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Economic Overview

Key statistics	Latest release	Previous rate
Quarterly GDP growth	5.8% (3Q2006)	6.2% (2Q2006)
Annual GDP growth	5.3% (2005)	7.1% (2004)
Consumer Price Index (CPI)	3.1% (Dec06)	3.0% (Nov06)
Industrial Production Index (IPI)	137.5 (Dec06)	135.8 (Nov-06)
Base Lending Rate (BLR)	6.72% (Dec-06)	6.72% (Nov-06)
Exchange rate: RM to US dollar	RM3.5015 (31/01)	RM3.5315 (29/12)

Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia & Bank Negara Malaysia

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- Malaysia targets to attract 20.1 million visitors and foreign exchange revenue of RM44.5 billion during the Visit Malaysia Year 2007. The campaign will benefit many economic sectors such as tourism, hotel, leisure & entertainment, retail, food, agriculture and transportation.
- Singapore's economy grew at 7.7% in 2006, higher than the government's forecast. The growth was fuelled by the robust growths in the manufacturing and services sectors. The construction sector also expanded for the first time in six years.
- Malaysia's exports in November surged 17.5% year-on-year to RM51.02bil after an unexpected decline in October, the International Trade and Industry Ministry said in a statement yesterday. Malaysia's exports posted the first decline in more than four years in October, dropping 3.4% to RM48.03bil from a year ago. Driven by strong exports and imports, total trade for the first 11 months grew 11.1% to RM975.86bil from a year ago and surpassed 2005's full year total trade of RM967.8 billion.
- To attract greater foreign investors to Malaysia, the Government has abolished the need for FIC approval for housing units priced from RM250,000 on December 20. Restrictions on the usage and number of units the foreigners can purchase have also been lifted. In spite of the relaxation, its effectiveness would depend on whether the state authorities will give their full support with regard to the relaxation.
- Industrial production in Malaysia grew at a faster-than-expected pace of 7.2% year-on-year in November, strongest seen in 9 months as production processes returned to normal after the festive period. The Statistics Department said the positive growth was driven by the rises in the electricity index of 12.5% to 154.1 from 137.0 and manufacturing index of 9.6% to 140.9 from 128.5



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- The ringgit breached the 3.50 against the US dollar when it touched 3.4995 on 23 January 2007 before moderating to 3.503 towards the end of the day. Economists continue to see the local unit appreciate further against the dollar and euro and to track the movements of other currencies.
- The international reserves of Bank Negara Malaysia amounted to RM294.1 billion or equivalent to USD83.5 billion as at 31 January 2007. The reserves position is sufficient to finance 7.9 months of retained imports and is 6 times the short-term external debt.
- The value of Malaysia's palm oil exports reached a record RM31.81 billion last year, helped by factors including the high prices enjoyed by crude palm oil (CPO) in the second half. CPO fetched prices ranging from RM1,800 to RM1,900 a tonne in the last 6 months of 2006.
- The Statistic Department said CPI for the whole of 2006 increased by 3.6% to 103.6 from 100 in 2005, while the CPI for December increased to 104.6 from 101.5 in the same period in 2005.
- The worst floods in 30 years are likely to cost Johor's economy billions of ringgit, in lost productivity, financial losses and damaged infrastructure. The floods have already caused Peninsular Malaysia's crude palm oil production to drop by 30% from November.
- In the first 11 months of 2006, the manufacturing sector registered total sales of RM468.4bil, 11.9% higher than the RM418.5bil reported in the same period of 2005, the Statistics Department said in a statement yesterday.
- Malaysia's GDP growth will likely ease to 5.2% this year from an estimated 5.9% in 2006 as a subdued global outlook dampens exports, Malaysian Institute of Economic Research (Mier) said. "With growth in the developed countries moderating and given the increasing uncertainty in the global outlook for 2007, Malaysia's exports could be affected and domestic demand will, in turn, also be affected," it said in a report.
- Prices of South-East Asian timber products have risen sharply across the board in the aftermath of the severe thunderstorms and flooding in production areas. In its latest newsletter, the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO) said incessant rainfall and widespread flooding had driven prices of Malaysian timber products sharply higher.



INVESTMENTS

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Authority seeks more land to expand Johor Port, PTP

The Johor Port Authority (JPA) is sourcing for more landbank near Tanjung Pelepas to expand Johor Port and Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP). The Government had allocated a whopping RM12.2 billion under the Ninth Malaysia Plan for Johor, of which, some RM5 billion will be spent on massive infrastructure work within the South Johor Economic Region (SJER). South Johor's Iskandar Development Region (IDR) will also require RM47 billion worth of investments to generate its economic growth between 2006 and 2010, thus keeping the two ports busy for further activities. A new logistic hub is expected to be constructed in the Pasir Gudang business centre in Johor next year. JPA is proposing to build a logistic hub, which is aim at reducing traffic flow to Singapore.

(New Straits Times-1 January 2007)

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Indian bank to set KL branch

India's fifth-biggest lender, Bank of Baroda, is expected to set up its branch office in Kuala Lumpur by the middle of this year. Bank of Baroda, which currently has a representative office in Kuala Lumpur, plans to submit its application to Bank Negara Malaysia no later than March this year. Bank of Baroda has 60 offices in 21 countries. Bank of Baroda's banking subsidiary in Malaysia will be a joint venture between Bank of Baroda and two other Indian commercial banks – Bank of Maharashtra and Oriental Bank of Commerce.

(New Straits Times-1 January 2007)

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First Solar to invest RM2 billion in largest panel plant in Asia

First Solar Inc is investing RM2 billion in Kulim Hi-Tech Parks and set up the largest solar-panel manufacturing plant in Asia. Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid said the plant on a 39.6 ha plot at the park's phase III would be fully operational by early next year. Mahdzir said the state was waiting for feedback from two Germany-based companies that would be investing between RM19 billion and RM21 billion to set up operations in Kulim Hi-Tech Park. "Western Digital is deciding between Kulim Hi-Tech, Hanoi (in Vietnam) and Shenzhen (in China) to set up its wafer manufacturing plant. Competition is stiff but we are trying to woo the investors by offering attractive incentives," he said.

(The Star-6 January 2007)

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Pioneer to spend RM1.4 billion on plant

Pioneer Bio Industries Corp Sdn Bhd will invest RM1.4 billion to build a biofuel plant in Perak that can produce ethanol from the sap of the nipah palm tree. The facility in Taiping is expected to be operational by late 2008 or early 2009.

(New Straits Times-8 January 2007)

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European firms keen to invest in Johor

According to VS Industry Bhd (VSI) executive chairman Beh Kim Ling, many medium-sized foreign firms would be seeking to form joint ventures with local partners, especially in "hot spots" such as the Senai area and Port of Tanjung Pelepas' Free Trade Zone. VSI provides moulded parts and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) products widely used in the audio, computer, telecommunications and motor industry.

(The Star-9 January 2007)



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Dumex to spend RM70m on plant expansion

Dumex (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd will spend RM70 million to expand its plant to widen its domestic and overseas markets. The company is adding more production lines at its factory in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan in order to sell to new overseas markets, besides the current 15 countries under its portfolio. The expansion is scheduled to be completed in the middle of the year.

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HSBC launches new service centre in Petaling Jaya

HSBC Bank (M) Bhd is waiting for Bank Negara's policy on branch licences for 2007 before it plans more branches in the country, said deputy chairman and chief executive officer Datuk Zarir J Cama. "Once we know what the central bank wants, whether more licences will be issued, with locations and types of branches specified, we will act," he told reporters after the opening of HSBC's new service centre in Section 13, Petaling Jaya on Thursday. Zarir said HSBC was always keen to open more branches and had identified some locations but declined to elaborate. He also said the banking market would be competitive this year with the entry of new local and foreign players in conventional and Islamic banks.

(The Star-12 January 2007)

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Eonmetall new plant ready in Q1

Eonmetall Group Bhd expects its new RM25mil plant in Valdor Industrial Estate to be operational in the first quarter of the year. Occupying about 2.8 ha, the plant would significantly raise Eonmetall's production capacity, managing director Datuk Goh Cheng Huat said at the company EGM yesterday.

(The Star-13 January 2007)

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StanChart targets 20 more branches in next 3-5 years

Standard chartered Bank Malaysia (StanChart), which opens its 37th branch in Malaysia this month, may open up to 20 new branches in the next three to five years. The plan follows StanChart's current expansion involving six new premises, upon receiving approval from Bank Negara Malaysia. StanChart had 31 branches prior to the consent. The central bank had allowed foreign banks to establish up to four new branches in Malaysia last year, in line with the liberalisation of the banking sector. Of StanChart's planned six new branches, four are already up, in Seberang Prai, Penang; Malacca; and Kepong and Kajang in the Klang Valley. The fifth branch in Batu Pahat, Johor, came to the picture this month, to be followed by its sixth entity whose location has not been revealed.

(New Straits Times-20 January 2007)

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Frontken aims to make Malaysia its regional hub

Frontken Corporation Bhd, which began operating at its RM25 million facilities at the Kulim Hi-Tech Park barely a year ago, aims to make Malaysia its regional hub for operations by further expanding at the same site in Kedah. Executive chairman and managing director Willie Wong said the company expects to have its second plant up and running by the end of 2008. Frontken's plant is on 2.7ha site at the science park with a built up area of 32,000 sq ft. with the new factory on board, Frontken will have five facilities in Malaysia.

(New Straits Times-24 January 2007)



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Intelek to build food waste processor plant in Malacca

Kuala Lumpur-based Intelek Vision Marketing Bhd will build a RM3 million plant in Malacca to manufacture high-technology food waste processors for the domestic and export markets.

(New Straits Times-29 January 2007)

RETAIL'S CORNER

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Retailers expect to ring in good sales

MJ Department Stores Sdn Bhd, which operates Metrojaya department stores in the country, was poised to benefit because tourists who visited the country generally liked to visit shopping centres, said assistant general manager for advertising and promotions Alice Tan. Starhill Gallery is working alongside the Tourism Ministry to develop exciting events and activities. Central Market Sdn Bhd managing director Bernard Bong is also enthusiastic about this year's prospects. General manager Andrew Brien of KLCC Suria was looking forward to VMY2007 as it would increase retail spending. Kamdar Group (M) Bhd chief executive officer Jayesh Kamdar said the group is in the midst of finalising some events and roadshows that will attract tourists to visit its outlets. The textile retailer has allocated some RM3 million to organise these events. For pewter specialist Royal Selangor, this year should be extra special, given that tourists already form an integral part of the company's customer base.

(The Star-1 January 2007)

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The Summit breathes new life with upgrade

Meda Inc Bhd, owner and operator of The Summit Subang USJ, is breathing new life into the shopping complex in a move to reposition it as the preferred neighbourhood mall. Complex operations director Vincent Tiew told StarBiz that management had been upgrading the mall since middle of last year and expected the exercise to be completed by end-2007 at a cost of about RM7mil to RM10mil. Among the improvements are the installations of additional closed circuit televisions, upgrading of the lighting, air-conditioning systems, toilets and lifts, and external building painting works. The management has also revamped the mall's tenancy mix. Tiew said the mall's occupancy rate had jumped from an average of about 70% to 92% in the past 12 months due to careful tenant selection and attractive rental packages.

(The Star-2 January 2007)

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Adopt consumer-centric approach, retailers told

Consumer-centric. That is the buzzword for those in the retail industry today and ignoring it would entail stressful consequences, say retail consultants. Being able to meet the expectations of today's consumers leads to an inevitable boost in the retailers' sales as well, said Accenture Consulting managing director of global retail industry, Jeffrey Smith. He said today's consumers have changed in terms of their shopping experience, the kind of products they want and how much they are willing to pay. Loyalty to a certain store or brand is no longer the binding factor that holds a consumer to the retailer.

(New Straits Times-2 January 2007)



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RAP plans more outlets in region

Roasters Asia Pacific Sdn Bhd (RAP) plans to expand its market in Asia Pacific by opening more Kenny Rogers Roasters restaurants in 5 years. Roasters Asia Pacific is owned by property developer and gaming operator Berjaya Corp Bhd, which also holds franchise to some of the best-known brands like Starbucks Coffee and the 24-hour 7-eleven conveniences stores. The company through Berjaya Roasters (M) Sdn Bhd currently has about 38 restaurants nationwide. "We plan to open at least 10 new outlets in Malaysia every yeas over the next 5 years," Berjaya Group executive director Francis Lee said.

(New Straits Times-8 January 2007)

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New outlets, products to boost KFCH revenue

KFC Holdings (Malaysia) Bhd (KFCH) expects revenue to grow by 5% to 8% this year as it continues to set up more fast-food outlets and introduce new products. The group aims to open up at least 16 new outlets each year and re-model old stores. KFCH, which currently has 444 outlets in Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei, is likely to spend RM15 million to RM16 million a year on expansion.

(New Straits Times-10 January 2007)

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Watsons plans to open at least 24 outlets this year

Watsons Personal care Stores Sdn Bhd (Watsons Malaysia), the country's largest drug and personal care retailer in terms of the number of outlets plans to open at least another 24 this year. Watsons Malaysia has been the market leader for the last 3 years, with 209 outlets operating today.

(New Straits Times-11 January 2007)

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Mydin to open Terengganu's first hypermarket

Malaysia hypermarket operator, Mydin Mohamed Holdings Sdn Bhd, will open its second wholesale hypermarket this week in Kuala Terengganu. The new store, worth an estimated RM80 million, will be the state's first hypermarket and is scheduled to open soon. The hypermarket will be the largest in the East Coast with 200,000 sq ft of built-up area. The outlet will also be the second hypermarket in the East Coast apart from Dairy Farm's Giant store in Kuantan. Mydin plans to open two other wholesale hypermarkets in Malacca and Kuantan in 2008. Kota Baru has also been identified as a venue for future store. The opening in Kuala Terengganu will ring the total number of Mydin outlets including emporiums, supermarkets and hypermarktes to a total of 26. A Mydin emporium is slatted to open in Shah Alam in March 2008.

(New Straits Times-15 January 2007)

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KFC to set up four more restaurants in Sarawak

KFC Sarawak will set up at least another four restaurants in Sarawak this year. The fast-food chain now has 26 outlets statewide, including the new outlets in Matang Jaya and Kuching International Airport which were opened three months ago.

(The Star-18 January 2007)



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AEON to open Jusco J-One in First Subang mall

Jusco J-One was expected to take up 2,000 sq m and would open its doors for business by December 2008, managing director Nagahisa Oyama said. "Tenancy agreement between AEON and First Subang developer NPO Development Sdn Bhd, a unit of Titijaya group was for "three years plus three," said AEON executive director Masato Yokoyama. Located in Subang Jaya, First Subang has a gross development value of RM150 million. Titijaya group director Charmaine Lim said only office units would be sold while the retail area will be retained by the developer. When completed, it will have 13,935 sq m of retail space and 32,515 sq m of commercial space. "The retail phase will be completed by December 2008 while the commercial phase is slated for completion in the third quarter of 2009," Lim said.

(The Star-19 January 2007)

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EUT brings boutique-style department store to Malaysia

Fashion retailer EUT Marketing Sdn Bhd said it is in talks with local and international department store operators to expand its first boutique-inspired department store called Point B! The latest RM10 million department store located at Menara Summit shopping centre in Subang Jaya is tagged as Malaysia's first branded boutique department store. Point B! has a nine-year lease period with Menara Summit. The group hopes to open another Point B! store in the Klang Valley by the second quarter of this year.

(New Straits Times-20 January 2007)

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Pizza Hut operator aims to open 16 outlets every year

Pizza Hut operator OSR Brands Bhd expects to spend about RM14 million annually to open at least 16 new outlets every year, managing director Jamaludin Md Ali said. He said each outlet typically requires an investment of about RM900,000. There are now 152 Pizza Hut outlets nationwide.

(New Straits Times-31 January 2007)

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

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Old school's records damaged

The 103-year-old heritage of a Tamil school in Panchor is under threat after floods damaged rare literature and historical annals stored in the school's office and library. Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (T) Ladang Lanadron in Panchor, which is said to be the country's oldest existing Tamil school in the country, was among the many premises which were badly hit by the recent floods.

(New Straits Times-4 January 2007)

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Sarawak rural roads turn mud traps

Drivers of light vehicles and those who are not familiar with the rural terrain have been warned not to venture into these territories or risk getting stuck in metre-deep rivers of mud in the middle of nowhere. Ba'Kelalan state assemblyman Nelson Balang Rining, who just returned from a tour of several interior districts in his constituency, said most of these rural roads were not passable anymore to small, low-suspension vehicles. There are more than 10,000km of timber roads all over rural Sarawak, snaking through some two million hectares of logging concession zones and oil palm plantations and agriculture estates, and connecting some 5,000 rural settlements to the outside world.

(The Star-4 January 2007)



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Rain did this

A landslide has badly damaged some 40 graves at a Muslim cemetery in Jalan Sim-Sim, Sandakan on Tuesday. The landslide is believed to have been triggered by heavy rain.

(New Straits Times-5 January 2007)

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It will cost more to get rid of factory waste

Business entities may soon have to pay more to get rid of their garbage with the closure of the Air Hitam Sanitary Landfill in Puchong on Jan 1. Solid Wastes Contractors' Association chairman Francis Lai said his association's members, who serviced mainly factories, were now saddled with additional costs as they had to travel further to the new Jeram Sanitary Landfill in Kuala Selangor. To make matters worse, said Lai, the landfill's management company, Worldwide Landfills Sdn Bhd, had also increased tipping charges from RM40 to RM50 per tonne of waste.

(The Star-6 January 2007)

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Puzzling switch to one-way road

IT has been six months since a new traffic system was implemented at Jalan Perindustrian Bukit Serdang (PBS) Section 14, Seri Kembangan. However, neither the residents nor the business people in the area know the reasons behind the rerouting. Traffic had always been two ways on the main road of Jalan PBS 14/1 but following the change, the road is now a one-way street, forcing motorists to quickly cross over to the adjacent side of the road. Because of the one-way markings drawn, motorists have to make a longer turn into the inner roads of the industrial area like Jalan 14/5 and 14/7 before coming out onto the main road again.

(The Star-6 January 2007)

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Fire causes blackout in Malacca

Fire at Tenaga Nasional Bhd's (TNB) main station in Cheng caused power disruption to some 7,000 users, including 100 industrial users yesterday. The fire, which started at 3.30am, burnt down two transformers and 16 units of switchgears, resulting in TNB suffering RM20mil in losses. "This is the worst fire I have seen in my 20 years of service with TNB," said Mohd Aminuddin Mohd Amin, TNB's general manager for Malacca. Residential areas in Cheng and Batu Berendam such as Taman Merdeka, Angkasa Nuri, Taman Tamby Chik Karim and Krubong were without power while many factories in Krubong Industrial area, Cheng Industrial area and Batu Berendam had to cease operations. At 5pm yesterday, 90% of power supply had been restored, Gan Hock Seong, assistant director of the department's enforcement division said. Full restoration of power is expected today, said Mohd Aminuddin.

(The Star-7 January 2007)

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Number of evacuees drops in Johor

The number of evacuees in three flood-hit districts is reducing as floodwaters continue to recede. As of 8am yesterday, the three districts - Batu Pahat, Muar and Segamat - now have a total of 19,378 evacuees in 66 relief centres. A check with the police flood operations room revealed that Batu Pahat district currently has the bulk of evacuees, 19,013 victims still taking shelter in 61 relief centres. In Muar, 208 victims remain housed in three relief centres and in Segamat, 157 victims are still housed in two relief centres. The total evacuees have gone down compared to Friday, where 22,513 victims were placed in 325 relief centres. The road from Kampung Seri Medan to Parit Warijo and Jalan Seri Pasir in Batu Pahat is still closed to light vehicles.

(The Star-7 January 2007)



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Buyers up in arms over late delivery and compensation

Apartment buyers of Block F, Flora Damansara, in Bandar Damansara Perdana are unhappy with the developer over several issues, including late delivery of vacant possession and delay in compensation for their apartments. A number of Block F buyers have yet to receive the keys to their units and compensation for late delivery. There are over 600 apartment units in Block F, and over 3,000 units at Flora Damansara. Blocks A, B, and D are low-cost apartments while Blocks E, F, and H are medium-cost apartments.

(The Star-8 January 2007)

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Eight states put on Red Alert

The Meteorological Department has warned of floods in low lying areas and strong winds are expected to rip roofsoff homes along the coast. Emergency teams have been directed to be on standby. The department noted cumulus cloud development on the South China sea and heavy moisture build-up on the northern section of the Straits of Malacca and warned authorities to be on alert in Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, Perlis, kedah, Penang, northern Perak and the coastal areas of Sabah.

(New Straits Times-8 January 2007)

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Kelantan and Terengganu hit by monsoon rains

Floods have hit the East Coast states of the Peninsula, with nearly 400 people having to evacuate their homes in Terengganu and Kelantan. In the interior Sabah district of Nabawan, some 20 people at Kampung Salong were made homeless when three houses were swept away by a swollen Sungai Logongon. Waters in the state continue to rise at "dangerous levels." In Johor, water levels have subsided and there were now only 16,389 evacuees in 57 relief centres in Batu Pahat, Muar and Segamat. The northern part of the Straits of Malacca will also see waves as high as 3m to 4m as monsoon rains strike Perlis, Kedah, Penang and northern Perak. As at 8pm yesterday, some 300 villagers have been evacuated from their homes in Terengganu and 87 in Kelantan. In Kuala Terengganu, a spokesman of the police flood operation centre said waters were now ankle deep in Dungun, Setiu, Hulu Terengganu and Besut districts. In Kota Baru, continuous downpour of 10 hours from 10pm on Saturday in most parts of Kelantan caused 87 people to be evacuated to flood relief centres in Kuala Krai and Pasir Mas by 8pm. In Kota Kinabalu, Beaufort assistant district officer Mohd Shaid Othman said Water Department technicians were working round the clock to repair equipment at the district's two water intake stations that were damaged after being submerged in the floodwaters since Friday.

(The Star-8 January 2007)

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Floods at danger level in Sabah

Rain over parts of Sabah have kept waters at the danger level, including in the southwestern Beaufort district where taps have been running dry over the past three days. Though floodwaters continue to surround their houses, taps have however been running dry for Beaufort's 80,000 residents. Beaufort assistant district officer Mohd Shaid Othman said Water Department technicians were working around the clock to repair equipment at the district's two water intake stations that were damaged after being submerged in the floodwaters since Friday. In Kinabatangan district, constant rain was causing floodwaters in Kinabatangan River to rise to 8.63m. The danger mark is 9m.

(The Star-8 January 2007)



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73 evacuated, 5 schools closed

Non-stop rain flooded low-lying areas in Kelantan as 73 people from the Telekong sub-district were evacuated. Five schools in the Kuala Krai were closed after classrooms were inundated by knee-level waters. The residents in low-lying areas of Machang, Tanah Merah, Kota Baru and Pasir Mas were also told to prepare to move. The Jeangau-Jabor road also closed to all vehicles.

(New Straits Times-8 January 2007)

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Seremban council urged to get rid of Taman Sikamat dump

Residents of Taman Sikamat in Seremban are angry with the Seremban Municipal Council (MPS) for allowing a private contractor to turn a nearby patch of greenery into a dumping ground. The dump is located very close to busy Jalan Sikamat, which is the main access route to several residential areas, schools and an army camp. Residents of houses close to the dump suffered from dust pollution each time lorry-loads of construction debris were dumped at the open area.

(The Star-8 January 2007)

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'Investor confidence not affected'

The floods that hit Johor had not affected investor confidence in the Iskandar Development Region, the state's southern economic corridor, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

(The Star-9 January 2007)

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Jump in dengue cases this year

More dengue cases were recorded in five states in the first week of this year compared with the last week of 2006, according to the Health Ministry. Kelantan registered the highest jump, up almost 80%, from 18 to 32 cases, while Selangor had the most number of cases - 562 compared with 471 in the previous week, said Health deputy director-general (Public Health) Datuk Dr Ramlee Rahmat. The number of cases in Pahang went up from 35 to 47, Negeri Sembilan (20 to 26), and Sabah (nine to 12). However, the number of cases dropped in Perak, Terengganu, Sarawak, Malacca, Penang, Johor and the Federal Territory.

(The Star-10 January 2007)

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Situation improves in most states

In Johor, 1,550 people returned home, reducing the number of evacuees to 5,001. Only Batu Pahat was still affected by floods. In Kelantan, all flood victims have returned home. In Terengganu, the 24 flood victims in Besut were allowed to return home yesterday morning. In Dugun, situation remains the same with 243 victims evacuated from Kampung Besut, Kampung Nyiur, Batu 48 and Kampung Santong. Jalan Sungai Tong-Pelong and Jalan Hulu Seladand-Kampung Besut in Setiu were in 0.5 metres of water and closed to light vehicles. In Sabah, the water level in Sungai Padas in Beaufort had dropped to 8.255 metres from 8.72 metres yesterday. The number of evacuees at the relief centre at Dewan Pak Musa remained at 295.

(New Straits Times-10 January 2007)



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The fear factor for Section 17 residents

An increase in robberies and snatch thefts has left residents of certain areas in Section 17, Petaling Jaya fearful for their safety. Residents in Jalan 17/33 and 17/31 as well as the adjacent roads have been living in fear for their safety and possessions as criminals have been on a brazen looting spree. Adding to the fear is that some burglaries were committed in broad daylight within residents' house compounds or right outside, regardless of whether residents were home or not.

(The Star-11 January 2007)

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Two die in scaffolding mishap

Two men were killed and 12 others injured when upper level scaffolding with several granite slabs collapsed and hit them. Police said the scaffolding could have collapsed from the weight of the slabs, each weighing about 50kg. The tragedy occurred at 12.30pm yesterday at the 5ha construction site of the Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, a residential cum boutique hotel project, in Jalan Bukit Bintang.

(The Star-11 January 2007)

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City Hall fulfils residents' basketball court request

Residents of Bukit Segar, Cheras will have a basketball court in their neighbourhood by the end of this month. City Hall, which received the residents' request in October last year, is building the RM30,000 facilities. It will be equipped with benches, railings and a reflexology path.

(The Star-12 January 2007)

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Families evacuated as water levels rise again

More than 80 families from Kampung Berangan and Kampung Batu 25 were evacuated after heavy rain caused water levels to rise to waist level. The families, clearly frustrated and upset as they had just finished cleaning their homes from the previous flood that hit them three weeks ago, initially refused to move to flood relief centres.

(The Star-12 January 2007)

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Johor hit by floods again

Two days of continuous rainfall in most parts of the state has forced the evacuation of about 15,597 victims to 81 relief centres state-wide. Many of them had just returned home after the recent flood waters had receded. Rising floodwaters and minor landslips have also led to the closure of at least four roads in Kluang, Johor Baru and Kota Tinggi. Access to Kota Tinggi town from Johor Baru has also been cut off to light vehicles.

(The Star-12 January 2007)

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Sabah facing nature's wrath

Four major landslips have cut off water supply to thousands of families, and some 10,000 people in nearby Sugut district have been told to evacuate as Sungai Paitan and Sungai Sugut have burst their banks. At nearby Kinabatangan district, the water level in Sungai Kinabatangan is fast reaching the 9.75m danger mark that would force thousands of villagers to flee their homes. The floods are also threatening wildlife. Taps ran dry in several parts here yesterday after four main water pipelines in the town were damaged in landslips along Jalan Lintas Sibuga, Hill Top, Taman Indah Jaya and at the 7th kilometre Jalan Utara, said Sandakan Water Department engineer Jeffrey Chong.

(The Star-12 January 2007)



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Johor floods take toll on transport sector

Early estimation showed that last month's major floods in Johor caused RM100mil in losses and damage to public infrastructure such as roads, bridges and schools. The figure is expected to rise when economic activities such as agro-based, commercial plantations, manufacturing and services are taken into account later. Among the services badly affected by the December floods were the Johor-based goods transportation service providers. Many factories, especially in Kota Tinggi and Kluang, had to temporarily stop production. Others not affected also had to close shop as transporters could not deliver raw materials to them.

(The Star-13 January 2007)

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Non-stop rain for 48 hours

A number of roads are impassable after 48 hours of relentless rain from Thursday morning. Km 24 and Km26 of Jalan Tinggi-Kulai are closed to traffic, while Km24 of Jalan Kota Tinggi-Kluang is open only to heavy vehicles. Some 2,000 people from more than 400 households were evacuated to 14 relief centres yesterday.

(New Straits Times-13 January 2007)

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Public hospitals in a pickle

The sudden surge in dengue cases in Selangor has resulted in a Catch-22 situation for a few public hospitals, which are already facing a critical shortage of beds. Selangor recorded 562 new dengue cases in the first week of this year, up from 471 cases in the last week of 2006.

(The Star-13 January 2007)

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Unlicensed shops raise concerns

Residents have highlighted the problems of illegal usage of industrial premises as coffee shops at Jalan PJS 11/9, Bandar Sunway. The residents, who are part of the Subang Jaya Municipal Council's (MPSJ) Residents Committee (JKP) Zone 1, identified five industrial lots that were turned into coffee shops illegally and made a report to MPSJ on Nov 24, with several complaints, the latest on Nov 6, made to the Public Complaints Bureau.

(The Star-13 January 2007)

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Abandoned houses a danger in our midst

Data in the Klang Valley show that vacant houses and shoplots were used by bad hats to commit rape, sodomy and, in the worst cases, even murder. Abandoned buildings are often a haven for drug addicts who would sniff or smoke drugs there. Some thieves even bore holes through the walls of abandoned houses to loot valuables and goods from the neighbouring houses. Abandoned homes are also a popular choice for irresponsible quarters to dump rubbish and other waste - a despicable act often carried out by those living outside the neighbourhood. Abandoned houses were the main cause of the surge in dengue cases in USJ11, Subang Jaya last year. In some abandoned houses, snakes take refuge in the compounds that are overgrown with lalang, causing the neighbours to live in fear. All these problems point to a clear fact: abandoned buildings are the source of crime, social ills and killer diseases and we cannot continue to close our eyes.

(The Star-15 January 2007)



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Drains fail to remove water in Batu Pahat

The number of evacuees passed 100,000 yesterday as Batu Pahat became the latest to be inundated by a second and worse round of flooding. A total of 101,020 people from 22,613 families had been moved to 340 relief centres through Johor. In Kota Tinggi, one of the worst hit districts, floodwaters were still rising despite a let-up in the rains that have been pounding parts of Johor since last Thursday. Kluang in central Johor is similarly deluged, with house and bridges washed away by the ragging floodwaters.

(New Straits Times-15 January 2007)

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Flood updates Electricity, water supply resumes to many areas

Utility companies have been able reconnect supply of electricity and water to many parts of the state with the slight improvement in the flood situation. As of 3pm Monday, 107 TNB substations resumed supplying electricity to Segamat and some areas in Ulu Tiram, Sg Tiram, Simpang Renggam and Kluang. However, 141 substations remained shut, with the most badly hit district being Kota Tinggi, where almost half the 70 substations affected were submerged under water. Other areas where substations are not operating include Batu Pahat (28), Kluang (23), Mersing (12), Johor Baru (5), and Pontian (3). Water treatment plants in Sg Johor, Kota Tinggi and Yong Peng have resumed operations, with only two plants in Mersing remaining shut. Water supply to Taman Rinting, Kota Puteri, Megah Ria, Masai and Seri Alam is expected to resume by Mon evening, after the completion of repairs work on a burst water pipe in Flora Heights, Masai on Jan 13. Meanwhile, a total of 107 schools used as relief centres in Sabah and Johor will be closed with immediate effect to ensure that the needs of floods victims are looked after properly.

(The Star-15 January 2007)

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Floods almost 110,000 evacuated

The number of flood victims in Johor Baru and Pontian has dipped slightly, but the figures in other districts continued to climb as more people left their homes and moved into relief centres across the state. As of 10am, some 109,831 people have been evacuated to 344 flood evacuation centres statewide. Those affected are from Batu Pahat (39,089), Johor Baru (16,417), Kluang (16,024), Kota Tinggi (13,189), Mersing (8,239), Segamat (6,593), Muar (5,611) and Pontian (4,669). Kota Tinggi, Bandar Tenggara, Mersing and Kluang remain cut off. Access to Mersing is only through Rompin, Pahang, as access from Johor Baru has been cut off due to floods and landslides. Some 36 roads state-wide have been closed. Among the major ones are: 1. Kota Tinggi - Mersing 2. Kota Tinggi - Sedeli 3. Kota Tinggi - Kluang 4. Labis - Yong Peng 5. Yong Peng - Parit Sulong 6. Yong Peng - Chaah 7. Kota Tinggi - Kulai 8. Muar - Labis, Muar - Lenga (heavy vehicles only).

(The Star-15 January 2007)

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Some 36 roads in Johor remain closed

The number of flood victims in Pontian and here has dipped slightly, but the figures in other districts continue to climb as more people are evacuated to relief centres across the state. Some 36 roads state-wide have been closed. Among the major ones are Kota Tinggi – Mersing, Kota Tinggi – Sedeli, Kota Tinggi – Kluang, Labis - Yong Peng, Yong Peng -Parit Sulong, Yong Peng – Chaah, Kota Tinggi – Kulai and Muar - Labis, Muar - Lenga (accessible to heavy vehicles only).

(The Star-15 January 2007)



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Selangor tops list of dengue cases

The total number of dengue cases in all states increased last week, with Selangor continuing to top the list of suspected new infections. In the second week of the year, 656 cases were detected in Selangor followed by Kuala Lumpur, which had 323 cases. Selangor and Kuala Lumpur had the highest number of cases in the first week of January, with 562 and 239 respectively. The total number of cases in all states last week rose from 1,155 in the first week of the year to 1,506. All states in the country recorded a higher number of cases last week compared with the previous week except for Johor, Terengganu and Labuan.

(New Straits Times-17 January 2007)

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Parking fee spells bad business at plaza

Residents and business owners in Faber Plaza Taman Desa are upset over the introduction of parking fees in the area, which has for the past 30 years offered free parking for everyone. The new parking system came into effect this month, but without consensus approval from unit holders of the plaza. The residents claim that the parking bays in the area are common areas that belong to all unit holders. Businesses like restaurants, florists, mini markets and film processing outlets are aplenty at the plaza and these are the shops that have been badly hit. The current parking system charges 60 sen for the first hour and RM1 for every subsequent hour. There is a 15-minute grace period.

(The Star-18 January 2007)

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Ranau road re-opens to traffic

Traffic is once again flowing between the state capital and Sabah's east coast districts after a 100m landslip in the interior Ranau district was cleared yesterday. Ranau District Officer Basri Riman said Public Works Department personnel worked overnight to clear tonnes of rock and soil washed down from a slope along the sole trunk road linking the east and west coast districts. "So far, only one lane has been opened and traffic is moving again though at a slower pace," he said yesterday. Hundreds of motorists and bus passengers were stranded following the landslip that occurred at about 2am on Tuesday.

(The Star-18 January 2007)

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Residents living in fear of rats

The Pandan Jaya flats are being invaded by rats and residents are not amused. The misery of having to put up with stench from uncollected rubbish is now compounded by the presence of rodents. This is beginning to take its toll on the neighbourhood.

(New Straits Times-18 January 2007)

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Residents want end to dispute over road

Residents of a small residential area in 4th Mile Jalan Kelang Lama hope Kuala Lumpur City Hall would come up with a solution to a long-standing dispute between them and a nearby school. The subject of the 10-year-old dispute is a road, which is the only access road leading into SRJK (C) Choong Wen and the residents' homes. The 12.2m-wide road and its reserve, on land belonging to City Hall, is used by everyone, including teachers, parents, students and residents living in the area. However, in 1999, the school authority encroached into the road reserve and built a brick wall, thus reducing the road to just 7.3m wide.

(The Star-18 January 2007)



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Samy Vellu says Johor to be allocated RM130 million

The repair bill for roads and infrastructure damaged by floods has been estimated at RM350mil. Besides damaged roads, he said, the allocation would be used to repair bridges, slopes, embankments and drains, and that bridges would be inspected thoroughly to ensure they were safe. Samy Vellu said about RM150mil would be used for repairs in Batu Pahat, Johor Baru, Kluang, Kota Tinggi, Mersing, Muar, Pontian and Segamat. He said the remaining funds would be channelled to repair roads and other infrastructure in Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. He said that a total of 86 federal and 57 state roads were affected by the floods in Johor.

(The Star-18 January 2007)

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Roads in rural areas get priority

The government will give top priority to repair roads in villages and rural areas damaged by the floods. Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said 86 stretches of federal roads and 63 stretches of state roads in Johor had been under water until Wednesday afternoon.

(New Straits Times-19 January 2007)

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Sleepless nights after landslide

Chiam Hock Seng bought his house last year at Bandar Country Homes in Rawang on top of a hill to ensure that he is not affected by floods. However, a landslide that happened two months ago caused his retention wall to collapse and his house is now flooded each time there is a heavy downpour. The landslide affected three houses - No 13, No 11 and No 9 - at Jalan 13/7 in Bandar Country Homes due to heavy downpours over the last two months.

(The Star-19 January 2007)

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40 Kg Baru shops razed in afternoon fire

An afternoon fire razed about 40 shophouses in Kampung Baru yesterday while the victims were at a nearby mosque for Friday prayers. The fire, which began at 1.35pm, engulfed six rows of stalls and shophouses.

(New Straits Times-20 January 2007)

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Resigned to facing flash floods

For the past 50 years, a rustic village known as Sector Yee Seng/Thambapillay Timur located just after 4½ Mile of Jalan Kelang Lama has been known for two things – its delicious bakuteh and its nasty flash floods. At least twice a year, the village will be hit with a massive flood as a result of Sg Kerayong bursting its banks and overflowing. DID and City Hall had carried out widening and deepening projects on the Klang and Kerayong rivers in a move to resolve the flash floods problem in Jalan Kelang Lama. The project, which had cost RM30mil, involved the widening and deepening of a 4.2km stretch of the river starting from the Federal Highway to the Petaling Bridge of Jalan Kelang Lama.

(The Star-20 January 2007)



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Floods come to Batu Talam

Batu Talam, which is set to see a by-election on Jan 28, and surrounding areas have been hit by floods. Since Saturday afternoon, the number of flood victims evacuated in the state constituency has been growing steadily. As of noon Sunday, seven villages have been affected and 120 people evacuated. The seven villages are Kampung Ulu Semantan, Kampung Batu Talam Tengah, Kampung Chenua, Kampung Piah, Kampung Cengkelar, Kampung Ajai and Kampung Ulu Sungai.

(The Star-21 January 2007)

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IT Stinks!

The issue of rubbish remains as stinky as ever. Heralded last year as the answer to our mounting rubbish woes, the much awaited Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) plant in Semenyih has hit some bumps. Residents of Kampung Pasir Baru have been complaining of the stench from the plant, located about a half a kilometre away.

(New Straits Times-21 January 2007)

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Illegal dump spoils life for villagers

The comings and goings of garbage lorries are disturbing the peace at Kampung Sungai Kertas in Batu Caves. Villagers note that since the lorries began to make their presence felt, there have been more flies and a bad smell seems to hang over the village, too. According to residents in the area, this has been going on for the last two years and these garbage trucks also pass by a road that is used by children going to school. The villagers are aware that an illegal garbage dump had been created on a hill behind their village.

(The Star-22 January 2007)

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MPSJ slaps fourth compound on developer

The Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) has slapped developer Active Heights Sdn Bhd with its fourth compound notice for causing another mud flood in Seri Kembangan. The latest incident on Sunday night caused a torrent of mud to flow into the Seri Kembangan Commercial Centre at Section 2, Taman Bukit Serdang. The absence of a retaining wall and a collapsed earth bund built by the developer for the hilltop project behind the Seri Pinang Apartments has been blamed for the mud flood that also damaged cars and motorcycles parked there. Broken bund: The retention pond does not work as it is supposed to, thanks to a broken bund. Active Heights was issued three RM25,000 compounds for last year's mud floods that riled residents, commercial lot owners and business operators alike.

(The Star-24 January 2007)

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Plagued by mud floods

The infamous mud flood that has been plaguing the Seri Kembangan Commercial Centre for the past one year has struck again. The latest incident happened on Sunday evening at around 7pm. This is the fifth time within a span of one year that business lots in the area have had to suffer the mud flood as a result of a heavy downpour. According to business operators, the mud is washed down from a nearby development site, where a middle-class housing project called Bukit Ikhlas is said to be under construction.

(The Star-24 January 2007)



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Infrastructure repairs to be done by February 18

Public infrastructure damaged by the recent floods will be repaired before the Chinese New Year on February 18. This includes roads, bridges and pavements. Repair works would also be carried out on hillslopes following the approval of a RM184 million budget. In Kota Tinggi, the slopes along the Ulu Tiram-Kota Tinggi road are badly scarred by landslides because of the impact of the flooding.

(New Straits Times-26 January 2007)

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High parking charges irks some hawkers

The Bangsar Night Market Association will be meeting with the owners of Jolly Green Giant Food Court in Jalan Telawi Bangsar to discuss whether traders can be charged a flat rate for parking at their premises on Sundays. About 40 traders operating stalls at the Bangsar night market refused to trade over the last two weeks as a sign of protest against their relocation. Many were unhappy because they not only had to move to a new place but they were also required to purchase designated tents and stalls.

(The Star-30 January 2007)

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No plan to relocate Kota Tinggi

The state government will not "relocate" or "rebuild" Kota Tinggi town but will take long term measures to prevent massive floods from occurring, according to Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman. Abdul Ghani said long-term plans to manage the riverbank as well as Sungai Muar's were important not only to increase agricultural produce but also to avoid floods. He also said 86 houses in the state were destroyed, more than half in Kota Tinggi alone, while the rest were in Segamat (19) and Johor Baru (12). He added that the floods affected 800 villages and 111 residential areas in Johor.

(The Star-31 January 2007)

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