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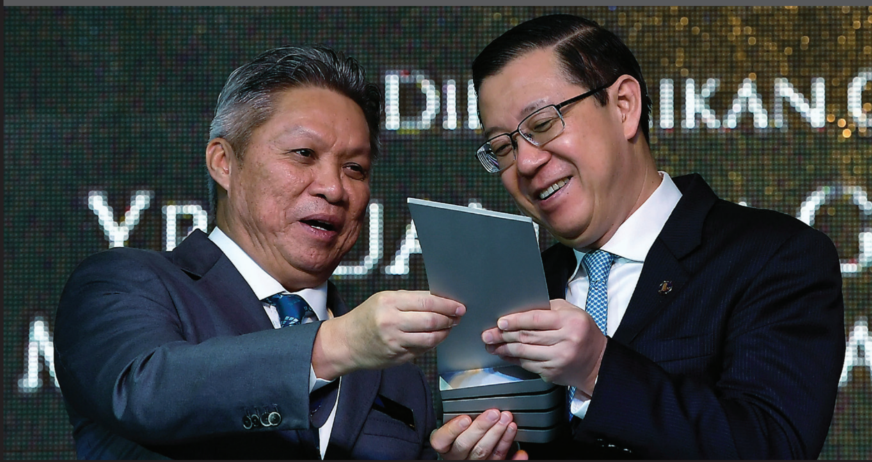
This Week's Highlight : Impact Study Of Other Tolls Takeover Ready 2-3 Months



Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng (right) with Inland Revenue Board Director Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Seri Sabin Samitah at the launch of the 2019 Revenue Day in Cyberjaya Friday. -- fotoBERNAMA by Harry Salzman

CYBERJAYA -- A study on the proposal to take over other toll concession companies throughout the country is expected to be completed in two to three months, says Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng. Lim said Friday, the study conducted with the cooperation of the Works Ministry would be carried in detail as the process to take over other toll companies is more complex compared to the four concessions under Gamuda Bhd (Gamuda).

This Week's Top Stories

MONDAY

Acquisition Of Highway Concessions To Take 6 Months

PUTRAJAYA -- The government expects to take about six months to acquire the toll concessions for four main highways -- Damansara Puchong Expressway (LDP), Western KL Traffic Dispersal System (SPRINT), Shah Alam Expressway (Kesas) and Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (SMART).

Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said Monday, the projected length of time was needed to meet regulatory, financial and legal requirements.

TUESDAY

No Immediate Need To Recalibrate Budget - Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR -- There is no immediate need to recalibrate the 2019 Budget following the recent decline of world crude oil prices, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. "It depends on how much it comes down. But not immediately (recalibrate Budget) because when it comes down, it will go up again," he said after watching an Ola Bola the Musical 2019 performance at Istana Budaya here Tuesday night with his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali.

WEDNESDAY

Manufacturing Sector Expects Cautious Growth In 2019

KUALA LUMPUR -- The manufacturing sector expects cautious growth and lower expectations from sales to employment in 2019, as global economic challenges still confront Malaysia. Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) president Datuk Soh Thian Lai said Wednesday, growth for the year would likely depend on the private sector's investments and consumption.

THURSDAY

Malaysia Business Confidence Softens In Q1

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia's business confidence in the first quarter of 2019 soften with the confidence indicator easing -2.2 per cent after increasing 7.1 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2018. The Statistics Department said Wednesday, the industry, constructionand, wholesale and retail trade sectors expected their business situation to decline in the first quarter of 2019 with confidence indicators of -3.6 per cent, -18.9 per cent and -8.2 per cent, respectively.

FRIDAY

Govt Targets RM150 Bln Direct Taxes Collection 2019

CYBERJAYA -- The government has increasedits direct taxes collection target to RM150 billion from RM147 billion previously. Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng said Friday, this was achievable based on the targeted economic growth of 4.9 per cent, which should be followed by an increase in tax collection.

SMEbrief

CGC Aims RM4.6 Bln Financing And Guarantees Approval

KUALA LUMPUR -- Credit Guarantee Corporation Malaysia Bhd (CGC) aims to approve RM4.6 billion in financing and guarantees to benefit 9,800 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) including women entrepreneurs and Bumiputera contractors this year. President and chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Zamree Mohd Ishak said Tuesday, this would be a significant increase from last year's RM3.7 billion financing and guarantees to 9,000 SMEs. "We have a special scheme for Bumiputera contractors that have been awarded projects by federal and state governments as well as government-linked companies," he told reporters at the 10th anniversary of CGC-Standard Chartered Malaysia collaboration to finance SMEs. To-date, he said CGC has availed over 460,000 guarantees and financing to SMEs valued over RM70 billion.

He said this included 102 tranches of portfolio guarantee scheme (PG) totalling RM12.2 billion benefitting about 25,000 SMEs and six tranches of the wholesale guarantee scheme (WG) worth RM1.5 billion with an outreach of 7,700 SMEs. "In total, CGC has availed over RM13.7 billion worth of financing through our PG/WG schemes in collaboration with 20 financial institutions and three development financial institutions, outreaching over 32,600 SMEs," he said.

Penang Promoting E-Commerce Training To Globalise SMEs

BUTTERWORTH -- The Penang government will further promote e-commerce training, especially for small and medium enterprise (SME) entrepreneurs to help them to market their products abroad. State Domestic and International Trade, Entrepreneur Development and Consumer Affairs Committee Chairman Datuk Abdul Halim Hussain said Thursday, a study conducted by the Penang Institute last year showed that the e-commerce adoption in Penang was only at five per cent.

PropUP Propertyupdate

Putrajaya Corp Ends Devt Deal With TRC Land

KUALA LUMPUR -- Putrajaya Corporation has terminated the development agreement for the affordable civil servant housing project (PPA1M) and related commercial development in Precinct 18 of Putrajaya with TRC Land Sdn Bhd. The company is a wholly-owned subsidiary of TRC Synergy Bhd and the agreement was entered into on July 24, 2017. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday, TRC Synergy said the termination was on the basis of national interest, consistent with the government's initiatives, to consolidate the development of affordable housing under the Housing and Local Government Ministry. "We respect Putrajaya Corporation's decision and the group remains positive and open with regards to current and / or future joint development opportunities with the government, government agencies, as well as the private sector to support the country's affordable housing agenda,"said TRC Synergy's managing director, Tan Sri Sufri Mohd Zin.

Marriot Int To Open 3 More Hotels In Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR -- Marriott International is aggressively cementing its position in Malaysia, with the company expected to open three more hotels this year, adding to the current 27 hotels operated in the country, supported by strong fundamentals for the Malaysian market.
The Westin Desaru Coast Resort is expected to begin operations in April while Four Points by Sheraton, located near Petaling Street and Fairfield by Marriott, located at Bintulu Paragon, are expected to open in the second half of this year.

Find Ways To Develop Malay Reserve Land - DPM

SHAH ALAM -- The decreasing size of Malay Reserve Land which is taken for development and often not replaced with land of equal size or value are among the issues which impacts seriously on its position currently. Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said Thursday, worse still is when the land which was named 'reserve' for the well-being of the Malays are often administered as idle land or low value land which adversely affects the market value of the very valuable property.

Zuraida Optimistic NCP Will Improve People's Quality of Life

KUALA LUMPUR -- Housing and Local Government Minister Zuraida Kamaruddin is optimistic that the National Community Policy (NCP) will help people especially the lower income (B40) households to sustain a better quality of life. "For example, the NCP pilot project at the Lembah Subang 2 People's Housing Project (PPR) received a good response and most interestingly, 'Anakku Anakmu' where every neighbour is responsible for babysitting their neighbour's children when the parents are forced to go out to attend to certain matters," she said Thursday.

MARKET

BURSA MALAYSIA

Scoreboard
Gainers - 486
Losers - 460
Not Traded - 605
Unchanged - 329
Value - 2350000000
Volume - 2910000000

FBM KLCI Ends Lower

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) ended the week lower, weighed down by selected heavyweights led by TNB and CIMB. At 5pm, the FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) stood at 1,700.76, down 6.97 points or 0.41 per cent from 1,707.73 at Thursday's close. The benchmark index opened 7.28 points lower at 1,700.45 and moved between 1,696.71 and 1,701.04 throughout the day. However, market breadth was slightly positive with 486 gainers to 460 losers, while 329 counters remained unchanged, 605 untraded and 29 others suspended. Total volume was higher at 2.91 billion units valued at RM2.35 billion against Thursday's 2.57 billion units valued at RM2.97 billion. Main Market volume increased to 2.02 billion shares valued at RM2.17 billion against Thursday's 1.74 billion shares valued at RM2.79 billion.

Ringgit Ends Lower Against US Dollar

KUALA LUMPUR -- The ringgit closed lower in tandem with most Asian emerging currencies as many investors stayed on the sidelines due to uncertainty over the US-China trade negotiations, dealers said. At 6pm, the ringgit fell to 4.0720/0770 against the greenback compared with Thursday's close of 4.0650/0680. A dealer said the US dollar was steady against major rivals on Friday, supported by rising US Treasury yields after the data showed that the US economy grew 2.6 per cent in the fourth quarter. The ringgit, however, traded higher against other major currencies. It rose against the Japanese yen to 3.6383/6438 from 3.6688/6718 on Thursday and appreciated against the Singapore dollar to 3.0105/0146 from 3.0140/0167. The local note increased versus the euro to 4.6258/6319 from 4.6304/6343 and gained versus the British pound to 5.3921/3000 from 5.4065/4108 Thursday.

Exchange Rate
(Ringgit : Foreign Currency)

	Buying	Selling
USD	4.0720	4.0770
EUR	4.6258	4.6319
GBP	5.3921	5.3000
100 YEN	3.6383	3.6438
SGD	3.0105	3.0146

Source: Bank Negara Malaysia

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 fell to RM22.93 billion from RM29.99 billion this morning while in the Islamic system, it declined to RM16.77 billion from RM21.36 billion. Earlier, BNM issued three conventional money market tenders, Bank Negara Interbank Bills, Bank Negara Interbank Bills Islamic and a commodity murabahah programme tender. BNM also revised the murabahah overnight tender from RM14.4 billion to RM15.7 billion. At 4 pm, the central bank conducted a RM22.9 billion conventional money market tender and a RM15.7 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 Close Untraded

KUALA LUMPUR -- The three-month Kuala Lumpur Interbank Offered Rate (KLIBOR) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives remained untraded Friday. Spot month March 2019, April 2019, May 2019 and June 2019 were all pegged at 96.22. 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 Mixed

KUALA LUMPUR -- The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) futures contract on Bursa Malaysia Derivatives closed mixed Friday amid the weaker underlying cash market. New spot month March 2019 eased 1.5 points to 1,698, newly introduced contract month April 2019 stood at 1,696.5, June 2019 edged up 0.5 of-a-point to 1,692 and September 2019 was unchanged at 1,688.5. Turnover halved to 5,975 lots against 10,825 lots on Thursday, while open interest decreased to 26,498 contracts from 34,073 contracts. The underlying benchmark FBM KLCI fell 6.97 points to end at 1,700.76 Friday.

AmBank Accorded Ram Consultancy's First Sustainability Rating For Banks

KUALA LUMPUR -- RAM Consultancy Services Sdn Bhd (RAMC) has assigned a Silver sustainability rating to AMMB Holdings Bhd (AmBank Group), making it the first banking group to receive a sustainability rating from the agency. RAMC chief executive officer Promod Dass said in a statement Monday, AmBank Group's decision to obtain a sustainability rating from RAMC signalled the group's strong emphasis on governance and transparency.

CIMB Islamic To Assist SimplySiti In Offshore Expansion

KUALA LUMPUR -- CIMB Islamic Bank Bhd and SimplySiti, a brand founded by popular singer Datuk Seri Siti Nurhaliza Tarudin, Monday jointly announced a collaboration to expand the homegrown beauty care business beyond Malaysian borders. SimplySiti will also leverage the end-to-end support of the CIMB-ASEAN Halal Corridor and CIMB's strong regional network, to meet the demand for quality halal beauty, cosmetics and skincare products across the region. Signing on behalf of SimplySiti was its president, Siti Nurhaliza, while CIMB Islamic was represented by Rafe Haneef, CIMB Group chief executive officer (CEO) of group Islamic banking.

Maybank Expects Loan Growth To Be In Line With System Growth

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malayan Banking Bhd expects loan growth for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2019 (FY19) to be in line with anticipated system loan growth for its home markets of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. President and chief executive officer, Datuk Abdul Farid Alias said Tuesday, the system loan growth for its three home markets would be 5.1 per cent for Malaysia, 3.6 per cent (Singapore) and 10.5 per cent (Indonesia) respectively. As for the bank net interest margin, the group expected a slight depression in Indonesia and Malaysia by 3-5 basis point due to deposit competitions, he said.

HLB To Exceed Five Pct Loan Growth Target In FY19

KUALA LUMPUR -- Hong Leong Bank Bhd (HLB) expects to achieve more than five per cent loan growth for the financial year ending June 30, 2019 (FY19), mainly driven by its retail and business banking segments. Group managing director and chief executive officer Domenic Fuda told a press conference Tuesday, the two segments would be mainly supported by the country's positive economic growth, which many analysts forecast would be in the range of about 4.5 and 4.6 per cent this year.

Maybank FY18 Net Profit Rises 7.9 Pct To RM8.11 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malayan Banking Bhd's net profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) rose 7.9 per cent to RM8.11 billion from RM7.52 billion a year ago. Revenue increased to RM47.32 billion from RM45.58 billion previously. In a statement Tuesday, the bank said the net profit for the year also marked a new record, surpassing the RM8 billion mark for the first time, boosted mainly by higher loans growth, lower overhead costs as well as lower provisioning.

RHB Bank Cautiously Optimistic Of Surpassing FY18's Record Net Profit

KUALA LUMPUR -- RHB Bank Bhd is cautiously optimistic of surpassing the record net profit of RM2.30 billion achieved in the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) in 2019. Group managing director Datuk Khairussaleh Ramli told reporters Wednesday, the bank could still improve on profit, but there are several parameters to consider, among them being the top line, cost and provisions.

Wallet2U, Affin Bank To Enhance IoT Banking Experience

KUALA LUMPUR -- Wallet2U Ezypay Sdn Bhd Wednesday announced its partnership with Affin Bank Bhd to enhance the internet of things (IoT) banking experience. Wallet2U chairman Tan Sri Che Md Noor Mat Arshad said Wednesday, the partnership aims to leverage on the financial technology platform and harness the momentum of rapid IoT development.

Banks In Malaysia Maintain Sufficient Liquidity - BNM

KUALA LUMPUR -- Banks in Malaysia have maintained sufficient liquidity to support intermediation and meet exigent needs, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) said in its "Monthly Highlights-January 2019" report released Thursday. BNM said the country's banking system liquidity coverage ratio (LCR) stood at 144.3 per cent, with all banks recording LCR levels above 100 per cent. The Basel III LCR has been phased in since June 2015, with initial compliance set at 60 per cent and progressive increments of 10 per cent each year.

EPF Revises List Of Unit Trust Funds For 2019/2020

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Employees Provident Fund (EPF) has published its Annual Qualifying List of Fund Management Institutions (FMIs) and unit trust funds under the EPF Members Investment Scheme (EPF MIS) effective March 1, 2019 until Feb 29, 2020. In a statement Thursday, EPF said for the 2019/2020 period, a total of 382 funds were approved under the EPF MIS, but only 282 funds, including nine new funds, from 19 FMIs qualified for offering, equivalent to a marginal increase of 0.7 per cent from the same period last year.

Tan Chong Returns To The Black In FY18

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tan Chong Motor Holdings Bhd returned to the black with a net profit of RM101.03 million for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) from a net loss of RM88.6 million in the preceding year. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Monday, the company said revenue improved to RM4.86 billion from RM4.34 billion previously, mainly supported by its automotive division which contributed RM4.75 billion to its total revenue.

Malaysian Bulk Carriers Returns To Black After Three Years

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian Bulk Carriers Bhd (MBC) returned to the black in the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18), after three years of losses, mainly due to the gain on disposal of a loss-making associate and the reduced share of loss. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Monday, MBC said it posted earnings of RM263.84 million compared with a net loss of RM134.95 million in the previous year. During the year, MBC gained RM265.93 million from the sale of its interest in Singapore-listed shipping firm PACC Offshore Services Holdings Ltd (POSH). The group ceased sharing POSH's results in May 2018.

SimplySiti Eyes 60 Pct Overseas Revenue Contribution By 2020

KUALA LUMPUR -- Simply SS Trading Sdn Bhd, the marketer of SimplySiti brand, is eyeing a bigger overseas revenue contribution of 60 per cent by 2020 from 5.0 per cent as at December 2018, supported by the company's aggressive expansion plan in the next two years. Group chief executive officer (CEO) Azuddin Rahman said Monday, the brand, which was already available in Brunei, would be exported to Indonesia, Singapore and Middle Eastern countries.

Petronas Chemicals FY18 Net Profit Jumps To RM4.98 Bln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Petronas Chemicals Group Bhd's (PCG) net profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) jumped to RM4.98 billion from RM4.18 billion the preceding year. Revenue soared 12 per cent to RM19.58 billion from RM17.41 billion previously on the back of higher product prices and sales volumes, partially offset by the strengthening of the ringgit against the US dollar, it said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Monday. Basic earnings per share increased 62 sen from 52 sen before.

MRCB Posts RM101.2 Mln Profit For FY18

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysian Resources Corporation Bhd (MRCB) posted a net profit of RM101.17 million for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) compared with RM161.91 million in 2017. This was on the back of a 29.2 per cent decline in revenue to RM1.87 billion due to the absence of RM1.1 billion revenue from the regeneration and redevelopment of the KL Sports City in Bukit Jalil that was completed in July 2017, it announced to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday.

7-Eleven Post RM51.3 Mln Net Profit For 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- Convenience store chain operator, 7-Eleven Malaysia Holdings Bhd's net profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 was 2.4 per cent higher at RM51.3 million, driven by higher profit contribution amongst most product categories and higher marketing income offset against lower other operating income. In 2017, it registered a net profit of RM50.10 million. Revenue was RM2.22 billion, up 1.3 per cent from the previous year's RM2.19 billion, it said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday.

Parkson Records Six Months Net Loss Of RM80.57 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Retailer, Parkson Holdings Bhd's, net loss for six months ended Dec 31, 2018 widened by 40 per cent to RM80.57 million as compared with RM57.39 million previously, due to lower sales mainly in its overseas operations. Revenue for the six months stood at RM1.97 billion from RM1.98 billion earlier. In a filing to Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, Parkson Malaysia said buoyant consumer confidence resulted in a positive same store sales (SSS) growth of five per cent.

TM Expects Lower Revenue To Continue In 2019

KUALA LUMPUR -- Telekom Malaysia Bhd (TM), which today announced a 2.2 per cent drop in last year's revenue, has projected the low- to mid-single digit decline to continue in the face of persistent challenges, which includes stiffer competition. Acting group chief executive officer Imri Mokhtar said the challenges seen in 2018 would persist this year. "In the short term, we will focus on our continued investment, but to do that, we need to ensure we optimise the cost," he told reporters Tuesday.

Nestle's FY18 Net Profit Jumps To RM658.88 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- Nestle (Malaysia) Bhd's net profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) jumped to RM658.88 million from RM642.55 million the preceding year. Revenue rose 4.9 per cent to RM5.52 billion from RM5.26 billion previously, supported by strong growth in both the export and domestic businesses, it said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Tuesday. Chief executive officer Juan Aranols said improved internal efficiencies and favourable prices for key commodities contributed to the group's strong profitability in FY18.

Genting Malaysia Swings To Loss In FY18, Declares Special Dividend

KUALA LUMPUR -- Casino and hospitality giant Genting Malaysia Bhd slipped into a net loss of RM19.59 million for the 2018 financial year compared with a net profit of RM1.16

billion in the preceding year, primarily attributed to an impairment loss of RM1.83 billion. Revenue increased to RM9.93 billion from RM9.33 billion previously, it said Wednesday.

AEON Co. Posts Higher Net Profit Of RM105.12 Mln

KUALA LUMPUR -- AEON Co (M) Bhd posted a net profit of RM105.12 million for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 compared with RM105.01 million registered in 2017. In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Wednesday, the company posted a total revenue of RM4.35 billion in 2018, which represented an increase of 5.6 per cent compared with the previous corresponding year's revenue of RM4.12 billion.

Pos Malaysia Records RM581.2 Mln Revenue For Q3 FY 2018/19

KUALA LUMPUR -- Pos Malaysia Bhd (Pos Malaysia) has reported a consolidated revenue of RM581.2 million for the third quarter ended Dec 31, 2018, down 6.4 per cent, compared with RM620.7 million recorded in the corresponding period of 2017. The decrease was mainly due to the decline in revenue from postal services due to a double-digit drop in mail volume and logistic business due to the end of a major project. The group also registered a net loss of RM13.020 million compared with a net profit of RM9.475 million reported in the corresponding quarter in 2017.

Serba Dinamik's Net Profit Rises To RM387.90 Mln In 2018

KUALA LUMPUR -- Serba Dinamik Holdings Bhd's net profit for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) rose to RM387.90 million from RM308.09 million recorded in 2017. Revenue jumped 20.6 per cent to RM3.28 billion versus RM2.72 billion chalked up previously. The improved revenue was due to the 25 per cent increase in earnings from the operations and maintenance division from the Middle East and Central Asia regions," the company said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Wednesday.

Media Prima Records Net Profit Of RM60.64 Mln In FY18

KUALA LUMPUR -- Media Prima Bhd recorded a net profit of RM60.64 million for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018, as compared to a net loss of RM605.53 million in the 2018 financial year. Revenue slipped to RM1.19 billion from RM1.20 billion previously, the group said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia Wednesday.

TNB Chalks Up Net Profit Of RM3.72 Bln In FY18

KUALA LUMPUR -- Tenaga Nasional Bhd posted a net profit of RM3.72 billion on the back of revenue of RM50.39 billion for the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018. However, due to a change in financial year from Aug 31 to Dec 31, the 12-month performance is not comparable against any previously reported comparative period, it said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia Thursday.

MAHB's Profit More Than Double To RM727.30 Mln On Gain From Hyderabad Airport

KUALA LUMPUR -- Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd's (MAHB) net profit surged 203.35 per cent to RM727.30 million in the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 versus RM239.75 million in 2017 due to, among others, unrealised gain on the fair value of investment in GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd (GHIAL) amounting to RM258.4 million. MAHB has an 11 per cent stake in GHIAL. The Group's revenue rose 4.3 per cent to RM4.85 billion from RM4.65 billion last year, underpinned by growth in airport operations, it said Thursday.

Ministry To Identify Companies For China's Import Expo - Saifuddin

From Nurul Jannah Kamaruddin

SHANGHAI -- The Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs will identify competence businesses to showcase their products at the Imported Food Exhibition Centre, here. Its Minister, Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said Monday, the centre, which would be set up by the China Cooperative Trade Entreprises Association (CCTEA) soon, would be a stepping stone for Malaysian brands to penetrate the Chinese market.

Selangor To Expand MRO Segment

PETALING JAYA -- Selangor is expanding its maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) sector in a bid to establish itself as the aerospace and aviation industry's gateway to Asian countries, says Menteri Besar Amiruddin Shari. The state is currently in talks with international companies for the relocation of some of their operations to Selangor, including around Subang Airport, Serendah and KLIA, Sepang, he said Monday.

PERANTIM To Boost Medical Devices Industry Ecosystem

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) has launched a body -- the Persatuan Perkilangan Peranti Perubatan (PERANTIM) -- to champion the agenda of the medical devices industry (non-medical gloves) in international trade and boost the industry's ecosystem. Deputy Minister of International Trade and Industry, Dr Ong Kian Ming said Monday, PERANTIM would be a platform for locally-owned and operated medical devices manufacturers to gather and exchange insights on the industry.

Govt To Take Over Highway Concessions In Stages - Azmin Ali

SEMENYIH -- The government is proposing to take over highway concessions in the country in stages and through the correct process, says Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Azmin Ali. He said Monday, the highway takeover process needed comprehensive discussions such as reviewing the agreements as well as the financial implications involved after the takeover.

Malaysia Mulls Building Biojet Fuel Refineries - Kok

PETALING JAYA -- The Ministry of Primary Industries is exploring the possibilities of building biojet fuel refineries in the country. Its minister, Teresa Kok said Tuesday, the idea of having the refineries was to balance internal demand for the fuels so as to increase the consumption of locally produced biofuels. "At least, if the aviation industry were to use biofuels for their aircraft, we know there is demand for them in the country. "Hence, we don't have to rely too much from exports of our palm oil, especially to some European Union (EU) countries," she said.

MAHB Mulls Improving KLIA Baggage Handling System

SEPANG -- Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) plans to upgrade the 20-year-old baggage handling system (bhs) at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) by installing newer technology. "The upgrade aims to provide better services to KLIA passengers," said MAHB corporate communications general manager Nik Anis Nik Zakaria during a media familiarisation tour on the baggage handling facility at Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (klia2) here Tuesday.

AirAsia Says It Is Monitoring Situation In Northern India As Pakistan-India Tension Escalates

KUALA LUMPUR -- Low cost carrier, AirAsia has sent out travel alerts on its North India destinations as tension between India and Pakistan escalates. "We are closely monitoring the situation in Northern India and any impact to our Amritsar and Srinagar services. Guests are encouraged to monitor their flight status at http://airasia.com/flightstatus ," it said via its official twitter handle. Meanwhile, Indian Airlines reportedly halted services to north Indian cities namely Amritsar, Chandigarh, Dehradum, Jammu, Leh and Srinagar as the tension escalated.

MCCC Proposes Establishment Of Specific Bank For Tourism

KUALA LUMPUR -- The Malaysia-China Chamber of Commerce (MCCC) is proposing that the government establish a specific bank to provide financing for the private sector to develop new tourism attractions. A memorandum, consisting 10 suggestions, was recently presented to Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) director-general Datuk Musa Yusof to be discussed with relevant government agencies. "MCCC leaders expressed that specific banks such as Agro Bank, SME Bank and EXIM Bank were set up to provide financing to relevant industries, however, the tourism industry, the third largest pillar of the economy, did not have a special bank to support its development," it said in a statement Wednesday.

FGV Does Not Expect Any Impairments In FY19

KUALA LUMPUR -- FGV Holdings Bhd does not expect any major impairments to be made in the current financial year, says group chief executive officer Datuk Haris Fadzilah Hassan. He said Thursday, its total impairment for the 2018 financial year (FY18) amounted to RM966 million, largely due to significant impairments related to three companies -- Asian Plantation Ltd, FGV Green Energy Sdn Bhd and Cambridge Nanosystems Ltd.

AirAsia Set To Roll Out Facial Recognition Screening At Selected Airports

SEMENYIH -- Low-cost carrier AirAsia aims to roll out facial recognition security checks for flight boarding at selected airports across the country this year. Deputy group chief executive officer Aireen Omar said, the facial recognition's pilot project is currently being carried out at the Senai International Airport, Johor. "Since the pilot test began, we have firmed up and improved the whole technology and we are looking to roll up (the system) at the various airports throughout Malaysia," she told reporters Friday.

Improve Intra-Regional Flows To Offset Global Trade Slowdown - HSBC

KUALA LUMPUR -- ASEAN economies can partly offset any trade downturns if the much-discussed supply chain diversion to Southeast Asia from China, the United States and Korea materialises, said HSBC Bank Malaysia Bhd (HSBC). The bank said in a statement Friday, a recent survey of companies around the world showed that tariffs open up opportunities for ASEAN markets, including Malaysia, in areas like electronics and textiles, among others. It said the threat of macro-economic headwinds dragging global growth should be the impetus ASEAN needs to push its reform agenda harder in 2019.

RHB Research Expects Malaysia's M3 Money To Grow 5.5 Pct This Year

KUALA LUMPUR -- RHB Research Institute expects Malaysia's money supply (M3) to grow at 5.5 per cent this year, as compared to eight per cent in 2018. In a research note Friday, it said the growth should keep demand-pull price pressure contained. "We expect headline inflation to be within the range of 1.5 to 2.5 per cent in 2019, from one per cent in 2018, due to the increased volatility of oil prices in recent months," it said.

Prices Of RON95 Petrol, Diesel Unchanged, RON97 Up Five Sen

KUALA LUMPUR -- The retail prices of RON95 petrol and diesel for the week of March 2 to 8 remain at RM2.08 and RM2.18 per litre, respectively, according to the Finance Ministry. It said in a statement Friday that the retail price of RON97 petrol for the same period will be five sen higher, at RM2.43 per litre. Based on the calculation under the Automatic Pricing Mechanism, the retail prices of RON95 petrol and diesel for the period should be RM2.13 and RM2.38 per litre, respectively, it said.

RAM Believes Govt Will Strike Balance Between Toll-Abolition & Implications Of Debt Mart

KUALA LUMPUR -- RAM Rating Services Berhad (RAM Rating) believes the Government of Malaysia's (GoM) will strike a balance between its toll-abolition plans and the potential implications for the debt capital market. Its infrastructure and utilities ratings co-head Davinder Kaur Gill said in a statement Friday, the rating agency expected the government to consider all options available to it on the execution of its plan to gradually abolish toll collections.

Proton Persona Facelift Unveiled

KUALA LUMPUR -- Proton Holdings Bhd has released the first official photos of the facelifted Proton Persona, the company's award winning B-segment family sedan. Set to be launched this year, the Persona, together with Proton Iriz, are the first models in the company's current range to be given an extensive exterior refresh since the commencement of Proton's collaboration with Geely in 2017, the automaker said in a statement Monday.

SMBC Appoints Kainaka As President/CEO

KUALA LUMPUR -- SMBC Malaysia has appointed Tetsuya Kainaka as president/chief executive officer effective Jan 23, 2019. Prior to the appointment, Kainaka was general manager of SMBC's Global Client Business Department based at the bank's headquarters in Tokyo, where he managed the non-Japanese multinational clients' businesses based in Japan, SMBC said in a statement Monday.

MIEC, Hong Kong Company Forms JV To Organise Asia GT Festival

KUALA LUMPUR -- Country Heights Holdings Bhd's (CHHB) unit, Mines International Exhibition Centre Sdn Bhd (MIEC), has entered into a joint venture (JV) agreement with Goldenport Motor Culture Development (Hong Kong) Ltd to establish the Asia GT Festival Sdn Bhd (AGTF). In a filing with Bursa Malaysia Tuesday, CHHB said AGTF would be in charge of organising the Asia GT Festival, the gala dinner and the Asia GT Golf Tournament annually, as well as all other directly or indirectly connected ancillary businesses.

Sunway Putra Mall Is Malaysia's First Autism Friendly Mall

KUALA LUMPUR -- Sunway Putra Mall has become the first autism friendly mall to facilitate the people who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) by providing public spaces that meet the needs of the community. Chief Executive Officer Sunway Malls and Theme Parks, Chan Hoi Choy said Tuesday, under the Autsome project short for 'Autism is Awesome', the mall has designated every Tuesday as autism friendly shopping day to provide an inclusive and comfortable shopping experience to them.

Proton X70 Owners Organise Road Trip To Hangzhou

KUALA LUMPUR -- Nine Proton X70 owners have organised an overland trip spanning four countries, 13 cities and 13,000 km, with their destinations including Hangzhou, China, the most populous city of Zhejiang province. Beginning with a flag-off ceremony at the Proton Centre of Excellence in Shah Alam, the entire trip will take the 33 participants approximately 33 days to complete, Proton Holdings Bhd said in a statement Tuesday.

PIHEC 2019 To Feature More Than 300 Industry Players

GEORGE TOWN -- More than 300 local and international industry players are expected to participate in the 10th Penang International Halal Expo and Conference (PIHEC) from March 1-3. Datuk Abdul Halim Hussain said in a statement Wednesday, the state's Local and International Trade and Industry, Entrepreneurship Development and Consumer Affairs Committee chairman said participants would range from producers to retailers from various sectors, including food and beverage, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics, logistics, technology, e-commerce service, banking and Islamic finance.

MAHB Launches KUL Sustainability Charter

SEPANG -- Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) Wednesday pledged to uphold its newly-launched KUL Sustainability Charter initiative as a commitment to the environment while growing its air travel business. MAHB group chief executive officer Raja Azmi Raja Nazuddin said the charter is divided into five pillars including practising sensible economic and environmental consciousness, creating an inspiring workplace, community-friendly organisation, and memorable airport experiences. KUL is the code for the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and Kuala Lumpur International Airport 2 (klia2) in the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

BNC, Bernama's TV Channel, Turns 11

KUALA LUMPUR -- Bernama News Channel (BNC), the television service of the Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama), celebrated its 11th anniversary today, proud of having achieved rapid growth in the dissemination of information to all levels of society. BNC is now actively diversifying its programmes and reports for its viewers while assisting the government to disseminate information and serve as a platform to channel feedback from the people to the government, said Bernama editor-in-chief Datuk Zakaria Abdul Wahab Thursday.

Financial Institutions' Sterling Performance Boosts Investor Confidence

By Harizah Hanim Mohamed

BIMB Holdings Bhd chief executive officer Mohd Muazzam Mohamed said the bank's strong performance translated to an after-tax return on equity (ROE) of 15.4 per cent, outpacing most industry peers.

KUALA LUMPUR -- The sterling performance of Malaysia's commercial banks and financial institutions in 2018, with some hitting record profits, is a shot in the arm to boost confidence in corporate earnings growth as the sector plays an important role in the financial system and the economy. "The results are a relief for investors and at least we won't be seeing drastic changes in corporate earnings growth," Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd Head of research Kenny Yee told Bernama.

Analysts have previously projected a lower corporate earnings for 2019 at around three per cent, which would be better than the 2018 projection of one per cent, lifted by the banking sector and a recovery in palm oil and crude oil prices. Yee explained that loan growth and lower impairment, particularly in the fourth quarter, had lent some support for these banks and for the current year, a loan growth target of between five per cent and six per cent was reasonable.
"But we also have to take note that these banks would face challenges in terms of margin compression as well as possible lower-than-expected growth," he added.

DECENT RESULTS
Meanwhile, Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd (BIMB) chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said financial results had been decent despite slowing economic growth of 4.7 per cent in 2018 and there were intermittently rising impairment during the middle of the year which saw gross impairment ratio rise to a high of 1.60 per cent in May 2018 before receding to 1.45 per cent at the end of December 2018. "We could also see net interest margin has been quite challenging with average lending rates falling to 5.019 per cent in December 2018 from a high of 5.065 per cent in July 2018.

"This happens amidst intense competition for deposits. Therefore, non-interest income or non-fund based income (for Islamic banking) will be a key factor in mitigating the margin compression faced by the banks," he added. Mohd Afzanizam said the latest numbers showed that total loan applications fell by 5.4 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) in January 2019 and similarly, total loan approvals declined by 4.8 per cent y-o-y in January 2019.

"Therefore, we could expect industry's loan growth would moderate this year from 5.6 per cent expansion 2018, in view of challenging economic outlook brought by the external uncertainties and moderate domestic spending, we could expect banks will be more cautious in their lending activities in 2019," he elaborated.

CIMB REPORTS 25 PCT GROWTH
CIMB Group Holdings Bhd reported a 25 per cent jump in net profit to a record high of RM5.58 billion in the financial year ended Dec 31, 2018 (FY18) from RM4.48 billion in the preceding year; however, revenue declined to RM17.38 billion from RM17.63 billion previously. CIMB Group has a targeted loan growth of six per cent to seven per cent for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2019 (FY19), versus the industry's forecast of five per cent, amid expectation that gross domestic product would grow at 4.5 per cent in 2019.

Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank), on the other hand, saw a 7.9 per cent increase in net profit for FY18 to RM8.11 billion from RM7.52 billion a year ago, with its revenue expanding to RM47.32 billion from RM45.58 billion previously. However, the bank maintained a conservative stance on the growth outlook for FY19 as various external uncertainties loom. As for other financial conglomerates, BIMB Holdings Bhd's net profit for FY18 improved 10 per cent to RM682.06 million from RM619.84 million in the preceding year, Affin Bank Bhd's net profit for FY18 rose 20.4 per cent to RM503.08 million from RM417.85 million in FY17, and Hong Leong Bank Bhd's net profit in the second financial quarter (Q2) ended Dec 31, 2018, rose to RM687.25 million from RM683.07 million a year earlier.

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