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This Week's Highlight : Najib To Oversee Flood Situation In Kelantan Saturday

MASSIVE FLOODS…An aerial view of Kuala Krai, Kelantan. The town is cut off from the outside world when communications went down due to massive floods. --fotoBERNAMA

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prime Minister Najib Razak will visit Kelantan Saturday to oversee the flood situation in the state as well as oversee the response to the floods in four other states. Upon his arrival, Najib would chair a meeting and receive briefings from the National Security Council, the National Disaster Management and Relief Committee, the state government and local emergency responders. "While I have been away, I have been in constant contact with the National Security Council and the National Disaster Management and Relief Committee, who have assured me that they are doing everything they can to help those who have been affected. But I want to see the situation for myself and be with the people," said Najib, according to the statement from the Prime Minister's Office Friday.

This Week's Top Stories

Monday

Bursa Launches Environmental, Social & Governance Index

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia Bhd Monday announced the launch of the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Index. In a statement here Monday, the exchange said the FTSE4Good Bursa Malaysia (F4GBM) Index is in line with the Prime Minister's vision in Budget 2014. The F4GBM Index is used to measure the performance of companies demonstrating strong ESG practices.

Tuesday

ASNB Announces 6.45 Sen Dividend For 2014

KUALA LUMPUR -- Amanah Saham Nasional Bhd (ASNB), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB), Tuesday announced an income distribution of 6.45 sen per unit for Amanah Saham Nasional (ASN) for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2014, unchanged from last year's income distribution. PNB Chairman Tun Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid said the income distribution would involve a total payout of RM107.57 million and benefit 1.26 million unitholders who currently hold a combined 1.66 billion ASN units.

Wednesday

Bank Rakyat To Allocate RM150 Mln For Ar-Rahnu

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Rakyat aims to allocate RM150 million to finance working capital requirements for 30 new Ar-Rahnu branches to be developed by various cooperatives next year, Senior Vice President Corporate Banking Abdul Razak Abu Bakar said Wednesday. The financing will be made via the bank's Ar-Rahnu Flexi package, a facility for cooperative bodies to obtain working capital funding for Ar-Rahnu franchise business, which offers a maximum withdrawal of 80 per cent of the value of gold mortgaged and a maximum period of up to five years, he said.

Thursday

Finance Ministry Gives RM50 Mln Immediate Aid For Flood-Hit States

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Finance Ministry has approved an immediate allocation of RM50 million for the states being ravaged by the worsening floods, Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Mohamad Hanadzlah said Thursday. He said the allocation would be channelled to the state development office in the states and distributed immediately. "The Finance Ministry will also facilitate the immediate purchase of equipment to ensure that aid reaches the people in the affected areas," he said in a statement.

Friday

Global Sukuk Issuances To Reach US$150 Bln In 2015

By Siti Radziah Hamzah

KUALA LUMPUR -- The rising interest in Islamic finance instruments will help drive global sukuk issuances to exceed the US$150 billion mark in 2015 despite the uncertainty in the global market. Chief Executive Officer of International Islamic Financial Market (IIFM), Ijlal Ahmed Alvi, said the target was achievable based on the sukuk issuances in the pipeline. Ijlal said this to Bernama on the sidelines of the World Islamic Banking Conference 2014 held in Bahrain recently.

SMEbrief

SMEs Stay Positive Despite 2015 Gloomy Outlook

By Nurul Hanis Izmir

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) remain positive on the industry's outlook next year despite external and internal challenges, aided by the government's continuous support, says the SME Association of Malaysia. Its national president Teh Kee Sin told Bernama, the government, under its Budget 2015 announcement, will allocate RM14.3 billion for 18 programmes proposed for SME development, encompassing the services sector, Bumiputera entrepreneurs, youths, graduates, micro-enterprises, petty traders, women, smallholders, cooperatives and trade associations. Teh said although the economic situation is likely to be tough next year, SMEs could overcome the challenges by making full use of the government's assistance schemes. Teh said the challenges in 2014, arising from the higher cost of doing business due to the subsidy rationalisation and higher raw material prices, will likely continue next year, creating an additional burden to the SMEs and cutting their profits 20 per cent.

Book By BGR Can Be Reference For Entrepreneurship Programmes

KOTA KINABALU -- A book by Borneo Green Resources Sdn Bhd (BGR) on successful 1Azam programme participants can be a source of reference for entrepreneurship programmes. Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman said the study on the entrepreneurship pychological model among the 1Azam participants was an extraordinary new initiative which could help motivate the poor to escape the clutches of poverty. "I believe continuous guidance and monitoring, such as being done by BGR and its mentor Nordin Abdul Malek, (BGR executive chairman) could drive 1Azam participants from merely surpassing normal income to achieving a high income." He said this in his speech at the launching of the book, "Azam Untuk Kaya", (Determination To Be Rich) and presentation of the BGR 1Azam Icon Awards, here, Tuesday.

5BY20 Helps Rural Women Become Better Entrepreneurs

By Ali Imran Mohd Noordin

KOTA KINABALU -- Women do 66 per cent of the world's work, but only earn 10 per cent of the world's income. Although women are grossly underpaid, they are found to reinvest 90 per cent of their income into the well-being of their family and community. The Coca-Cola Company has decided to provide for them better job prospects, while at the same time ensuring that they are able to meet the daily commitments to their families through its '5by20' programme, where it aims to empower five million women entrepreneurs worldwide by 2020. The programme focuses on three key areas, namely business skills training, access to credit and developing networks of peers and mentors. Until today, 5by20 has been implemented in 44 countries including Brazil, China, Haiti, Mexico, Egypt and Indonesia. Malaysia is the latest country to join the list, after the launch of 5by20 in November. Malaysia's 5by20 programme is known as SURI (Sertai Usahawan Realisasi Impian), and is a collaboration with the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry.

PropUP — Property update

Fiamma Properties To Acquire RM48 Mln Land

KUALA LUMPUR -- Fiamma Properties Sdn Bhd, a wholly-owned unit of Fiamma Holdings Bhd, has signed a sale and purchase agreement for the acquisition of two pieces of freehold land for RM48 million. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, Fiamma Holdings said the acquisition would be funded via a combination of bank borrowings and internally-generated funds.

Secondary Properties May Be Cheaper

By Rosemarie Khoo Mohd Sani

KUALA LUMPUR -- The secondary property market in the country has good potential as the prices of the houses could be 30-40 per cent lower than the new ones, said the Malaysia Institute of Estate Agents (MIEA). Its president, Siva Shanker, said many people were unaware of the hidden 'gems' in the secondary property market. "The data have proven that property prices in the secondary market are very much similar to those in the primary market and if comparisons are made in terms of location and size, they are much cheaper and affordable, he told Bernama Tuesday.

Bina Puri To Complete New Sabah State Administrative Complex

KUALA LUMPUR -- Another additional works for major development in the state of Sabah valued at RM64.99 million has landed on the lap of Bina Puri Holdings Bhd, closing the year 2014 with its unbuilt book order stands at RM2.01 billion to date. Main Market listed Bina Puri Holdings Main Market listed Bina Puri Holdings Bhd, announced here Monday that the company through its wholly-owned subsidiary, Bina Puri Sdn Bhd has accepted the letter of award from Jabatan Kerjaraya, Sabah on Dec 15, 2014 to undertake additional works for the proposed new Sabah State Administrative Complex, Teluk Likas, Sabah (Phase 1-Building Works) under the federal government's 'Facilitation Fund'.The project entails the upgrading of works to Existing Seawall, upgrading works to External Roundabout for the Proposed Traffic Diversion and upgrading works to Fencing. Construction will commence Monday and is expected to be completed in 16 months.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard
Gainers - 436
Losers - 255
Not Traded - 750
Unchanged - 301
Value - 870115062
Volume - 8464895

BURSA: FBM KLCI Hits More Than Two-Week High

KUALA LUMPUR -- The benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) ended on a firm note Friday with the benchmark FBM KLCI hitting more than a two-week high, dealers said. At close, the index on the local exchange rose 14.70 points to 1,764.44. A dealer said despite the holiday-thinned trade, the local equities will stay buoyant at year-end, boosted by window-dressing by investors. However, Hong Leong Investment Bank in its note earlier said overall, the market is likely to remain choppy. "Moving forward, the trading will be stimulated by thin volume in a subdued market, due to profit-taking consolidation and persistent swings in crude oil prices," the research house said. Bursa Malaysia was closed Thursday for Christmas Day. Gainers trounced losers 436 to 255, while 301 were unchanged, 750 untraded and 14 suspended. Total volume fell to 846.49 million shares worth RM870.12 million from 1.05 billion shares worth RM995.56 million on Wednesday. Main Market volume declined to 607.93 million shares worth RM824.60 million from 655.49 million shares worth RM916.73 billion on Wednesday.

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	3.4890	3.4920
EUR	4.2538	4.2578
GBP	5.4264	5.4325
100 YEN	2.8986	2. 8023
SGD	2.6400	2.6433

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

FOREX: Ringgit Rebounds Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit rebounded from its recent losses to close higher Friday, supported by improved risk appetite for the local unit. As at 5 pm, the ringgit was quoted at 3.4890/4920 vis-a-vis the greenback from 3.4955/4975 on Wednesday. The local market was closed Thursday for Christmas. A dealer said most investors reduced their dollar position ahead of the year-end holiday. The ringgit was traded mostly higher against other major currencies. It appreciated against the yen to 2.8986/8023 from 2.9016/9044 on Wednesday, rose against the pound to 5.4264/4325 from 5.4345/4393 and strengthened against the euro to 4.2538/2578 from 4.2624/2663 previously. The ringgit, however, fell against the Singapore dollar to 2.6400/6433 from Wednesday's 2.6385/6420.

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

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates ended steady Friday on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention to absorb excess liquidity from the financial system. The liquidity surplus in the conventional system slipped to RM22.14 billion against RM28.97 billion estimated earlier, while in the Islamic system, the excess declined to RM7.6 billion from RM15.39 billion. The central bank conducted a late conventional money market tender for RM22.2 billion and a RM7.6 billion Al-Wadiah money market tender, both for three-day monies. The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 3.22 per cent, while the one-, two- and three-week rates stood at 3.28 per cent, 3.32 per cent and 3.35 per cent, respectively. The local market was closed yesterday for Christmas.

KLIBOR Futures Close Untraded For 9th Consecutive Session

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed untraded for the ninth consecutive session Friday. Spot month January 2015, February 2015, March 2015 and June 2015 remained pegged at 96.11, 96.12, 96.15 and 96.14, respectively. Open interest stood at 1,170 contracts. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.86 per cent.

KLCI Futures End Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed steady in tandem with the higher cash market. At the close, December 2014 rose 15 points to 1,763.50, January 2015 added 12.50 points to 1,765.50, March 2015 gained 11 points to 1,763.50 and June 2015 was 13 points better at 1,764.50. Turnover decreased to 9,792 lots from 16,888 lots on Wednesday while open interest narrowed to 37,213 contracts from 43,117 contracts previously. The underlying FBM KLCI ended 14.70 points higher at 1,764.44.Bursa Malaysia was closed Thursday for Christmas Day.

Banking &Finance

Mega Mergers To Hog Islamic Banking Into 2015 Limelight

By Zairina Zainuddin

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's Islamic banking sector is set to attract global limelight next year with the formation of the world's first mega Islamic bank amid challenging times next year. The proposed three-way merger between CIMB Group Holdings Bhd, RHB Capital Bhd and Malaysia Building Society Bhd (MBSB) will help internationalise the Malaysian model of Islamic finance thus positioning the country as the leader in Islamic banking. "This is a positive industry development because it is market driven mergers and acquisitions (M&A)," Maybank Islamic Bank Chief Executive Officer Muzaffar Hisham told Bernama. On July 10, Bank Negara gave the greenlight to commence discussions with the aim of merging the businesses of both RHB and CIMB, as well as, create an enlarged Islamic Banking franchise with MBSB. The mega merger is expected to take off in the first quarter of next year.

Malaysia's Insurance Industry To Be Stable In 2015

By Azlee Nor Mahmud

KUALA LUMPUR -- The insurance industry is expected to be stable in 2015 despite the uncertainties in the global economy affecting Malaysia, say industry experts. Etiqa Takaful Bhd Chief Executive Officer Ahmad Rizlan Azman said there is a huge market potential which assures continued growth in the years ahead. He also said the market penetration rate for Takaful is relatively low compared to the Muslim population in Malaysia. "However, given the large untapped market that still exists with only 54 per cent of the population having a life insurance or Family Takaful policy, there is significant room for growth in Malaysia," he told Bernama. Rizlan said on the whole, the Takaful industry performed relative better than conventional insurance, adding, in terms of total contribution, the former registered an increase of 4.4 per cent in 2013 compared to 2012. Conventional insurance recorded an increase of 4.1 per cent in total premium over the same period.

Maybank Sells 10 Pct Stake In ATR Kim Eng Land

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malayan Banking Bhd's (Maybank) indirect subsidiary, Maybank ATR Kim Eng Capital Partners Inc has sold its 100 per cent stake in ATR Kim Eng Land Inc (ATRKE Land) to Rockwell Primaries Development Corp, ATR Holdings Inc and Dragon Eagle International Ltd. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, Maybank said the total assets of ATRKE Land as at Nov 30, 2014 was 1.07 billion Philippine Pesos (about RM83.7 million).

Maybank Offers Moratorium On Loan Repayments For Flood Victims

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank will offer a six-month moratorium on instalment payment for loans and waive certain charges based on a case-to-case basis for customers in Terengganu, Kelantan, Pahang and other areas affected by floods. The bank said credit card holders affected by the floods would be eligible for waivers on late/finance charges and applications to increase their credit limit during this period. Maybank head of Community Financial Services Malaysia, Hamirullah Boorhan said the bank had offered a similar disaster relief programme in past years to its customers. "In line with Maybank's mission to humanise its financial services, we initiated this programme to lessen the burden of our customers," he said in a statement, here, Tuesday.

BNM Issues Payment Card Reform Framework

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Tuesday issued the payment card reform framework as a standard under the Financial Services Act 2013 and the Islamic Financial Services Act 2013. The central bank said the framework could foster an efficient, transparent and competitive payment card industry in the country. "The framework incorporates the proposals set out in the concept paper issued on Oct 10, taking into account the feedback received during the consultation process," BNM said in a statement.

Flood Victims Given Reprieve By Agrobank

KUALA LUMPUR -- Agrobank has offered a relief assistance plan to help customers in flood-stricken states, particularly Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang. This includes a moratorium on monthly installment payments and rescheduling of loan repayment for qualified customers. Agrobank President and Chief Executive Officer Datuk Wan Mohd Fadzmi Wan Othman, in a statement here Friday, said the bank understood the need for flood victims to get a temporary reprieve from their financial obligations in this difficult time. He said the bank would process requests for the flood relief packages on a case-by-case basis.

Bank Association Members Make Commitment To Help Flood Victims

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Association of Banks in Malaysia (ABM), through its 13 member banks in Kelantan, Pahang, Terengganu, Perak, Perlis and Sabah, will be pro-actively assisting customers, both individuals and businesses, affected by the floods. ABM Executive Director Chuah Mei Lin said the banks understood that this was a difficult and stressful time for the flood victims. "As in all previous occasions, our member banks will be extending a helping hand during this challenging period by providing solutions and assistance to customers based on their individual financial circumstances," she said in a statement here Friday. The assistance provided by the banks may include deferring home loan repayments; restructuring business loans without incurring fees; or granting a temporary suspension of repayment installments, waiver of charges for affected customers seeking replacements of ATM cards, cheque books and passbooks which have been destroyed in the floods.

NCB Eyes 90 Pct Asset Utilisation Ratio

KUALA LUMPUR -- NCB Holdings Bhd aims to improve its profitability by increasing its asset utilisation ratio to 90 per cent next year from 75 per cent this year and re-evaluating non-profitable businesses. Group Managing Director Abi Sofian Abdul Hamid said, the company will focus on its core business of warehousing, haulage and freight while at the same time improving its cost management. "Work is still ongoing, we have a few focus groups to identify clearly where we can cut all these non-profitable businesses," he told reporters after the signing of a corporate integrity pledge (CIP) here Monday.

Tourism M'sia, Jin Air To Draw Korean Tourists To Sabah

KOTA KINABALU -- Tourism Malaysia, with the cooperation of Jin Air, aims to fly in 15,378 passengers via 86 chartered flights to Sabah in 2015. Budget airline Jin Air is a subsidiary of Korean Air. Tourism Malaysia will also be running a three-month campaign up to March next year to draw more Korean tourists to the "Land Below the Wind". Deputy Director General of Tourism Malaysia Azizan Noordin said this is in line with the efforts of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture to draw more tourists to the country, especially Sabah. "Through this cooperation, we are looking at about 380,000 Korean tourists making their way to Malaysia next year. Sabah last year registered 283,000 Korean tourist arrivals and we hope to record 350,000 for 2014, he told reporters this after welcoming Jin Air's maiden flight to the state at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport Monday night.

Berjaya Land's Q2 PBT Rises To RM122.42 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Berjaya Land Bhd's pre-tax profit (PBT) rose to RM122.42 million for the second quarter ended Oct 31, 2014, from RM117.27 million in the same period last year. Revenue was higher at RM1.41 billion from RM1.04 billion previously. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, the company said the higher group revenue was mainly due to the consolidation of HR Owen by BToto Group.

Give Online Traders Time To Register With CCM

KUALA LUMPUR -- Puteri Umno has urged the Companies Commission of Malaysia (CCM) to give online traders time to register their businesses as required under the Consumer Protection (Electronic Trades Transactions) Regulations 2012. "We are aware that registering their online business would bring many benefits to the traders themselves but they should be given some time, to enable them to complete company registration and related matters," the movement's head Datuk Mas Ermieyati Samsudin said in a statement Monday.

Malaysia's 2014 GDP To Grow By 5.8 Pct

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth is likely to expand by 5.8 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) in 2014 and five per cent next year, said Affin Hwang Capital. In a note Monday, the research house said the estimation was made after taking into account the strong expansion of 6.4 per cent registered in the first half of 2014. It said domestic demand would continue supporting the growth, although expected to slow in the first half of 2015 (1H15).

M'sia Eyes 1.4 Mln Chinese Tourist Arrivals Next Year - Nazri

PETALING JAYA -- Malaysia is expected to attract 1.4 million Chinese tourist arrivals next year in conjunction with the Malaysia Year of Festival 2015 (MyFest 2015). Tourism and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz said the amount was part of the government's target to achieve 29.4 million foreign tourists to visit Malaysia next year. He said after the Malaysia Airlines (MAS) MH370 tragedy in March, the number of Chinese tourists arrival in Malaysia was still high, only after May the number of Chinese tourists had decreased. There was a need for all parties to work hard to get back the Chinese tourists to visit Malaysia, he told reporters after launching the Tunamaya Air at Subang Skypark Terminal near here, Monday. Nazri said among the steps taken to woe Chinese tourists to Malaysia, was looking at the need to waive the visa charges of 80 Renminbi (RM44.83) per person.

Celcom Eyes 50 Pct Surge In Customers

KUALA LUMPUR -- Celcom Axiata Bhd expects a 50 per cent increase in the number of new customers for its rebranded First post-paid package, which is designed to optimise and personalise customers' Internet and call usage. First offers customers First Basic and First Elite plans, and is for middle and heavy users who seek exclusive privileges and personalised plans based on their individual needs, its chief marketing officer, Zalman Aefendy Zainal Abidin, said Tuesday.

FGV Share Price Falls Due To Bearish Palm Oil Mart

KUALA LUMPUR -- The fall in the share prices of Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd (FGV) by almost half from its offer price is due to the global decline in the prices of palm oil. Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Razali Ibrahim, said this affected the share prices because 75 per cent of FGV's business was based on the

product. "FGB cannot compare with Sime Darby Bhd or IOI Corp Bhd because they are much more diversified. When the price drops, of course it will affect the price of FGV. The fall, to me, is quite alarming and sad," he told reporters here Tuesday.

Aviation Industry Beaming With Optimism

By Farhana Poniman

KUALA LUMPUR -- Aviation industry players are beaming with optimism on the sector's outlook next year, as the current slump in global oil prices will lower airlines' operating cost. The downtrend in crude oil prices, which fell 47.5 per cent from 2014's peak, would augur well for the sector's earnings and yields especially after the two aviation tragedies involving the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines' (MAS) MH370 on March 8 and the downing of MH17 in eastern Ukraine on July 17. Industry players are expecting jet fuel prices for 2015 and 2016 to average at US$100 per barrel and US$110 per barrel, respectively. Rockwell Collins' Airport Business Development Regional Director Andrew Seow believes the propensity to travel is huge in Malaysia given its large population. "Asia-Pacific is the growth area for travel and Malaysia is well-placed to benefit from that," he told Bernama.

Private Investment To Remain Robust

By Noor Soraya Mohd Jamal

KUALA LUMPUR -- The prospects for corporate sector is expected to be optimistic next year, with private investment remaining robust driven by the balance of projects under the Tenth Malaysia Plan (10MP) which enters its final year in 2015. Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said there were still many projects that needed to be completed next year and they would become the new catalysts for local companies especially in the banking and services sectors. "Mega projects, for example the 2,000-kilometre Pan-Borneo Expressway worth RM27 billion, and construction in rural areas in Sabah and Sarawak will become the new catalysts for Malaysia's corporate sector," he said in an interview with Bernama. Nazri Khan said next year would also see some big initial public offerings (IPO) such as 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), Weststar and Medini Iskandar. "The controversy surrounding 1MDB should not be a problem as IPO is a different thing. The assets placed under the IPO are good and defensive such as power assets," he said.

MAHB Eyes Listing Of Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen Aiport

SEPANG -- Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) may look at listing as one of the options for the Istanbul's Sabiha Gokcen Airport upon gaining total equity interest in the airport. Its chief executive officer, Datuk Badlisham Ghazali, said MAHB had received its shareholders' nod to acquire the remaining 40 per cent stake currently not owned by the company in the airport through the 'right of first refusal' exercise. "We expect the exercise to be completed latest by the first quarter of next year and we see that listing is one of the options to keep the airport competitive," he told reporters after the company's extraordinary general meeting (EGM) here, Tuesday.

2015 Promises To Be An Exciting Year For DHL Express

KUALA LUMPUR -- DHL Express expects 2015 promises to be an exciting year as the company continues to invest and grow its presence and services throughout Malaysia. "The coming year will see even more progressive growth and innovative logistics solutions from DHL Express," DHL Express Malaysia and Brunei, Managing Director Christopher Ong said in a statement here Friday. He said the company has just introduced increased frequency and capacity of flights from Malaysia. Ong pointed out that the fastest growing trade area worldwide was the intra-Asia trade corridor, with emerging Asia economies expected to grow by 6.9 per cent per annum in 2014-18. "Malaysia is a country that has proven to strive amid adversity and still remains one of the most competitive economies among developing Asian economies," he said. However, Ong expected the same challenges next year as analysts foresee advanced economies to have difficulties in accelerating their growth.

M'sian Formula Bikes To Open 20 3S Smartshops Next Year

BUKIT MERTAJAM -- Malaysian Formula Bikes Sdn Bhd, importer and assembler of Taiwan-made motorcycles and scooters from San Yang Motor (SYM), plans to open another 20 of sales, service and spare part (3S) smartshops for SYM motorcycles next year. Its Managing Director, Datuk Seri Arifuddin Shah, said currently, the group has 10 3S smartshops in Malaysia providing one-stop services for customers. He said for 2015, the group planned to improve the brand's name and increase production capacity to achieve higher sales."We hope that by opening more 3S smartshops, it will reflect our company's commitment to serve our customers nationwide and also strengthen our brand name in a highly-competitive market," he told reporters here Friday.

Consumers Must Wisely Voice Their Rights

KUALA PILAH -- Consumers must exercise their right wisely if the prices of goods go up, despite the drop in fuel prices. Domestic Trade, Cooperative and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Hasan Malek, who is also Kuala Pilah Member of Parliament, said they should pick the right avenue to report on the matter. "They talked about prices of goods going up due to fuel price increases in the past, but now the prices of fuel have gone down, so they have to demand the prices of goods be brought down. I leave it to consumer associations to voice the right of consumers so that action can be taken against errant traders," he said at a programme of Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM) here, Monday.

Emas Kiara Gets LOA For Geosynthetic Works In India

KUALA LUMPUR -- Emas Kiara Industries Bhd has announced that its joint venture (JV) bid for geosynthetic engineering works in Assam, India worth US$13.56 million (RM47.16 million) has been accepted by the Assam Water Resources Department. On May 30, its unit Emas Kiara Marketing Sdn Bhd inked a JV agreement with PD Associates and Raswill Representative Pte Ltd to form an unincorporated joint venture. The company said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Monday a letter of acceptance (LOA) from the department was received on Dec 18 for the project, which is for flood management of the Ranganadi river on both bank embankments in Lakhimpur District. Emas Kiara said the JV is required to furnish a performance security of US$679,005 (RM2.36 million) within 21 days from the receipt of the LOA, and sign the contract for the project.

M'sia Ranks 4th In Use Of Social Media In Job Search

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia has been ranked the world's fourth in workers' use of social media in making their career decisions, according to the 2014 Kelly Global Workforce Index (KGWI), an annual global survey. Kelly Outsourcing and Consulting Group (KellyOCG) vice president D. Anthony Raja said at least 60 per cent of the local workforce use social media as a job search tool contrasting with the global average of 36 per cent. "This phenomenon is more inclined in Asia Pacific countries, which stands out as a hot spot with approximately half (51 per cent) of the employees involving their social media network for employment decisions. "This is significantly higher than Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) (34 per cent) and the Americas (a combination of North and South America) (30 per cent)," he said in a statement here Monday. However, he said, less than 30 per cent of job positions in Asia Pacific countries are landed via online job boards.

MAS Welcomes 100th Boeing 737 Aircraft

SEPANG -- Malaysia Airlines (MAS) Monday welcomed the arrival of its 100th Boeing 737 aircraft, celebrating more than 40 years of partnership with the aircraft manufacturer. MAS Chief Executive Officer Ahmad Jauhari Yahya said the new aircraft, which can fly up to six hours, departed from Seattle on Dec 19 and made three stops in Hawaii, Majuro and Guam. The journey took a total of 21 hours covering 15,000 kilometres. "The new Boeing 737-800 is the latest of its kind, and with enhanced capability, it gives 15 per cent better fuel efficiency. The Boeing 737 variant continues to be an amazing aircraft for our airline with its consistent reliability, unmatched economics and innovation in passenger comforts," he said in his speech after welcoming the aircraft here Monday.

Challenging Times Ahead For Palm Oil Industry

By S.Joan Santani

KUALA LUMPUR -- The rapid growth of the palm oil industry has brought about many new challenges to the sector's future sustainability and competitiveness. For Malaysia, making inroads into new markets is always crucial for the 20 millions of tonnes of crude palm oil (CPO) that is produced each year. But, this is no mean feat as Indonesia, the world's largest palm oil producer, and the commodity's closest substitute, soybean oil, offer stiff competition to the golden crop. The scenario today is one of low prices for the commodity, which is exported to about 150 countries which depend on palm oil for their supply of vegetable oils and fats for cooking, frying, making margarine and bakery fats. Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd Derivatives Product Specialist David Ng told Bernama lower prices would mean higher offtake as more countries, especially the poor ones, would be able to purchase the edible oil for their consumption.

Proton Says Ready To Collaborate On Asean Car Project

By Azizul Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian carmaker Proton Holdings Bhd says it is ready to collaborate in the Asean car project. Proton Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdul Harith Abdullah said Asean is the next largest growing market in the world after China, and Asean countries should protect their own market territory by producing their own home-grown products. "We would be very happy to extend our market deeper into other Asean countries with their collaboration, in expanding our brand further," he said when asked to comment on the Asean car project, which was discussed by Malaysian and Indonesian leaders in October.

EPF Takes Legal Action On PSSB For Default

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) has taken legal action against Perwaja Steel (Kemaman) Sdn Bhd (PSSB) for defaulting monthly EPF contributions, amounting to RM9.17 million, for the period between August 2013 and September 2014. The action, both prosecution and civil suit, was also taken personally against company directors for the same default. EPF Deputy Chief Executive Officer for Operations Datuk Mohd Naim Daruwish said in a statement here Tuesday, EPF has completed the investigations on PSSB Kemaman and has filed the civil suits against the company and its directors at the Kuala Terengganu High Court to recover the outstanding arrears of contributions.

Bernama Radio24 Joint Venture With China Radio International

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bernama Radio24 and the China Radio International (CRI) will work together to place their representatives in their stations to foster closer ties between the two nations. The agreement for the joint-venture was made at a meeting of four delegates from CRI led by its Deputy-Director of the Southeast Asia Broadcasting Centre and Director of Malay Service, Zhang Wenwen with Bernama General Manager Datuk Zulkefli Salleh, at Wisma Bernama here Tuesday. Zhang said the joint-venture which began in 2009 had opened up opportunities for an exchange of officers a year later and was beneficial to continue the initiative.

RM2 Mln Penalty For Traders Flouting Price Control Act

SHAH ALAM -- The penalty for traders flouting the Price Control Act will be increased to between RM1 million to RM2 million next year, said Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Hasan Malek. The increase, which has been agreed to by the Cabinet, Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara, will be gazetted early next year, he said. The existing penalty of between RM100,000 to RM200,000 has not been effective at curbing profiteering by traders and has led to laments about widespread subsidy cheating, he told reporters here Tuesday.

H1 Auto Sector To Soften Despite New Models

By Azizul Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR -- Automotive players are expected to introduce new and enhanced versions of existing models next year, including energy-efficient vehicles (EEVs) at very competitive prices. However, uncertainties over the impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), rising living costs and bleak global economic outlook may cause consumers to be careful with their spending, and players expect the sector to soften in the first half of next year. Proton Holdings Bhd Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Datuk Abdul Harith Abdullah told Bernama, Proton sees a lot of potential in providing models in their respective segments, citing the recently launched Proton Iriz. However, he said, Proton is also cautious and mindful of the market outlook for 2015 with the impending introduction of the GST.

Rubber Sector To Recover On Higher NR Demand

By Harizah Hanim Mohamed

KUALA LUMPUR -- The natural rubber (NR) industry is expected to recover next year, supported by increased demand from consuming countries amid low supply, says Malaysian Rubber Board (MRB) Director-General Datuk Dr Salmiah Ahmad She said the brighter prospects would be supported by China's mounting demand for the commodity which has been on the increase since this year. "This means demand will exceed the world's supply of natural rubber," she told Bernama. A Monetary Fund report said global demand for NR will increase 5.3 per cent in 2014 and 2015. However, Malaysia's natural rubber production declined to 826,421 tonnes in 2013 from 922,798 metric tonnes recorded in 2012. The International Rubber Study Group had reported that natural rubber supply declined to 2.5 million tonnes in June from 3.06 million tonnes registered in the same month last year. "Therefore, MRB expects rubber prices to be stronger next year," she added.

MAS Shares To Be Delisted From Bursa Malaysia On Dec 31

KUALA LUMPUR -- Shares of Malaysia Airlines (MAS) will be removed from the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia Securities from Dec 31, 2014 at 9 am, the local bourse announced Friday. The national airline suspended trading of the shares since Dec 15 to facilitate its selective capital reduction (SCR) repayment exercise until itsdelisting, following a privatisation exercise by Khazanah Nasional Bhd. The trading of MAS shares will continue to be suspended until the completion of the SCR.

Bernama Coop, FAMR Holdings Ink MoU On Healthy Lifestyle

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bernama Bhd Cooperative and FAMR Holdings Sdn Bhd Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate in promoting a healthy lifestyle among the public. Under the MoU, FAMR Holdings would gain assistance with advertising and promotion of its 'Cypress Extra' alkaline energy drink. The MoU was signed by Bernama Cooperative Chairman Datuk Zulkefli Salleh while FAMR Holdings Sdn Bhd was represented by Managing Director Siti Zaleha Abd Ghani.

Lafarge Cement Secures RM254 Mln Contract From Petronas

KUALA LUMPUR -- Lafarge Cement Sdn Bhd has secured a RM254 million contract from Petronas Refinery and Petrochemical Corporation Sdn Bhd for the provision of concrete supply for its Refinery and Petrochemicals Integrated Development Project in Pengerang, Johor. Larafge Cement Sdn Bhd is a subsidiary of Lafarge Malaysia Bhd (LMB). "The Package 21D contract was awarded for five years," the company said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday.

GST Registration Rises To 241,493 As Of Dec 22

KUALA LUMPUR -- The number of companies registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) stood at 241,493 as of Monday, an increase of 4,883 from Sunday, said the Royal Malaysian Customs Department. The number of GST-registered companies has now surpassed the government's year-end target of 140,000. Businesses with an annual sales turnover of less than RM500,000 are urged to register for the GST, in the event it exceeds RM500,000 in the future. They are to register by Dec 31 for the new tax system to be implemented on April 1, 2015.

Maybank Kim Eng Wins Asiamoney, The Asset, Starmine Awards

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank Kim Eng has won multiple awards and recognitions from Asiamoney, The Asset and StarMine. The Asiamoney Brokers Poll 2014 had Maybank Kim Eng making the list for all categories in Malaysia; coming in first for Best in Sales Trading and Best Events And/Or Conferences, and second for Best Local Brokerage, Best Execution, Best for Overall Country Research. Maybank Kim Eng was also named the Most Improved Brokerage Over the Last 12 Months, Best for Roadshows and Company Visits, Most Independent Research Brokerage and Best Overall Sales Service, the company said in a statement Wednesday.

NCIA & Partners Conduct Feasibility Study For Green Tech Power Station

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) will witness a feasibility study for the potential construction of a 50 MW green technology power station. The study on the public-private partnership project will be funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and spearheaded by Japanese-based Panasonic Corp as well as Newjec Inc. In a statement here Wednesday, Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) said the study would encompass the development of energy supply and investments derived from photovoltaic energy generation stations.

Mitrajaya Bags Contract To Build BNM's Business Operation Complex

KUALA LUMPUR -- Mitrajaya Holdings Bhd's wholly owned subsidiary, Pembinaan Mitrajaya Sdn Bhd has secured a contract to design, construct, commission and complete the Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) Business Operation Complex in Kuala Lumpur worth RM186.8 million. In its filing to Bursa Malaysia Wednesday, Mitrajaya said the contract is expected to commence on Jan 2, 2015 and complete by March 31, 2016. The contract is expected to contribute positively to the group's future earnings, it said.

Prasarana's 1st Six-Car Train To Arrive Saturday

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prasarana Malaysia Bhd will receive its first new six-car light rail vehicle this Saturday. In a statement here Wednesday, Prasarana said the first of 50 sets acquired from CSR Zhuzhou Electric Locomotive Co, including 20 under the Light Rail Transit Line Extension Project, was shipped from Shanghai on Dec 5 and was on the way to Port Klang. Prasarana project development group director, Datuk Zohari Sulaiman, said the train would be transported to the company's Ampang Line depot, where it would undergo internal inspection after which testing and commissioning procedures would commence.

Kaspersky Lab Launches Cyber Threat Logbook Project

KUALA LUMPUR -- Kaspersky Lab launches its targeted cyber attacks logbook project, an online service that brings together all the information on the most sophisticated cyber campaigns as a means to curb cybercrime. In a statement here Friday, it said through the new service users could explore links between threats as well as their trends and impact or investigate the behaviour of specific threats. "Currently, the team's portfolio contains several years' worth of research into 29 major targeted attacks, including high-profile campaigns such as Regin, Darkhotel, Cloud Atlas and more," it said. The service makes it possible to view links between different cyber campaigns and retrieve detailed information on each of them, including the geography of infections, the ways in which malware was spread, the cyber criminals' targets and the special features of each attack, it added.

Govt To Ensure 2015 Fiscal Deficit Won't Worsen

By Siti Radziah Hamzah

KUALA LUMPUR -- The government is expected to undertake measures to ensure that the country's fiscal deficit will not worsen in 2015 due to the fall in crude oil prices.

Under 2015 Budget, the government said it plans to reduce fiscal deficit to three per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) next year.

In a research note, RHB Research said the government has a few options to help mitigate the fall in crude oil prices.

It said one of them is to request Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) to pay a slightly higher dividend of RM20.3 billion (based on a 30 per cent drop in crude oil prices), to help it tide over the difficult period.

Petronas has warned of a lower dividend next year as its net profit for the third quarter ended Sept 30, 2014 fell 12.3 per cent to RM15 billion on weaker oil prices, liquefied natural gas sales and unfavourable foreign exchange.

NATIONAL PRIDE...Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak (right) showing the panoramic view of the Petronas Twin Towers to US Secretary of State John F. Kerry during a visit in October, 2013.

RM23.2 Bln GST Revenue

RHB Research said the government's revenue will, however, get a lift when the Goods and Services Tax (GST)'s impact would be felt more significantly in 2016.

It said the government has estimated the GST revenue for 2015 of RM23.2 billion.

This, however, will be offset by revenue foregone from the abolishment of the sales and services tax of RM13.8 billion, it said.

RHB Research said the government could miss its fiscal deficit target next year if Petronas does not pay higher dividend.

"The government will have to work within its means by using contingent money and cut its development expenditure by RM3 billion.

2015 GDP Forecast At 5 Pct

"However, the deficit could still improve to between 3.1 per cent and 3.2 per cent in 2015, based on a 30 per cent drop in oil revenue, from 3.5 per cent of GDP estimated for 2014," it said.

It said if the government were to miss its budget deficit target, the rating agencies are unlikely to downgrade Malaysia's credit rating.

"This is because the budget deficit is still on an improving trend," it said.

The research firm said the real GDP would grow by five per cent in 2015, weaker than its earlier projection of 5.3 per cent and compared to an estimate of 5.8 per cent in 2014.

Domestic demand will sustain its growth at around 5.3 per cent in 2015, albeit slower than 5.7 per cent estimated for 2014, from 7.4 per cent in 2013, it said.

Ringgit To Strengthen

UBS AG said while things may get worse before they get better, oil and capital flows could become more ringgit-positive later in 2015.

"The weakness in the ringgit is likely to be based on a combination of the stronger US dollar and the lower oil price on top of already slowing growth momentum –- implying weak growth and lower policy interest rates," it said in a note.

Against the backdrop, UBS said, it expects the US dollar to continue appreciating in 2015 and towards euro at 1.15-level and Malaysia's domestic credit cycle to further mature alongside that of Asia.

"As such, we forecast the ringgit to regain some of its poise, but not to reverse recent losses. We project US dollar/ringgit at 3.50-level for end-2015," it said.

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Market Outlook
December 20, 2014

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

BURSA MALAYSIA

BURSA: KL Shares Set To Stage Further Rebound

KUALA LUMPUR -- Shares on Bursa Malaysia are likely to stage a further rebound next week, driven by a dovish US Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) statement and positive global economic data.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank vice-president and head of retail research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said besides that, oil prices were expected to experience a mild jump, while Wall Street and Asian regional indices would undergo a wilder upside swing ahead of the New Year window dressing.

"The positive global economic data encompass the US Industrial Production, the Germany Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), the France PMI and a Europe trade balance.

"We believe Bursa Malaysia will see a modest recovery bounce next week.

However, aggressive bulls might consider using a post-Federal Reserve meeting drop in the FBMKLCI as an opportunity to buy on dips for a corrective bounce back toward the 1,730 and 1,750 resistance area," he said.

For the week-just-ended, the benchmark index closed 17 points lower at 1,715.99, driven by continuous buying support in selected blue chips.

The FBM Emas Index erased 67.13 points to 11,799.34, the FBMT100 Index eased 74.45 points to 11,542.4, the FBM 70 increased 72 points to 12,896.45 and the FBM Ace improved 50.83 points to 5,603.33.

Sector-wise, the Industrial Index fell 37.72 points to 3,100.57, the Finance Index gave up 189.23 points to 15,273.77 and the Plantation Index eased 289.82 points to 7,477.66.

Weekly turnover increased to 9.42 billion shares worth RM10.63 billion from 6.58 billion shares worth RM8.12 billion last week.

Main market volume improved to 6.88 billion shares, valued at RM10 billion against 4.54 billion shares, valued at RM7.55 billion previously.

Warrants' turnover rose to 763.4 million shares valued at RM246.73 million against 754.81 million shares valued at RM785.49 million.

The ACE market volume went up 1.74 billion shares worth RM365.82 million from 1.27 billion shares worth RM257.06 million transacted previously.

Ringgit Likely To Trade Between 3.45 & 3.50 Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is likely to trade in the range between 3.45 and 3.50 level against the US dollar next week in the face of weaker crude oil prices, a dealer said.

He said the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) position not to raise the interest rate in near term helped ease the pressure on the local unit, but the underlying sentiment was still weak and dictated by oil prices and equity market.

The ringgit reached its two-week high on Thursday as the Fed signalled that it was on track to raise interest rates next year, after falling to a five-year low of 3.5040 the previous week on slumping crude oil prices.

"Ringgit will be under pressure and even test the 3.5 level, depending on foreign funds' sentiment and the movement of crude oil prices," the dealer told Bernama.

For the week just-ended, the ringgit soared to 3.4750/4780 against the US dollar from last Friday's 3.4940/4960.

The local unit appreciated against the Singapore dollar to 2.6400/6443 from last Friday's 2.6664/6691 and advanced against the yen to 2.9109/9141 from 2.9483/9502 last week.

It surged against the British pound to 5.4412/4472 from 5.4866/4919 and surged against the euro to 4.2676/2720 from 4.3423/3459 previously.

Short-Term Rates To Be Kept Steady

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term rates are expected to be kept steady next week with Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) intervening to siphon off excess funds from the interbank system.

BNM is expected to call for several tenders in the conventional, Islamic and repo systems on a daily basis next week, depending on the amount of liquidity surplus in the market.

On Friday, the overnight rate stood at 3.22 per cent while the one-week, two-week and three-week rates were at 3.28 per cent, 3.32 per cent and 3.35 per cent, respectively.

During the week just ended, the central bank entered the money market daily throughout the week as the system was flushed with funds from the money market and Islamic maturities.

The closing interbank liquidity surplus for the week was RM26.197 billion in the conventional system and RM4.684 billion in Islamic funds.

On Friday, the underlying three-month interbank rate stood at 3.86 per cent.

KLCI Futures Likely To Further Rebound

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract (FKLI) on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is expected to further rebound next week, a dealer said.

He said share prices on Bursa Malaysia were expected to further rebound next week driven by a dovish US Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) statement and positive global economic data.

Besides that, the oil prices are anticipated to experience a mild boost, while Wall Street and Asian regional indices will undergo a wilder upside swing ahead of the New Year window dressing, he said.
On a Friday-to-Friday basis, December 2014 fell 12.5 points to 1,712.5, January 2015 dropped 11 points to 1,715, March 2015 declined 13 points to 1,713 and June 2015 was 10.5 points lower at 1,714.5.

Turnover for the week increased to 52,384 lots from 44,689 lots last week while open interest rose to 35,613 contracts against 35,860 contracts last week.

For the week just-ended, the benchmark FBM KLCI ended 16.04 points higher at 1,715.99.

CPO Futures Likely To See Quiet Trading

KUALA LUMPUR -- Crude palm oil (CPO) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivative are expected to see quiet trading next week due to the Christmas holiday, a dealer said.

Interband Group of Companies senior palm oil trader Jim Teh said the absence of traders would slow the market due to lack of trading activities during the year-end holiday.

He said the local market was expected to trend lower, influenced by the flagging global economy and the Monsoon season.

"The market price also depends on the world's crude oil prices.

"Physical CPO will likely move between RM2,080 and RM2,180 a tonne for the week," he told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, January 2015 rose RM1 to RM2,160 a tonne, February 2015 fell RM18 to RM2,153 a tonne, March 2015 decreased RM21 to RM2,153 a tonne and April slipped RM18 to RM2,156 a tonne.

Weekly turnover increased to 237,408 lots from 232,265 lots last week while open interest declined to 219,940 contracts from 226,820 contracts previously.

On the physical market, December South remained unchanged with RM2,170 per tonne.

Rubber Prices Likely To Be Quiet

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is expected to be quiet next week in the absence of traders during the Christmas holiday, a dealer said.

He said the market would be closed on Christmas day and was likely to be quiet until the end of this month due to the holiday season.

A dealer said the local market would also be influenced by the movements of crude oil prices and currency exchange.

"For the week just-ended, the rubber market was traded mostly mixed, mainly influenced by the movements of the ringgit and the performance in the regional futures market," he told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the Malaysian Rubber Board's official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 increased 12 sen to 507 sen a kg while latex-in-bulk rose eight sen to 358 sen a kg.

The unofficial closing price for tyre-grade SMR 20

gained five sen to 505 sen a kg and latex-in-bulk added eight sen to 358 sen a kg.

KLIBOR Futures Likely To Remain Quiet

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

For the week just ended, no transaction was recorded throughout the week, while open interest was lower at 1,170 contracts on Friday from last week's 2,970 contracts. December 2014 ended the week at 96.15.

On a week-to-week basis, spot month January 2015, February 2015, March 2015 and June 2015 were pegged at 96.11, 96.12, 96.15 and 96.14, respectively.

The underlying three-month KLIBOR remained at 3.86 per cent.

Tin Price To Follow LME's Movement

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tin price on the Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) next week will closely track the performance of the London Metal Exchange (LME), which is currently erratic, a trader said.

"London is very uncertain now. We can only hope for further improvement in London for the betterment of our price," he said.

The local front has been vastly influenced by the LME trend throughout the week. The KLTM fell sharply by US$400 on Friday at a two-year four-month low of US$19,100 a tonne, dampened by the weak metals market.

"If the LME picks up on Monday, then there will be a slight improvement in the price moving towards US$20,000," he told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the tin price dropped to US$19,100 per tonne from US$20,320 previously.

Accumulated turnover eased to 243 tonnes from 297 tonnes last week.

Gold Futures Prices Likely To Be Above RM130 A Gramme

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gold futures prices on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to be steadied above RM130 a gramme as the Federal Reserve's patience in boosting interest rate would allow the market to rebound.

Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd dealer Ong Su Ling said the US Fed's position not to raise the interest rate in near term helped ease the pressure on gold prices.

"However, the upside movement on gold prices would be weighed if the US dollar continues to be stronger," she told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, spot month December 2014 fell 78 ticks to RM134, January 2015 eased 74 ticks to RM134.45, February 2015 74 ticks to RM134.45 and March 2015 fell 74 ticks 135.15 a gramme, respectively.

Total volume for the week fell to 426 lots worth RM1.9 million from 582 lots worth RM3.67 million transacted last week. Open interest on Friday eased to 1,721 contracts compared with 1,764 contracts previously.