

This Week's Highlight : Celebrate Diversity, Never Disrupt Harmony, Says Mahathir In CNY Message



LOVE, PEACE & HARMONY...In his Chinese New Year message, Dr Mahathir called on all the people to pledge to together maintain harmony, stability and peace in the country. He also said it was hoped that the people would continue with the tradition of visiting the homes of their friends in conjunction with the celebration.--fotoBERNAMA

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad Monday reminded Malaysians not to take lightly the nurturing of the relationship among the multiracial, multi-religious and multi-cultural community, saying it is something not easy to preserve. The Prime Minister said that although Malaysians were fortunate to be able

to celebrate various festivals including Chinese New Year in harmony and peace, the situation might not always be so because there were those who attempted to disrupt the harmony for a certain purpose. As such, he said, it was hoped that all quarters would not allow themselves to be intimidated by such things.

KUALA LUMPUR -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad Wednesday dismissed rumours of a Cabinet reshuffle that would reportedly take place after the Chinese New Year festival, saying there was no such thing. "No reshuffle, no change. I stick with the same (Cabinet ministers)," he told reporters after attending the Chinese New Year 'open house' hosted by Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng and the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (NCCIM) here. Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on a recent blog post claiming that Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali would be appointed deputy prime minister after the Chinese New Year.

THURSDAY

Tabung Harapan At RM202 Mln, To Be Used To Pay Federal Govt Debt

PUTRAJAYA -- The Tabung Harapan Malaysia (THM) has accumulated a total of RM202.72 million, and the money will be used in paying the federal government debt, Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said Thursday. He said the exact amount stood at RM202,716,775.10 as of Jan 14, 2019, the closing date of the account after the period of receiving contributions was extended by two weeks from Dec 31, 2018, in compliance with a Cabinet decision made on Jan 2 following positive feedback from Malaysians.

FRIDAY

International Investors Confident In Malaysia's Economy

KUALA LUMPUR -- International investors are confident in Malaysia's economic potential as well as the government's ability to drive the economy forward. Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said Malaysia remained an attractive investment destination with investors, especially with the government's commitment to the competency, accountability and transparency principles under Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's leadership. "Dr Mahathir is a well-known and much respected international statesman in Japan. They are confident their investments will be used to grow Malaysia's economy to the fullest," said Lim in a statement on his visit to Japan which ended Friday.

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

Malaysia Ready To Facilitate Southern Thailand Peace Dialogue Upon Request - Rahim

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia said Monday it is ready to facilitate should there be any request for fresh dialogue between Majlis Syura Patani (Mara Patani) and the Government of Thailand in the effort to bring peace to restive southern Thailand. Malaysia's facilitator, former Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Noor, said Kuala Lumpur was in a 'wait-and-see' phase for developments following the decision of the Mara Patani dialogue panel to suspend all dialogue with the Thai government.

TUESDAY

2019 Will Be The Beginning Of Nation's Economic Development, Says Guan Eng

GEORGE TOWN -- Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng is confident 2019 will see the beginning of economic development for Malaysia, given the country's fiscal position which has begun to consolidate and the impressive increase in foreign direct investments (FDIs) into the country since 2018. "We hope 2019 will be a more prosperous year for Malaysia. We have been able to strengthen our fiscal position since last year and this provided the confidence to foreign investors, as well as, international institutional funds that Malaysia was committed in addressing problems inherited from the previous government," he told a press conference Tuesday.

SMEbrief

Ministry To Encourage Local Craft Traders To Market Products Online

KUALA TERENGGANU -- The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture will step up cooperation with local craft traders to market their products online in a bid to help them expand their business globally, says its minister Datuk Mohamaddin Ketapi. He said that to date, not many of them used the online platform to market their products, resulting in the industry failing to take off and looking gloomy. "They can choose...whether to market their products on Lazada or Shopee, just inform us and we will do the needful," he said Monday.

Invest In Sabah's Development, Shafie Tells Entrepreneurs

SANDAKAN -- The Sabah government

is appealing to local entrepreneurs to invest in the state in order to boost the state's economic growth. Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal said he would meet entrepreneurs soon to encourage them to invest in the state's development efforts. "I am confident they (entrepreneurs) have the funds to invest in development (projects). "They can invest their funds to create businesses or economic activities that will provide job opportunities for the people, hence assist in solving unemployment in the state," he told reporters Wednesday.

INSP To Match Over 400 Local Companies On April 2

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's renowned global business matching event, International Sourcing Programme (INSP) on April 2 will match more than 400 Malaysian companies with 150 high quality importers from over 40

countries. The one-day INSP, held in conjunction with the Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) 2019, will see buyers and sellers go through 2,000 business meetings. Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) deputy chief executive officer Datuk Wan Latiff Wan Musa said in a statement Thursday, the INSP was one of the small and medium enterprises' (SMEs) most sought after events for the local companies to meet global buyers without having to fork out hefty travelling fees.



PropUP

Propertyupdate

SC Estate Partners BS Civil To Develop Affordable Houses In Kedah

KUALA LUMPUR -- SC Estate Construction Sdn Bhd (SEC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of SC Estate Builder Bhd, has entered into a joint venture (JV) agreement with BS Civil Engineering Sdn Bhd to develop 7.90 hectares (79,069.13 square metres) of freehold land into a mixed development in Bandar Alor Setar, Kedah. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Monday, SC Estate Builder said SEC would develop the land owned by BS Civil, which would be paid RM9 million by the developer. The mixed development would consist of apartments, low cost apartments and shoplots with an estimated gross development value of about RM93 million.

Perak To Build Houses Costing As Low As RM20,000 Each

SERI ISKANDAR -- The Perak government will provide affordable homes for as low as RM20,000 for low-income households (B40) to enable them to own their own homes through a new housing policy to be implemented soon. Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu said Monday, under the new policy the state government through the Perak Housing and Property Board would finance the construction of affordable housing from development costs imposed on housing developers following pre-defined terms.

Chance To Purchase House At A Discount In Penang

GEORGE TOWN -- The Penang chapter of the Housing and Real Estate Development Association is holding a promotion from Thursday till Sunday at a mall in Lebuhr Tunku Kudin here to encourage home ownership. It is being held in conjunction with the national-level Home Ownership Campaign that ends on June 30. "Discounts of at least 10 per cent will be offered for units costing from RM100,000 to RM1 million, Penang Rehda chairman Datuk Toh Chin Leong told a press conference here Thursday.

LIFESTYLE
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MARKETS



Scoreboard

Gainers -	407
Losers -	344
Not Traded	-756
Unchanged -	347
Value -	1720000000
Volume -	2480000000

Bursa Malaysia Ends Mixed On Continued Selling

By Azlee Nor Mahmud

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bursa Malaysia ended mixed on continued selling of most index-linked stocks on weak buying sentiment, amid a subdued regional performance, dealers said. At 5 pm, the benchmark FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) ended trading on Friday at 1,686.52, down 6.87 points, from Thursday's close of 1,693.39. The barometer index moved between 1,683.71 and 1,690.43 throughout the day, after opening 4.88 points lower at 1,688.51. Market breadth was, however, positive with 407 gainers and 344 losers while 347 counters remained unchanged, 756 untraded and 24 others were suspended. Total volume rose to 2.48 billion shares valued at RM1.72 billion versus Thursday's 1.42 billion shares worth RM1.2 billion. Bank Islam chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said the FBM KLCI was to breach the immediate resistance level of 1,700 points. "However, external developments continued to take centre stage. Issues surrounding the trade negotiations between the United States (US) and China has always been the source of market instability," he told Bernama. Main Market volume rose to 1.9 billion shares, valued at RM1.59 billion, against Thursday's 1.11 billion shares, valued at RM1.15 billion.



Exchange Rate

(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.0670	4.0720
EUR	4.6059	4.6124
GBP	5.2590	5.2667
100 YEN	3.7023	3.7079
SGD	2.9988	2.9029

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

Ringgit Closes At Seven-Month High Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit closed at a seven-month high of 4.0670/0720 against the US dollar, a level last seen on July 20, 2018, when it stood at 4.0600/0630, bucking the trend of its regional peers, aided by rising commodity prices especially that of palm oil. Friday is the fifth consecutive trading day the ringgit has been on the uptrend, after hitting a six-month high of 4.0715/0765 on Thursday. Dealers said year to date, the ringgit appreciated 1.5 per cent against the greenback. In November 2018, physical palm oil price dropped below RM2,000 per tonne to RM1,973 per tonne, sparking concern among the industry which supports more than three million smallholders. As of Friday, the physical price for local CPO stood at RM2,190 per tonne. Back home, the ringgit was traded mixed against other major currencies. It strengthened against the Singapore dollar to 2.9988/9029 from Thursday's 3.0017/0058 but eased against the yen to 3.7023/7079 against 3.7004/7059 previously. Against the euro, the local unit strengthened to 4.6059/6124 from 4.6191/6252 but depreciated against the British pound to 5.2590/2667 versus 5.2547/2619 on Thursday.

Short-Term Rates Close Stable On BNM Operations

KUALA LUMPUR -- Short-term interbank rates closed stable Friday on Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) operations

to absorb excess liquidity from the financial system. The surplus in the conventional system increased to RM23.38 billion from RM23.31 billion this morning, while in the Islamic system, it reduced to RM10.58 billion from RM18.46 billion. Earlier, BNM conducted one conventional money market tender, one Islamic range maturity auction and one reverse repo tender. BNM also revised the conventional overnight tender from RM21.7 billion to RM22.6 billion. At 4 pm, the central bank conducted a RM22.60 billion conventional money market tender and a RM10.50 billion Murabahah money market tender, both for three-day money. The average Islamic overnight interest rate stood at 3.19 per cent, while the one-, two- and three-week rates were pegged at 3.26 per cent, 3.30 per cent and 3.35 per cent, respectively.

KLIBOR Futures End Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives remained untraded Friday. February 2019 stood unchanged at 96.24, while March 2019, April 2019 and June 2019 were all pegged at 96.22, respectively. Both volume and open interest remained nil. At the 11 am fixing, the underlying three-month KLIBOR stood at 3.69 per cent.

KLCI Futures End Lower

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed lower Friday in line with the weaker underlying cash market. February 2019 eased 4.5 points to 1,683, while March 2019 and June 2019 each slid 6.0 points to 1,678 and 1,670 respectively, while September 2019 shed 8.0 points to 1,662. Turnover increased to 5,789 lots from 5,201 lots on Thursday, while open interest narrowed to 25,777 contracts against 25,851 contracts. The underlying benchmark FBM KLCI ended 6.87 points lower at 1,686.5

CIMB Thai Appoints Omar Siddiq As Acting President, CEO

KUALA LUMPUR -- CIMB Group Holdings Bhd has appointed Omar Siddiq Amir Noer Rashid as the acting president and chief executive officer of its subsidiary, CIMB Thai Bank PCL, effective Jan 30, 2019. His appointment was made following the voluntary personal leave of the previous president and chief executive officer Kittiphun Anutarasoti.

CCM Unit Secures RM50 Mln Financing From OCBC Al-Amin

KUALA LUMPUR -- Chemical Company of Malaysia Bhd's wholly-owned subsidiary, CCM Chemicals Sdn Bhd (CCMC), has accepted an Islamic financing facility of RM50 million from OCBC Al-Amin Bank Bhd to part finance its Pasir Gudang Works Plant 1 (PGW1) reactivation project. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday, the company said the PGW1 reactivation project was expected to increase the production capacity for chlor alkali products by about 50 per cent and would potentially fill in the gap in the market, which is currently met by imports, thereby increasing CCMC's market share. "The PGW1 reactivation project is currently in progress and is expected to be completed and commence production in the second quarter of this year," it said.

TA Investment Declares Distribution For Dana Optimix, Tadif

KUALA LUMPUR -- TA Investment Management Bhd has declared a gross income distribution of 1.5 sen for TA Dana Optimix and 0.30 sen for TA Asia Dividend Income Fund (Tadif) to registered unit holders of the funds as at Jan 31, 2019. TA Dana Optimix aimed to achieve

steady capital gains with consistent income over the medium to long term by investing in a diversified mix of Shariah-compliant instruments, while Tadif seeks to provide income and long-term capital appreciation by investing in collective investment scheme which invests mainly in a portfolio of Asian stocks, it said in a statement Monday.

Istana Budaya Expects Sponsors To Pay Up Outstanding Debts

KUALA LUMPUR -- Istana Budaya expects to be able to collect up to RM700,000 from 37 companies who were show sponsors but have yet to pay their sponsorship debt since 2010. Its director-general Datuk Mohamed Juhari Shaarani said Thursday, the outstanding debts need to be paid by the companies who have booked for this year's staging slots at Istana Budaya. "If they (the sponsors) want to have staging slots, they have to pay their existing debts first. "To prevent the debts from growing, we urge everyone to pay up and will blacklist the problematic companies," he said.

Foreign Investors Buy RM1 Bln M'sian Equities In Jan 2019

KUALA LUMPUR -- Foreign investors net buy RM1 billion worth of Malaysian equities in Jan 2019, snapping three months of net sell, due to higher crude oil prices and a more 'dovish' US Federal Reserve (Fed). Maybank Investment Bank Bhd (Maybank IB) Analyst Wong Chew Hann said foreign investors were net selling in only six out of 21 trading days in Jan 2019. "Foreigners were largely net buyers alongside Brent crude oil price which rose 15 per cent from US\$53 per barrel as at Dec 31, 2018 to US\$61 per barrel as at Jan 31, 2019. "The Federal Open Market Committee post meeting on Jan 29-30 indicated that the Fed is flexible on its interest

rate and balance sheet policies to reflect economic and market situations," he said in a research note Thursday.

CPAM Group Achieves Over RM80 Bln AUM In 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- The CIMB-Principal Asset Management Group (CPAM Group) of companies has reported RM81.3 billion in assets under management (AUM) as of Dec 31, 2018. In Malaysia, CIMB-Principal Asset Management Bhd (CIMB-Principal Malaysia) continues to uphold its position as one of the leading asset management firms. CIMB-Principal Malaysia chief executive officer, Munirah Khairuddin, said in a statement Friday: "Our top dividend-paying unit trust funds for 2018 include CIMB-Principal DALI Equity Growth, CIMB Islamic Balanced, CIMB-Principal Equity, CIMB-Principal Equity Growth & Income, CIMB-Principal Balanced and CIMB-Principal Bond, with yields ranging from 3.31 per cent to 7.98 per cent."

Individuals With Overseas Bank Accounts Urged To Declare Income To IRB

KUALA LUMPUR -- Individuals with overseas bank accounts and those having previously undeclared income are being urged to report it immediately to the Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia (IRB). The IRB said in a statement Friday, it had begun receiving information, particularly with regards to ownership of overseas bank accounts from September 2018, under the Automatic Exchange of information (AEOI) with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). "We have issued letters and sent e-mails targeting those taxpayers with overseas bank accounts and who have failed to file their tax returns as required. "Taxpayers in this category are requested to contact the IRB and report their income," it added.



FINANCING YOUR BUSINESS ACROSS THE WORLD



Perodua Sells 20,100 Vehicles In January

KUALA LUMPUR -- Perodua has sold some 20,100 vehicles in the first month of 2019, including registrations of 1,025 units for its recently launched Aruz sport utility vehicle on the last day of January. Perodua Sales Sdn Bhd managing director Datuk Dr Zahari Husin said despite the delay in the registration of Aruz, the second national car maker managed to maximise the delivery of the model up to the wee hours, in anticipation of the long Chinese New Year break. "Pending official figures from the Malaysian Automotive Association, Perodua estimates its market share for January 2019 to be around 41.7 per cent, and a 9.2 per cent growth from 18,400 vehicles sold in December 2018," he said in a statement Monday.

F&N Shares Declines Despite Better Q1 Results

KUALA LUMPUR -- Fraser and Neave Holdings Bhd's (F&N) share price declined despite posting an increased profit for the first quarter ended Dec 31, 2018, amid festive season. At 9.50 am, the counter was eight sen lower at RM33.88 with 600 shares changing hands. F&N, in a filing to Bursa Malaysia last Thursday, reported that first quarter net profit ended Dec 31, 2018 increased to RM122.85 million from RM106.82 million recorded in the same period a year ago. Revenue rose to RM1.01 billion from RM1 billion previously, the company said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Monday. It attributed the higher net profit for the quarter under review to higher contribution from food and beverages.

Healthy Passenger Demand Continues In 2018 - IATA

KUALA LUMPUR -- Global passenger

traffic growth, measured in revenue passenger kilometers (RPKs), rose by a healthy 6.5 per cent in 2018, said the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Thursday. In a statement, it said although this represented a slowdown compared to the 2017's growth of 8.0 per cent, it was another year of above-trend growth. Global passenger traffic rose 5.3 per cent in December 2018 against the same month in 2017, the slowest year-over-year (y-o-y) pace since January 2018.

PJBumi Subsidiary Wins RM18.7 Mln Contract

KUALA LUMPUR -- PJBumi Bhd's wholly-owned subsidiary, PJBumi Construction Sdn Bhd, has been awarded a RM18.7 million contract by Salam Properties Sdn Bhd. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday, the company said the contract was for the restoration of abandoned residential and commercial buildings project, known as the Permatang Shahbandar phase 4, in Maran, Pahang. It said the contract period is for 36 months from the date of site possession, adding, the contract is expected to contribute positively to the earnings per share and future earnings of the group.

GFM Subsidiary Secures Contracts Worth RM69 Mln From BNM

KUALA LUMPUR -- GFM Services Bhd's wholly-owned subsidiary, Global Facilities Management Sdn Bhd, has clinched two contracts worth RM69 million from Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) for the provision of comprehensive facilities management services at selected premises. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Thursday, the integrated facilities management service provider said both contracts are for four years from January 2019. GFM managing director, Ruslan Nordin

said the new contracts reflected the clients' confidence, in the company's ability to deliver quality and timely service.

Airfreight Growth Shrinks To 3.5 Pct In 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- Demand for global air freight grew 3.5 per cent in 2018 compared with 9.7 per cent in 2017 in the face of weakening global trade, sagging consumer confidence and geopolitical headwinds. IATA director-general and chief executive officer Alexandre de Juniac said air cargo demand lost momentum towards the end of 2018. "We are cautiously optimistic that demand will grow in the region of 3.7 per cent in 2019. "But, with the persistent trade tensions and protectionist actions by some governments, there is a significant downside risk. Keeping borders open to people and to trade is critical," he said in a statement Thursday.

Nine Bombardier CRJ900 Aircraft Sold To Chorus Aviation

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bombardier Commercial Aircraft has announced that a subsidiary of Chorus Aviation Inc (Chorus Aviation) has finalised a purchase agreement for nine CRJ900 aircraft valued at US\$437 million (US\$1 = RM4.09). According to a statement Thursday, the aircraft will be operated by Jazz Aviation LP, a subsidiary of Chorus Aviation, under the Air Canada Express banner, making them the first Canadian operator of the new ATMOSPHERE cabin for CRJ Series regional jets. "We are delighted that Chorus and Jazz have chosen Bombardier products for the growth and renewal of their fleet. It reaffirms their confidence in the value that the CRJ Series provides to airlines," Bombardier Commercial Aircraft president, Fred Cromer, said.

BTS Releases Report On Leadership In The Business World

KUALA LUMPUR -- The 'Trends in Executive Development' report, sponsored by BTS Group AB and conducted by Executive Development Associates (EDA), shows the need to retarget executive development on leaders' abilities to create a compelling vision based on their company's business strategy and increase bench strength. The global research report found that changes in the external environment mean that executive programmes need to tie to the business strategy; digital transformation and innovation combined is the top influential condition impacting executive development; and high-potential development is a priority as companies need to strengthen their successor bench strength.

Wrong To Impose Same PSC For KLIA, Klia2: AirAsia

KUALA LUMPUR -- AirAsia Malaysia says it is standing firm in its opinion that the decision to impose the same passenger service charge (PSC) for KLIA and klia2 is fundamentally wrong and against the principle of non-discriminatory pricing. Chief executive officer Riad Asmat said on Sunday, the low-cost carrier's position remains that there are two different service levels at KLIA (premium) and klia2 (low-cost).

MAHB Rejects Overture By AirAsia For Mediation

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) has rejected AirAsia's offer of

mediation in a letter sent by the airport operator's lawyers. In a statement, the budget airline said it had proposed mediation to MAHB in an attempt to amicably resolve the parties' ongoing dispute over passenger service charges at klia2. The Mavcom Act required AirAsia and MAHB to first seek mediation before resorting to other legal proceedings, in order to potentially save time and costs for all parties involved, including the judicial system.

Lim Guan Eng Never Intervenes In Umrah Affairs - MOF

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Ministry of Finance (MOF) today stressed that its minister, Lim Guan Eng, has never issued a statement or a directive requiring Muslims to perform umrah only through Tabung Haji (TH) and not through independent or private travel agencies. In a statement Wednesday, the MOF said the allegation that the minister had issued such a statement or directive was indeed baseless. "According to the article titled 'Guan Eng Will Kill Malay Businesses' published in the Malaysia Today portal dated Feb 4, 2019, the objective of the so-called directive is to ensure that Tabung Haji will monopolise umrah arrangement and management services, hence eliminating any chance for Bumiputera-owned independent/private travel agencies to compete in the market.

Millennials To Dominate Work Force By 2025

KUALA LUMPUR -- Seventy-five per cent of the global work force would comprise millennials by 2025, while more than half of today's jobs would become obsolete with advancements in technology and automation, says Qi Group of companies executive chairman, Datuk Seri Vijay Eswaran. He said most millennials did not want a 9 am to 5 pm existence. "They want to be in charge of their own lives and want to experience things, travel and explore, and be able to earn an income in between those experiences," he said at the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. Vijay noted that this category (the millennials) fit brilliantly into the gig economy, which refers to a free market system, creating temporary positions for independent workers for short-term.

TNB Signs MoU With Three Companies

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tenaga Nasional Bhd's (TNB) wholly-owned subsidiary, TNB Energy Services has via its unit, Maevi Sdn Bhd, signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) with three companies as strategic partners for energy management and smart home projects. Under the MoU, Maevi will cooperate with real estate companies Protasco Bhd and Tan & Tan Development Bhd, as well as software and engineering consultancy, DGB Bhd. The MoU with Protasco is for the supply and installation of the Maevi smart homes service for housing development projects, TNB said in a statement here Friday.

MIMOS, RMN Cooperate To Boost ICT Capability

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's National Applied Research and Development Centre, MIMOS and the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) continued their cooperation through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the information and communication technology (ICT) capability of the forces. This collaboration will see the two sides continue to conduct a thorough study on the needs of RMN's technological solutions. In a statement Thursday, Navy Chief Admiral Datuk Mohd Reza Mohd Sany said the partnership would enable the RMN to provide a platform for implementing research and development (R&D) for the latest proven technologies.

Jumio Wins 2019 Big Innovation Award

KUALA LUMPUR -- Jumio announced Thursday that it has been named the 2019 BIG Innovation Award winner for cutting-edge technology by Business Intelligence Group. Jumio's innovations -- centred around augmented intelligence, machine learning, 3D liveness detection and the user experience -- have enabled the company to become a global leader in online identity verification. It supports some of the largest organisations across an array of sectors, like financial services, digital currency and online gaming, and continues to grow as more companies want Jumio's help to secure their online businesses.

Naza Unveils New Picanto GT-Line

KUALA LUMPUR -- Naza Kia Malaysia, the official distributor for Kia vehicles in Malaysia, today unveiled the new GT-Line variant of their best-selling compact car, Picanto, for the Malaysian market. Naza Corporation Holdings group chief executive officer (automotive group), Datuk Samson Anand George said the company decided to introduce the sporty variant of the car following

the successful launch of the Kia Picanto 1.2 EX model last year. In a statement Thursday, he said the Picanto GT-Line boasted new features including new colour accents on the full body kit, Kia's signature "tiger nose" grille, dual exhaust pipes, 16-inch alloy wheels, LED daytime running lights and fog lamps, shark-fin antenna and keyless entry.

IBFD Releases Revised Tax Research Platform

KUALA LUMPUR -- IBFD, a leading international provider of cross-border tax expertise, announced Thursday that its Tax Research Platform has been redesigned and enhanced to ensure a simplified international tax research experience. The new version is more intuitive, efficient and effective, and provides a seamless experience for mobile and desktop users. The platform combines country tax guides in several levels of detail, news, treaties, case law and easy-to-use tools to enable tax professionals to quickly access vital information.

Malindo Air To Introduce New Routes To Kota Bharu, Langkawi From LTAM

MELAKA -- Malindo Air is expected to introduce two new routes to Kota Bharu and Langkawi from the Melaka International Airport (LTAM) in Batu Berendam here from March 1. The Melaka public works, transport and public facilities exco, Datuk Mohd Sofi Abdul Wahab said the two-way flights would operate thrice weekly on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. He said Wednesday, this Malindo Air initiative would assist in enhancing the state's tourism industry by attracting more domestic and overseas tourists in conjunction with the Visit Melaka Year 2019.

Malaysia Ranks 1st In World's Best Healthcare Category

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia, with a score of 95 out of 100, ranked first in the

Best Healthcare in the World category of the 2019 International Living Annual Global Retirement Index. According to the International Living website (<https://internationalliving.com/countries-best-healthcare-world>), among top six countries that obtained the best ratings in the category of Best Healthcare in the World for this year, Malaysia ranked first with its world-class healthcare services and sophisticated infrastructure. It said that with 13 hospitals in the country accredited by Joint Commission International (JCI), where almost all doctors -- with majority of whom were trained in the United Kingdom, the United States or Australia -- were fluent in English, thus communication was flawless.

DDC Selects Scott Cramer As President And CEO

KUALA LUMPUR -- Scott Cramer has joined DNA Diagnostics Center (DDC) as president, chief executive officer (CEO) and board director, a statement Thursday said. Cramer is a seasoned executive with over 30 years of experience in corporate leadership, commercialisation, sales and marketing management. Before this, he was president and CEO of several global medical device and diagnostic companies including Accriva Diagnostics, Novasys Medical and Bacchus Vascular Inc.

UTP Partners With DID On Environmental Conservation

KUALA LUMPUR -- Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS (UTP) has announced a collaboration with the Department of Irrigation and Drainage Malaysia (DID) to share expertise and technology on environmental sustainability. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was inked on Jan 14 by UTP vice chancellor, Prof Dr Mohamed Ibrahim Abdul Mutalib, and DID director-general, Datuk Dr Md Nasir Md Noh, said a statement Thursday. It was witnessed by UTP chief strategy officer, Dr Aidid Chee Tahir, and DID human capital development division director, Norizan Abdul Aziz.

MARDI Focused On Future Of Farming Technology

By Nor Azlina Sani



The Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) Director-General, Datuk Dr Mohamad Roff Mohamad Noor.

SERDANG -- The Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (MARDI) is optimistic about its expansion into modern farming technology through the growth of plant factories this year, its director-general, Datuk Dr Mohamad Roff Mohamad Noor, told Bernama recently.

He said MARDI is committed to developing the technology to make it easier for young farmers so that they won't have to rely on conventional farming methods.

"By 2050, many farmers will be aged. This technology can help young farmers produce quality crops that do not require much land and is monitored automatically," he said at MARDI headquarters.

MARDI built a plant factory in Serdang in 2016 at a cost of RM600,000 which is now producing high yield and quality crops. It has encouraged MARDI to extend the technology to the younger generation in hopes that they will be keen to become agropreneurs.

According to Mohamad Roff, the plant factory is an environmentally-controlled structure where every vital element for plant growth -- like light, temperature, carbon dioxide and moisture -- is guided.

The system allows for the intensive production of vegetables

which are safe, nutritious, highly marketable and can be harvested every month.

Explaining further, Mohamad Roff said the chain of production was studied from seedling germination to the LED lighting, post-harvest and waste management systems.

He said with a hydroponic plant factory that is just 30m x 60m x 20m, and which has 18 planting shelves stacked seven storeys high, production capacity is increased five to ten times more per unit of space.

The MARDI factory plant is able to accommodate up to 15,000 plants at one time with a production capacity of two tonnes of leafy vegetables or herbs per month.

Since the plants are growing in an enclosed environment with no access to natural light, LEDs are used to maximise photosynthesis and plant growth.

LEDs are better because they reduce heat generation and energy consumption, while improving nutrient and antioxidant production in leaves, and producing more vibrant-looking plants.

Mohamad Roff said the use of red and blue lights for eight hours are primarily for better plant growth, biomass and quality.

The plant factory also uses sensors to measure environmental parameters and control irrigation.

Sensors are connected via a network guided by "mobile hotspots", thus information on the environment and irrigation situation can be obtained in the blink of an eye through apps on your smartphone or online, which are easily accessible.

In fact, the LEDs and air-conditioning in the plant factory can be controlled through this way too, making it easier to keep an eye on things.

"So if there is a problem, the farmer will know through his gadget, and this is what can attract young people to agriculture because everything is automated and at your fingertips. In addition, year-round production is unaffected by changes in weather, pests or disease," Mohamad Roff said.

-- BERNAMA

