante said the expansion of its services to Sabah and Sarawak this year would not only give benefits to the local people to enjoy the services but also provide job opportunities among the people. foodpanda.my, which was founded in February 2012, together with its affiliated brands hellofood and hungrypanda, is the leading group of online food ordering platforms that is active in over 30 countries including India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan and Singapore.

Boeing Finds Significant Potential In 'Green Diesel' As A Sustainable Jet Fuel

KUALA LUMPUR -- Boeing has identified 'green diesel', a renewable fuel used in ground transportation, as a significant new source of sustainable aviation biofuel that emits at least 50 percent less carbon dioxide than fossil fuel over its lifecycle. The company is working with the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and other stakeholders to gain approval for aircraft to fly on green diesel, further reducing the aviation industry s carbon emissions. Boeing researchers performed analysis that found green diesel, which is made from oils and fats, to be chemically similar to today's aviation biofuel. If approved, the fuel could be blended directly with traditional jet fuel. "Green diesel approval would be a major breakthrough in the availability of competitively priced, sustainable aviation fuel," said Dr. James Kinder, a Technical Fellow in Boeing Commercial Airplanes Propulsion Systems Division in a statement from Seattle on Tuesday. Besides that, there are also opportunities in other projects such as enhancing the energy efficiency in commercial buildings and building a broadband internet optical fibre network throughout the country, the national trade promotion agency added.

Toshiba Adds Social Infrastructure To Business Portfolio In Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR -- TOS Energy Malaysia Sdn Bhd , a wholly-owned subsidiary of Toshiba Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, will now add social infrastructure to its business portfolio. This allows Toshiba to offer customers a one-stop solution in key business segments and in products ranging from power plants to industrial products such as motors and drives. Toshiba Asia Pacific is a subsidiary of Tokyo-based Toshiba Corporation. In a statement here Wednesday, Toshiba Asia Pacific said the move by TOS Energy Malaysia, will enable it to expand its activities and reinforce operating capabilities.

Samsung Picks ANADIGICS ProVantage Solutions For GALAXY Trend 3

SINGAPORE -- ANADIGICS, Inc., a world leader in radio frequency (RF) solutions, today announced that the company is shipping production volumes of its AWT5001 and AWT5008 ProVantage power amplifiers (PAs) to Samsung Electronics for the new GALAXY Trend 3. ProVantage solutions leverage ANADIGICS' unique InGaP-Plus technology to provide outstanding performance, space-saving integration and lower overall system cost delivering exceptional value, the company said in a statement, Wednesday. The GALAXY Trend 3, powered by ProVantage PAs, features a 4.3-inch display, dual-core 1.2 GHz processor, and Android 4.2 Jelly Bean operating system.

ECERDC Receives Courtesy Call From China Ningxia Delegation

KUANTAN -- The East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC) today received a courtesy call from a Chinese trade and investment delegation from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, China. ECERDC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Datuk Jebasingam Issace John said the delegation, which is led by the Director General of Ningxia Economic and Technological Corperation Office, are here to explore investment opportunities in the East Coast Economic Region (ECER) as well as to promote their products in Malaysia They are especially keen to explore

collaboration opportunities in halal industries especially in agriculture, pharmaceutical and textile sectors, he said to reporters after a short meeting with the delegates here Wednesday.

MyCC Seeks Feedback On Leniency Regime, Financial Penalties Guidelines

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia Competition Commission (MyCC) is calling upon the public to take part in the public consultation being held for its draft Guidelines on Leniency Regime and Financial Penalties. In a statement Wednesday, the MyCC said both guidelines are based on the statutory framework of the Competition Act 2010. The Guidelines on Leniency Regime is based on Section 41, which allows the MyCC to grant a reduction of up to a maximum 100 per cent of any penalties that could otherwise be imposed on infringing enterprises. The documents for consultation are available for viewing and can be downloaded from the MyCC website, www.mycc.gov.my.

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Perodua Contributes RM1.5 Million To Miros' Crash Dummies Calibration Lab

KUALA LUMPUR -- Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd (Perodua) has contributed RM1.5 million to the Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research's (Miros) for renovation of its dummies calibration lab at its PC3 facility in Melaka. PC3 is Miros' Provisional Crash Safety Engineering Unit Crash Centre and also Southeast Asia's sole crash lab. Speaking to reporters after the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Perodua and Miros, Monday, Miros Director-General Professor Dr Wong Shaw Voon said the crash dummies calibration room is important as it would help reduce the cost and time to maintain very sensitive equipment which is not available in Malaysia. Perodua President and Chief Executive Officer Datuk Aminar Rashid Salleh said that by providing the necessary infrastructure and equipment to facilitate the test process, the smart partnership is expected to benefit the entire automotive industry.

Allianz Life Insurance Eyes 100,000 Policyholders For New Product

KUALA LUMPUR -- Allianz Life Insurance (M) Bhd, a unit of Allianz Malaysia Bhd, expects to sign up 100,000 policyholders in the first six months of this year for its new retirement product, 'Allianz RetirePlus'. Allianz Life Insurance Chief Executive Officer, Jens Reisch, said the company would focus on reaching out to as many Malaysians as it could. He said starting this year, the company would make retirement a strategic priority. "It is not a new topic for us as we have been advocating messages on retirement and advocating its importance for quite some time now," he told reporters after the launch of its retirement campaign, themed "Let Allianz Protect your Retirement", here Monday.

MACC Focusing On Curbing Corruption In Commercial Activities

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) is taking initiatives to fight corruption in commercial activities among organisations, focusing on three aspects -- detection, prevention and education. Said. This is due to increasing fraud cases in commercial activities especially those involving former government projects which have been passed to private entities, MACC Chief Commissioner Tan Sri Abu Kassim Mohamed told reporters after the launch of KPMG Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Survey Report 2013 here Monday. The survey, covering the period January 2010 to December 2012, revealed that 83 per cent of respondents indicated that fraud is a major problem for locally-based businesses, and 80 per cent of them believed that bribery and corruption has increased over the last three years. Some 100 respondents from listed companies on Bursa Malaysia participated in the survey.

Visit Malaysia Year 2014 Likely Spur Local Businesses

GEORGE TOWN -- Against the backdrop of the expected slowing down of economic activities and rising cost of living this year, the Visit Malaysia Year 2014 (VMY 2014) is likely to give hope to local businesses. Penang Hoteliers'

Association chairman Datuk Lim Mee Lee said VMY 2014 would help spur business for Penangites, especially businessmen engaged in the food and beverages industry, hoteliers, hawkers and transportation operators. “Most of the association members are hoping for good business prospects this year due to increasing foreign and domestic tourists amid cheap and affordable food still available in Penang,” he told Bernama, Tuesday. “Malaysia, especially Penang, is an attractive region as it has been listed as a World Heritage Site, offering cheap and affordable hotel rooms, wide variety of food and friendly English-speaking community,” Lim said. He urged local authorities should take action against illegal budget hotel owners and not just issue compounds to ensure that hotels are safe for tourists and also to develop a fair and responsible tourism industry.

Pacnet Opens Singapore’s First Data Centre With Tier III Design Certification

By Tengku Noor Shamsiah Tengku Abdullah

SINGAPORE -- Pacnet, a leading provider of integrated network and technology solutions in Asia-Pacific, today officially opened CloudSpace II (SGCS2), the first data centre design in Singapore to be recognised with Uptime Institute’s Tier Certification of Design Documents. The US$90 million facility was designed in accordance with the BCA Green Mark scheme - the equivalent to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification by the US Green Building Council. The eight-storey, 155,000-sq ft standalone facility, strategically located in Paya Lebar, was built to Tier III criteria and received certification of the design documents by Uptime Institute on Dec 4, 2013. Officiating at the opening ceremony of SGCS2 Tuesday, Jacqueline Poh, Managing Director of the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) said, “Singapore is committed to being Asia’s preeminent place for doing business. New data centres that assist companies to anchor themselves in Singapore to reach half the world’s population are always welcome here.”

Proton Sees Rising Sales With More Affordable Vehicles For Launch This Year

From Nurul Hanis Izmir

KOTA KINABALU -- With more affordable vehicles to be launched in the first half of this year, Proton Holdings Bhd is confident of achieving higher sales in 2014, compared with 141,000 vehicles sold last year Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Lukman Ibrahim said. He said the national carmaker was working on a plan to maximise the features of the present models without compromising on the quality, and to be sold at affordable prices for Malaysians. “We are trying to make the car more advance in terms of safety and sophistication so that it is valuable to our customers. It is not necessary to come out with the new models, but expanding on what we have currently and giving more variants is more important to us,” he told media on the sidelines of the three-day DRB-Hicom “Ke Bawah Bayu” programme, here, Tuesday.

AirAsia India Is Subject To Fresh Public Objection Notice

NEW DELHI -- The Indian government has asked the public to raise fresh objections, if any, to granting budget airline AirAsia India, a license to start commercial operations in the country, said a news report. This is despite the venture having been cleared by the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) and receiving the Civil Aviation Ministry’s no-objection certificate (NOC). The latest public notice was issued by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Monday, the Indian Express newspaper reported Wednesday.AirAsia India is the first airline to be launched since the Indian government in September 2012 allowed a 49 per cent Foreign Direct Investment in the civil aviation sector by foreign carriers. It is also a 49: 30:21 joint venture between Malaysia’s AirAsia - Asia’s largest budget airline - Tata Sons and Telestra Tradeplace.

NEC Launches New DCMStar/ Chainstore Solution For International Retailers

By Tengku Noor Shamsiah Tengku Abdullah

SINGAPORE -- NEC Corporation on Wednesday launched a new addition to its lineup of DCMStar/ChainStore solutions for international retailers in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region and elsewhere. In a statement Wednesday, it said primary functions of the new product include the provision of product order recommendations, real-time access to sales and inventory information from each store, and a customer relationship management (CRM) function that can be used to implement a wide variety of point card services. DCMStar/ChainStore systems are complete packaged solutions that integrate NEC’s know-how from many years of chain store management experience in and outside Japan to provide support for the headquarter and store operations of multi-store retailers such as convenience and drug stores. NEC’s enhanced DCMStar/ChainStore solution will be exhibited at the NEC Innovative Solutions Fair 2014 in Singapore on Thursday.

MALAYSIA Setting Example in Islamic Banking-Financed ‘Green’ Innovations

by CompareHero.my

Malaysia is the perfect example to emulate for regions and nations looking to boost their green technology initiatives. Exploring financial opportunities in Islamic banking presents a sustainable solution to the development of green technologies on a global scale. In fact, finance bigwigs like Deloitte Corporate Finance UAE assistant director Goutam Palukuri and financial secretary to the Treasury of the UK Greg Clark concur. “Many in the Middle East can emulate what they see in Malaysia as Middle Easterners would prefer to finance green technology projects that are Shariah-compliant,“ Palukuri said in an interview. “The process of putting in place a tangible policy framework and incentives and motivation like that given by the Malaysian authorities can spur green financial industry in the Middle East further.” The convergence of exploring the growing market that is Islamic banking and the deployment of green technological innovations is a unique opportunity that hits two birds with one stone. Furthermore, both efforts can prove very beneficial for consumers.

Malaysia is a global leader in both Islamic finance and green technologies. The government recognises the strong potential of green technologies to encourage economic growth while reducing the negative impacts of industrial growth to the environment. At the same time, Kuala Lumpur has established itself as a top destination for Islamic banking in and beyond Southeast Asia. Malaysian consumers will undoubtedly benefit from the development of more Islamic-friendly banking principles as over 60% of the country’s population is Muslim. The adoption of green technologies, on the other hand, typically reduce costs for both the banks and the consumers.

‘Green Initiatives’ in Malaysia

At “The Green Financing: Discover Green Technology Industry in Malaysia (GF 2013)” conference held in Kuala Lumpur on October 2013, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Deputy Governor Dato’ Muhammad bin Ibrahim recognised the intensification of national and international efforts to promote green technology in recent years. He mentioned how green technologies can resolve growing ecological and social problems, and promote the better utilisation of natural and energy resources. “The shift towards a green economy affects all stakeholders - decision makers, and policy formulators, companies and their customers. Increasingly, investors are emphasizing sustainability to the environment as an important investment criterion,” Ibrahim said in his keynote speech. It also impacts consumers and their finances -- adopting more sustainable, green sources of energy, for instance, reduces costs associated with petrol and electricity bills. BNM, in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology, and Water, has put in motion the Green Technology Financing Scheme (GTFS), which is structured to minimise financial risks borne by innovative green technology companies. The programme opens information channels between businesses and investors, as well as credit enhancements and incentives to address any market need.

In 2012, the adoption of Islamic-financed green contracts has increased from 1.4% in 2008 to 5.2% in 2012, according to Ibrahim. Equity-based contract structures supported by Islamic banking has so far attracted over 140 companies developing green technology innovations under GTFS. The relative success of Malaysia in promoting green technology investments through Islamic financing has not gone unnoticed, particularly in the Middle East, where Shariah-compliant banking practices are highly likely to be received more openly by Islamic populations. According to the Islamic Banking and Finance Institute of Malaysia, the main thrust of promoting finance for green technology is to promote socioeconomic growth in developing countries. Ibrahim stresses that the role of Islamic banks in Malaysia extends beyond the financial space to a more well-rounded value-based social system based on the fulfilment of Islamic tenets. He believes that the nation should focus more on exploring Islamic financing opportunities that promises insurance to the success of a growing green technology movement, in which it has the potential to become a significant global player.

The Role of the Malaysian Consumer

Banks and corporations shouldn’t be the only ones aiming to go green. Aside from a reduction in spending and a corresponding increase in savings, Malaysian consumers also get a lot of advantages to adopting greener technologies from the way they get their bank statements to the types of vehicles they drive. Simply opting for online bank statements instead of having them mailed to home addresses saves the average consumer costs associated with the paper, printing, and postage involved in the delivery. While seemingly insignificant from the point of view of the consumer, if hundreds of thousands of consumers follow suit, the impact becomes substantial. Furthermore, green technologies being developed are often more cost-effective, such as electric cards more “fuel-efficient” in terms of battery consumption compared to the ags mileage of petrol-powered vehicles. During this phase as Malaysia pushes through with its two-pronged effort to develop Islamic banking and adopt greener technologies and practices, the average consumer -- the end user -- will inevitably have a part to play in its success. As more and more consumers avail of Shari’ah compliant financial services and opt for greener technologies, the efforts in these fronts will gradually succeed. CompareHero is the leading Malaysian financial comparison platform, aimed at educating Malaysians and help them save time and money.

For more ways to save money and a complete overview of comparisons from mobile and broadband products to financial products, visit http://www.comparehero.my.

* This is the opinion of CompareHero.my and does not necessarily represent the views of BERNAMA.

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Market Outlook

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BURSA MALAYSIA

Bursa Weekly : FBM KLCI To Likely Consolidate And Rebound Next Week

By Noor Soraya Mohd Jamal

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) will most likely consolidate and rebound next week on mild bargain hunting ahead of the coming Chinese New Year, dealers said. Affin Investment Bank Vice-President/ Head of Retail Research Dr Nazri Khan said after registering easier performances for three consecutive weeks, the immediate support for the index remained at the 1,800-points level.

Speaking to Bernama, Nazri believed that the downtrend was temporary, as it was proven that Malaysia is a defensive market and would play "catch-up" soon, especially right after Chinese New Year. "Bear in mind, the FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) outperformed last year, and it's the most expensive stock in the region. So, it's also natural to see a sell-down to neutralise the market," he said.

Nazri added that market players should take advantage of the current oversold situation to buy on dips.

For the week just ended, the stock exchange was closed for two local holidays - Prophet Muhammad's birthday on Jan 14 and Thaipusam on Jan 17.

On a week-to-week basis, the FBM KLCI declined 13.6 points to 1,813.01, the Finance Index lost 67.2 points to 16,663.779, the Plantation Index slipped 140.8 points to 8,483.47 and the Industrial Index shed 22.6 points to 3,064.77. The FBM Emas Index lost 111.7 points to 12,547.74, and the FBMT100 Index fell 108.1 points to 12,251.77, but the FBM Ace was 70.8 points higher at 6,032.04.

The FBM 70 slid 185.3 points to 13,906.16. Weekly turnover depreciated to 6.139 billion shares worth RM6.627 billion from the 9.14 billion shares valued at RM9.66 billion, recorded last week.

Main market volume fell to 4.71 billion shares valued at RM6.23 billion from 6.67 billion shares worth RM9.06 billion registered previously.

Warrants turnover rose to 620.63 million units worth RM14.58 million from 215.56 million units valued at RM26.30 million.

The ACE market volume eased to 1.254 billion shares valued at RM363.11 million from 2.21 billion shares worth RM520.58 million.

Forex: Ringgit To Trade Lower Next Week, Says Affin Investment Bank

By Nurul Hanis Izmir

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is expected to trade lower next week together with other emerging Asian currencies due to the aggressive US economic recovery, says Affin Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research, Dr Nazri Khan. He said the weakening in the local currency was in tandem with the declinein the FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI. "However, this is a temporary situation as the ringgit will rebound, maybe after Chinese New Year," he told Bernama. According to Nazri, investors anticipate that as the US economy improves, it will be an advantage for the greenback. The US Federal Reserve is also reported to continue scaling back its bond-buying programme, giving a boost to the dollar, another dealer added.

During the holiday-shortened week, the ringgit traded lower and closed at 3.2960/2980 to the US dollar from last Friday's 3.2670/2700. The market was closed on Tuesday and Friday for local public holidays. It declined against the Singapore dollar to 2.5865/5895 compared with 2.5726/5754 last Friday, and against the yen, the local note dropped to 3.1465/1500 versus 3.1132/1167 previously.

Against the British pound, the local note weakened to 5.3843/3883 from 5.3778/3841, and depreciated against the euro to 4.4845/4876 from 4.4444/4492 last Friday.

Money Market: Short-term Rates Expected To Remain Steady Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term rates are expected to remain steady next week as Bank Negara Malaysia continues to intervene in the money market to absorb excess funds from the system. A dealer said the central bank's move is expected to keep rates in check. For the holiday-shortened week, the overnight rate stood at 2.94 per cent, while, the one-week, two-week and three-week rates, stood at 2.98 per cent, 3.02per cent and 3.05 per cent, respectively.

The market was closed on Tuesday and Friday due to public holidays.

During the week, the central bank actively intervened on a daily basis to mop up surplus liquidity by conducting conventional, range maturity auction, Al-Wadiah, Commodity Murabahah programme and repo tenders. It also made late borrowings to further reduce the excess funds. The action increased the system's total liquidity surplus to RM19.357 billion in conventional operations and RM5 billion in Islamic funds

FBM KLCI Futures To Move In Tandem With Cash Market Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is likely to move in tandem with the underlying cash market next week, dealers said. They said positive underlying fundamentals would continue to support the local market to stay above the 1,800-points level. Market sentiment should be better as economic fundamentals in the United States and Europe looked more resilient than previous years, they added.

On a week-to-week basis, spot month January 2014 dropped 17 points to 1,809 and February 2014 lost 17.5 points to 1,809. March 2014 shed 17.5 points to 1,809 and June 2014 eased 13.5 points to 1,807.

Turnover fell to 26,609 lots from 30,666 lots last week, while open interest widened to 47,900 contracts from 41,049 contracts previously. The benchmark FBM KLCI ended the week 13.6 points lower at 1,813.01.

CPO Futures To Trade Between RM2,400 And RM2,600 Per Tonne Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian rubber prices are expected to be on a downtrend next week on anticipation of weaker demand, amid speculation that China's economy is faltering, a dealer said. "The negative sentiment generated by the Chinese economic data will weigh down on the local rubber market prices," she told Bernama.

She also said the rubber market would likely follow the price movements on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange and the Shanghai Futures Exchange next week.

For the week just-ended, rubber prices closed mostly lower with the Malaysian Rubber Board's official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 increasing four sen to 714 sen a kg, while latex-in-bulk shed two sen to 478 sen a kg.

The unofficial closing price for tyre-grade SMR 20 rose 2.5 sen to 714.50 sen a kg, while latex-in-bulk was unchanged at 479.5 sen a kg. The market was closed on Friday for the local Thaipusam public holiday

Rubber Prices To Be On Downtrend Next Week

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KLIBOR Future Likely To Remain Flat Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is likely to remain flat next week. For the holiday-shortened week, the KLIBOR futures contracts were untraded throughout.

The local market was closed on Tuesday and Friday for local public holidays.

Turnover was nil, with open interest widening to 3,895 from last week's 3,755 contracts. On a week-to-week basis, February 2014 and April 2014 each gained two ticks to 96.74, 96.69 respectively, while March 2014 and June 2014 each rose one tick to 96.71 and 96.67.

The underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.29 per cent.

KLTM: Tin Price To Continue Uptrend Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The tin price on the Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) is likely to maintain its uptrend next week on steady demand, a dealer said. He said the KLTM price is expected to hover between US$22,200 and US$22,400 as demand from Japanese and European traders picks up with the US economic data report due next week. "The report should favour both the Japanese and European traders," the dealer told Bernama.

The KLTM was closed on Tuesday and Friday this week for local public holidays.

For the week just-ended, the local tin price closed US$550 higher at US$22,200 per tonne, on higher demand and in tandem with the better performance of the London Metal Exchange (LME). Weekly turnover rose to 208 lots from 203 lots last week, with Japanese and European traders dominating the market, followed by local traders. The premium between the KLTM and LME remained at US$210 per tonne as per last Friday.

Gold Futures To Trade Sideways Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- On the back of fresh news to spur prices, trading in the gold futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is expected to turn sideways next week, a dealer said. Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd dealer Nicole So Siew Chien said a slew of corporate earnings reports on Wall Street, would influence the movement of the gold prices. Better earning results will prompt a rally on stock markets, but dim the metal's safe-haven appeal. "Physical buying, however, remains strong ahead of the Lunar New Year, and will continue to be supportive of the gold price. Many investors are also waiting the next meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) on Jan 28-29," she told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Thursday basis, January 2014 advanced RM1.35 or 27 ticks to RM131.40 a gramme, while February 2014, March 2014 and April 2014 also rose RM1.50 or 30 ticks each to RM131.80 a gramme. There was no trading on Friday due to the local Thaipusam public holiday. Total volume rose to 2,665 lots valued at RM34.97 million from the 1,910 lots valued at RM24.82 million recorded last week. On Thursday, open interest expanded to 1,917 contracts versus the 1,425 contracts registered last Friday.