



MALAYSIA

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Malaysia is ranked 24th in business sophistication and innovation

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has ranked Malaysia above New Zealand, China and Italy in terms of business sophistication and innovation.

According to the WEF "Global Competitiveness Report 2009-2010", released in March, Malaysia was placed 24th among 133 nations, while New Zealand was at 27th, China 29th and Italy 34th spots respectively.

The government had already placed innovation as the main agenda in its 2010 Budget to

undertake a complete transformation of public and private sector governances, as well as the socio-economic sector in the country.

Some of the innovation processes are currently being implemented through various approaches such as the 1Malaysia concept, the National Key Results Areas (NKRAs), the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) and the new economic model.

Links: www.miti.gov.my

GDP may expand by 7.3% this year

KUALA LUMPUR, April 10: HSBC Holdings plc senior Asian economist Robert Prior-Wandesforde expects Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) to expand 7.3% this year on rising exports fuelled by higher commodity prices and domestic demand.

His forecast for 2010 was revised from the 6.8% made last year and higher than Bank Negara's forecast of 4.5% to 5.5% in the 2009 annual report.

He said there were also signs that private consumption had risen strongly due to confidence in the economy returning.

He added that while indications suggested growth would be broad-based this year, growth levels would

(Continued on page 2)



Proton's Emas launched in Geneva

GENEVA, March 3: Malaysia's first global car Emas is expected to mark the birth of a golden era for Proton, the national car maker.

The concept version of the car, shown in three variants, was launched at the Geneva International Motor Show, March 2.

This is Proton's 25th year in production and now ready to be a global player.

Proton group managing director Datuk Syed Zainal Abidin Syed Mohamed Tahir, said they would need between 17 and

24 months to get the car into production.

Emas, an acronym for Eco Mobility Advance Solution, was designed in collaboration with acclaimed Italian design house Italdesign Giugiaro.

Links: www.proton.com

Emas was launched at the 80th Geneva Motorshow, March 2.

GDP growth (From Page 1)

not sustain beyond 2010 but return to trend growth of 4.5% to 5% annually in the next five to 10 years.

He said the reforms suggested by the National Economic Advisory Council to the Government and encapsulated in the recently unveiled New Economic Model were sensible but a lot depended on the delivery.

He expects Bank Negara to raise the rates of the country's benchmark policy rate – the overnight policy rate (OPR) – by another 75 basis points to 3% this year.

UTM, Newcastle to boost Iskandar

JOHOR BARU: Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and Newcastle University of United Kingdom are working to bring medical researchers into Iskandar Malaysia.

UTM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Zaini Ujang said the arrangement with the UK university's medical branch in Nusajaya here was expected to turn the development corridor into a major education and research hub.

Teaching staff from the Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed Malaysia) in Nusajaya are expected to conduct research at UTM's biomedical and health sciences faculties.

NUMed Malaysia is expected to have nearly 20 academic staff in its first phase when it begins operations next year.

UTM had joint interests with Newcastle University in the fields of sustainability, ageing and cancer-related research in medicine.

The student population of NUMed Malaysia was expected to reach nearly 750 in eight years of operation.

Among courses offered by NUMed Malaysia is the acclaimed bachelor of medicine/bachelor of surgery (MBBS) programme.

From 2012, NUMed Malaysia intends to introduce the Newcastle University

New findings at Bujang Valley



Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim (in blue cap) viewing the ancient writings discovered at Bujang Valley.

SUNGAI PETANI: The significance of the recently unearthed prehistoric buildings in Sungai Batu in Bujang Valley has been boosted by findings of ancient writings, which proved that a civilisation existed here from as early as the first century AD.

The Sanskrit Pallava inscriptions found on bricks indicated that the civilisation and buildings in Sungai Batu pre-dated other prominent ancient monuments like the Borobudur and Angkor Wat, which were built in the 8th and 12th centuries respectively.

The Sungai Batu excavation site comprises an area for religious ceremonies, a jetty and a smelting factory, which had been in existence before other ancient monuments in South-East Asia came up, making this of greater historical importance to both the country and the world.

There are indications that the site was not only used for religious purposes but also for commercial activities like iron smelting.

Universiti Sains Malaysia's Centre of Global Archaeological Research, is conducting the excavation with the National Heritage Department and other local and foreign experts.

Excavation work began on Feb 1 last year. The site has yet to be gazetted as the Bujang Valley Heritage Park.

The Bujang Valley consists of almost 300sq km of land from Gunung Jerai to Sungai Muda.

Captain James Low first identified the Bujang Valley civilisation after discovering more than 20 temples in Kampung Bujang in 1840.

Research and excavation activities found that Bujang Valley was the main port in South-East Asia from the 5th century to the 13th century A.D.

By ANNE HASLAM - Extracted from The Star - **Links: www.thestar.com.my**



OMEC Yes Bazaar

Omec YES held a bazaar at Stowe Centre, March 21.

The YES Bazaar had 20 stalls selling various items from Batik, karaoke stall and Malaysian food among others.

The YES Bazaar was launched by the Acting High Commissioner Dato' Rustam Yahaya.

Dato' Rustam Yahaya, 2nd left, launches the YES Bazaar.

Formation of an Asean community inches towards reality



Asean unity: Asean leaders linking hands during the opening ceremony of the 16th Asean Summit in Hanoi yesterday (left to right) Laos Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavan, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Thailand Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya, Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Myanmar Prime Minister General Thein Sein, Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen and Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

HANOI: The 16th Asean Summit accelerated the momentum for the 10-nation regional grouping to turn its vision of becoming an Asean Community by 2015 into reality.

Leaders attending the two-day summit that ended, April 10, took note of the progress and shortcomings in implementing the roadmaps in their own countries.

The roadmaps adopted during previous summits outlined the plans of action in building the Asean Community premised on three pillars of cooperation Asean Political-Security Community, Asean Economic Community and Asean Socio-Cultural Community.

Asean has to show that it could be a role model as a regional grouping, succeed and ensure the prosperity of its community, said Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

One significant outcome of the summit was the setting up of the Asean Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

The commission, among others, aimed to ensure justice and fairness for the two groups that represent more than about 50%

of the Asean population of 550 million people.

Last year, the Asean Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights was established to protect human rights and fundamental freedom of the peoples of Asean.

All these contributed to the well-being of the Asean Community based on Asean's own mould, Najib said.

Two statements by the Asean leaders, on sustained recovery and development and joint response to climate change, were issued during this summit.

Asean economic integration is set to advance this year with the coming into force of the two key agreements liberalising movement of trade and investment in the region.

The Asean Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) will be implemented in May and the Asean Comprehensive Investment Agreement (ACIA), by October.

The 16th Asean Summit Asean promised a better future for its community in Brunei, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. - Bernama

visit **Malaysia**

Raihan to perform in London

Malaysia's most successful group ever, Raihan, have sold over 3.5 million copies of their debut album Puji-Pujian and toured the world to international acclaim, as well as collaborating with other artists.

Specially invited by Meltdown Director Richard Thompson for their unique perspective on Islamic pop, this is a very rare opportunity for UK audiences to experience a true Malaysian phenomenon.

Please visit Southbank Centre website for more information

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UKEC - Projek Amanat Negara

The seventh United Kingdom & Eire council for Malaysian students (UKEC), annual Projek Amanat Negara, was held at Malaysia Hall, London, April 17.

The event was officiated by the Acting High Commissioner Dato' Rustam Yahaya who in his opening speech touched on the significance of PAN in nation building.

The event saw an attendance of 70 people, consisting of like-minded undergraduates, post-graduates and Malaysians working in the UK.

Dato Rustam Yahaya (centre front row) with Dr Rosman Abdullah, Director Malaysian Students Department, at the launch of Projek Amanat Negara.



Semporna Regatta Lepa

The annual Semporna Regatta Lepa was held from April 24 to 26.

Visitors from many countries witnessed a thrilling parade of flamboyant Lepas competing for the best decorated Lepa. Other thrilling events included a line-up of Sea Sports and the Lepa Queen pageant.

The distinctive lifestyle of the nomadic Sea Bajau community in Sabah's East Coast is characterised by their living on Lepa. They only come to the mainland for food and water supply.

Lepa is Bajau for single masted sailing boat which is usually made of Uvar Suluk or Red Seraya Wood. A typical Lepa is 5 metres long and 1.5 and decorated with colourful decorative cloths.

Mambong's art

KUALA KRAI: The unique red clay pots from the hamlet of Mambong have always attracted attention at exhibitions and in shops.

The village has been producing incense burners, round-bottomed water jars, squat water vessels, pots and steaming pots for at least 300 years.

At first they were made for daily use but over the years they caught the eye of collectors.

But the industry is dying. About 50 families live in the isolated village on Sungai Galas, a 45-minute boat ride from the district capital. Fewer than 10 people are making Mambong pottery.

Halimah Said, one of the remaining few making the pottery, said she began making the pottery in her teens. The 53-year-old said the skill was passed down from generation to generation and the pottery is made as it had always been - by hand.

Using clay from Kampung Bahagia across the river, the pieces are shaped then left to dry in the sun. Later, designs

are applied using strips of bamboo and wooden stamps.

Halimah makes about 10 pieces a day.

By Sulaiman Jaafar – Extracted from New Straits Times

Links: www.nst.com.my



Halimah Said makes about 10 pottery items a day and says that a direct road will open up the market for Mambong's clay pots.