MALAYSIAeBiz
BERNAMA
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This Week's Highlight : KL-Singapore HSR To Be Fully Operational By 2026

SEALED...Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and his Singapore counterpart Lee Hsien Loong (standing, left) witnessing the signing of the MoU to kick-off the iconic KLSingapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) project. Signing the agreement in Putrajaya Tuesday was Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan (right) and Singapore's Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan (left). Pix: Harry Salzman

PUTRAJAYA-- The Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High-Speed Rail (HSR) project is expected to be fully operational by 2026. This was revealed in a joint press conference by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and his Singapore counterpart Lee Hsien Loong after both leaders witnessed the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) to kick-off the iconic project here Tuesday.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

Malaysia Has Capacity To Absorb Exogenous Shocks - Muhammad

By Christine Lim

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia has the capacity to absorb any exogenous shocks should the global economy deteriorate, with excess capital in the banking industry of about RM120 billion, says Bank Negara Malaysia Governor, Datuk Muhammad Ibrahim.

Malaysia had since the 1997/1998 Asian financial crisis, undertaken a lot of reforms which did well in strengthening the banking sector with far-reaching impact, he told Bernama.

TUESDAY

HSR Project A Game-Changer - Najib

PUTRAJAYA -- The Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail (HSR) project will be a game changer for Malaysia and Singapore including for economic generation, lifestyle and property value, said Malaysia's Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak Tuesday.He said the project, which is due to complete in 2026, would also generate new impetus in terms of economic development along the way not only in the Klang Valley and Singapore but also towns in between.

WEDNESDAY

Huge Opportunities For Malaysian Cos In Sri Lanka - Envoy

From R. Ravichandran

COLOMBO -- There are huge opportunities for Malaysian companies to expand their business and investment in Sri Lanka, said Malaysian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Wan Zaidi Wan Abdullah. "Considering that Malaysian companies in Sri Lanka have been quite resilient since two decades ago, the investment sector is wide open for the Malaysian firms," he said to Malaysian journalists in conjunction with the two-day working visit by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi to Sri Lanka beginning Thursday.

THURSDAY

Eight Malaysian Cos To Invest US$3 Bln In India

KUALA LUMPUR -- Eight Malaysian companies will invest US$3 billion (US$1.00=RM4.03) in seven sectors, including renewable energy and biodiesel, in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Seven memoranda of understanding (MoUs) signed Thursday between the Malaysian companies and the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board, are expected to create about 8,000 jobs, said ASEAN-India Business Council Co-Chairman Datuk Ramesh Kodammal.

FRIDAY

BNM'S International Reserves At RM390.8 Bln At July 15

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) international reserves amounted to RM390.8 billion (US$1 = USD4.042) as at July 15, 2016. The reserves position is sufficient to finance 8.2 months of retained imports and is 1.2 times the short-term external debt, the central bank said in a statement Friday.

SMEbrief

Government Will Continue To Assist, Guide Indian Entrepreneurs

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Government through the Special Secretariat for Empowerment of Indian Entrepreneurs (SEED) will continue its efforts to guide Indian entrepreneurs in order to propel and expand their business. Abdul Halim Abdul Aziz, Deputy Director 1, Distribution, Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's Department said: "Data obtained from the Companies Commission of Malaysia showed that 91 per cent of Indian entrepreneurs consist of micro enterprises while nine per cent are small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

SME Segment To Maintain Double-Digit Growth With OPR Cut: AmBank

KUALA LUMPUR -- AMMB Holdings Bhd (AmBank Group) expects the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) segment to continue its strong double-digit growth this year underpinned by the cut in the Overnight Policy Rate (OPR). Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Sulaiman Mohd Tahir said Wednesday, the bank sees the move by Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) as positive.

Embrace IoTs To Communicate With Young Entrepreneurs - Rahman

PETALING JAYA -- Government agencies involved in promoting the Bumiputera agenda, especially entrepreneurship and employment, must embrace the Internet of Things (IoTs) to communicate their roles. Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan, said Thursday, agencies which had lined up many programmes needed to ensure that the people acknowledged what they did.

Five More 'Mara Digital Mall' Branches To Be Opened

SHAH ALAM -- Five more 'MARA Digital Mall' branches or Bumiputera information technology centres would be opened by the end of next year, said Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob Thursday. "It is to provide opportunities for more Bumiputeras to be involved and venture into the digital and IT market," he said. He said the five branches would be opened in Petaling Jaya, Terengganu, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Johor.

Eco-Innovation Among Vietnamese SMEs To Be Promoted

HO CHI MINH CITY -- Eco-innovation consulting services from the ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Centre (ASEIC) were introduced to Vietnamese small and medium enterprises (SMEs), Vietnam News Agency (VNA) reports. The event, jointly held by the State Agency for Technology Innovation under the Ministry of Science and Technology and the ASEIC, Thursday, aimed to encourage and support the Vietnamese business community to promote innovation and sustainable development activities.

PropUP

Property*update*

BNM: Sufficient Measures To Maintain Household Debt At Prudent Level

LABUAN -- Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) is confident that the series of measures introduced in the last couple of years are sufficient to maintain the current household debt at the prudent level. Currently, the nation's household debt stands at 89 per cent of the gross domestic product, among the highest in Asia. BNM Governor Datuk Muhammad Ibrahim said Monday, the household debt was one of the areas being monitored by the central bank on a regular basis.

First-Time Home-Owners Continue To Have Access To Financing

KUALA LUMPUR -- First-time home-owners continued to have access to financing, said Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM). In a statement Wednesday, the central bank said outstanding housing loans continued to expand at double-digit levels, recording a growth of 10.6 per cent as at end-May 2016.

Banking Industry Ready For HSR - Munir

KUALA LUMPUR -- The banking industry is ready to provide loans for the Kuala Lumpur-Singapore High Speed Rail (HSR) development project, says Bank Muamalat Chairman, Tan Sri Dr Mohd Munir Abdul Majid. "This is a major project, (but) we have the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and other international as well as Malaysian and Singaporean banks, interested in providing loans," he said after the launch of the Bank Muamalat Aisya Debit Card here Wednesday.

Call On First-Time HouseBuyers To Apply For SRP Financing

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Association of Banks in Malaysia (ABM) has urged first-time housebuyers to apply for the government financing scheme under "Skim Rumah Pertamaku" (SRP). "Eleven commercial banks and 11 Islamic financial institutions in Malaysia are participating in the SRP," ABM said in a statement Wednesday, clarifying reports that the stringent lending policy is affecting first-time housebuyers.

Sime Darby Property To Launch Elimina Valley Phase 3

KUALA LUMPUR -- Sime Darby Property will be launching phase three of the Elmina Valley homes at the City of Elmina Saturday. The gross development value (GDV) of Elmina Valley Phase 3 is RM280 million and is part of Elmina West of the City of Elmina, a 2,023-hectare freehold mixed development with a total GDV of RM25.8 billion, said Managing Director, Datuk Jauhari Hamidi said in a statement Thursday.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard

Gainers - 397

Losers - 340

Not Traded - 614

Unchanged - 350

Value - 1409937516

Volume - 13806736

Bursa Malaysia Closes Slightly Lower

By Nurunnasihah Ahmad Rashid

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia closed slightly lower Friday as mild profit-taking emerged among selective heavyweight stocks. The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) fell 0.12 of-a-point or 0.007 per cent to close at 1,657.42. The benchmark index, which opened 1.41 points weaker at 1,656.13, moved between 1,651.90 and 1,659.76 throughout the day. Market breadth was mixed with 397 gainers, 340 losers, 350 counters unchanged, 614 untraded and 19 others suspended. Volume fell to 1.38 billion units worth RM1.41 billion from 1.81 billion units worth RM1.70 billion on Thursday. Mercury Securities Head of Research Edmund Tham told Bernama that the easier local bourse performance was in line with the weaker sentiment on regional bourses. South Korea's Kospi Index lost 0.09 per cent to 2,010.34 while Singapore's Straits Times Index dropped 0.04 per cent to 2,939.45. China's Shanghai Composite Index fell 0.87 per cent to 3,012.43 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng shed 0.16 per cent to 21,964.27. Tham said the weak external factors, particularly lower commodity prices, including that of crude oil, and the global growth rate cut by the International Monetary Fund, weighed on market sentiment. Another dealer said global oil prices were down on worries over persisting global supply glut while the weaker ringgit also dampened investor sentiment. Main Market turnover fell to 934.39 million shares worth RM1.33 billion from Thursday's 1.23 billion shares worth RM1.60 billion.

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
US	4.0535	4.0595
S'pore	2.9891	2.9937
100 Yen	3.8223	3.8290
Sterling	5.3194	5.3281
Euro	4.4686	4.4768

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

FOREX: Ringgit Closes Lower Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit ended easier against the US dollar Friday on lack of catalysts, said a dealer. At 6 pm, the local unit was quoted at 4.0535/0595 against the US dollar from 4.0380/0430 on Thursday. The dealer said investors remained cautious over the ringgit and other regional currencies ahead of policy meetings in the US and Japan next week. The local unit was mostly lower against a basket of major currencies. It rose against the British pound to 5.3194/3281 from Thursday's 5.3322/3396. It eased against the Singapore dollar to 2.9891/9937 from 2.9821/9864 Thursday. The local unit weakened against the yen to 3.8223/8290 from 3.8217/8282 on Thursday and declined against the euro to 4.4686/4768 from 4507/4578 previously.

Money-Market: Short-Term Rates Remain Stable On BNM's Intervention

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates closed stable 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 RM21.94 billion from RM31.23 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system, it declined to RM5.62 billion from RM8.98 billion. BNM had earlier conducted four tenders, a range maturity auction, two repos and a Qard Islamic range maturity auction. The central bank also conducted a conventional money market tender of RM21.9 billion and a RM5.2 billion Qard, both for three-day money. The overnight Islamic reference rate was one per cent higher at 2.95 per cent, while the one-week, two and three-week rates stood at 3.02 per cent, 3.07 per cent and 3.11 per cent respectively.

KLIBOR Futures Contracts Close Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed untraded Friday. At close, spot month August 2016 was quoted at 96.54 while September 2016, October 2016 and December 2016 stood at 96.59, respectively. Open interest was nil. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.40 per cent.

KLCI Futures End Higher

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives ended firmer Friday on continued buying interest. July 2016 rose 6.5 points to 1,659.00, August 2016 added seven points to 1,654.50, September 2016 gained 7.5 points to 1,648.5 while December 2016 soared nine points to 1,636. Turnover rose to 7,748 lots from 6,543 lots on Thursday while open interest improved to 43,130 contracts from 42,950 contracts, previously. The benchmark FBM KLCI settled 0.12 of-a-point weaker at 1,657.42.

Labuan Must Diversify Economy – BNM Governor

LABUAN -- Labuan must diversify its economy and not to be too overly-dependent on any particular sector following the slump in global oil prices, said Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Governor, Datuk Muhammad Ibrahim. "Just like the Malaysian economy, we have diversified it since 1997 and 1998. The same applies to Labuan. That is why we move to develop the foundation and trust to develop the Islamic finance," he said after the presentation of Labuan Financial Services Authority (Labuan FSA) Annual Report 2015 here Monday.

Affin Bank Cuts BR And BLR Effective Tuesday

KUALA LUMPUR -- Affin Bank Bhd is lowering its base rate (BR) to 3.80 per cent per annum from 3.99 per cent, effective Tuesday, in line with the decrease in the overnight policy rate (OPR) by Bank Negara Malaysia. Along with this revision, the bank's base lending rate (BLR) and Affin Islamic Bank Bhd's base financing rate will also be reduced to 6.66 per cent per annum from 6.85 per cent, said Affin Bank in a statement here Monday.

SC Seeks Feedback On CIS

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia Bhd has published a consultation paper to seek feedback on the proposal to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of the bourse as a destination for capital raising and investment in relation to Collective Investment Schemes (CIS). Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Seri Tajuddin Atan in a statement here Tuesday said the review was part of the bourse's ongoing market development initiatives to expand the depth and breadth of Malaysia' capital market by providing attractive diversified investment options to investors.

Alliance Financial Group Upbeat On Loan Growth

KUALA LUMPUR -- Alliance Financial Group Bhd (AFG) is optimistic of surpassing the loan industry standard of between six and seven per cent growth for its current financial year (FY) ending March 31, 2017. Chief Executive Officer Joel Kornreich told reporters here Tuesday, despite the challenging economic environment, the loan growth would be driven by the demand from the small and medium enterprise (SME), consumer and commercial segments.

Initiatives To Enhance Competitiveness, Improve Efficiency Of Unit Trust Industry

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Securities Commission Malaysia (SC) announced new initiatives to enhance the competitiveness and efficiency of the Malaysian unit trust industry. Key changes include an expedited approval process for non-complex retail unit trust funds to reduce time-to-market and removing the need for prospectuses to be renewed on an annual basis for greater operational efficiency. In a statement here Tuesday, the SC said amendments to the relevant guidelines reflecting these initiatives would take effect on Aug 15.

RHB Bank, RHB Islamic Bank Cut Base Rate To 3.80 Pct

KUALA LUMPUR -- RHB Banking Group's units, RHB Bank and RHB Islamic Bank, will reduce their base rate (BR) to 3.80 per cent from 3.90 per cent per annum with effect from Friday. Both banks will also reduce their base lending rate (BLR) and base financing rate (BFR) from 6.85 per cent to 6.75 per cent per annum, the group said in a statement here Wednesday.

Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp Affirms Commitment To M'sia

KUALA LUMPUR -- Japanese financial institution Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corp (SMBC) has affirmed its long-term business commitment in Malaysia. Senior Managing Director and Co-Head of International Banking Unit Yasuyuki Kawasaki said in a statement here Wednesday, the group wants to become a truly Asia-centric institution and Malaysia is a core component of this vision.

AmInvest Aims To Grow AUM To RM40 Bln By FY17

KUALA LUMPUR -- AmInvest, the fund management business of AMMB Holdings Bhd, aims to grow its asset under management (AUM) to RM40 billion by March 31, 2017 (FY17). Its Deputy Chief Executive Officer/Chief Investment Officer of Fixed Income Department, Goh Wee Peng told reporters here Wednesday, as of June 2016, AmInvest's total AUM stood at RM36.3 billion, comprising 83 unit trust funds, two exchange-traded funds and nine private retirement scheme funds.

Ambank Sees Opportunities For Investors In Bond, Unit Trusts

KUALA LUMPUR -- Ambank Holdings Bhd sees opportunities for investors in bonds and unit trusts. This comes on the heels of the bank's move earlier this month to reduce its base rate (BR) and base lending rate (BLR) by 20 basis points to 3.80 per cent and 6.65 per cent respectively. Group Chief Executive Officer Datuk Sulaiman Mohd Tahir told reporters here Friday, although the cut is seen as a challenge to deposits, there is also a silver lining in other alternatives, such as bonds and units trusts.

RHB Aims To Increase Customer Base By 30 Per Cent By Year-End

KUALA LUMPUR -- The RHB Banking Group aims to increase its customer base by 30 per cent from nearly 30,000 by year-end with the unveiling of its all new RHB Premier service, logo and value propositions. In a statement here Friday, the group said RHB Premier is exclusively designed to reward the affluent segment of its customers and their loved ones with privileges that put them first.

Shopback Malaysia Eyes 20 Pct Monthly Growth In Users

KUALA LUMPUR -- Online cashback platform, Shopback Malaysia, is eyeing 20 per cent monthly growth in users from 300,000 currently following the launch of its mobile application. Chief Operating Officer, Sharmeen Looi, told reporters here Monday, Malaysia offered huge potential for the company to grow as there were some 11 million smartphone users in the country.

Rolls-Royce Aims 'Dawn' At Young Ultra-High Networth Individuals

KUALA LUMPUR -- Rolls-Royce Motor Cars Kuala Lumpur has launched Rolls-Royce Dawn, a super luxury drophead, targeting young ultra-high networth individuals. Managing Director Datuk Micheal Ong told reporters here Tuesday, the RM4 million four-seater is to leverage on a new interest generated among the new generation.

Jewellery Records US$316 Bln Sales Globally In 2016

KUALA LUMPUR -- Jewellery is the best performing personal accessories category with global sales worth US$316 billion in 2016, global market research company Euromonitor International said in a statement here Tuesday. It said jewellery is also the fastest growing segment within the personal accessories industry, recording a three per cent growth between 2015 and 2016.

Sarawak's Timber Exports Fall 3.5 Pct In 1st Half Of 2016

KUCHING -- Sarawak's timber and timber product exports in the first six months of this year have been affected by uncertain conditions in major consuming markets such as Japan, India, Taiwan and China. Sarawak Second Finance Minister Datuk Amar Awang Tengah Ali Hasan said in a statement here Tuesday, the state's total exports dropped by 3.5 per cent to RM3.09 billion from RM3.20 billion registered in the same period last year.

Maxis Q2 Pre-Tax Profit Rises To RM648 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR-- Maxis Bhd's pre-tax profit rose to RM648 million for the second quarter ended June 30, 2016 from RM631 million in the same period last year. Revenue for the quarter under review stood at RM2.102 billion from RM2.11 billion previously. In a statement here Wednesday, the telecommunications company said it registered stable postpaid revenue of RM975 million for the second quarter this year against RM972 million last year.

i-Berhad's Q2 Pre-Tax Profit Increases To RM23.61 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- i-Berhad's pre-tax profit for the second quarter ended June 30, 2016 rose to RM23.61 million from RM9.04 million in the same period last year. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Wednesday, the company said its revenue rose to RM86.68 million from RM52.73 million previously.

Bank Muamalat Eyes 1 Mln Customers Over Next 2 Years

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd aims to double its customer base to one million over the next two years, driven by its newly-launched debit card, Aisya Debit Card. Chairman Tan Sri Dr Mohd Munir Abdul Majid told reporters here Wednesday, the card is the first of its kind in the country as it incorporates spending with the social responsibility feature of waqf.

MATRADE: Exports Of Machinery, Appliances & Parts At 15 Pct This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) expects the exports of machinery, appliances and parts to achieve at least 15 per cent of total exports this year despite the soft market. Director of Products and Services Promotion Division, Md Silmi Abd Rahman told reporters here Wednesday said the exports from this sector were higher at 20.5 per cent totalling RM36.14 billion last year compared with RM29.99 billion in 2014.

Hua Yang's Q1 Pre-Tax Profit Falls To RM32.22 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hua Yang Bhd's pre-tax profit for the first quarter ended June 30, 2016 fell to RM32.22 million from RM40.19 million in the same period last year. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia here Wednesday, the property developer said revenue declined to RM127.96 million from RM142.57 million previously.


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AirAsia's Leasing Unit To Get 30 Pct Of A321neo Order

KUALA LUMPUR -- Asia Aviation Capital Ltd (AAC) is poised to benefit from parent company AirAsia Bhd's recent deal for 100 Airbus A321neo aircraft, with 30 per cent of the order expected to be placed under its wing. AAC, which is wholly-owned by AirAsia, in a statement here Monday said it is expected to receive 30 of the 100 Airbus A321neo aircraft for its leasing operations. The aircraft deal between AirAsia and Airbus valued at US$12.6 billion based on list prices was entered into at the Farnborough Airshow in the United Kingdom last week.

Mavcom To Announce Decision On Passenger Service Charges By Year-End

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom) is currently reviewing the airport passenger service charges (PSCs) and will announce its decision by year-end. "We're studying them now and will make an announcement at an appropriate time," Chief Operating Officer Azmir Zain told media briefing on the Malaysia Aviation Consumer Protection Code 2016, here Monday.

70 Pct Of Companies Set Up In Labuan In 2015 Originate From Asia

LABUAN -- A total of 836 companies were incorporated in Labuan in 2015 with over 70 per cent of them originating from Asia, the Labuan Financial Services Authority (Labuan FSA) Annual Report 2015 said. Presenting the report here Monday, Bank Negara Malaysia governor Datuk Muhammad Ibrahim said this reflected Labuan IBFC as a favourable destination for multinational companies looking to expand into the Asia-Pacific markets.

Petronas Lubricants Partners Halfords Group To Capture UK Market

KUALA LUMPUR -- Petronas Lubricants International Sdn Bhd (PLI) Wednesday announced its partnership with Halfords Group plc, a British retailer of motoring and cycling products operating in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland. The retail partnership marks the first time Petronas Syntium with °CoolTech will be made available directly to end consumers there, it said in a statement here Wednesday.

Malaysia's June CPI Up 1.6 Pct From The Same Month Last Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for June 2016 increased by 1.6 per cent to 114.8 compared with 113.0 in the same month last year. Among the major groups which recorded increases was the index for alcoholic beverages & tobacco which rose by 21.9 per cent from June 2015, food & non-alcoholic beverages in increasing 4.2 per cent and housing, water, electricity, gas & other fuels up 2.4 per cent, the Department of Statistics Malaysia said in a statement here Wednesday.

iflix Set To Expand Beyond ASEAN

By Azizul Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR -- Internet TV service, iflix, is set to expand to markets outside Southeast Asia or the ASEAN region in the second half of this year, in a bid to secure a billion subscribers by 2020. Group Chief Operating Officer Azran Osman-Rani told Bernama here Wednesday, emerging markets are still iflix's target and the company has to date garnered more than a million paid subscribers across ASEAN.

M'sia, Indonesia Join Hands To Counter Anti-Palm Oil Campaign

PUTRAJAYA -- Malaysia and Indonesia will join hands to counter the anti-palm oil campaign that has led to a decline in exports of the commodity to China. Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Mah Siew Kong told reporters here Thursday, a meeting will be held with Indonesia on July 28 to discuss the issue. "We acknowledge that we are facing competition from soybean oil producers, but what is regrettable is the presence of an anti-palm oil group that is continuing to lobby purchasing countries," he said.

Maybank Eager To Participate In BNM's Fintech Consultative Paper

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) is looking forward to participating and giving its views on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) consultative paper on financial technology (fintech). Maybank, Head of Community

Financial Services Malaysia Datuk Hamirullah Boorhan opined that embracing fintech is vital, due to its increasing global importance, particularly in retail banking and consumer banking.

Bank Rakyat Arau Branch Among Top Three For Microbanking
By Zainal Abdul Jalil

ARAU -- The Bank Rakyat branch in Arau has continued to maintain its record performance among the top three branches, nationwide, for microbanking service since 2013. Branch Manager Zuraini Abd Wahab told Bernama here Thursday, the branch's success was due to the increase in deposits and customers, enhanced Ar-Rahnu pawnbroking services and increase in personal loan approvals.

Perodua's Market Share May Rise To 37 Pct Crowns With 'Bezza'
PETALING JAYA -- Perusahaan Otomobil Kedua Sdn Bhd's (Perodua) market share is poised to rise to 37.2 per cent from the current 35.5 per cent, underpinned by the launch of the new 'Bezza', as well as the expected softness of the Total Industry Volume (TIV) this year. President and Chief Executive Officer Datuk Dr Aminar Rashid Salleh told reporters here Thursday, Perodua expects to maintain its total sales this year at 216,000 based on demand for the new sedan.

Standard Chartered Launches 'Video Banking'
KUALA LUMPUR -- Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia (SCBM) Thursday launched its 'Video Banking' service here, a service that allows clients to securely interact with banking consultants via video, audio and chat. Malaysia and Singapore are the first markets to go live, to be followed by seven other markets by end-2016. SCBM Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer Mahendra Gursahani said the bank is constantly innovating to bring easy, convenient banking to clients.

Royal Philips To Open 10 Stores In Malaysia In Next 2 Years
JOHOR BAHARU -- Dutch-based electronics, healthcare and lighting company, Royal Philips, is looking to open eight to 10 new stores over the next two years as part of its expansion plan in Malaysia. Its Country Manager for Malaysia, Muhammad Ali Jaleel said Royal Philips, which began operations in Malaysia in the 1930s, sees a wider market for the brand in the country. "We currently operate a store in Publika Shopping Gallery, Kuala Lumpur and we plan to open a minimum of eight to 10 new stores by end-2018," he told reporters here Friday.

Desa Kerayong Project To Be Fully Taken Up In Three Years
By Zarul Effendi Razali

KUALA LUMPUR -- Majubina Projects Sdn Bhd expects its rehabilitated Desa Kerayong Indah mixed-development project to be fully sold out in three years. Managing Director William Law said the project, with a gross development value of RM1.1 billion over the next five years, comprises 2,000 units, with almost 800 already sold. "Desa Kerayong was abandoned before Majubina decided to continue the development through a joint venture with Probil Industries Sdn Bhd. "Almost all the 800 buyers purchased their units through the previous developer," he told Bernama here Friday.

AirAsia Unit Enhances Features Of Big Prepaid MasterCard
KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia's wholly-owned unit, TPaay Asia Sdn Bhd, has enhanced the features of the BIG Prepaid MasterCard in two formats of multi-currency prepaid cards to complement travel experiences. In a statement here Friday, AirAsia said the cards -- BIG Prepaid MasterCard Plastic and the BIG Prepaid MasterCard Virtual -- would allow holders to carry six currencies in one card.

Talks Between Brahim's And Tabung Haji Ongoing
KUALA LUMPUR -- The ongoing discussions between Brahim's Holdings Bhd and Tabung Haji (TH) are not likely to be concluded by this year, said Brahim's Executive Chairman Datuk Seri Ibrahim Ahmad Badawi. The discussions cover areas to further enhance Brahim's food supply to pilgrims doing the hajj while they are in Makkah, he said at the launch of Brahim's book on "Malaysia's favourite traditional recipes" here Friday.

DRB-HICOM Appoints Shaharul Farez As COO, Property, Corporate Planning & Strategy

KUALA LUMPUR -- DRB-HICOM Bhd has appointed Shaharul Farez Hassan as its Chief Operating Officer (COO), Property, Corporate Planning and Strategy, effective July 15, 2016. Shaharul Farez, 46, was formerly the Executive Vice-President of Malakoff Corporation Bhd. Among the key positions he held previously were Group Chief Executive Officer, Tradewinds Corporation Bhd and Group Chief Financial Officer, Pernas International Holdings Bhd. Shaharul Farez holds a Masters in Business Administration from Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, USA, and Bachelor of Science in Economics and Accounting from University of Bristol, United Kingdom, DRB-Hicom said in a statement here Monday.

Base To Train Workforce For London's Newest Neighbourhood

KUALA LUMPUR -- The shareholders of London's Battersea Power Station project has launched a skill training centre to encourage residents to consider a career in retail, hospitality, estate management, leisure or business there upon its completion. Battersea Project Holding Company Ltd chairman Datuk Johan Ariffin said in a statement here Monday, the Battersea Academy of Skills Excellence (BASE) offered courses tailored to the employers' specific needs while building on their own in-house training programmes.

Super Group Opens Principal Hub In Johor

JOHOR BAHARU -- Singapore-based food and drinks manufacturer, Super Group Ltd has opened its principal hub in Johor Monday, proving that Malaysia is still the main destination of choice for foreign investors. Its Executive Director, Darren Teo told reporters here Monday, the company had established the hub as a regional centre for procurement and distribution of food ingredients business segment, out of which 85 per cent of the products would be exported to the Asia Pacific region.

klia2 Maintenance Programme For 2016 69 Pct Complete - MAHB

KUALA LUMPUR -- The special maintenance programme using grouting injections planned for the Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (klia2) this year has been 69 per cent completed as of June, said Malaysia Airport Holdings Bhd (MAHB). In its report on the maintenance progress at klia2 Monday, MAHB said grouting injection was completed at another three locations last month, bringing the number of locations to 27 out of 39 planned for this year.

Malaysia Airlines Offers Low Fares For Selected KL-London Flights

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Airlines is offering low fares for selected flights from Kuala Lumpur to London, under its 'How Far Can Your Ringgit Go' promotion, which begins Tuesday till July 25, 2016. In a statement here Tuesday, the national carrier said the offer, from as low as RM2,499 (economy class) and RM10,999 (business class), is for both ways and valid for immediate travel until March 31, 2017.

Al Rajhi Bank M'sia Appoints Nik Norzrul Thani As New Chairman

KUALA LUMPUR -- Al Rajhi Bank Malaysia (ARBM) Wednesday announced the appointment of Datuk Dr Nik Norzrul Thani Nik Hassan Thani as its new Chairman, effective July 13, 2016. The unit of Al Rajhi Bank, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia said Nik Norzrul Thani, who was previously acting Chairman, has served as a board member of ARBM since 2006. "He brings with him a wealth of experience with over 35 years of local and international experience in the legal, academic and Islamic banking sectors," it said in a statement here Wednesday.

PHAR, AirAsia Collaborates To Launch Digital Performance Platform

KUALA LUMPUR -- International media and marketing agency, PHAR, Wednesday launched Southeast Asia's largest publisher trading desk in collaboration with AirAsia Bhd. In a statement here Wednesday, the company said the digital performance platform, called PHAR Focus, was developed to serve the objectives of traveller related digital campaigns.

Malindo Air Establishes Interline Partnership With Qatar Airways

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malindo Air has teamed up with Qatar Airways to offer seamless connectivity for passengers when travelling between ASEAN and more than 100 destinations in Qatar Airways' network. In a statement here Thursday, Malindo Air Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Chandran Rama Muthy said the partnership, which took effect on July 8, 2016, would allow Qatar Airways' passengers to tap into Malindo Air's growing short-haul regional network that currently serves 36 cities in 13 countries, including 13 major airports in Malaysia.

It's A Privilege Not Everybody Could Have - BNM Governor

By Azman Ujang, Siti Hawa Othman & Christine Lim

KUALA LUMPUR -- For the first media interview he granted since his appointment as Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) Governor from May 1, Datuk Muhammad Ibrahim seemed very relaxed and at ease despite knowing the three of us from Bernama would be asking plenty of questions to the newly-minted central banker.

He has taken over from Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz whom the international central bank fraternity showered with accolades, including being named one the world's best central bank chiefs and the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Central Banking Awards in January.

Being one of Zeti's three deputies, Muhammad has had a ringside view of the enormity of the job which the first woman at the helm held for 16 years, making her the second-longest serving Governor after the legendary Tun Ismail Ali.

"Nobody can ever be ready to become a Governor because the role is significant. It's important to the country, it requires dynamic thinking and to be forward looking in terms of issues that we want to address," he said in setting the tone for the interview.

Zeti had earlier described Muhammad's appointment as positive for the country."Being part of our policy team at the Bank will provide continuity and the much-needed certainty in this prevailing period of great uncertainty.

I have great confidence in his ability to lead the Bank going forward into the future," she had said.

STRONG BANK NEGARA TEAM

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak too had voiced confidence that under the leadership of Muhammad, BNM would continue to assist and advise the government besides presenting views to further drive the country's economic growth.

We began by asking him what were his feelings when his appointment was finally announced after much media hype and speculations that someone outside of BNM might replace Zeti?

"For me, the post is a continuation of my whole career in the central bank.

It's essentially a call of duty and opportunity to serve the nation. I know that if you are at Bank Negara, you can make a real difference. For the last 32 years, I knew that I'll make a difference in Bank Negara.

"And with a strong team at the central bank, we are able to make the necessary changes. That is the most important for me as Governor - the ability to serve the nation. It's a privilege as not everybody has that opportunity. It's a significant appointment for anybody," Muhammad said.

EXCERPTS OF THE INTERVIEW

The following are excerpts from the interview:

Q: Can you share with us the mood and morale of the staff as a whole when a career Bank Negara personality was named to succeed Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz amid speculations that someone from outside the central bank would likely be appointed?

A: I think it is more a sense of relief and pride as we are able to basically chart our path forward, because we have put in place many plans. For instance, we have had the Financial Sector Blueprint in place since 2011, so the continuation of implementing those action plans, I think is very important because there won't be any hiccups. So far, the implementation of those plans we have in place has been going smoothly and there is continuity. I think that is the most important thing.

Q: You joined Bank Negara in 1984 and moved up the ranks through the years. In the initial years with the central bank, did it cross your mind that one day you would make it as Governor?

Bank Negara Governor Datuk Muhammad Ibrahim. Pix Mohd Huzaini Daud FotoBERNAMA

A: I think the most important thing when we start our first career is that we just want to do our level best. I was a bank scholar so the fact that I got a place at the central bank was a great privilege for me because of the opportunity to learn about banking and the economy, overall. This was something I had been looking forward to since I was in school. So joining the central bank was a dream come true for me, career-wise.

Q: How would you describe your predecessor Tan Sri Zeti?

A: Exemplary leadership. She gave a lot of space to us to grow. For a lot of us in the bank. She gave a lot of opportunities for us to fully realise our potentials, to give us autonomy in managing some of the major policies that the bank had embarked on. I think this is her biggest achievement -- to develop leaders for the future.

-- BERNAMA

LIST OF MARKET REPORTS :

BURSA MALAYSIA

BURSA Malaysia Likely To Consolidate

By Nurunnasihah Ahmad Rashid

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia is expected to consolidate next week with sentiment weighed down by bearish external developments, especially the falling global oil prices.

Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan told Bernama that the weak US jobs data and weak manufacturing data in Japan as well as the absence of plans to expand stimulus from the Bank of Japan would hurt investor sentiment.

It was reported that the bank's Governor Haruhiko Kuroda has ruled out the idea of using "helicopter money" -- or directly underwriting the budget deficit -- to combat deflation. "The downgraded forecast for global growth by the International Monetary Fund to 3.1 per cent in 2016 and 3.4 per cent in 2017 will also dampen investor sentiment in the near term," he said.

On domestic factors, Nazri said the depreciation of the ringgit would also drag down the local bourse's performance.

"Immediate support is expected to be between 1,640 and 1,630 points while key resistance should be at the 1,660 and 1,680-point level," he added.

Weekly turnover increased to 8.71 billion units worth RM8.41 billion from 8.18 billion units worth RM9.37 billion last week. Main market volume rose to 5.80 billion shares worth RM7.89 billion from 5.44 billion shares worth RM8.84 billion previously.

FOREX: Ringgit Likely To Be Volatile

By Harizah Hanim Mohamed

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit is expected to be volatile against the US dollar next week amid the inconsistent global oil prices and commodity prices, although Malaysia's moderate inflation rate will cushion the impact on the ringgit, a trader said.

"At the moment, the local note has broken the 4.07 psychology level, so it is expected to trade lower next week," Affin Hwang Investment Bank Vice-President/ Head of Retail Research Datuk Dr Nazri Khan Adam Khan told Bernama. Meanwhile, Hong Leong Bank in a note maintained a slight bullish outlook on the ringgit versus the greenback due to a retreat in risk appetite.

"Despite the likelihood of an extended retreat in risk appetite, we opine that risk aversion in the dollar going into the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting and US Gross Domestic Product report would provide support to the ringgit. "Downbeat US reports along the way would drive the dollar lower," it said.

In the upcoming week, there will be another round of FOMC meetings to determine the interest rate coupled with the release of the US GDP report for the second quarter. The ringgit was traded lower throughout the week just ended.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the local unit was weaker at 4.0535/0595 against the US dollar from 3.9450/9500 in the previous week. The ringgit also ended lower against other currencies.

It dropped against the Singapore dollar to 2.9891/9937 from 2.9335/9381, inched down versus the yen to 3.8223/8290 from 3.7242/7306 and eased vis-a-vis the euro to 4.4686/4768 from 4.3935/3007 previously. Against the British pound, the ringgit depreciated to 5.3194/3281 from 5.2918/2009.

Money-Market: Short-Term Rates Likely To Remain Stable

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian money market is likely to remain stable next week on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) intervention to absorb excess liquidity from the financial system.

The central bank is expected to conduct daily tenders to reduce excess liquidity from the financial market. For the week just ended, BNM intervened on a daily basis to absorb excess funds by conducting several tenders, namely conventional money market, range maturity auction, Islamic range maturity auction, repo and reverse repo tenders, Qard tender as well as commodity murabahah programme tender.

On Friday, BNM's action helped reduce the market's liquidity surplus in the conventional system to RM21.94 billion from RM31.23 billion earlier, while in the Islamic system, it declined to RM5.62 billion from RM8.98 billion.

The overnight Islamic reference rate was one per cent higher at 2.95 per cent, while the one-, two- and three-week rates stood at 3.02 per cent, 3.07 per cent and 3.11 per cent respectively. Meanwhile, the benchmark three-month interbank rate stood at 3.40 per cent.

KLCI Futures Likely To Trade Lower

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contracts (FKLI) on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to trade lower next week, in line with the weak outlook for the cash market. A dealer said the FBM KLCI might continue to trend further downward on persistent selling pressure.

He said buying sentiment would be hit by bearish external developments including falling oil prices as well as the global growth rate cut by the International Monetary Fund to 3.1 per cent in 2016 and 3.4 per cent in 2017.

For the week just ended, the futures market was mainly lower on selling pressure coupled with the softer ringgit against the US dollar and falling oil prices.

Spot month July 2016 and December 2016 fell nine points each to 1,668 and 1,636 respectively while August 2016 dipped 9.5 points to 1,654.5 and September 2016 lost 10 points to 1,648.5.

Weekly turnover narrowed to 43,130 lots from last week's 40,717 lots while open interest increased to 43,130 contracts from 42,157 contracts previously. The benchmark FBM KLCI settled at 1,657.42, down 10.98 points, from 1,668.4 recorded last Friday.

CPO Futures Likely To Ease

By Mohd Khairi Idham Amran

KUALA LUMPUR -- Crude palm oil (CPO) futures prices are likely to ease next week on lack of demand but the weaker ringgit would support prices from a big drop, a dealer said. Interband Group of Companies Senior Palm Oil Trader Jim Teh said traders would remain cautious next week on lack of festive seasons to drive demand.

"However, the weaker ringgit, in a way, will help to cushion prices as it makes palm oil cheaper thus stimulate buying interest," he told Bernama. Meanwhile, another dealer said traders would look to export data from a cargo surveyor, to be released on Monday, for further leads.

The dealer, however, was in consensus with Teh that bullish fundamentals and a weaker ringgit would cushion any attempt to sell the commodity. "Palm oil is still the cheapest edible oil in the market," he said.

On Wednesday, cargo surveyor Intertek Testing Services released data on Malaysian palm oil products exports for July 1-20 which show a rise of 14 per cent to 817,736 tonnes from the same period a month earlier.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, spot month July 2016 advanced RM64 to RM2,362 per tonne, August 2016 rose RM40 to RM2,340 per tonne, September 2016 went up RM42 to RM2,320 per tonne and October 2016 increased RM52 to RM2,313 per tonne.

Weekly turnover eased to 253,050 lots from last week's 201,439 lots while open interest dropped to 253,050 contracts from 274,427 contracts previously. On the physical market, August South was RM20 easier at RM2,390 per tonne.

Rubber Market Likely To Continue Upward Momentum

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysian rubber market is likely to continue its uptrend momentum next week riding on the weakening ringgit amid improved trading on regional rubber markets, dealers said. A dealer said the weakening ringgit would provide a boost to demand while improved prices on regional rubber markets will help to support the price uptrend.

On a weekly basis, the Malaysian Rubber Board's official physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 rose 18.5 sen to 519.0 sen a kg while while latex-in-bulk jumped 27 sen to 452.0 sen a kg. Meanwhile, the unofficial physical price for tyre-grade SMR 20 perked 16.5 sen to 514.0 sen a kg and latex-in-bulk advanced 32.5 sen to 455.0 sen a kg.

KLIBOR Futures Expected To Remain Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to remain untraded next week on lack of demand. The futures market was also untraded for the week just ended, with open interest remaining nil. On a Friday-to-Friday basis, spot month July 2016 was pegged at 96.54 while August 2016, September 2016 and December 2016 all stood at 96.59. The underlying three-month KLIBOR on the cash market stood at 3.40 per cent.

KLTM Likely To Trade Range-Bound

By Rosemarie Khoo Mohd Sani

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Kuala Lumpur Tin Market (KLTM) is likely to trade range-bound next week between US$17,500 and US$18,000 per tonne, said a dealer. The dealer said the gains in other base metals may cushion the price for tin apart from the improved oil prices.

"However, traders would still be waiting for fresh leads as they will monitor the global economic developments, including the possibility of an increase in interest rates by the United States after the June 23 Brexit vote," the dealer told Bernama.
For the week just ended, tin finished US$30 lower at

US$17,870 per tonne compared with US$17,990 per tonne last Friday. The weekly turnover fell to 164 lots from 237 lots last week.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the price differential between the KLTM and the LME was at a premium of US$10 per tonne from a discount of US$110 per tonne last Friday.

Gold Futures Expected To Trend Higher

By Rosemarie Khoo Mohd Sani

KUALA LUMPUR -- Gold futures contracts on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives are expected to trend higher next week should the ringgit fail to advance against the US dollar.

"We would expect Bursa gold on Monday and the following week to continue its upward trend, if the ringgit still cannot find its strength," Phillip Futures Sdn Bhd Dealer Chu Ching Yong told Bernama.

The local note was traded lower for the week just ended. Another dealer said investors remained cautious over the ringgit and other regional currencies ahead of policy meetings in the US and Japan next week.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, July 2016 and August 2016 each rose 69 ticks to RM172.95 and RM173.25 a gramme respectively, while September 2016 and October 2016 each gained 72 ticks to RM173.90 and RM174.05 a gramme respectively.

Weekly turnover eased to 127 lots worth RM2.19 million from 191 lots worth RM2.39 million last week. Open interest on Friday advanced to 331 contracts from 320 contracts previously.