MALAYSIAeBiz
WEEKLY BUSINESS ROUNDUP FEBRUARY 15 - 19 2016

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This Week's Highlight : Najib Promises US Businessmen Stability, Certainty

WARM...President of the United States Barack Obama with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak welcoming the arrival of ASEAN leaders at the US-ASEAN Leaders Summit in Sunnylands, California on Monday. Pic: Mazlan Samion --fotoBERNAMA

From Jamaluddin Muhammad

SAN FRANCISCO -- As As Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak rolled out the red carpet for American businessmen, he promised stability and certainty for those investing in Malaysia. "As businessmen you want stability and certainty. As prime minister, I will deliver stability and certainty for you," he told the American captains of industry during a luncheon at a hotel in San Jose, Silicon Valley Wednesday.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

US Recognises Strategic Importance Of ASEAN - Najib

From Jamaluddin Muhammad

SUNNYLANDS (California) -- On the eve of the US-ASEAN Leaders Summit here Monday (Tuesday in Malaysia), Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the summit represents a recognition by the United States of the diplomatic, economic and strategic importance of ASEAN. "It is the first summit after the elevation of the dialogue relations to a strategic partnership in November last year in Kuala Lumpur (during the ASEAN Summit and related summits)," he said here Sunday (Monday in Malaysia).

TUESDAY

ASEAN Needs Full Preparation Towards Digital Economy

From Jamaluddin Muhammad

SUNNYLANDS(California)--TheASEAN Community needs full preparation, including further promotion of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education, as the region moves towards the digital economy, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. The Malaysian Prime Minister said Tuesday, STEM education was important to fill the job needs of such an economy and should be introduced at the school level.

WEDNESDAY

Zeti Unlikely To Stay For Another Term

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz said she will not stay on for another term as Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Governor. "I am not at liberty to discuss the matter. An announcement on my successor will be made soon. It will eventually happen," Zeti told reporters after launching the Investment Account Platform (IAP) here Wednesday.

THURSDAY

Malaysian Economy Grows 5.0 Per Cent In 2015

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian economy expanded by 5 per cent last year, led by the private sector.

The Statistics Department said Thursday that in the fourth quarter (Q4), Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at a slower pace of 4.5 per cent compared to 4.7 per cent in the third quarter.

Meanwhile, Bank Negara Malaysia said despite the challenging economic environment during the quarter, the private sector continued to be the key driver of growth.

FRIDAY

No Further Budget Recalibration Needed At The Moment - Najib

From Jamaluddin Muhammad

SAN FRANCISCO -- There is no need for further recalibration of the 2016 Budget at the moment as crude oil prices are likely to stabilise in the region of US$30-US$40 per barrel, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. The prime minister said the government may consider recalibrating the budget if crude oil prices dip below US$30 a barrel. "It looks like oil prices are likely to stabilise at between UD$30 to US$40 for a while," he told Malaysian journalists here.

SMEbrief

SME Cluster Proposed Under Malaysia Halal Council

By Kamaliza Kamaruddin

KUALA TERENGGANU -- A special cluster for the small and medium enterprise (SME) sector needs to be set up under the newly-formed Malaysia Halal Council to enable SMEs to raise their problems, especially on financing. Expounding on the proposal, Persatuan Tunas Usahawan Belia Terengganu (Patut) president Amir Long told Bernama, a special fund should be provided for SMEs involved in the halal sector to ensure that plans formulated would reach the entrepreneurs.

EXIM Bank To Assist Entrepreneurs Explore Business In TPP Nations

PASIR MAS -- The Export-Import Bank of Malaysia Bhd (EXIM Bank) will assist Malaysian entrepreneurs explore business opportunities in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) member countries. Exim Bank Chairman Datuk Mat Noor Nawi said Monday, local entrepreneurs are encouraged to explore markets in TPPA member countries and the bank would assist with financing.

Community Lead Centre To Boost SMEs In Sekinchan

SABAK BERNAM -- Malaysia SME Media Group has launched its first Community LEAD Centre (LEAD Centre) in Sekinchan near here with the aim of assisting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in strengthening their business. Its chief executive officer and chief group editor, Wayne Lim said Tuesday, besides offering advisory services and business guidance to SMEs in Sekinchan, the
centre would also help them extend their business network.

RM23.11 Mln For Development Of 168 SMEs In Terengganu

KUALA TERENGGANU -- A total of RM23.11 million has been allocated by SME Corporation Malaysia (SME Corp) Terengganu to develop 168 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Terengganu since 2007. SME Corporation Malaysia Terengganu Director Muhammad Ibrahim said Tuesday, Terengganu received the highest allocation followed by Melaka with RM17.94 million for 297 SMEs and Penang with RM15.14 million (124 SMEs).

HDC Targets 20 Pct Halal Exports From Bumi Companies

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC) expects the export contribution of halal products by Bumiputera companies to reach 20 per cent by 2020, Chief Executive Datuk Seri Jamil Bidin said Wednesday. "With increasing efforts by key stakeholders such as the HDC, the Malaysia Malay Traders and Entrepreneurs Association (Perdasama) and Islamic Development Department (Jakim), we expect the number of halal-certified Bumiputera companies to rise to 5,000 by 2020," he said after announcing a HDC-Perdasama collaboration here.

PropUP Property*update*

UEM Sunrise Partners Mulpha For RM5 Bln Project In Johor

KUALA LUMPUR -- UEM Sunrise Bhd and Mulpha International Bhd are expected to embark on a mixed development project in Johor with a gross development value of about RM5 billion. "The project will integrate both UEM's Gerbang Nusajaya project and Mulpha's Leisure Farm project and both companies will be managed on a 50:50 joint venture (JV) basis," UEM Sunrise Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer Anwar Syahrin Abdul Ajib said Tuesday.

Inari Buys Industrial Land, Factory For RM22.8 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Investment holding firm Inari Amertron Bhd's unit Inari Technology Sdn Bhd is set to acquire leasehold industrial land with factory erected thereon in Penang for RM22.8 million from Unetsys Sdn Bhd. The acquisition is strategic as the said property is located in close proximity to Inari's existing factories in Bayan Lepas Free Trade Zone and hence increase the Group's total manufacturing floor space in Bayan Lepas, it said Thursday.

UMLand Eyes 75 Pct Take-Up Rate For Johor Halal Park

KUALA LUMPUR -- United Malayan Land Bhd's (UMLand) wholly-owned unit, Tentu Teguh Sdn Bhd (TTSB), is eyeing a 75 per cent take-up rate for the 141.64-hectare Johor Halal Park project by year-end. The Johor Halal Park and TTSB chief executive officer Mohd Noor Abd Salam said Thursday, there are committed investors from Singapore, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and mainland China.

Central I-City Project Spurs Economic Growth, Creates Jobs

SHAH ALAM -- A shopping mall in the making, Central i-City within the city of lights i-City here is expected to spur the country's economic growth and create ample job opportunities. A joint-venture joint between i-Bhd and Thai retail developer Central Pattana Public Company Ltd (CPN), the project would also attract foreign investors into the country, Second International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Chuan said after officiating the RM850 million Central i-City project here Thursday.

Bina Darulaman Eyes Perak Land, Afforable Housing

KUALA LUMPUR -- Kedah-based property developer, Bina Darulaman Bhd, plans to acquire land in Perak for possible residential development and focus on afforable housing given the softer property market. Group Managing Director Datuk Izham Yusoff said Thursday, the company's ample cash pile of RM79.01 million would enable it to take advantage of the softer market and secure any good opportunities.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard

Gainers - 426

Losers - 382

Not Traded - 611

Unchanged - 326

Value - 1728294416

Volume - 15851250

Exchange Rate

(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.2030	4.2100
EUR	4.6662	4. 6748
GBP	6.0225	5. 2342
100 YEN	3.7168	3.7240
SGD	2.9893	2. 9947

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

BURSA Malaysia Closes Mixed

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia ended mixed Friday, fuelled by better-than-expected gross domestic product data, but capped by falling crude oil prices. At 5 pm, the FBM KLCI ended 5.14 points lower at 1,674.88 compared with Thursday's close of 1,680.02. The index reached an intraday high of 1,685.23 after opening at an intraday low of 1,673.84. The local bourse was weighed by blue-chips led by IOI Corp, which fell by 15 sen to RM4.75, and followed by CIMB, declined nine sen to RM4.31, Genting, shed 19 sen to RM8, and Petronas Chemicals, eased three sen to RM7. Market breadth was positive with gainers leading losers 426 to 382 with 326 counters remained unchanged, 611 counters untraded and 18 others suspended. Total volume fell to 1.59 billion shares worth RM1.73 billion from 1.67 billion shares worth RM2.10 billion on Thursday. Main Market volume reduced to 1.08 billion units valued at RM1.66 billion from 1.19 billion units valued at RM2.004 billion on Thursday. Turnover on the ACE Market rose to 334.16 million shares worth RM44.09 million from 261.51 million shares worth RM51.28 million.

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FOREX: Weak Oil Prices Pushes Ringgit Lower

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit contracted from Thursday's gain to end the week lower against a basket of major currencies as sentiment in the market was clouded by falling crude oil prices. At 5 pm, the local unit was traded at 4.2030/2100 against the greenback from 4.1670/1730 Thursday. A dealer said the global market took a hit after Saudi Arabia rejected any prospect of a cut to its oil production, causing prices to fall by as much as 3.5 per cent. "Although Malaysia is not a substantial oil exporter, this news fanned worries in the market," the dealer added. Meanwhile, the ringgit closed weaker against the Singapore dollar at 2.9893/9947 from 2.9675/9724 on Thursday, and declined versus the yen to 3.7168/7240 from 3.6646/6715. The ringgit also fell against the euro to 4.6662/6748 from 4.6387/6462 and depreciated vis-a-vis the British pound to 6.0225/2342 from 5.9467/9574.

Short-Term Rates End Steady On BNM's Intervention

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term inter-bank 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 fell to RM32.18 billion from RM39.98 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system, it eased to RM7.10 billion from RM14.47 billion. In the morning, BNM called for four tenders of a range maturity auction, Qard Islamic RMA, repo and a commodity murabahah programme. The central bank conducted a late conventional money market tender for RM31 billion and a Qard money market tender for RM7.0 billion, both for three-day money. The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 3.21 per cent, while the one-week, two and three-week rates were pegged at 3.30 per cent, 3.35 per cent and 3.39 per cent respectively.

KLIBOR Futures End Untraded For 38th Consecutive Session

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives were untraded for the 38th consecutive session Friday. At the close, March 2016, April 2016, May 2016 and June 2016 stood at 96.27, 96.26, 96.27 and 96.27, respectively. Open interest totalled 120 contracts. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.75 per cent.

KLCI Futures Contracts Close Lower

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts (FKLI) on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended lower Friday in line with weaker underlying cash market. February 2016, March 2016 and June 2016 all fell five points to 1,676.5, 1,671.0 and 1,648.0 respectively while September 2016 eased 2.5 points to 1,639.5. Turnover shed to 8,979 lots from 9,837 lots on Thursday while open interests were lower at 46,320 contracts from 49,186 contracts. The benchmark FBM KLCI ended the day 5.14 points lower at 1,674.88.

Banks Should Review Loan Portfolio For Agriculture Entrepreneurs

KUALA LUMPUR -- Commercial banks are urged to review loan portfolios allocated for agriculture entrepreneurs to enable them to drive their businesses to the global stage. Deputy Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tajuddin Abdul Rahman told reporters here Monday, commercial banks should reassess the percentage of loans approved especially for the younger generation of entrepreneurs. "We need to review the loans given so that they can compete with entrepreneurs from other countries. This is part of our objective under the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement," he said.

PruBSN Sees Continued Growth Of Takaful Industry

KUALA LUMPUR -- The takaful industry is expected to continue its growth, further supported by higher awareness among Malaysians despite the current economic conditions and high cost of living. Prudential BSN Takaful Bhd (PruBSN) Chief Executive Officer Aman Chowla said here Tuesday, with the higher awareness, the number of Malaysian subscribers has increased from time to time. PruBSN currently has over 14,000 agents serving more than 700,000 customers.

Maybank Strengthens Online Banking With New Services

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank Bhd aims to further strengthen its leadership in online banking with the introduction of several new services on Maybank2u (M2u). The bank, which currently commands 64 per cent of the Internet banking transaction and 76 per cent of mobile banking transaction volume in the country, has introduced new services to further boost its dominance in the digital banking space. Maybank Head of Community Financial Services Datuk Hamirullah Boorhan said here Tuesday, the introduction of these new services on M2u was part of Maybank's continuous commitment to add value to its online banking offering.

Islamic Banks Launch Investment Account Platform

KUALA LUMPUR -- Six Islamic banking institutions Wednesday launched the first bank-intermediated financial technology (fintech) platform, known as the Investment Account Platform (IAP). Raeed Holdings Sdn Bhd Chairman, Datuk Zamani Abdul Ghani, said IAP was a strategic initiative of the Islamic finance industry to operationalise investment account, a new product offering by Islamic banking institutions.

IAP Strongly Impact Role Of Financial Intermediation - Zeti

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Investment Account Platform (IAP) is likely to have a significant implication on the role of financial intermediation in the Islamic financial system, says Bank Negara Malaysia Governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz. She said here Wednesday, the centralised multi-bank platform is more than just a new, innovative medium for Shariah-compliant investments and fund raising initiatives. The platform was developed by a consortium of six local Islamic banking institutions, namely Affin Islamic Bank Bhd, Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd, Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd, Maybank Islamic Bhd, Bank Kerjasama Rakyat Malaysia Bhd and Bank Simpanan Nasional.

Shares In FGV A Strategic Investment – TH

KUALA LUMPUR -- Lembaga Tabung Haji (TH) clarified that its shareholdings in Felda Global Ventures Holdings Bhd (FGV) are a long-term strategic investment in one of its priority sectors for investment. Depositors need not worry as their money has not vanished as alleged and their deposits are guaranteed, TH said in a statement here Wednesday. The drastic fall in global palm oil prices has directly affected commodity-based companies and negatively affected plantation stocks, it said.

M'sian Economy faces Challenging Operating Environment – BNM

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian economy which recorded growth of 5.0 per cent in 2015, is expected to face a challenging operating environment in the immediate future, said Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM). "The downside risks to growth will however, remain, given the continued uncertainty in the external environment and the ongoing reforms in the domestic economy," the central bank said in a statement here Thursday. Though domestic demand will still drive growth with some support from net exports, it said, the pace of domestic demand expansion would be moderate.

Groundbreaking Ceremony For AICB's RM180 Mln Building

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Governor, Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, Friday officiated the groundbreaking ceremony for the building of the RM180 million A Centre of Excellence (ACE) in Bukit Perdana. The centre, scheduled for completion in the third quarter of 2018, is a project under the Asian Institute of Chartered Bankers (AICB), which has 10 affiliate institutes in the banking, financial and capital market industries.

ZIMB Aims For 15 Pct Of Total New Sales Volume In 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- Zurich Insurance Malaysia Bhd (ZIMB) aims to deliver 15 per cent of the total new sales volume for 2016 from Zurich Favour8, its endowment plan that was launched here Thursday. Chief Executive Officer Philip Smith said the policy has received good response from the public after its soft launch in December. "Up until January, Zurich Favour8 new sales volume contributed between eight and 10 per cent to our monthly new sales volume and we are confident of achieving the 15 per cent sales target by year-end," he told reporters here Friday.

Boeing Projects Demand Of 3,750 New Airplanes Valued At US$550 Bln In SEA

SINGAPORE -- Boeing is expecting some 3,750 new airplanes valued at US$550 billion in terms of demand coming from the Southeast Asian region over the next 20 years. Boeing Commercial Airplanes, Vice President of Asia Pacific and India Sales, Dinesh Keskar said here Monday, of this number, 76 per cent or 2,850 airplanes will cater for growth, while 24 per cent or 900 planes are for replacement purposes. He said the new deliveries which would largely be for growth, will also see the largest demand for single-aisle airplanes such as the Next-Generation 737 and new 737 MAX.

Franchise Industry To Sustain Growth Momentum

KUALA LUMPUR -- The franchise industry will continue to sustain its growth momentum despite the current economic slowdown, said Perbadanan Nasional Bhd (PNS) Managing Director Datuk Syed Kamarulzaman Syed Zainol Khodki Shahabudin here Monday. Syed Kamarulzaman said consumer demand would continue to drive the industry's growth.

Pharmaniaga Pre-Tax Profit Falls To RM112.72 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Pharmaniaga Bhd's pre-tax profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2015 fell to RM112.72 million from RM125.58 million in the same period of 2014. Revenue increased to RM2.19 billion from RM2.12 billion last year, it said in a statement here Monday. Pharmaniaga said the manufacturing division was the key contributor for the year. Its pre-tax profit rose to RM100 million from RM86 million in the last financial year, it said.

Zawara To Push F&B Business Overseas In 2017

KUALA LUMPUR -- Local fashion brand Zawara Sdn Bhd aims to push its new business, Zawara Coffee, to international markets in 2017. "We are planning to expand the Zawara Coffee brand to Singapore and Indonesia next year and establish the brand in the United Arab Emirates, Europe and North America by 2020," Founder and Group Chief Executive Officer Kamarul Karim told reporters here Monday

AirAsia Group Carried 50.68 Mln Passengers In 2015

KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia Group carried 50.68 million passengers in financial year ended 2015 (FY15), up 11 per cent from 45.58 million passengers in financial year 2014. In its preliminary operating statistics released Monday, the low-cost airline said its capacity rose nine per cent to 63.34 million versus 58.16 million previously. "The load factor rose by two percentage points year-on-year (yoy) to 80 per cent," the company said here Monday. It said Malaysia AirAsia (MAA) posted a 10 per cent increase in the number of passengers carried last year to 24.25 million, gained seven per cent in capacity to 30.08 million and added two percentage points in load factor.

AirAsia X Carried 3.61 Mln Passengers In 2015

KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia X Bhd (AAX) carried 3.61 million passengers in the financial year ended Dec 31, 2015 (FY15), down 15 per cent from 4.23 million passengers in FY14. In its preliminary operating statistics released here Monday, the low-cost airline said its capacity eased six per cent to 4.85 million versus 5.16 million previously. The load factor fell by seven percentage points year-on-year (y-o-y) to 75 per cent.

More Than RM1 Bln In Taxes With Penalties Reduced - IRB

PETALING JAYA -- The Inland Revenue Board (IRB) hopes to collect more than RM1 billion in tax revenue this year following the reduction of penalties on taxpayers. Chief Executive Officer Tan Sri Dr Mohd Shukor Mahfar said here Tuesday, last year the board managed to collect close to RM1 billion. "Last year, we give a similar reduction but we worked on a small scale but this year we are going to double our efforts to achieve our target," he said.

M'sia's Halal Industry Attracts RM10.6 Bln Investment In 2015

KUALA LUMPUR -- The halal industry in Malaysia attracted investments worth RM10.6 billion in 2015, comprising RM5.6 billion in foreign investment and RM5 billion in domestic investment. Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said here Tuesday, the foreign investors were from the US, Japan, Italy, United Arab Emirates, Taiwan, the UK and Singapore. He said local halal products would continue to command strong interest among consumers worldwide with exports worth RM42 billion last year from RM38 billion in 2014.

Dialog's Q2 Pre-Tax Profit Falls To RM100.85 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Dialog Group Bhd's pre-tax profit for the second quarter (Q2) ended Dec 31, 2015 fell to RM100.85 million from RM107.03 million in the same quarter a year ago. Revenue rose to RM639.63 million from RM570.29 million previously. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday, Dialog said the group's financial performance remained healthy despite the current low oil price.

Tasek Corporation's Pre-Tax Profit Falls To RM119.82 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tasek Corporation Bhd's pre-tax profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2015 fell to RM119.82 million from RM136.32 million recorded in 2014. Revenue increased to RM702.58 million from RM656.06 million in the corresponding year. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Tuesday, the company said the increased revenue was mainly from higher sales volume recorded by both the cement and concrete divisions.

M'sian Furniture Companies Garner RM14 Mln Sales At UK Fair

KUALA LUMPUR -- Sixteen Malaysian furniture manufacturers clinched almost RM14 million in confirmed and potential sales at UK's largest furniture and furnishing event. In a statement here Tuesday, the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC) said the recent January Furniture Show (JFS) 2016, the largest furniture and furnishings event in the UK, was a huge success for Malaysian furniture companies.

Axiata's Pre-Tax Profit Rises To RM3.33 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Axiata Group Bhd's pre-tax profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2015 rose to RM3.33 billion from RM3.15 billion recorded in the same period in 2014. Revenue increased 6.3 per cent to an all-time high of RM19.9 billion versus RM18.71 billion, previously. President/Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Seri Jamaludin Ibrahim said here Wednesday, the group's key topline numbers improved for the year from a good final quarter performance in revenue. "The results was due to excellent performances by most of our operating companies, turnaround strategies, stronger overall data growth and stronger currencies against the ringgit," he said.

Batu Kawan's Q1 Pre-Tax Profit Surges To RM938.66 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Batu Kawan Bhd's pre-tax profit for the first quarter ended Dec 31, 2015, surged to RM938.66 million from RM318.27 million recorded in the same quarter last year. Revenue rose to RM4.45 billion from RM3.21 billion previously, the company said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Wednesday. It said the higher profit was derived after accounting for a surplus of RM485.69 million from the sale of plantation land to an associate.

Bat's Pre-Tax Profit Rises To RM1.23 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- British American Tobacco (M) Bhd's pre-tax profit for financial year ended Dec 31, 2015 rose to RM1.23 billion from RM1.21 billion in the same period of 2014. Revenue, however, fell to RM4.58 billion from RM4.79 billion previously. For the fourth quarter ended Dec 31, 2015, the pre-tax profit rose to RM272.55 million from RM265.94 million in the same quarter last year. Revenue declined to RM1.05 billion from RM1.2 billion previously. In a statement here Wednesday, Managing Director, Stefano Clini, said the group registered a domestic volume contraction of 13.5 per cent in the face of falling legal consumption in 2015 versus 2014.

KL Kepong's Pre-Tax Profit Soars To RM911 Mln In Q1

KUALA LUMPUR -- Plantation company Kuala Lumpur Kepong Bhd's (KLK) pre-tax profit for the first quarter ended Dec 31, 2015 soared to RM911 million from RM294.3 million in the preceding year corresponding quarter. Revenue jumped to RM4.33 billion from RM3.11 billion previously. In its filing to Bursa Malaysia, the group said the outlook for the plantation sector remained challenging for the current financial year. Without taking into account the surplus on sales of plantation land in the current quarter, the group anticipates a satisfactory profit for the financial year 2016.

MAHB Lands On Lower Pre-Tax Profit Of RM41.65 Mln

SEPANG -- Airport operator, Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB)'s pre-tax profit slipped to RM41.65 million for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2015, down 94.22 per cent, from RM749.32 million registered in 2014. Revenue, however, jumped to RM3.87 billion from RM3.34 billion, previously. For the fourth quarter, MAHB saw a pre-tax loss of RM58.09 million, down 109.72 per cent, compared with a pre-tax profit of RM597.468 million recorded previously while revenue stood at RM1.03 billion against RM711.33 million registered in the same quarter of 2014.

Hup Seng Pre-Tax Profit Increases To RM72.95 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Biscuits manufacturer, Hup Seng Industries Bhd, posted a higher pre-tax profit of RM72.95 million for 2015 as compared with RM51.72 million in the previous year on improved sales margins Its revenue jumped to RM286.86 million for its financial year ended Dec 31, 2015 as compared with RM262.21 million for the 12 months in 2014. "The increase in profit before tax is mainly due to the improved sales margin brought about by lower input costs, weaker ringgit and improved production efficiency," it said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Thursday.

Change In Leadership Won't Affect Investments In Kedah

JITRA -- The change in Kedah's political leadership will not affect investments in the state, says state Industry and Investment, Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumer Affairs Committee Chairman, Datuk Dr Ku Abdul Rahman Ku Ismail. "I am confident that despite the changes in the Kedah state leadership, it will not impact investments due to factors as political stability, consistent policies, skilled workforce, communications expertise and infrastructure facilities," he told reporters here Monday.

Malaysia Airlines To Keep Six Superjumbo A380s Until 2018 - Mueller

SINGAPORE -- Malaysia Airlines plans to keep the six superjumbo A380s 'at least' until 2018, says its Chief Executive Officer Christoph Mueller. Nonetheless, without deliberating on the plan, Mueller said that "we don't have A380s in excess." According to recent reports, the airline was trying to dispose off its six A380s, four of which were in service and the other two remained idle. "We have no problem with the aircraft at this point of time," he told reporters here Monday.

We Are Open For Discussion With Consortium Zenith – SPAD

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) is open for discussion with Consortium Zenith BUCG Sdn Bhd which has proposed the expansion of the freight rail network operated by Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd. It, however, said SPAD had yet to receive any formal licence application from Consortium Zenith. "As such, the recent claim by the company that it was awaiting approval from SPAD, as reported in the media, is inaccurate," SPAD said in a statement here Monday.

Prasarana, Transport For London To Exchange Technical, Operational Info

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prasarana Malaysia Bhd has collaborated with Transport for London for a work placement programme to facilitate the exchange technical and operational information in public transportation. Prasarana President/Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Azmi Abdul Aziz told reporters here Monday, this was part of Prasarana's initiatives to further enhance its capabilities to become a global integrated public provider.

Proton Recalls Exora, Preve & Suprima For Faulty Hoses

SHAH ALAM -- Proton Holdings Bhd will recall almost 100,000 units of its Exora, Preve and Suprima models to fix the CFE oil cooler hoses starting Tuesday. Its Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Abdul Harith Abdullah, said these models had faced problems of the oil cooler hoses, which would break down when the cars reached an average mileage of 40,000 kilometres (km), due to the degration of internal hose/tube material. "We will call the owners and the priority will be given to the cars with mileage of 40,000 km and above. We hope to finish this in the next six months," he told reporters here Tuesday.

Yayasan Peneraju To Provide High-Income Job Opportunities

KUALA LUMPUR -- Yayasan Peneraju Pendidikan Bumiputera will cooperate with industry players from various sectors to provide opportunities for Bumiputeras to secure high-income jobs. Chief Executive Officer, Raja Azura Raja Mahayuddin, told reporters here Tuesday, the logistics, electrical and electronics, communications content and infrastructure, health, tourism and business services sectors offered opportunities for Buimputeras.

HDC Hopes To Attract Korean, Japanese Investors In Halal Cosmetics

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC) hopes to attract South Korean and Japanese investors to set up their base in Malaysia as a gateway to the halal cosmetic market. Its chief executive, Datuk Seri Jamil Bidin told reporters here Tuesday, the halal industry was already gaining traction in general with investments into Malaysia amounting to RM10.6 billion last year, comprising RM5.6 billion foreign direct investment and RM5 billion domestic investment.

Boeing Optimistic With Prospects Of P-8A Poseidon

From Nor Baizura Basri

SINGAPORE -- Boeing is optimistic with the prospects of its P-8A Poseidon given its capability to cater to broad-area maritime and littoral operations. Its Director of Business Development for Maritime Programs, James D. Detwiler, said in terms of the Poseidon, the focus is in Asia, Europe and America. "There is a lot of maritime mature fleets out there. If you look at the spectrum of that, it gives you some ideas about the customers that we are talking to," he told reporters here Tuesday. Apart from the US Navy which is currently using the plane, only India and Australia are the international clients that have purchased the aircraft.

Boeing & Okay Airways Announce Commitment For 737s
By Massita Ahmad

SINGAPORE -- Boeing and Okay Airways Wednesday announced a commitment for 12 737s, including 8 737 MAX 8s, three 737 MAX 9s and one Next Generation 737-900ER (Extended Range) airplane. The agreement valued at US$1.3 billion at current list prices is subject to approval of the Chinese government and will be posted to Boeing's Orders & Deliveries website once all contingencies are cleared. "We have a long term strategy with Boeing. We are confident with the help of Boeing, we will be the best privately-owned airline in China," said Okay Airways' Chairman Wang Shusheng here Tuesday.

AMIC, MARA Aerospace & University Of Nottingham To Produce Skilled Workers
From Nor Baizura Basri

SINGAPORE -- Aerospace Malaysia Innovation Centre (AMIC) and MARA Aerospace & Technologies Sdn Bhd join hands with University of Nottingham to produce more highly skilled workers as well as experts and researchers for the aerospace industry. AMIC Chief Executive Officer Shamsul Kamar Abu Samah told Bernama here Wednesday, the collaboration agreement among the parties would lead to exchange of knowledge and expertise in certain areas of the aerospace industry. "We want to develop human capital in aerospace and technology. We also want to expose our local talents and expertise to the aerospace's global landscape in research and technology," he said.

M'sia In Good Stead To Weather Economic Uncertainty - Nor Mohamed

PETALING JAYA -- Malaysia's ability to weather the economic uncertainty through various means, including recalibrating the 2016 Budget, shows its leadership capacity, former second finance minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop said. He told reporters here Wednesday, the government took the right action to take the country out of a crisis and the 2016 Budget revision was a step in the right direction.

M'sia's Q4 2015 Balance Of Payment Records Surplus Of RM11.4 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's current account balance for the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2015 posted a higher surplus of RM11.4 billion, when compared with the RM5.06 billion in the preceding quarter, the Statistics Department said here Thursday. The higher surplus was mainly reflected from the higher surplus in the goods account of RM30.9 billion and lower deficit in both the primary income account of RM8.2 billion and secondary income account of RM5.0 billion.

InvestKL To Attract 13 MNCs For Regional HQ In Greater KL

KUALA LUMPUR -- InvestKL aims to attract 13 Multinational Corporations (MNCs) this year to establish their regional headquarters in Greater KL. The government investment entity was set up specifically for this purpose. Chief Executive Officer Datuk Zainal Amanshah said here Thursday, the move would be driven by very attractive sectors such as oil and gas, engineering and services, information communication technology and aerospace. Zainal said Greater KL would also entice companies in the retail space that want to look at optimal allocation with good cost structure, connectivity and logistics.

Alibaba To Give Furniture Firms A Boost At MIFF 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- The leading online wholesale trade platform, Alibaba Group, is expected to give local companies participating in the coming Malaysian International Furniture Fair 2016 (MIFF 2016) a further boost, said organiser, United Business Media (M) Sdn Bhd. Its Managing Director (ASEAN Business), M. Gandhi, said the 100 Malaysian companies selected could link their businesses to Alibaba's online platform. "The link-up, which covers offline (face-to-face) and online with clients for three months until May 2016, will enable them to continue their relationship with buyers after MIFF," he said.

10 Packages For Pan Borneo Highway Project To Be Tendered

KUCHING -- Ten work packages for the Pan Borneo Highway project from Sematan to Miri, stretching 746 km, will be tendered in phases this year, Works Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof said here Thursday. He said all the packages were scheduled to start this year and complete by 2022. So far, work on two packages, namely the Nyabau Road Junction to Bakun Road Junction (43 km) in Bintulu and the Telok Melano to Sematan (33km) in Sematan have started he said.

Honeywell Appoints New President For Southeast Asia

KUALA LUMPUR -- The US multinational conglomerate, Honeywell International Inc, has appointed Briand Greer as President, Southeast Asia, succeeding Jim Bujold, effective Monday. Greer, prior to this appointment, was President of Honeywell Aerospace, Asia Pacific, responsible for all aspects of aerospace business in the region. In a statement, Shane Tedjarati, President of Global High Growth Regions said Bujold had contributed significantly to Honeywell's high growth region strategy in many of the company's new markets.

Exxonmobil Presents Employees, Business Partners With Safety Excellence Awards

KUALA LUMPUR -- ExxonMobil Corp's subsidiary, ExxonMobil Exploration and Production Malaysia Inc. (EMEPMI), has presented awards to its employees and business partners in recognition of their safety excellence and efforts to improve safety performance in 2015. In a statement here Monday, ExxonMobil said the EMEPMI safety awards were given out annually to company worksites and business partners who had achieved exemplary safety performance through strong leadership and safety initiatives.

Siemens Signs Long-Term Agreement With Lotte Chemical Titan

KUALA LUMPUR -- Technology and engineering giant Siemens Malaysia has signed a long-term maintenance agreement with Lotte Chemical Titan to service and maintain three gas turbine units. The three gas turbine units are currently operating at two Lotte Chemical Titan plants located in Johor, including two units at the Pasir Gudang plant and one in Tanjung Langsat. Siemens Malaysia President and Chief Executive Officer Prakash Chandran said here Monday, the two plants are vitally important to the Johor region.

MMC Sukuk Gets 'Best Islamic Finance Deal Of The Year In SEA' Award

KUALA LUMPUR -- MMC Corp Bhd's inaugural RM1.5 billion Sukuk Murabahah (via Tawarruq arrangement) has emerged as the Best Islamic Finance Deal of the Year in South-East Asia at the Alpha South-East Asia Deal & Solutions Awards 2015. In a statement here Tuesday, MMC said, the sukuk, which saw RHB Investment Bank Bhd (RHBIB) as the sole principal adviser, sole lead arranger and sole lead manager, was rated 'AA-' by Malaysian Rating Corp Bhd.

AirAsia Launches Flight From KL To Shantou, China

KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia Bhd has launched four times weekly direct flights from Kuala Lumpur to Shantou, China, which is available for booking from Wednesday onwards with a promotional all-in-fare from RM88 for one-way travel, inclusive of taxes and fees. Commencing operations on March 25, 2016, the airline's 14th exclusive route into China from Malaysia, will be operated by AirAsia on the Airbus A320 with a 180 seat capacity, it said in a statement here Wednesday. The promotional all-in-fares is available for online booking at airasia.com, as well as the AirAsia mobile app on iPhone and Android devices from now until Feb 22. The travel period for this promotional all-in-fare will be from March 25, 2016 until Feb 5, 2017.

ASNB Organises Programme On Financial Planning & Investment

KUALA LUMPUR -- Amanah Saham Nasional Bhd (ASNB), a unit of Permodalan Nasional Bhd, Thursday organised the Santai Labur PNB programme to discuss prudent financial planning and investment. The programme, held for the first time, involved winners of the "#ASNBdanSaya" contest that was held from Dec 29, 2015 until Jan 10, 2016, which took the concept of "Like & Win" on the ASNB Facebook. The winners received exclusive tickets to the "Santai Labur PNB" programme, as well as RM200 each -- RM100 cash and RM100 in ASNB units.

CCB PJ Upgrade Aims To Enhance Customers' Experience

KUALA LUMPUR -- The RM7 million investment in the upgrade of Mercedes-Benz Cycle & Carriage Bintang PJ Autohaus (CCB PJ) is aimed at enhancing customers' experience. In a statement here Thursday, Mercedes-Benz Malaysia said to date it has invested RM43 million in CCB PJ. "The upgraded CCB PJ displays the latest Mercedes-Benz Corporate Identity which ranged from minor to major tangible enhancements," it said.

JFH In Tie-Up With Online Grocer HappyFresh

KUALA LUMPUR -- HappyFresh, an online grocery platform in Southeast Asia, has partnered Jasons Food Hall (JFH), one of Kuala Lumpur's premier grocers, to expand its product range. HappyFresh Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder Markus Bihler said here Thursday, the alliance will strengthen its brand position in the Malaysian market.

Tony Fernandes Lifts USABC's Fourth Pillar Award

KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia Co-founder and Group Chief Executive Officer Tan Sri Tony Fernandes has been awarded the Fourth Pillar Award by the US-ASEAN Business Council (USABC) for his extraordinary contribution towards the growth of ASEAN and the US-ASEAN relationship. He was the second recipient of the award after US President Barack Obama, AirAsia said in a statement here Friday. The Fourth Pillar Award is presented to a person or organisation representing the "fourth pillar", a person that has made an extraordinary contribution towards the growth of ASEAN as well as fostering better US-ASEAN relationship.

Better-Than-Expected 2015 GDP Shows Govt Reforms Successful

By Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- The better-than-expected gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2015 proves that the government's financial and fiscal reforms have been successful, said an economist.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Bhd's Head of Retail Research, Datuk Dr Mohd Nazri Khan, said the economy, which was badly hit in the last quarter due to the plunging oil prices and weakening of ringgit, managed to beat consensus expectations.

"The financial and fiscal reforms that have been undertaken over the last year have been successful to ensure the economy is resilient to weather all of these external shocks.

"We must laud all the unpopular measures introduced by the government such as the Goods and Services Tax and subsidy rationalisation, as they have been successful to cushion the weaknesses that we've seen from the global uncertainties," he told Bernama Friday.

He said 2015 has been a tough year for Malaysia and it was not easy for the government to strike a delicate balance between public finance reforms to ensure that the country has a budget deficit target as well as continuous growth in the economy.

GOOD MOMENTUM

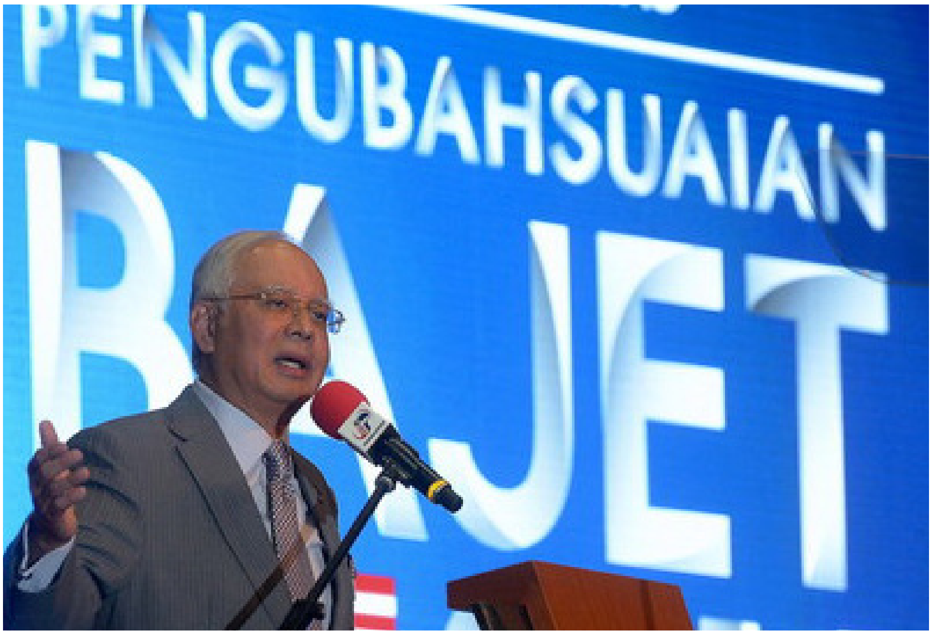
The government aims to achieve a budget deficit of 3.1 per cent of GDP in 2016 from 3.2 per cent in 2015. "Overall, I see it's a good momentum, especially on the domestic front despite challenging economic uncertainties," Nazri said.

Earlier, Bank Negara Malaysia had announced that Malaysia's economy grew by 4.5 per cent in the final quarter (Q4) of 2015, bringing the full-year GDP growth to five per cent as against six per cent in 2014.

This was supported mainly by private sector demand, while on the supply side, it was underpinned by the major economic sectors.

The country had recorded a GDP growth of 5.6 per cent in the first quarter before slowing down to 4.9 per cent in the second quarteer and 4.7 per cent in the third.

Malaysian Rating Corp Bhd's Chief Economist, Nor Zahidi Alias, noted that the Q4 GDP came as a surprise as it surpassed his expectation of four per cent.



RESTRUCTURING MEASURES... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak when tabling the recalibrated 2016 Budget at Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) on Jan 28. Pic: Azhar Pidek - fotoBERNAMA

CRUCIAL PILLAR

"The services sector has clearly showed its resilience despite the overall slowdown in the economy. It will likely become a crucial pillar in sustaining the headline growth in 2016.

"Overall, the statistics look positive although going forward, more headwinds are expected to exert pressure on the headline GDP growth," he said.

Zahidi said the momentum in private consumption was expected to moderate in the first half of 2016 as the lag impact of GST and weaker ringgit rippled through the economy.

"Nonetheless, barring unforeseen circumstances, we still view the government's revised real GDP growth projection for 2016 achievable," he said.

In January, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak presented the recalibrated 2016 Budget with 11 restructuring measures and adjustments.

The revision is expected to save RM9 billion in operating and development expenditures as announced in October 2015.

Previously, the government announced an allocation of RM267.2 billion in Budget 2016, of which operating expenditure amounted to RM215 billion while development expenditure amounted to RM49 billion.

-- BERNAMA

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

BURSA MALAYSIA

Bursa Malaysia To Trend Higher Towards 1,700-Point Level

By Siti Radziah Hamzah

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FBM KLCI is likely to trend higher next week towards the 1,700-level on improved market sentiments due to a recovery in crude oil prices and better-than-expected Malaysia's economic growth data.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President and Retail Research Head Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said the market would climb higher next week after the key index staged a convincing breakout through at 1,650 for the week just ended.

"We can see that the volume has gone up too, which means we have the momentum to trend higher next week," he told Bernama. Nazri said that the ringgit was also expected to be higher next week amid stronger current-account surplus of RM11.42 billion in the fourth quarter last year.

"It is the highest in six quarters. That suggest that the ringgit also will recover and at the same time, foreign inflows will also come into Malaysia," he added.

Nazri highlighted oil and gas as well as plantation counters would drive the market higher, assuming oil and crude palm oil continued to recover.

The local bourse was traded mostly higher during the week just ended, aided by recovery in oil prices and reached a seven-week high on Thursday, in line with gains in the regional markets after Iran backed joint efforts by Russia and Saudi Arabia to stabilise crude prices. Market sentiment was also helped by better-than-expected gross domestic product (GDP) for the fourth quarter of 2015.

Malaysia's economy grew 4.5 per cent in the final quarter of 2015, bringing the full year GDP growth to 5.0 per cent against 6.0 per cent in 2014.

Weekly turnover went up to 8.36 billion units worth RM8.76 billion from 3.45 billion units worth RM4.04 billion last week. Main market volume rose to 5.82 billion shares valued at 8.28 billion from 2.37 billion shares valued at RM3.82 billion previously.

FOREX: Ringgit To Trade At 4.10 Versus Greenback

By Zairina Zainudin

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is likely to trade higher at 4.10 against the US dollar next week on improved sentiment towards the local unit.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President and Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said the sentiment would be fuelled by a recovery in global oil prices, better-than-expected 2015 gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 5.0 per cent, as well as higher current account surplus.

On Thursday, Bank Negara Malaysia announced that the current account balance in 2015 amounted to RM34.0 billion (2014: surplus was RM47.3 billion), resulting from a wider deficit in services and secondary income accounts, as well as lower surplus in goods account. "It is the highest in six quarters. That suggests ringgit will also recover and at the same time, foreign inflows will also come into Malaysia," he told Bernama.

The central bank had also announced that Malaysia's economy grew by 4.5 per cent in the final quarter of last year, bringing the full-year GDP growth to five per cent from six per cent in 2014. The country recorded a GDP growth of 5.6 per cent in the first quarter before slowing down to 4.9 per cent in the second quarter and 4.7 per cent in the third.

During Q4, the ringgit appreciated 3.6 per cent against the US dollar, as well as rose against the euro (6.7 per cent), the pound sterling (6.0 per cent), and the Japanese yen (4.0 per cent). However, the local note depreciated against the Australian dollar by 0.5 per cent. Against all regional currencies, the ringgit appreciated by between 2.4 per cent and 5.8 per cent, with the exception of the Indonesian rupiah, falling 2.4 per cent, Bank Negara said.

Another dealer said the local foreign exchange market would be traded in a cautious mode next week as the outcome from the European Union (EU) leaders' summit in Brussels would likely influence market players.

European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker said he was "quite confident" a deal on keeping Britain in the bloc would be reached. "The outcome from this EU-UK talks at the summit potentially has some influence here," the dealer added.

For the week just ended, the ringgit eased to 4.2030/2100 from 4.1650/1750 versus the greenback last Friday, mainly due to uncertainty in the global economy, domestic economic data and the movement of crude oil prices.

The local unit fell against the Singapore dollar to 2.9893/9947 from 2.9831/9918 last Friday, weakened versus the yen to 3.7168/7240 from 3.6979/6081, and declined against the euro to 4.6662/6748 from 4.6973/6102. However, the ringgit appreciated against the British pound to 6.0225/2342 from 6.0422/0583.

Money Market Expected To Remain Stable

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian money market is expected to remain stable next week as Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) continues to intervene to manage surplus liquidity.

The central bank is expected to call for daily tenders to mop up excess funds from the market. A dealer said the local market would trade cautiously, awaiting the outcome from the ongoing two-day European Union (EU) leaders' summit in Brussels.

European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker said he was "quite confident" a deal on keeping Britain in the bloc would be reached. "The outcome from this EU-UK talks at the summit potentially has some influence here," the dealer said.

For the week just-ended, BNM intervened daily to absorb excess funds by conducting conventional money market tenders, range maturity auction, commodity murabahah programme, Islamic range maturity auction Qard and repo tenders.

On Friday, the central bank's action helped reduce the market's total liquidity surplus to RM32.18 billion from RM39.98 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system, it shrank to RM7.1 billion from RM14.47 billion, previously.

The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 3.21 per cent while the one-, two- and three-week rates were at 3.30 per cent, 3.35 per cent and 3.39 per cent, respectively. Meanwhile, the benchmark three-month interbank rate eased by one per cent to 3.75 per cent.

FBM KLCI FUTURES MAY SEE UPSIDE

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are likely to be higher next week, tracking the positive cash market, dealers said.

The FBM KLCI on the cash market is expected to trade towards the 1,700-level next week, tracking the crude oil movement and better-than-expected Malaysia's economic growth.

For the week just ended, FBM KLCI futures were traded higher before retreating on Friday in line with the cash market after recording recent gains.

On a week-to-week basis, February 2016 jumped 38.5 points to 1,676.5, March 2016 appreciated 39.5 points to 1,671.0 while June 2016 and September 2016 gained 31 points each to 1,648.0 and 1,639.5, respectively.

Weekly turnover increased to 44,835 lots from 20,244 lots last week while open interest rose to 46,320 contracts from 45,712 contracts last Friday. The benchmark FBM KLCI settled at 1,674.88, up 31.14 points, from 1,643.74 recorded the previous week.

CPO Futures Expected To Trade Between RM2,380 And RM2,480 A Tonne

By S. Joan Santanasamy

KUALA LUMPUR-- Crude palm oil (CPO) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to trade between RM2,380 and RM2,480 a tonne next week due to lack of fresh leads to chart the market.

Interband Group of Companies senior palm oil trader Jim Teh said the market is anxiously awaiting for Feb 1-20 exports data which is expected to fall.

"Palm oil exports data is expected to decline as demand from top palm oil consumers, namely China and India, slowing due to routing global economy," he told Bernama. Teh also said that the market would also likely see profit-taking amid speculative play as it would be compared to crude oil and soybean oil prices.

He said the tropical oil market was lower this week following headwinds in oil prices. Earlier this week, CPO prices were down as the market was not impressed with the country's shipments data for the first half of February, which fell between 14 and 16 per cent compared with the same period a month ago due to weak demand from major importers.

On a weekly basis, March 2016 shed RM68 to RM2,522, April 2016 fell RM73 to RM2,566, May 2016 decreased RM57 to RM2,586 and June 2016 was RM42 lower at RM2,576 a tonne.

Turnover for the week just ended was higher at 228,579 lots from 133,267 lots last week while open interest narrowed to 236,566 contracts from 245,610 contracts last Friday. On the physical market, March South added RM20 to RM2,520 a tonne from last week's RM2,500 a tonne.

Rubber Market Likely To Be Uncertain

S. Joan Santanasamy

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is likely to be uncertain next week due to the absence of market moving catalyst. A dealer said the supply and demand situation and the regional futures markets performance would be the main factors plaguing the prices.

"Lack of buying interest will be seen as market participants might refrain from active dealing and floundering crude oil prices are expected to continue," he told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the Malaysian Rubber

Board's sellers' official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 decreased 20 sen to 453.50 sen a kg while latex-in-bulk trimmed 2.0 sen to 343.50 sen a kg. The unofficial closing price for tyre-grade SMR 20 fell 19 sen to 453 sen a kg while latex-in-bulk declined 4.0 sen to 343.50 sen a kg.

KLIBOR Futures To Remain Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives will likely remain untraded next week.

For the week just-ended, the market was untraded for the 38th consecutive session. Settlement prices for March 2016, April 2016 and June 2016 remained pegged at 96.27, 96.26 and 96.27, respectively.

Newly-introduced contract month, May 2016 ended the week at 96.27. Open interest was unchanged at 120 contracts. The underlying three-month KLIBOR shed one per cent to 3.75 per cent.

KLTM To Trade Between US$15,500 And US$15,700

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) will likely trade upwards next week, moving between US$15,500 per tonne and US$15,700 per tonne next week, a dealer said.

"We anticipate the market to trade higher, boosted by demand for the commodity following news that both tin producing countries, China and Indonesia, are going to cut their production. "If the tin price hit its psychological level, which is US$15,700, there is a possibility that the metal price would go further," the dealer said.

He said that the movements on the London Metal Exchange (LME) and continued consumer buying support, particularly from European, Japanese and Latin American buyers would also influence the local tin market. For the week-just-ended, the KLTM finished US$150 higher at US$15,600 per tonne.

European, Japanese, Latin American, and Indian buyers accounted for the week's turnover of 381 tonnes versus 188 tonnes last week.

The discount between the KLTM and the LME narrowed to US$30 per tonne from US$125 per tonne last Friday.

Gold Futures Likely To Continue Uptrend

By Nurul Hanis Izmir

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gold futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are likely to continue their uptrend next week, boosted by several factors, including the ringgit performance and the much awaited U.S economic data.

"The US government will be releasing its consumer price index data tonight, followed by other data such as the home sales, gross domestic product and durable goods orders next week.

"Any sign of weakness of the US economy derived from these data will further boost the expectation of the US Federal Reserve not raising its interest rates too soon, which is a bullish factor for the gold," Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd dealer Azim Faris Ab Rahim told Bernama.

Meanwhile, on a Friday-to-Friday basis, February 2016 fell one tick to RM165.75 a gramme, March 2016 maintained last week's RM166, April 2016 eased two ticks to RM166.15, and May 2016 added one tick to RM166.45.

Volume for the week-just-ended rose to 375 lots worth RM6.21 million from 272 lots worth RM4.38 million previously. Open interest was higher at 1,651 contracts from 1,470 contracts last week.