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This Week's Highlight:
Govt Takes Positive Measures To Manage Economy - Najib

FOCUS...Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak answering questions from the local media after his keynote address at the Jeddah Economic Forum on March 2. - File Pic: Anuar Isman fotoBERNAMA

KUALA LUMPUR -- The government will continue to take positive and effective intervention measures in managing the economy to ensure national prosperity, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"This is to ensure that the government does not allow total freedom or the 'laissez faire' philosophy so that whatever they want to do in the market, they follow our requirements," he said in reply to a supplementary question from Datuk Wan Mohammad Khair-il Anuar Wan Ahmad (BN-Kuala Kangsar) in the Dewan Rakyat here Tuesday.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

Bank Negara Reserves At RM410.5 Bln At Feb 29

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia's international reserves amounted to RM410.5 billion (US$95.6 billion) as at Feb 29, 2016. The reserves position is sufficient to finance 8.3 months of retained imports and is 1.2 times the short-term external debt, the central bank said in a statement Monday.

TUESDAY

RM250 Mln Grant For Oleochemicals, Food and Health Products

KUALA LUMPUR -- The government has allocated RM250 million in grant to encourage investments in production of oleochemicals and food and health value-added products, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

A RM4.5 million grant has also been allocated to smallholders and plantation companies to acquire in-field equipment and machineries, he added Tuesday.

WEDNESDAY

Tax Reduction Initiatives To Manage Rising Costs

KUALA LUMPUR -- The various government initiatives concerning tax reduction for the 2015 assessment year will hopefully help the people in managing their finances and handling the effects of the rising cost of living.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Wednesday, many would begin to file in their tax returns whether at the Inland Revenue Board offices throughout the country or on line.

THURSDAY

GST Collection Exceeds 2015 Target

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection exceeded the RM27 billion mark set by the government for 2015, says the Deputy Director-General, Royal Malaysian Customs Department, Datuk Subromaniam Tholasy. He said the exact collection from the new tax regime, implemented on April 1, 2015, would be announced soon by the government. "For this year, the department has been given the task of raising RM39 billion from the GST and we are confident of achieving the target," he told a press conference on the GST implementation report card here Thursday. The six per cent GST replaced the Sales and Service Tax of 10 per cent and six per cent, respectively. The GST implementation is part of the government's tax reform programme to enhance the capability, effectiveness and transparency of tax administration and management in the country.

FRIDAY

"Rating Agencies Didn't Give Us The Ratings We Deserved" - Zeti

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) was among the first central banks to diversify its foreign reserves into instruments from within the ASEAN region, Governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz said Friday. It was a key effort the rating agencies failed to recognise, she said. "Bank Negara was one of the first central banks to diversify its reserves into instruments from this region because we felt we knew this region although rating agencies didn't give us the ratings we felt we deserved," she said at the Wharton Global Forum 2016. She said BNM, through its own monitoring and surveillance, felt that ASEAN is also where it should diversify reserves into. "And this not only reduces our vulnerability to external developments but it will contribute towards achieving more stable conditions in the regional financial markets," she said.

SMEbrief

GEM Expects 100,000 Entrepreneurs To Register By Year-End

KUALA LUMPUR -- Non-government organisation Global Entrepreneurship Movement (GEM) expects 100,000 entrepreneurs from various industries to register with it by year-end and partake in its programmes. “By placing greater emphasis on entrepreneurship via GEM’s strategic programmes locally, regionally or at an international level, everyone will be provided opportunities to rise,” Treasury Secretary-General Tan Sri Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah said Monday.

SME Bank Targets RM200 Mln Lending Via XCESS 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- SME Bank expects to meet its lending target of RM200 million for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) this year through a series of outreach programmes under XCESS 2016. Its Group Managing Director, Datuk Mohd Radzif Mohd Yunus said Tuesday, XCESS 2016 was part of the bank’s outreach programmes the bank undertook every year to reach SME entrepreneurs directly and it has scheduled to have smaller scale outreach programmes throughout the country.

TPPA Widens SME Opportunities In Global Markets - Mustapa

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) will widen opportunities for Malaysia’s small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in international markets, says International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed. He said with the TPPA, market access to TPPA member countries like Japan will be made easier.

CGC Targets RM4 Billion Loan Approvals In 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- Credit Guarantee Corp (M) Bhd (CGC) targets 8,650 loan approvals worth RM4 billion, targeting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), this year. The objective of CGC, which was established in 1972, is to assist SMEs by providing guarantee cover, especially for those with inadequate collateral or without collateral, to enable them to obtain credit facilities from financial institutions at reasonable cost, it said Wednesday.

Maybank Expects 27 Pct Growth In Retail SME Loan

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) expects its Retail Small and Medium Enterprises (RSMEs) loan portfolio to grow by 27 per cent to RM28 billion this year, given the tremendous demand from regional markets. Maybank Group Head of Community Financial Services (CFS) Datuk Lim Hong Tat said Thursday, the projection was also supported by the strong outlook in the region for SMEs.

PropUP — Property*update*

Damansara Realty’s Unit Secures RM35 Mln Services Contract

KUALA LUMPUR -- Damansara Realty Bhd (DBHD)’s unit, TMR Urusharta (M) Sdn Bhd, received a Letter of Award (LOA) from Malaysia Airports (Sepang) Sdn Bhd for a services contract worth about RM35 million. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, DBHD said the contract entailed comprehensive cleaning and related services at Kuala Lumpur International Airport by Malaysia Airports (Sepang) Sdn Bhd.

Plan To Build Affordable Houses In Pengkalan Hulu, Perak

SUBANG JAYA –- Luster Industries Bhd’s unit, Pembinaan LSP Jaya Sdn Bhd (PLSP), Koperasi Hartanah Malaysia Bhd (KOHAMA) and land owner, Aznel Development Sdn Bhd will embark on a housing project in Pengkalan Hulu, Perak. The parties Wednesday signed the agreement to undertake the project, known as Taman Tasik 1 Malaysia, which is about two kilometres from Pengkalan Hulu town.

End Financing Dampens Property Market - Rehda

KUALA LUMPUR -- End financing and loan rejection are the main factors dampening the local property industry, said Real Estate and Housing Developers Association Malaysia (Rehda) President Datuk Seri FD Iskandar Wednesday. FD Iskandar said he hoped the relevant authorities, especially Bank Negara, would be more flexible in approving loans for first-time and affordable house buyers.

UEM To Venture Into Affordable Housing Year-End

KUALA LUMPUR -- UEM Group Bhd plans to establish a new entity which will venture into afforable housing developments by year-end. Group Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer Datuk Izzaddin Idris said Thursday, the group was currently looking at introducing or developing a new building system that would require less labour.

SMTrack, CSWB To Build Houses For Felda

KUALA LUMPUR -- SMTrack Bhd has signed a joint-venture (JV) agreement with Cherish Words Sdn Bhd (CWSB) to participate in sub-contracting work to design and build 300 houses for Federal Land Development Authority (Felda). In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, SMTrack said CWSB was appointed by Gandingan Mutiara Sdn Bhd (GMSB) on Nov 21, 2014 to undertake the sub-contracting work, which was first awarded by Felda to GMSB on Jan 6, 2014.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard

Gainers - 406

Losers - 385

Not Traded - 579

Unchanged - 360

Value - 175390

Volume - 163246

BURSA: KL Shares Close Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- Shares on Bursa Malaysia closed higher Friday as sentiment turned positive on higher oil prices and the European Central Bank's decision to cut interest rates. The benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) settled 5.63 points higher at 1,696.54 from Thursday's close of 1,690.91. The index moved between 1,688.11 and 1,698.15 throughout the day, after opening 2.11 points easier at 1,688.80. Market breadth was positive with gainers outpacing losers 406 to 385, while 360 counters were unchanged, 579 untraded and 20 others suspended. Volume, however, fell to 1.63 billion shares valued at RM1.75 billion from 1.82 billion shares valued at RM1.9 billion on Thursday. Main Market volume fell to 1.21 billion units worth RM1.67 billion from 1.23 billion units worth RM1.73 billion on Thursday.

FOREX: Ringgit Ends Higher Against Greenback

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit Friday closed higher against the greenback following the good demand for the local currency which was fuelled by higher share prices on Bursa Malaysia, dealers said. At 5 pm, the local unit was traded at 4.0860/0910 against the US dollar compared with 4.0950/0030 on Thursday. The ringgit was traded mixed against other major currencies. It fell against the Singapore dollar to 2.9656/9707 from 2.9650/9730 on Thursday and increased against yen to 3.5927/5981 from Thursday's 3.6098/6185. It declined against the British pound to 5.8275/8366 from 5.8206/8332 Thursday and fell against the euro to 4.5400/5471 from 4.4889/4985 on Thursday.

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.0860	4.0910
EUR	4.5400	4. 5471
GBP	5.8275	5. 8366
100 YEN	3.5927	3.5981
SGD	2.9656	2. 9707

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

Money-Market: 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 was reduced to RM35.19 billion from RM40.27 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system it fell to RM3.90 billion from RM7.81 billion previously. In the morning, BNM called for five tenders comprising a conventional money market tender, two Qard tenders, a Commodity Murabahah Programme tender and a repo tender. The central bank conducted a late conventional money market tender for RM33.0 billion and a Qard money market tender for RM3.9 billion, both for three-day money. The overnight Islamic reference rate stood at 3.21 per cent while the one-, two- and three-week rates were pegged at 3.30 per cent, 3.35 per cent and 3.39 per cent, respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Contracts End Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives were untraded for KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended untraded Friday. March 2016, April 2016, May 2016 and June 2016 all remained at 96.29, 96.28, 96.29 and 96.32, respectively. Open interest totalled 120 contracts. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.71 per cent.

KLCI Futures Close Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts (FKLI) on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives finished higher Friday. Spot month March 2016 and September 2016 rose six points each to 1,697.50 and 1,672.50 respectively, while April 2016 added 6.50 points to 1,693 and June 2016 was seven points higher at 1,682. Turnover increased to 8,885 lots versus 7,350 lots on Thursday, while open interest widened to 44,712 contracts from 42,167 contracts. The benchmark FBM KLCI finished 5.63 points higher at 1,696.54.

Visa Launches Easy Payment Service

KUALA LUMPUR -- Visa Inc, a global payment technology company, has launched its fast and easy mobile payment service, Visa Checkout, in Malaysia. "The service will enable consumers to make payment for goods online, on any device, with just a few clicks," Visa Country Manager for Malaysia, Ng Kong Boon told reporters here Tuesday.

Since its launch in 2014, more than 11 million Visa Checkout accounts have been created with more than 250,000 large and small merchants, and 600 financial institutions have become its partners.

Renminbi-Qualified Foreign Institutional Investor Licence Open For Application

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia incorporated institutions that fulfil Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) and Securities Commission Malaysia's guidelines can now apply for the Renminbi Qualified Foreign Institutional Investor (RQFII) licence. The SC and BNM have jointly issued a Guidance Note to facilitate applications to the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) for an RQFII licence, the central bank said in a statement here Tuesday.

Healthy Capital, Liquidity Buffer Against Economic Headwinds – Maybank Islamic

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank Islamic Bhd, the Islamic banking arm of Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank), is focused on ensuring a healthy capital and liquidity buffer in the face of the current economic challenges. Chief Executive Officer Datuk Muzaffar Hisham told reporters here Wednesday, Islamic banking and financial institutions as such, need strong, effective and sustainable risk management strategies. The risk management helps to evaluate risks and formulate mitigating action, he said.

Digital Economy To Contribute 20 Pct To GDP By 2020

KUALA LUMPUR -- Digital economy, which is developing rapidly worldwide, is expected to contribute 20 per cent to Malaysia's Gross Development Product (GDP) by 2020 versus 17 per cent in 2014. Digital economy refers to an economy that is based on digital computing technologies. Treasury Secretary-General Tan Sri Dr Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah told reporters here Wednesday, the growth was expected to be propelled by the wide use of digital economy both in the private and public sectors.

Workshop Aims To Enhance Journalists' Understanding Of Islamic Banking & Finance Industry

KUALA LUMPUR -- The 'Islamic Banking and Finance' workshop aims to enhance the journalists' existing knowledge and understanding of the industry which is constantly evolving. The National Press Club of Malaysia (NPC) President, Datuk Mokhtar Hussain, said in his welcoming address at Wisma Bernama's Centre for Excellence here Wednesday, 30 business journalists from newspapers, television, radio and Islamic business magazines as well as business students attended the one-day workshop. "This is the first ever media workshop on such a topic organised by the NPC in collaboration with Maybank Islamic Bhd, the Islamic banking arm of Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank)," he said.

Takaful Ikhlas Wins European Global Banking & Finance Awards 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- Takaful Ikhlas Bhd, a wholly owned subsidiary of MNRB Holdings Bhd (MNRB), won the European Global Banking & Finance Awards 2016 - Takaful Company of the Year (Malaysia) from The European Magazine. President and Chief Executive Officer Datuk Ab Latiff Abu Bakar said this was proof of the continuous effort by the company in uplifting its brand equity among customers.

BNM Keeps OPR Unchanged At 3.25 Pct

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia has decided to maintain the Overnight Policy Rate (OPR) at 3.25 per cent as it remains accommodative and supportive of economic activity. Overall domestic financial conditions remained relatively stable since the previous Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting, said Bank Negara Malaysia in a statement here Wednesday. The financial system continues to be sound with financial institutions operating with sufficient liquidity buffers while the growth of financing to the private sector also remained healthy. The OPR was last raised by 25 basis points on July 10, 2014.

New Sterilisation Services Would Boost Sales By 20 Pct - Adventa

KUALA LUMPUR -- Medical services and related supplies manufacturer, Adventa Bhd, expects a 20 per cent increase in sales following the introduction of new sterilisation services in the fourth quarter of this year. The services provided by its unit, Electron Beam Sdn Bhd, recorded a 36 per cent growth in revenue and 136 per cent jump in annual earnings since its acquisition in 2012, said Chairman Edmond Cheah Swee Leng.
The existing sterilisation services is also expected to grow, he said in the company's 2015 Annual Report released Monday.

AAY Permata Eyes S'pore, Southern Thai Marts

KUALA LUMPUR -- AAY Permata Trading Sdn Bhd, manufacturer of self-care products, intends to market its Sidra Care brand in Singapore and southern Thailand by year-end. AAY Permata Director of Marketing and Co-Founder, Shikh Muhammad Nor Hashim Shikh Hassan, said here Monday, the brand, which included the Bidara shower and baths products and ointment, had penetrated the Brunei market. "We have sold 4,000 bottles of shower gel in three months since it was introduced in January this year and we aim to sell 2,000 bottles every month," he said.

AWC To Generate RM700 Mln Revenue Via Renewed Concession Agreement

KUALA LUMPUR -- AWC Bhd is expected to generate about RM700 million from a building maintenance support services agreement and critical asset refurbishment programme (CARP). Wholly-owned subsidiary, Ambang Wira Sdn Bhd (AWSB)'s renewed concession agreement and CARP for Federal government buildings is expected to contribute positively to AWC Group's earnings for the current financial year ending Dec 31, 2016 as well as over the next 10 years, the company said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Monday.

BHIC To Incur Lower Net Loss From Chulan Tankers Sale

KUALA LUMPUR -- Boustead Heavy Industries Corp Bhd (BHIC) is expected to incur a lower net loss from the proposed sale of its three chemical tankers -- Chulan 1, Chulan 2 and Chulan 3. In a circular to shareholders on the proposed sale Monday, BHIC said, the net loss would be at RM2.04 million from RM12 million indicated in its initial announcement on Dec 23, 2015. It said the difference of about RM9.96 million was due to the net effect of the difference of ringgit/US dollar exchange rate used in the sale consideration and net book value of Chulan tankers used in the calculation of the net loss.

Stag Oilfield A Solid Long-Term Investment - Sona Petroleum

KUALA LUMPUR -- Sona Petroleum Bhd is confident its proposed acquisition of Stag oilfield, valued at US$25 million (US$1 = RM4.11), is a solid long-term investment. In a statement here Tuesday, the company said the oilfield, off Western Australia, will provide Sona with sustainable ongoing revenue for growth. "The current production of about 4,000 barrels per day (bpd) will be enhanced to over 5,000 barrels bpd in 2018 following our development plans from 2016 to 2018," it said.

Huawei Sees Steady Growth In M'sia

KUALA LUMPUR -- Huawei Technologies expects a steady growth of its smartphones, tablets and smart watches in Malaysia. Huawei Consumer Business Group's Product Marketing Director (Handset) South Pacific Region, Luke Au, said globally, Huawei was growing and Malaysia was in line. "We have started selling premium products and services here," he said at the launch of the Huawei Mate 8 smartphone here Tuesday. Au said China-based Huawei was now the world's third largest smartphone maker with 9.9 per cent market share. The Huawei Mate 8 is priced from RM2,099 to RM2,399.

Business Deals Via ISP To Increase By 5 Pct - MATRADE

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) expects business deals done via the International Sourcing Programme (ISP), a business matching programme, to increase by five per cent from last year's RM443 million. The ISP, to take place on March 29, will be held in conjunction with the Malaysia International Halal Showcase (Mihas) from March 30-April 2.

Berjaya Food Pre-Tax Profit Slips Slightly In Q3 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- Berjaya Food Bhd's pre-tax profit slipped slightly to RM11.04 million for the third quarter ended Jan 31, 2016 compared with RM12.63 million reported in the previous corresponding period. The group's revenue was higher at RM147.27 million in the current quarter under review compared with RM133.48 million, it said in a statement here Tuesday.

PRS Funds Net Asset Value Hits RM1.172 Bln In 2015

KUALA LUMPUR -- Private retirement scheme (PRS) funds achieved a significant milestone in 2015 with total net asset value (NAV) reaching RM1.172 billion. The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) said growth in PRS funds remained steady as they continued to focus on encouraging greater participation to ensure retirement planning remains a priority for Malaysians. "Out of the total NAV, Islamic PRS funds accounted for 32 per cent," said the SC in its 2015 annual report released here Thursday.

Equity Market Grew To RM1,695 Bln In 2015 - SC

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian capital market continued to expand in 2015 with growth driven by the equity market, which grew by RM44 billion from RM1,651 billion in 2014 to RM1,695 billion by end-2015. The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) in its Annual Report 2015 said close to RM3.91 billion was raised via initial public offerings (IPOs), with the listing of 10 new companies on Bursa Malaysia.

Zecon JV Bags RM1.46 Bln Highway Job In Sarawak

KUALA LUMPUR -- Zecon Bhd-Kimlun Sdn Bhd joint venture has bagged a RM1.46 billion contract from Lebuhraya Borneo Utara Sdn Bhd to upgrade the Pan Borneo Highway in Sarawak. "The project is expected to contribute positively to Zecon Group's earnings during the tenure of 48 months," it said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Thursday. The joint-venture company would be incorporated in due course to undertake the contract as part of the condition imposed in the tender for the contract. It said Zelan would have a 70 per cent equity in the joint venture company and Kimlun, the remainder.

Palm Oil Stocks Fall 6.05 Pct To 2.17 Mln Tonnes In February 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's total palm oil stocks in February 2016 fell 6.05 per cent to 2.17 million tonnes versus 2.31 million tonnes registered in January 2016, said the Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) in a statement here Thursday. Crude palm oil (CPO) stocks for February 2016 declined 3.94 per cent to 1.25 million tonnes against 1.30 million tonnes recorded for January. Processed palm oil stocks eased 8.78 per cent to 918,300 tonnes in February, it said. Total CPO production dropped 7.70 per cent to 1.04 million tonnes in February from 1.13 million tonnes registered a month earlier.

Ford Confident Of Maintaining Sales Momentum This Year

By Azizul Ahmad

PETALING JAYA -- Ford Motor Company is optimistic of maintaining its sales momentum in Malaysia, driven by four new models introduced this year. Managing Director for Malaysia and Asia Pacific Emerging Markets David Westerman said 12,130 Ford vehicles were sold in 2015. "We will bring in our best cars, trucks and sport utility vehicles (SUVs) to Malaysia and we are confident they will be accepted by Malaysian consumers," he told Bernama after launching the New Focus model here Thursday.

Hafele Eyes RM30 Mln Sales In M'sia This Year

By Sharifah Pirdaus Syed Ali and Muhammad Faiz Baharin

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hafele Worldwide, a leading international manufacturer and supplier of furniture fittings and architectural hardware, is eyeing double-digit growth in sales in Malaysia to RM30 million this year. Its General Director for Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia Dominik Fruth told Bernama here Thursday, Hafele is leveraging on its transformed concept to bring customers closer to its brand, having invested RM1.8 million in a 7,200 sq. ft. (668.9 sq. m.) design centre to showcase dream kitchens and wardrobes. The company expects the centre to open a new chapter of relationships and creative ideas directly with home owners and customers as well as being an inspirational hub for partners.

SC Expects Capital Mart To Raise RM80 Bln This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) expects the country's capital market to raise RM80 billion this year compared to RM90 billion in 2015. Chairman Datuk Seri Ranjit Ajit Singh said an estimated RM75 billion would come from bonds and RM5 billion from initial public offerings (IPOs). "Although this year's projection is lower compared to that of 2015, the main thing is that the Malaysian capital market saw a consistent capital-raising activities despite the external volatility," he told reporters after unveiling 2015 SC Annual Report here Thursday.

MAHB: Feb Passenger Movements Up 10.6 Pct To 9.1 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Passenger movements for airports under Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) grew by 10.6 per cent to 9.1 million in February 2016 from 8.22 million recorded in February 2015. International traffic rose 9.9 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) to 4.0 million passengers, while domestic traffic advanced by 11.2 per cent y-o-y to 5.1 million passengers. On a 12-month basis, the total MAHB system with Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport (SGIA) registered a 6.1 per cent growth to 113.6 million passengers. "Overall aircraft movements increased by 4.3 per cent with international and domestic movements increasing by 5.1 per cent and 3.9 per cent respectively over February 2015," the airport operator said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday.

TWSE Optimistic Of Overall Regional Marts' Performances

By Niam Seet Wei

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Taiwan Stock Exchange (TWSE) encourages Taiwanese to invest in the Malaysian market, as it is optimistic of the overall regional markets' performances this year despite the uncertain global situation coupled with the falling oil prices. TWSE Senior Executive Vice-President & Chief Information Officer, Naikuan Huang, told Bernama here Monday, for this year, TWSE was optimistic the regional markets will perform well above the nominal return of 10 per cent, given that there was no serious changes in global political or economic environment. He was also optimistic of South-East Asia's regional markets, including Malaysia's, as he viewed the region's performance was the best in 2015.

PDAM, ACAPMA To Examine Best Mechanism For Local Oil Industry

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Petrol Dealers Association of Malaysia (PDAM) will collaborate with the Australasian Convenience and Petroleum Marketers Association (ACAPMA) to examine the best mechanism for the local industry in facing the open market environment. Its President, Datuk Hashim Othman told reporters here Monday, through the memorandum of understanding signed with ACAPMA, PDAM will suggest new policy relating to the oil industry in line with the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement signed recently.

M'sia Confident Of Implementing B10 Biodiesel Programme - Uggah

KUALA LUMPUR -- The government is confident of implementing the B10 biodiesel programme this year, said Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah Embas here Tuesday. The B10 programme mandates a minimum 10 per cent of bio content in diesel. He said the move was in line with the country's commitment as a member of the Council of Palm Oil Producing Countries with Indonesia to increase the usage of palm oil in biodiesel.

Taxpayers' Bank Account Details Won't Be Divulged - IRBM

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Internal Revenue Board Malaysia (IRBM) has given an assurance that details of taxpayers' bank accounts will not be divulged but will be used only to facilitate tax refunds. Director of Corporate Services Department Marina A. Aziz told reporters here Tuesday that the IRBM is confident that the recently introduced tax refund voucher system (BBBC) would reduce the number of individual taxpayers who do not furnish bank account details from the 350,000 last year. The voucher system replaces the earlier system of tax refunds by cheque. "The BBBC is meant to be an alternative that is faster, more effective and cheaper, and we have also introduced EFT (Electronic Funds Transfer)," she said.

JMCIM Reaffirms Commitment To Implement HSR Project

By Massita Ahmad

SINGAPORE -- The 12th Malaysia-Singapore Joint Ministerial Committee Meeting for Iskandar Malaysia (JMCIM) has reaffirmed its commitment to implement the High-Speed Rail (HSR) project expeditiously, bearing in mind its scale and complexity. In a joint statement issued after its meeting here Tuesday, JMCIM praised the HSR Work Group for the substantive progress made in the planning of Kuala Lumpur-Singapore HSR project. JMCIM noted that discussions on the commercial, regulatory, security and technical issues were ongoing, it said.

Petronas Taking Steps To Mature Canadian LNG Project

KUALA LUMPUR -- Petronas, through its subsidiary, Pacific NorthWest LNG (PNW LNG), is proactively taking steps to mature its Canadian liquefied natural gas (LNG) project towards its final investment decision. Responding to recent media reports on the status of the project, Petronas said in a statement Wednesday, the Canadian Environmental impact assessment process for the PNW LNG project was still ongoing.

GPSC To Spend US$1.5 Bln For Urban Sustainability In 11 Countries

By Massita Ahmad

SINGAPORE -- The newly-launched Global Platform for Sustainable Cities (GPSC) is expected to mobilise up to US$1.5 billion for urban sustainability programmes in 11 developing countries, including Malaysia, in the next five years. The GPSC, part of an initiative funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), was jointly launched by the GEF and World Bank as its coordinator, here Wednesday.

Teraju Creates RM62.81 Bln Worth Of Business to date

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Bumiputera Agenda Steering Unit (Teraju) has provided RM62.81 billion worth of business opportunities, financing and human capital development through

24 programmes and initiatives for Bumiputera entrepreneurs until Jan 31 this year. Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar said here Wednesday, the programmes, held in partnership with state governments, government agencies, regional corridor development agencies, government-linked companies and the private sector spurred sustainable Bumiputera participation in the economy.

Prasarana Issues 'Notice To Remedy' To Scomi

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prasarana Malaysia Bhd (Prasarana) has issued a 'notice to remedy' to Scomi Transit Projects Sdn Bhd (Scomi) for failing to deliver 10 sets of new monorail trains by Dec 31, 2015. Scomi had not only failed to comply with the Stage Gate 2 of the second supplement contract to deliver the trains but also did not submit any mitigation plan to remedy the delay as requested by Prasarana on Jan 4, 2016, it said in a statement here Wednesday.

Malaysia's Participation In TPPA Will Boost Exports, GDP

KUALA LUMPUR -- The participation in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) will increase Malaysia's exports by 20 per cent and gross domestic product (GDP) by seven per cent after it is fully implemented, said HSBC Global Research Economist. Its Senior Trade Economist, Douglas Lippoldt, said here Wednesday, with TPPA Malaysia would be able to diversify into a broader market as well as having room to diversify its goods and services value chain and hence it must be prepared for it.

Malaysia Airlines To Offer Great Savings At MATTA Fair 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Airlines will offer great savings at the MATTA Fair 2016 held at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) from March 11 to 13, 2016. The deals will be offered for six days and are available through all Malaysia Airline's distribution channels and its website at www.malaysiaairlines.com. "We are delighted to become the partner airline at this year's MATTA Fair. This is the best time to plan your holidays as we will offer exclusive deals to over 50 destinations via our participating travel agents," said Chief Commercial Officer Paul Simmons in a statement Wednesday.

Egypt Introduces Mandatory Registration Rule For Exports By Foreign Factories

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian factories wanting to export their products to Egypt must now register with the Egyptian General Organisation for Export and Import Control (GOEIC). This follows the issuance of a Ministerial Decree requiring all foreign factories to do so. The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) in a statement here Thursday said the decree on the mandatory requirement was issued on Feb 2, 2016 and is effective March 16. under licence from the owner," it added.

SC: 22 Takeover Offers Worth RM6.52 Bln Cleared In 2015

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Securities Commission (SC) cleared a total of 22 documents in relation to takeover offers, including by way of schemes involving a total offer value of RM6.52 billion last year. The same number of offer documents was cleared in 2014 involving a total offer value of RM6.78 billion, it said in its Annual Report released Thursday. The largest offer for the year was by IJM Land Bhd, effected by way of a members' scheme of arrangement under Section 176 of Companies Act 1965 which constituted RM1.98 billion in the offer value.

Peninsular M'sia's Electricity Demand Hits All-Time High

KUALA LUMPUR -- The exceptionally hot weather in the past few days has pushed electricity consumption to its highest in Peninsular Malaysia, recording an all-time high peak demand of 17,175 megawatts (MW) on Wednesday, said Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB). The utility giant said the heatwave, due to the El Nino weather phenomenon, has seen consumer demand for energy climbing since Monday, breaching the 17,000 MW peak demand threshold. "This broke the previous record in peak demand of 16,901 MW registered on June 6, 2014. "With the sufficient electricity generation in place, the higher demand projected will not have any impact on the reliability of power supply," said TNB in a statement here Friday.

BNM Reforms Put Malaysia On Solid Footing - Zeti

KUALA LUMPUR -- Various financial reforms undertaken by Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) to strengthen financial institutions have put Malaysia on a solid platform that has enable its economy to remain stable despite external headwinds. "Otherwise, we will be very vulnerable to (the headwinds), like the oil price decline. If we didn't have policies to strengthen our financial institutions then, we will be in great difficulty," BNM governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz said. Hence, the current overnight policy rate (OPR) of 3.25 per cent remains supportive of the economy and its core, she said when asked on the central bank's decision to keep the key rate unchanged unlike others in the region such as Indonesia which has reduced its interest rate twice this year.

Petronas Names First Floating LNG Facility

KUALA LUMPUR --Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) has named its first floating liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility, PFLNG SATU. It marks another milestone for the national oil and gas (O&G) corporation in the global LNG business arena. In a statement here Monday, the O&G player said the PFLNG SATU was named at a Petronas ceremony, together with its strategic partners Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering Co. Ltd (DSME) and Technip, at the DSME shipyard in Okpo, South Korea.

AmInvest Funds Win Three Awards

KUALA LUMPUR -- Three of AmInvest's unit trust funds were honoured for providing consistent strong risk-adjusted returns relative to peers at The Edge, Thomson Reuters Lipper Fund Awards 2016. AmDynamic Bond, AmCumulative Growth and AmASEAN Equity were selected as the top performing funds in the category of Bond Malaysian Ringgit - 10 years, Equity Asia Pacific Ex-Japan - 10 years and Equity ASEAN - 3 years, respectively. For the third year running, AmDynamic Bond, a fixed income fund launched in 2003, was singled out as the best Bond Malaysian Ringgit 10-year performance category for its performance versus its peers, AmInvest said in a statement here Monday.

Al Rajhi Bank M'sia Appoints New Chief Internal Auditor

KUALA LUMPUR -- Al Rajhi Bank Malaysia (ARBM), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Al Rajhi Bank of Saudi Arabia, has apointed Afzal Ahmad as its Chief Internal Auditor (CIA). In a statement here Tuesday, ARBM Acting Chief Executive Officer Selamat Sirat said Afzal would be able to take the bank's audit standards to the next level with his vast experience in the industry. Afzal has more than 20 years of multifaceted audit experience in the banking industry in a multicultural environment.

Takaful M'sia Bags 'The Best Takaful Company In Malaysia' Award

KUALA LUMPUR -- Syarikat Takaful Malaysia Bhd has been named 'The Best Takaful Company in Malaysia' for the fourth consecutive year at the International Takaful Award 2016, held in London recently. In a statement here Tuesday, Takaful Malaysia said the award was in recognition of its strength in the industry and further enhanced the company's position as the market leader in providing extensive insurance solutions.

Maybank Opens Second Branch In Laos

KUALA LUMPUR -- Maybank has opened its second branch in Laos's capital Vientiane, boosting its support for the local financial services sector as well as tapping into one of ASEAN's fast expanding economies. The branch, located in the commercial district of Nongduang, offers a full spectrum of banking services, Maybank said Tuesday. Maybank's first branch in Vientiane was opened in 2012.

More BHPetrol Stations To Offer Infiniti Euro 5 Diesel

KUALA LUMPUR -- Boustead Marketing Sdn Bhd, which markets and distributes BHPetrol fuel and lubricants, has increased its network of stations in northern Peninsular Malaysia offering BHPetrol Infiniti Euro 5 Diesel. Boustead Marketing said BHPetrol was now available at the BHPetrol stations in southbound Tapah rest area, Perak, along the North-South Highway in response to requests from motorists for the higher grade diesel, it said in a statement here Wednesday.

The Parenthood To Open 2nd London Street Family Park

PETALING JAYA -- The Parenthood's second London Street Family Park in Malaysia, providing modern-day parenting amenities and services, is set to open its doors to the public this year. Spanning over 25,000 sf ft, the RM6 million family park will be located at the new wing of the Sunway Pyramid Shopping Mall, The Parenthood Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Leroy Lee told reporters here Wednesday.

Islamic Fund & Wealth Mgmt Blueprint To Be Launched This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) will launch the Islamic fund and wealth management blueprint sometime this year, in a bid to firmly establish Malaysia as an international Islamic capital market centre. The blueprint, which is formulated by the SC, will chart the medium to long term strategic direction for the industry as well as map out strategies and recommendations to strengthen Malaysia's competitive edge, said SC in its 2015 Annual Report, released here Thursday.

Tefal Introduces New Titanium Cookware Range

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tefal, the world's leading cookware and small home appliances maker, has introduced its latest non-stick Titanium Cookware range in Malaysia. Tefal Malaysia Senior Product Manager Nikki Lua said the product line included Tefal Titanium Expertise Cookware, Tefal Titanium Pleasure Cookware and Tefal Titanium So Intensive Cookware. Nikki said Tefal re-invented the thermo-spot to indicate the right temperature for perfect cooking and taste. "The superior cookware is designed with a new non-stick titanium coating, named Titanium Excellence and Titanium Force which guarantee longer product durability," Lua said here Thursday.

Zeti Set To Retire As Bank Negara Governor

KUALA LUMPUR (Bernama) -- Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz is set to retire as Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Governor next month having served the central bank for the last 16 years.

Zeti, 68, the first woman to assume the position since May 2000, had earlier hinted that she will remain in office until her five-year term ends.

The BNM board of directors "has made the recommendation on the potential successor, and the government will make the decision and submit the name to the Agong," she told reporters on the sidelines of the Wharton Global Forum 2016 here Friday.

"Just be patient. (It will be announced) very soon," she said when asked who would be her preferred choice between Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, and Datuk Mohamed Ibrahim, the current Deputy Governor.

Besides the two, the list of potential candidates includes Malaysian Ambassador to the United States Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin, Treasury Secretary-General Tan Sri Mohd Irwan Serigar Abdullah and Deputy BNM Governor Datuk Nor Shamsiah Mohd Yunus.

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS

"In total, I would have served 35 years in the financial sector and by then, I would have done most of what I set out to do," she was quoted as saying at a press conference in August, last year.

Zeti, who has a PhD in economics from the University of Pennsylvania, joined the bank in 1984, rising to acting governor in 1998 and governor in 2000, giving her a ringside seat on the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s and the subsequent global financial crises.

"Bank Negara was one of the first central banks to diversify its reserves into instruments from this region because we felt we knew this region although rating agencies didn't give us the ratings we felt we deserved," she said at the Wharton Global Forum 2016.

She also said that various financial reforms undertaken by BNM to strengthen financial institutions have put Malaysia on a solid platform that has enable its economy to remain stable despite external headwinds.

Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz briefing the media on the Malaysian economic performance for the third quarter of 2015 at the Central Bank. File Photo by Dayana Nabila Shaipul Anuar fotoBERNAMA

"Otherwise, we will be very vulnerable to (the headwinds), like the oil price decline. If we didn't have policies to strengthen our financial institutions then, we will be in great difficulty," she said.

OPR REMAINS SUPPORTIVE

Hence, the current overnight policy rate (OPR) of 3.25 per cent remains supportive of the economy and its core, she said when asked on the central bank's decision to keep the key rate unchanged unlike others in the region such as Indonesia which has reduced its interest rate twice this year.

The central bank last raised the OPR by 25 basis points on July 10, 2014. Zeti said Malaysia's economy was still growing and factors affecting growth were now transitionary.

In 2009, Global Finance magazine named her as one of the world's best central bank chief. In 2010, she was named "Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah 1432H" at the national-level Ma'al Hijrah celebration.

In 2013, Zeti has again been accorded "Grade A" among the heads of central banks for the 10th time by the Global Finance magazine.

-- BERNAMA

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

BURSA MALAYSIA

BURSA: Higher Oil Prices, ECB Stimulus To Lift Bursa
By Nurul Hanis Ismir

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia will likely continue its positive momentum next week, driven by further improvement in the global crude oil price, which is now trading above US$40 a barrel.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President and Retail Research Head Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said the barometer index was also expected to benefit from higher commodity prices especially palm oil.

The Malaysian Palm Oil Board announced this week that palm oil stocks fell 6.05 per cent to 2.17 million tonnes in February versus 2.31 million tonnes registered in January 2016, signalling a possible increase in the commodity's prices.

Nazri said the decision by the European Central Bank to cut interest rates and expand its asset-purchase programme to 80 billion Euros would boost the market globally and locally.

"All countries that use the euro will benefit from the decision and this will influence Asian shares," he told Bernama.

On the domestic front, Bank Negara Malaysia's decision to keep its overnight policy rate unchanged at 3.25 per cent affirmed that liquidity in the banking system remained sufficient, also boosting more confidence among investors, he added.

On a weekly basis, the FBM KLCI finished 4.05 points better to 1,696.54 due mostly to the strengthening of global oil prices.

Weekly turnover rose to 9.61 billion units worth RM9.99 billion from 8.67 billion units worth RM10.37 billion last Friday.

Main market volume strengthened to 6.89 billion shares valued at RM9.52 billion versus last Friday's 6.14 billion shares valued at RM10.18 billion.

FOREX: Ringgit To Extend Upwards Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is expected to extend its upward momentum next week on positive sentiment spurred by the continued increase in global oil prices, said Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/ Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan.

"The current sentiment for the ringgit is positive. With the US dollar declining and crude oil prices continuing to improve, the ringgit can increase further.

"The ringgit will likely appreciate to 3.95 in the short-term," he told Bernama.

However he said traders were cautious ahead of US Federal Reserves Open Market Committee meeting to determine the direction of interest rates.

Meanwhile, another dealer said that the Bank Negara Malaysia's move to maintain its Overnight Policy Rate (OPR) at 3.25 per cent is expected to further boost investors appetite for the local unit.

"With the unchanged OPR, the Malaysian economy is also expected to grow at a more moderate level throughout 2016," the dealer said.

He said the European Central Bank's (ECB) decision to cut interest rates would also help the ringgit's performance next week, regain traders' confidence and boost the economic growth of 19 countries that use the euro.

The ringgit was traded mostly higher for the week just-ended. It ended 4.0860/0910 on Friday against the greenback from 4.1175/1225 previously aided by improving crude oil prices.

The local unit rose against the Singapore dollar to 2.9656/9707 from 2.9789/9828 last Friday and strengthened versus the yen to 3.5927/5981 from 3.6191/6251 previously.

It however depreciated against the euro to 4.5400/5471 from 4.5033/5104 last week and weakened against the British pound to 5.8275/8366 from 5.8209/8305 last Friday.

Money Market To Remain Stable Next Week

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

The central bank is expected to conduct daily tenders to mop up excess funds in the market, said a dealer. For the week just-ended, BNM intervened to absorb excess funds by conducting range maturity auction, money market tenders, conventional money market tenders, commodity murabahah programme, Qard, repo and reverse repo tenders.

On Friday, the central bank's action helped reduce the market's total liquidity surplus to RM35.19 billion from RM40.27 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system, it shrank to RM3.90 billion from RM7.81 billion.

The overnight 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 was pegged at 3.71 per cent.

FBM KLCI Futures To Trade Higher Next Week

By Nurul Hanis Ismir

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

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President and Retail Research Head Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan said strengthening crude oil price would remain the key factor in supporting the local benchmark index.

"The decision by the European Central Bank to cut interest rates will also drive the index next week," he told Bernama.

On a week-to-week basis, March rose two points to 1,697.50, April 2016 gained three points to 1,693, June 2016 added eight points to 1,682 while September 2016 was 10.5 points higher at 1,672.50.

Weekly turnover slipped to 44,276 lots from 50,263 lots while open interest widened to 44,712 contracts from 40,163 contracts last week.
The benchmark FBM KLCI settled at 1,696.54, up 5.63 points from the previous week of 1,692.49.

El-Nino Concerns Could Drive CPO Prices Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- Crude palm oil (CPO) prices are expected to trade higher next week as the El Nino factor continues to weigh on prices.

Analysts projected higher CPO prices as crop-damaging El Nino will reduce fresh fruit yield and lower production in coming months.

Experts at the recent Palm and Lauric Oils Outlook Conference have forecast that CPO prices will be confined between RM2,700 and RM3,000 per tonne by June based on the weather event.

The Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) on Thursday reported the country's total palm oil stocks in February 2016 fell 6.05 per cent to 2.17 million tonnes versus 2.31 million tonnes registered in January 2016.

"CPO stocks for February 2016 declined 3.94 per cent to 1.25 million tonnes against 1.30 million tonnes recorded a month earlier," the board said.

Meanwhile, Interband Group of Companies Senior Palm Oil Trader Jim Teh predicted that profit-taking will set in next week.

This will see CPO prices retreating between RM2,350 and RM2,450 a tonne as values have risen significantly the past three weeks.

Another local trader told Bernama, steady crude oil prices, higher soyoil prices and a recovery in regional commodities futures markets would support the market next week.

However, a stronger ringgit will be the only obstacle that will prevent CPO from testing more resistance levels. For the week-just-ended, CPO was traded mostly higher.

On a weekly basis, March 2016 soared RM85 to RM2,549, April 2016 surged RM102 to RM2,595, May 2016 rose RM101 to RM2,608 and June 2016 was RM109 higher at RM2,602 a tonne.

Turnover shrank to 160,687 lots from 204,595 lots last week, while open interest rose to 263,725 contracts from 258,628 contracts previously.

On the physical market, March South was RM80 better at RM2,550 a tonne from RM2,470 a tonne previously.

Rubber Likely To Trade Mixed Next Week

By Azizul Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is expected to trade mixed next week buoyed by the ringgit's movement, crude oil prices as well as the performance of regional peers.

A local trader said the domestic currency, which is expected to be stable versus the US dollar next week, would mitigate the upside of the benchmark SMR 20 price.

The recovery in crude oil prices could also the price of SMR grades and latex-in-bulk positively.

"Local rubber prices are likely to track the movements on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM) and Shanghai Futures Exchange while concerns over the El Nino phenomena would also aid the commodity's better price," told Bernama.

For the week just-ended, steady crude oil prices and a broader recovery in regional rubber futures markets supported the commodity's uptrend.

SMR 20 price hit a seven-month high on Monday when Brent climbed above the US$39 per barrel level for the first time this year.

"The SMR 20 is likely to trade within a range of between 490 and 510 sen per kg next week amid a mixed risk sentiment and latex-in-bulk at between 390 sen and 410 sen a kg," another dealer added.

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

Board's sellers' official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 fell 16 sen to 512.5 sen per kg while latex-in-bulk added 10.5 sen to 388.5 sen per kg.

The unofficial sellers' closing price for tyre-grade SMR 20 slipped 48 sen to 500 sen per kg while latex-in-bulk improved 14 sen to 400 sen per kg.

KLIBOR Futures To Remain Untraded Next Week

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 continued to see lacklustre performance.

March 2016, April 2016, May 2016 and June 2016 was unchanged at 96.29, 96.28, 96.29 and 96.32 respectively.

Open interest was unchanged at 120 contracts. The underlying three-month KLIBOR was pegged at 3.71 per cent.

KLTM Uptrend On Tin Producers' Output Cutback

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) is likely to trend upwards next week prompted by a slowdown in tin ore production in China and Indonesia.

China's tin producers are reducing output to mitigate declining prices while Indonesia has agreed to curtail its offshore tin mining operations in a move to shore up demand.

"However, traders are adopting a wait-and-see attitude to see how the market would fare next week," said a dealer.

For the week just-ended, the metal was traded between US$16,650 and US$17,230 per tonne with European, Japanese, South Korean, Chinese, Pakistani and Latin American traders participating actively in the market.

Turnover rose to 281 tonnes compared with the previous week's 250 tonnes.

The price differential between the KLTM and the LME narrowed to US$70 per tonne on Friday against US$125 per tonne previously.

Gold Futures To Trade Cautiously Next Week

KUALA LUMPUR -- Trading in gold futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives is likely to be cautious next week ahead of the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting on Thursday, a dealer said.

Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd Dealer Leo Goh Boon Hao said with the outlook looking good for the United States, the dollar was now on a solid foundation, hence a sluggish price trend for gold.

"The strengthening of the greenback will dampen the COMEX gold market, which would pressure the precious metal here in Kuala Lumpur," he told Bernama.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, March 2016 fell 22 ticks to RM166.05 a gramme, April 2016 decreased 33 ticks to RM166.30, May 2016 rose 33 ticks to RM166.50 and June 2016 shed 33 ticks to RM166.75 a gramme.

Weekly turnover increased to 294 lots worth RM4.89 million from 234 lots valued at RM3.9 million last Friday.

Open interest on Friday fell to 804 contracts from 779 contracts previously.