



برونى دارالسلام

Brunei Darussalam

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ROYAL SPEECH ON NEW YEAR 2008

HM: Shut the doors on corruption

ISTANA NURUL IMAN, January 1 – Citizens and residents of Brunei Darussalam were urged to shut the doors on corruption as with corruption, all processes and mechanisms are weakened and unbalanced affecting all progress. Furthermore, Allah the Almighty will bless us and the country when we are clean from corruption.

These were stated by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam in his royal speech to mark New Year 2008.

In this context, His Majesty then focused on the civil service reminding them that they are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that this vision is achieved. According to the sovereign, they cannot escape from this responsibility and make the society understand. They should also portray themselves as a clean manager and administrator as when they are clean, it also portrays a clean government.

His Majesty also called to enhance relations with world organisations. This, according to the sovereign, is important to sustain cooperation in various fields including finding business opportunities and promoting Bruneian products outside especially in the BIMP-EAGA region.



PHOTO: MOHD. ZULIZI HAJI DURAIMAN

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivers a *tithah* in conjunction with New Year 2008 at the Istana Nurul Iman.

\$9.5 billion for NDP 2007 - 2012

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 19 – A total of \$9.5 billion has been allocated by the government to implement programmes and projects under the National Development Plan 2007 – 2012 (NDP 2007 – 2012).

This was stated by the Permanent Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office, Dato Paduka Awang Haji Kamis bin Haji Tamin at a press conference for the publication of the 'Brunei Darussalam Long-Term Development Plan' held in Ong Sum Ping.

That publication recorded:

Social Services Sector received the highest allocation with a total of \$ 3,055.7 million. From that allocation, Education Sector received \$ 822.5 million; Medical and Health received \$ 149.2; Government Housing received \$ 23.3 Million; National Housing Scheme received \$ 1,555.7 million; Religious Affairs received \$ 27.2 million; Public Facilities and Environment received \$ 182.5 million and Human Resource Development received \$ 295.5 million.

Public User Sector was given the second highest with the total of \$ 1492.7 million. From that allocation, electric received \$ 587.9 million; drainage received \$ 178 million; water supply received \$ 524.6 million; and flow of water received \$ 202.2 million.

Info-Communication Technology Sector received the third highest with a total of \$ 1145.7 million.

Transportation and Communication Sector received \$ 1,067.0 million. From that allocation, a total of \$ 568.5 million was allocated for road; Civil Aviation received \$ 114.5 million; Marine and Port received \$ 26.8 million; Telbru received \$ 116.5 million; Radio and Television \$228.2 million and Post Services received \$12.5 million.

Industry and Trade Sector received a total of \$ 1,025 million. From that allocation, Agriculture received \$101.8 million; Forestry received \$ 65.4 million; Fishery received \$ 115.8 million; Industry Development received \$ 404.3 million; Trade and Entrepreneurship Development received \$ 38.5 million and Pulau Muara Besar received \$ 299.1 million.

Public Building Sector received \$ 673 million.

Security Sector received a total of \$ 596.8 million where Royal Brunei Armed Forces received \$ 421.3 million and Royal Brunei Police Force received \$ 175.5 million.

Miscellaneous Sector received \$ 278.9 million. From that allocation, Contingency Reserves received \$ 244.9 million; Site Development received \$ 15 million; Consultant Fee received \$ 15 million; Liabilities for completed Projects received \$ 4 million and Site Development received \$ 4 million.

And Science & Technology and Research & Development received an allocation with a total of \$165.2 million.



PHOTO: HERNIE SULLANA HAJI OTHMAN

Brunei begins its new school term in January. Statistics for January 2008 shows that an estimated 3,941 students will enroll in pre-school classes at government schools. Highest enrolment is in Brunei-Muara District with 2,788 students, followed by Belait with 505 students, Tutong with 505 students and Temburong with 152 students.

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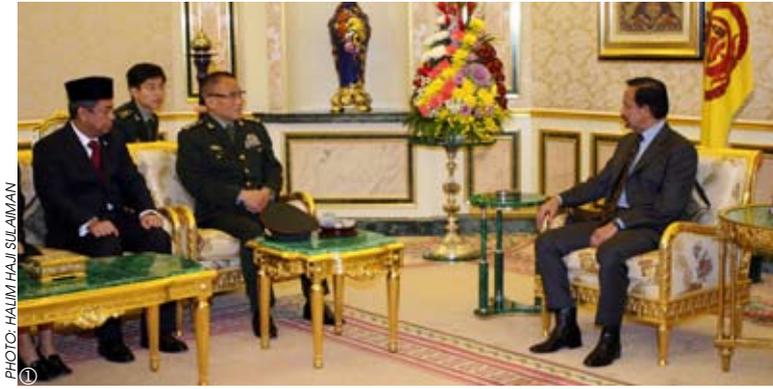


PHOTO: HAJI HAJI SULLAIMAN



PHOTO: MASRI OSMAN

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan Of Brunei Darussalam received in audience at the Istana Nurul Iman from:

- ❶ The Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, State Councillor and Minister of National Defence of the People's Republic of China, His Excellency General Cao Gangchuan on January 14.
- ❷ ASEAN's Secretary-General, His Excellency Dr. Surin Pitsuwan on January 16.
- ❸ Interpol's Secretary General, Mr. Ronald K. Noble on January 24.



PHOTO: MASRI OSMAN



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PHOTOS: ABDULLAH HAJI AWANG DAMIT

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam received diplomatic credentials from four newly-appointed envoys to Brunei Darussalam. The ceremony was held on January 15 at the Istana Nurul Iman.

They were:

- ❶ His Excellency Phithak Phrombubpha, Thailand's newly-appointed Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam.
- ❷ His Excellency Faysal Gouia, Tunisia's newly-appointed non-resident Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam.
- ❸ His Excellency Jong Chun Kun, Republic of Korea's newly-appointed Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam.
- ❹ His Excellency Richard O'Brien, Ireland's newly-appointed Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam.



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Brunei-Myanmar share warm bilateral relations



His Excellency General Thein Sein, the Prime Minister of Myanmar during audience to His Majesty.



His Majesty and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince at a banquet hosted for His Excellency General Thein Sein.

ISTANA NURUL IMAN, January 16— Brunei Darussalam and the Union of Myanmar have built a good working relationship through personal contacts and some extremely useful cooperations.

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam said in his *titah* (royal speech) during a banquet hosted in honour of His Excellency General Thein Sein, the Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar's three-day official visit to the country. The banquet was held at the Istana Nurul Iman.

His Majesty said that relationship was more focused on health education and technical assistance. His Majesty believed that the cooperation provides the basic foundation for all development and the crucial ones are the human ones.

"These involve doing all we can to help our people gain the skills and confidence they need to cope well with today's complex challenges.

"That is where Brunei Darussalam has made a commitment to our partners to do whatever we can to assist both bilaterally and regionally through the Initiative for ASEAN Integration," said the monarch.

In his return speech, the Myanmar premier described Brunei as a country that is famous for its beautiful scenery and prosperity and was delighted to have the opportunity to be in Bandar Seri Begawan to witness the beauty and serenity of Brunei.

He also expressed his hope that his visit would contribute to the betterment of the bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries and continue to promote close relations between the countries' leaders.

Also present at the banquet were His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, His Royal Highness Prince Haji Sufri Bolkiah and His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Malik.

Her Majesty receives audiences

Her Majesty Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha received in audience at the Istana Nurul Iman from Mrs. Prarassorn Phrombubpha, spouse of Thailand's newly-appointed Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam on January 29.



PHOTO: ABDULLAH HAJI AWANG DAMIT

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam sent congratulatory messages to:

- His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the King of Bahrain and His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the Prime Minister of Bahrain on the occasion of the 36th National Day of Bahrain on December 16.
- His Majesty Emperor Akihito of Japan and his Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda on the occasion of the 74th birthday anniversary of His Majesty Emperor Akihito on December 23.
- His Excellency Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar and His Excellency General Thein Sein, the Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar in conjunction with the country's 60th Independence Day anniversary on January 4.
- Her Excellency Pratibha Patil, the President of the Republic of India and her Prime Minister, His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh in conjunction with the republic's Proclamation anniversary on January 26.
- His Excellency Major General Michael Jeffery, Governor-General of Australia and The Honourable Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister of Australia in conjunction with the Australia Day on January 26.
- His Excellency Samak Sundaravej as the new Prime Minister of Thailand on January 29.

Royal speech on Islamic New Calendar

HM: Change for the betterment

KIARONG, January 9 - A call to change for the betterment was made by His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.

The call was made by His Majesty at a ceremony to mark the Islamic new calendar – 1429 Hijrah.

The sovereign said, regardless of the size of the change, it is the change itself that matters. A change or development starts from realisation as without it, there can be no change.

"This is the role of realisation and it must always be stimulated. The realisation does not come spontaneously even if it is stimulated unless there is an exceptional reason that drives us to change," said the monarch.

His Majesty also urged government agencies to tackle the important issue that can make or lead to changes.

There are many issues that need to be tackled, among others must be handled immediately such as flash floods or areas that are prone to flooding, said His Majesty. His Majesty said there is a suggestion that this was also caused by the drainage system that has not been given attention, like those that were blocked by vegetation which caused the water to stop from flowing.

"If this is true, is it not important to look into it and make changes?" asked His Majesty.

His Majesty also said that the flood could also be due to development factors such as those projects that are not closely supervised by regulations and acts where its risk could affect the drainage and environment. However, the situation is not as trivial as it looked like as it deals closely with the law, management, etiquettes and discipline. Hence, His Majesty called to take necessary actions to handle the problem.

Brunei Darussalam celebrates the Islamic new calendar 1429 on January 9 which coincided with 1st of Hijrah 1429 (Islamic year).



PHOTO: HERMIE SULLIANA HAJI OTHMAN

The sovereign made a call to change for betterment in his titah to mark the Islamic new calendar.

Brunei celebrate new Islamic year 1429

KIARONG, January 9 – Brunei Darussalam celebrated the Islamic New Year 1429 Hijrah with a ceremony to mark the event at the Jame 'Asr Hassanil Bolkuah in Kampong Kiarong.

Present at the ceremony was His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam. Accompanying His Majesty to the event were His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Malik.

The highlight of the event was the announcement of the Anugerah Tokoh Ugama/Jasawan Ugama and Anugerah Bakti Hijrah for 1429 Hijrah.

The Anugerah Tokoh Ugama/Jasawan Ugama was given to Pehin Datu Imam Dato Paduka Seri Setia Ustaz Haji Abdul Hamid bin Bakal. He received \$20,000, a certificate of acknowledgement, a token of appreciation and free medical care in a first class ward in any government hospitals.

Meanwhile, the Anugerah Bakti Hijrah were awarded to Awang Haji Metussin bin Haji Timbang and Awang Haji Zainal @ Abu Bakar bin Idris. Each recipient received \$10,000, a certificate of acknowledgement, a token of appreciation and free medical care in a first class ward in any government hospitals.

This is an annual celebration where this year's theme is "Tunas Bangsa Berakhlak Al-Quran".



PHOTO: MASRI OSMAN

His Majesty, His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Malik with the award recipients.



PHOTO: AMPUAN HAJI MAHMUD AMPUAN HAJI TENGGAH

His Majesty visits ailing Suharto

JAKARTA, January 14 - His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam visited former Indonesian President Suharto, who is undergoing treatment at a hospital in the Indonesian capital.

The 86-year-old Suharto, suffered multiple organ failure last Friday, a week after he was initially admitted to hospital with a weakening heart, kidney and lungs.

His Majesty at the Pertamina Centre Hospital to visit former Indonesian President, Mr. Suharto.

Sovereign sends condolence messages

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam sent his condolences to the President of Pakistan, His Excellency Pervez Musharraf following the death of former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto in Rawalpindi on December 28, 2007.

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam as well as the government and people of Brunei, condemned the dreadful act of terrorism in Rawalpindi, which resulted in the death of former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto

In the message, His Majesty also sent his deepest condolences and profound respect to the people of Pakistan, as well as the family and friends of the late Bhutto.

His Majesty also sent his condolences to His Excellency Dr. Haji Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, following the death of former President of Indonesia, Mr. Soeharto on January 27.

In the message, His Majesty expressed his great sadness upon learning of the death of Mr. Suharto.

On behalf of His Majesty's Government and the people of Brunei Darussalam, His Majesty sent his condolences to His Excellency Dr. Bambang Yudhoyono President of Republic of Indonesia and the family of the late Mr. Suharto.

Signing a book of condolences

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, December 29 - The Pakistan High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam, His Excellency Major General (Rtd) Syed Haider Jawed, expressed his appreciation for those who sent their condolences, especially citizens and residents of Brunei, for Pakistan's former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was assassinated in Rawalpindi on December 27, 2007.

The signing of a book of condolences was held at the Pakistan Chancery in Beribi, Gadong.

BERAKAS, January 13 - Brunei-based Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) celebrated its 60th year anniversary of establishment in this country.

A banquet was held to celebrate the event at the International Convention Centre. Present to grace the event were His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, Her Majesty The Raja Isteri, Her Royal Highness Pengiran Isteri, and other members of the royal family.

To enliven the night, a number of stage performances were held by HSBC staff members and local artistes to entertain the hundreds of guests.

At the end of the festivity, His Majesty and the royal family mingled with HSBC's management and staff members.

The Sultanate of Brunei and HSBC have a strong history of partnership. The Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation was the first bank established in the constitutional Islamic monarchy in 1947. Historically, the bulk of banking assets have been personal finance products. The Brunei government's cap on personal lending, new support for local banking institutions, and emphasis on growing Islamic finance have created new opportunities for HSBC. In 2004, the Bank was granted the only offshore Islamic Banking license in the country.

HSBC celebrate 60th year of establishment in Brunei



Their Majesties and Her Royal Highness Pengiran Isteri attend HSBC's 60th year anniversary in Brunei.

PHOTO: AK AMIRULNIZAM PG-HAJI MOHD.ALI

Brunei welcomes new Princess

ISTANANURULIMAN, January 28 - By command of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, Yang Amat Mulia Pengiran Penggawa Laila Bentara Istiadat Diraja Dalam Istana Pengiran Haji Alauddin bin Pengiran Paduka Tuan Pengiran Haji Abu Bakar, Grand Chamberlain, announced that Her Royal Highness Pengiran Isteri Azrinaz Mazhar binti Hakim Mazhar has safely given birth to a Princess on Monday, 19th Muharram, 1429 corresponding to January 28, 2008 at 4.24pm.

The birth of the Princess was marked with a 21-cannon salute fired at the vicinity of the Istana Nurul Iman.

Critical review on SPN 21

BERAKAS, January 3 - Consultants from the United Kingdom were in the country to assist the Ministry of Education in the planning of the new National Educational System for the 21st Century or "SPN 21".

The consultants from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) carried out a critical review of the SPN 21 document drafted by the Ministry with the aim of making several improvements to it. The seven-day talks also provided the consultants with first-hand knowledge of the teaching and learning environment through school visits.

The British consultants also visited the sultanate's technical institutions, higher education institutions and the Youth Development Centre.

Among their objectives were to strengthen and make the document more coherent in terms of both the core and concurrent strategies; to further advice on effective educational reforms, particularly on general education and to identify the learning outcomes of which high language skills, foreign language skills and mathematics are key components.

PHOTO: HAJI MASMALEH HAJI MOHD. ALI



His Majesty and male members of royal family join mass Aidiladha prayer.

His Majesty joins mass Aidiladha prayer

KIARONG, December 20 - His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam joined the mass Aidiladha prayer at the Jame 'Asr Hassanil Bolkiah.

Present with His Majesty were His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah and His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Malik.

His Royal Highness was given a short briefing at the KDB Pejuang Operations Room



PHOTO: MASRI OSMAN

Crown Prince's working visit to Royal Brunei Navy

MUARA, January 31 - His Royal Highness Prince General Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office, General of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) conducted a working visit to the Royal Brunei Navy.

The visit was part of His Royal Highness' continuous observations on the development of the various units of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces.

His Royal Highness' visit began with a presentation on the mission, vision and roles of the Royal Brunei Navy, which was presented by the Commander of the Royal Brunei Navy.

His Royal Highness then observed the expansion project of the naval base.

His Royal Highness also boarded the KDB Pejuang Missile Gun Boat and received another scope of presentation by the Fleet Commander, Lieutenant Colonel (L) Roslan bin Dato Paduka Haji Yaakub, before visiting the KDB Pejuang Operations Room to witness a missile firing-handling demonstration.

His Royal Highness next visited the Logistic Building to take a closer look at the Royal Brunei Navy's spare provisions; which are continuously maintained, and constantly in operational state to meet the demands of its operations.

Next, His Royal Highness visited the Electronic Workshop and the Naval Technical Training School. The school is responsible for producing technically qualified personnel so that the ships and their systems can be maintained effectively. The school provides technical courses such as Weapon Engineering, Marine Engineering and Maritime Warfare.

His Royal Highness concluded his visit at the Royal Brunei Navy Medical Services centre, which provides health and medical services to the Royal Brunei Navy personnel and their families.

Brunei Darussalam hopes to be a Nation of Zikir

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, December 19 - To ensure that the nation is continuously under the guidance of Allah the Almighty, His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam hopes to make Brunei Darussalam a 'Nation of Zikir' that will always glorify Allah.

This was stated by His Majesty in his *titah* (royal speech) to mark the Hari Raya Aidiladha.

According to the sovereign, this is in line with the promise in Surah Al-Baqarah versus 152 which reads 'those who remember Allah, Allah will remember them'.

His Majesty also hoped for peace in all our activities, be it in management, administration, development - in short, in living as a nation. This is the ambition of the *ummah* in the world as peace is like a big river that waters all plants. If it never dries, then it is truly the source of prosperity and wealth.

Her Royal Highness graduates



Her Royal Highness receives her degree at a convocation ceremony in London.

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 11 - Her Royal Highness Princess Fadzilah Lubabul Bolqiah, the daughter of His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanil Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam was awarded a Bachelors of Arts with Honours in International Studies from Kingston University. The convocation took place at Barbican Centre, London on January 9.

Lowest corruption recorded



PHOTO: AK AMIRULNIZAM PG-HAJI MOHD ALI

The Director of Anti Corruption Bureau, Pengiran Kasmirhan during the presentation.

BERAKAS, January 3 – Corruption cases are very much under control in Brunei Darussalam even though Brunei Darussalam is not yet included in the Transparency International Index.

According to the statistics issued by Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB), the past four years showed that 2007 recorded the lowest number of complaints/information received by the bureau with a total of 195 complaints compared to 244 in 2006; 203 in 2005; 200 in 2004 and 243 in 2003.

The Director of ACB, Pengiran Kasmirhan bin Pengiran Haji Tahir said that three data surveys should be done for any countries to be included in the Transparency International Index. Brunei at the moment has data from only one survey by the World Bank.

The Anti Corruption Bureau has three strategies to combat corruption: through investigation via strong legislation and tough enforcement; through enhancing community ties/ education including the production of drama series, lectures, road shows and exhibitions; and through a joint cooperation with Curriculum Department, Ministry of Education to include prevention of corruption education in the national curriculum.

Brunei Darussalam joins CBD in May

JALAN MENTERI BESAR, January 12 – Brunei Darussalam will join the 'Convention of Biodiversity' (CBD) in May 2008 at the 9th Conference Members of CBD meeting in German.

The CBD's Secretary Executive, Dr. Ahmed Djoghlaif who is in the country for a one-day working visit delivered a presentation on an 'Overview of Convention on Biological Diversity' held at Setia Pahlawan Hall, of the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources.

The briefing was attended by the Deputy Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Dato Paduka Awang Haji Hamdillah.

In his briefing, Dr. Ahmed among others explained on the role of his secretariat and areas of cooperation that could be explored between CBD and Brunei Darussalam that is beneficial, coincides and in accordance with the initiatives of Heart of Borneo.

CBD is the only international agreement who takes a comprehensive approach for conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.



PHOTO: HALIM HAJI SULAIMAN

Among the officials at the presentation including the Deputy Minister of Industry and Primary Resources (far right).

Call to enhance service delivery



PHOTO: MOHD. ZUL-IZZI HAJI DURAMAN

The Police Commissioner inspects the guard-of-honour during the 86th anniversary of Police.

GADONG, January 15 – In its effort to enhance their service delivery to the community, members of the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) were urged to improve all their weaknesses and introduce renewals.

The Police Commissioner, Yang Dimuliakan Pehin Dato Awang Zainuddin bin Jalani stressed the matter at the 86th anniversary Police Day Parade at the Police Headquarters in Gadong.

All members of RBPF must be ready to make relevant changes suitable with today's demand where service delivery has always become a topic for conversation amongst the society and people of this country, said the Police Commissioner.

He also urged for police officers to share relevant information with the public known as 'Right of Information'.

The Police Commissioner added that the members of Royal Brunei Police Force must behave pro-active to convey the information to society and people through certain channels especially the mass media provided it does not affect or sub-judice to any case that is being investigated.

Myanmar Premier on 3-day visit in Brunei



PHOTO: MOHD. ZUL-IZZI HAJI DURAMAN

His Excellency General Thein Sein (second from right) at a briefing by the Brunei Economic Development Board.

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 18 - Myanmar's Prime Minister General Thein Sein was in Brunei Darussalam for a three-day visit starting January 16.

Present to welcome the Prime Minister at the Brunei International Airport was the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah.

The premier's visit is at the invitation of His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam and also as part of his introductory visit to other ASEAN members.

In Brunei, His Excellency visited the Brunei Shell Petroleum (BSP) and held talks with the Brunei Economic Development Board (BEDB). His Excellency also attended an audience and banquet with His Majesty at the Istana Nurul Iman.

General Thein Sein led a 43-member delegation that comprised of cabinet ministers of agriculture, economic development, commerce, transport and energy.

The visit was hoped to boost bilateral ties and economic cooperation among both countries.

TAP contribution needs to increase



PHOTO: ABDULLAH HAJI AWANG DAMIT

Pengiran Dato Paduka Haji Ismail (third from left) and other participants at the roundtable discussion.

JERUDONG, January 19 - There is a need for higher contribution rates from employer and employees to supplement the current pension scheme of the Employees Trust Fund (TAP). The current contribution rates of 10 per cent from employees and employers are considered too low by regional standards.

The Permanent Secretary at Prime Minister's Office, Pengiran Dato Paduka Haji Ismail stated the matter at the Centre of Strategic and Policy Studies' social security roundtable discussion held at the Empire Hotel & Country Club.

Other issues discussed was to extend the retirement age from 55 years to 60 years old, as only retirees aged 60 and above are entitled to Brunei's Old Age Pension.

The roundtable discussion was attended by over 100 participants that included policy makers, members of the public and private sector, panel from World Banking, American International Group (AIG), Ministry of Manpower Singapore and Brunei's TAP.

CNR System for RBAF

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 18 - The capability of the nation's military defense has reached another milestone with the development of "A Combat Net Radio (CNR) System" for the Royal Brunei Armed Forces' (RBAF) current and future battlefield communications requirements.

The contract signing ceremony for the development of the CNR system was held between the Ministry of Defence (MinDef) and Harris Corporation, RF Communication Division from the United States of America.

Signing on behalf of MinDef was Permanent Secretary of Defence, Dato Paduka Haji Abd. Majid Mangarshah while International Contract Manager of Harris, Robert Tinney signed on behalf of Harris.

The project is to be implemented in phases over a four-year period. The CNR project marks another milestone for RBAF as the new system will enhance RBAF's C4I (Command, Control, Communication Computing & Intelligence) System, enabling secure and reliable voice and data communication links down to the tactical level and integrating with other communications system.

Compulsory Education Order 2007 enforced



PHOTO: MOHD. ZUL-IZZI HAJI DURAMAN

The Deputy Minister of Education launches the Guide Book Guidance Services and Counselling and Career Education Workshops for Schools in Brunei Darussalam.

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 24 - To ensure that the children of this nation receive formal education within an appropriate period in schools; and to enhance the quality of the education, the Ministry of Education have enforced the 'Compulsory Education Order 2007' that took effect from November 24, 2007.

This was disclosed by the Deputy Minister of Education, Pengiran Dato Seri Setia Dr. Haji Mohammad at the launching ceremony of Guide Book Guidance Services and Counseling and Career Education Workshops for Schools in Brunei Darussalam held in the Rizqun International Hotel.

The Deputy Minister said this Order is to uphold economic growth and the sustainability of the country, where the ministry took proactive measures in reviewing and refining practices and educational policies and to ensure continuous development in line with the vision and mission of the ministry.

As soon as the Order took into effect on November 24, children that attain the age of compulsory schooling - who were born on or after January 1, 2002 except the children given exemption under this Order must register and study in schools as a pupil.

The main objective of this Order is to ensure all children aged between six and 15 years old who meet the requirements to receive primary and secondary education are officially registered and getting proper education in schools.

SELIRONG ISLAND RECREATIONAL PARK

PHOTOS: HAJI MOHD. YUSOF MOHD. YASSIN,
HERNIE SULIANA HAJI OTHMAN

Selirong Island Recreational Park is Brunei's largest mangrove island with 2,566 hectares in size. Located in the outer southeast of Brunei Bay, the island is home to many amazing flora and fauna. The island can be only reached by water and journey from the capital takes around 45-minute to one-hour.

Realising that Selirong Island is a host to varieties of wildlife and natural treasure including the world's finest mangrove species, the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources through Forestry Department have taken various initiatives to conserve the island.

Beginning 1995, Selirong Island has been upgraded into a recreational park from its original status as forest reserve. Among the improvement made were the building of bridges and walk-path. Other facilities provided are huts and restrooms.

Even though development has been imposed into the island, the naturalness of this 1,000 years old island is still sustained. The existence of extinct species can still be found here.

Strolling through the bridge or walk-path, visitors can enjoy fresh air and the relaxing green scenery. Furthermore you can also see some of the residing wildlife species that belong to the island.

From the survey made, the island is expected to house more than 40 bird species, 10 mammal species, eight reptile species, 10 insect species and some unknown number of fish species.

Some of the identified fauna species found at the island are; Proboscis Monkey *Nasalis Larvatus*, Long-tailed Macaque (one of monkey species), Flying Lemur (*Colugo*), Slow Loris, Bearded Pig, large Flying Fox (fruit bat), Oriental Small-clawed otter, Stork-billed Kingfisher, Cattle Egret, White-bellied sea eagle, water monitor, saltwater crocodile, reticulated python, mangrove cat snake, batik golden web spider, Archerfish, giant Mudskipper and fireflies.

The island also keeps a numbers of flora species but amongst the most commonly spotted are *Bakau Kurap* (*Rhizophora Mucronata*), *Bakau Minyak* (*Rhizophora Apiculata*), *Gurah* (*Excoecaria*) and *Nibong* (*Oncosperma Tigillarum*).

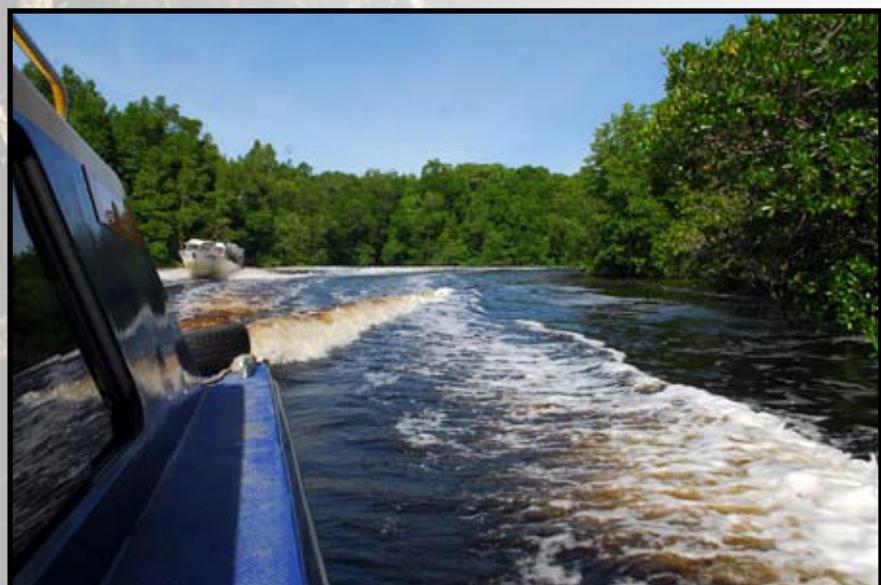
If you wish to visit the mangrove island, there are few local tour companies offering the package. For tourist or visitor's safety, each visit or trip to the island will be escorted by rangers.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office is among those who visited the mangrove island last year.





Among the flora and fauna can be seen at the island.



Scenery along the journey to Selirong Island

Did you know that...

- The Prime Minister's Office was established on January 1, 1984 on the resumption of full independence and sovereignty of Brunei Darussalam. His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam made an announcement on the setting up of a ministerial form of government and the creation of the post Prime Minister.
- During the early years of establishment there were only 10 departments under the Prime Minister's Office.
- Now there are 20 departments namely: Adat Istiadat Negara (Royal Custom and Traditions), Audit, Narcotics Control Bureau, Information, Royal Brunei Police Force, Anti Corruption Bureau, Councils of State, Radio Television Brunei, Internal Security, Development and Economics Planning, Public Service Department, Management Services, Petroleum Unit, Public Service Commission, State Muffi, Judiciary, Attorney General Chamber, Government Printer, Civil Service Institute and Department of Electrical Services.
- Most of the departments are led by director or director-general except for Adat Istiadat Negara (Royal Custom and Traditions), Audit, Royal Brunei Police Force, Councils of State, State Muffi, Judiciary and Attorney General Chamber.
- More information on the Office is available at www.pmo.gov.bn.

>> BRUNEI IN BRIEF

- Official name is Negara Brunei Darussalam.
- Capital is Bandar Seri Begawan.
- It is located on the north-west of Borneo Island in Southeast Asia.
- Land size is 5765 sq. km
- Population is estimated at 390,000 people (2007)
- It is divided into four districts – Brunei Muara, Tutong, Kuala Belait and Temburong.
- Malay is the official language but English is widely spoken.
- Islam is the official religion and it allows other religions to be practiced.
- National carrier is Royal Brunei Airlines.
- It has an equatorial climate, a uniform temperature, high humidity and heavy rainfall.

Public Warning: The trafficking of controlled drugs carries the death penalty in Brunei Darussalam

>> HOW TO GET TO BRUNEI DARUSSALAM?

There are a number of ways to reach Brunei.

- By air - Brunei's national carrier, Royal Brunei Airlines travels to more than 20 destinations around the world. The airline also has worldwide office for you to book a return flight to Brunei (to know the nearest RBA's office at your place, please log to: www.bruneiair.com)

International airlines such as Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines and Thai Airways also fly frequently to Brunei. Beginning July 2006, Air Asia, the Malaysia's lowest airfare carrier also has direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to Brunei.

Arrival by plane would land you to Brunei International Airport (BWN), the sole airport in the nation.

- For those who enjoy journey by sea, you can reach Brunei by boat or ferry. The main ferry terminal in Brunei is the Serasa Ferry Terminal at Muara. You can catch a ferry from Labuan, Sabah or Lawas and Sundar, both in Sarawak, a state of the neighbouring country, Malaysia. Another option is via a boat from Limbang, Sarawak which will arrive at the jetty around Jalan Residency area in the Capital.
- You would have two options of entry point to Brunei by land transport. You can enter through the Sungai Tujoh Immigration Control Post in Belait District or the Kuala Lurah Immigration Control Post in Brunei Muara District. The Sungai Tujoh Immigration Control Post in Belait is the entry point for those from Miri, Sarawak. While the Kuala Lurah Immigration Control Post is the entrance for those coming from Limbang, Sarawak; Kota Kinabalu; and Kalimantan.

Brunei Darussalam Long-Term Development Plan

A book entitled 'Brunei Darussalam Long-Term Development Plan' that was recently launched have outlined three major areas; Wawasan Brunei 2035; Outline of Strategies and Policies for Development (OSPD) 2007-2017; and the National Development Plan (RKN) 2007-2012.

Wawasan Brunei 2035

Through the National Vision or known as Wawasan Brunei 2035, it aims to make Brunei Darussalam, by 2035, as a nation which will be widely recognised for the accomplishments of its educated and highly skilled people as measured by the highest international standards; quality of life that is among the top 10 nations in the world; and a dynamic and sustainable economy with income per capita within the top 10 countries in the world.

To elaborate further on the three main areas:-

i. An educated, highly skilled and accomplished people

Seek to build a first class education system that provides opportunities for every citizen and resident to meet the requirements of the changing economy and encourages life-long learning as well as achievements in sport and the arts.

ii. Quality of life

Seek to provide our people with high standards of living and political stability while ensuring proper care of our environment and the vital supports needed by all members of our society.

iii. Dynamic and sustainable economy

Seek to build an economy that provides the people with quality employment in both public and private sectors and also offers great economic opportunities.

To achieve these, there is a need to develop and implement an integrated and well-coordinated national strategy comprising of eight elements.

The eight elements are;

i. An education strategy that will prepare the youth for employment and achievement in a world that is increasingly competitive and knowledge-based.

ii. An economic strategy that will create new employment for the people and expand business opportunities within Brunei Darussalam through promotion of investment, foreign

and domestic, both in downstream industries as well as economic clusters beyond oil and gas industry.

iii. A security strategy that will safeguard the country's political stability and sovereignty as a nation and that links our defense and diplomatic capabilities and our capacity to respond to threats from disease and natural catastrophe.

iv. An institutional development strategy that will enhance good governance in both the public and private sectors, high quality public services, modern and pragmatic legal and

regulatory frameworks and efficient government procedures that entail a minimum of bureaucratic "red tape".

v. A local business development strategy that will enhance opportunities for local small- and medium- sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as enable Brunei Malays to achieve leadership in business and industry by developing greater competitive strength.

vi. An infrastructure development strategy that will ensure continued investment by government and through public-private sector partnerships in developing



Various measures have been taken in ensuring a high quality of public services. One such measure is by introducing the Kumpulan Kerja Cemerlang.



and maintaining world-class infrastructure with special emphasis placed on education, health and industry.

- vii. **A social security strategy** that ensures that as the nation prospers, all citizens are properly cared for.
- viii. **An environmental strategy** that ensure the proper conservation of our natural environment and cultural habitat..

Outline of Strategies and Policies for Development (OSPD) 2007-2017

The first Outline of Strategies and Policies for Development (OSPD) 2007 -2017 elaborates on the eight strategies underlined in the National Vision through 50 policy directions. It will be used as a guide for policy makers and implementers to prepare development programmes and projects for a period of 10 years towards accomplishing the Wawasan Brunei 2035 goals.

National Development Plan (RKN) 2007-2012

The launching of the latest RKN marks a strategic shift in the planning and implementation of development projects. It is also the first RKN to be formulated based on the objectives of the Wawasan Brunei 2035. Plans are structured in a continuity manner to support and attain long term socio-economic development of the country.

The key challenges in RKN 2007-2012 will be to enhance national capacity to carry out development initiatives and strengthen competitiveness. High priority will be given on the development of human resources, science, technology and innovation (STI) promoted industries, economic

resilience, and high quality of life of the people. The development will be pursued alongside efforts to preserve positive cultural values and the quality of the environment

A total of \$9.5 billion have been allocated for RKN 2007-2012, where growth target is expected to be achieved partially through the various programmes and projects planned under the latest RKN. This investment is expected to create a multiplier effect in the form of private sector spending.

An economic diversification programme will still be pursued during RKN 2007-2012. This includes further development in downstream oil and gas activities. The projected high oil price will be expected to contribute positively to the economy especially in terms of government revenue and export. In the non-oil and gas sector, the promoted industries will also be pursued.



The Government of His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam continues to provide excellent education at minimal cost; and further supported with the enforcement of Compulsory Education Order 2007, as it ensures that the children of this nation receive formal education within an appropriate period in schools. To this day, Brunei Darussalam has one of the highest literacy rate in this region.



Both the public and private sectors have given strong support in enhancing business opportunities for the small- and medium-enterprises (SMEs).



Brunei Darussalam is promoting herself as an eco-tourism destination where 78 per cent of the country's total land area is covered by forests with 40 per cent of the land is gazetted Forests Reserve.

JERUDONG, January 27 - His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah presented prizes to the winners of the 14th Inter-Ministry Civil Service Day Golf Championship at the Royal Brunei Golf, Jerudong Park and Country Club.

The meet from January 25 to 27 was organised by the Ministry of Finance in conjunction with the Civil Service Day celebration. The objective of the event was to celebrate the Civil Service Day and to strengthen ties among the ministries.

The overall winner in the individual's category was Hong Kok Seng followed by Seruji bin Haji Setia and Ahmad Yani bin Haji Md Noor.

In the team's event, the trophy went to the Prime Minister's Office team comprising of Haji Shaminan Haji Awg Damit, Murni Haji Ahmad, Haji Ibrahim Haji Mohd Yassin, Pengiran Yusop Pengiran Salleh, Pengiran Adam Pengiran Aran, Moorsalin Sharbini, Haji Hamdani Haji Zakaria and Haji Afif Daraina.

Second place went to the team from the Ministry of Development made up of Hong Kok Seng, Han Kiew Kwang, Haji Suhaimi Haji Gapar, Haji Rahmad Haji Jafar, Bahrin Haji Mohammad, Hamid Abdullah, Chua Peng Keong and Haji Qatar Haji Abdullah.

Third place went to Ministry of Home Affairs team which included Seruji Haji Setia, Haji Raya bin Dollah, Ali bin Haji Rashid, Haji Hamidon bin Haji Damit, Haji Noorismadi bin Haji Tamit, Azmi bin Haji Julaihi, Haji Md Mahdi bin POKDSDDLU Haji Rahman and Dato Haji Adanan bin Haji Hanafiah.

PMO wins Inter-Ministry Civil Service Day Golf Championship



His Royal Highness the Crown Prince presents the trophy to Dato Paduka Awang Haji Mustappha bin Haji Sirat, Permanent Secretary at Prime Minister's Office.

PHOTO: MASRI OSMAN

Second Group of IMT leaves for Mindanao

RIMBA, January 15 - The second group of the International Monitoring Team (IMT) have left for Mindanao, Philippines. A ceremony to bid farewell to the group was held at the airbase in Rimba, Gadong.

Present at the ceremony was Colonel Pengiran Dato Paduka Haji Rosli bin Pengiran Haji Chuchu, the Commander of Royal Brunei Land Forces. The second group comprising three officers and one senior PTB is led by Colonel Pengiran Tajuddin bin Pengiran Haji Karim.

The first group of the IMT left for the Philippines in September 2007.



The Commander of Royal Brunei Land Forces and officials bid farewell to the second IMT troop.

PHOTO: HAJI MOHD. YUSOF MOHD. YASSIN

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, OCTOBER 2007

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) in October 2007 rose by 0.4 per cent over September 2007 with an index of 103.2.

The cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages went up by 0.1 per cent due to higher prices of flour, biscuits, fresh and frozen chicken, fresh prawn, canned seafood, condensed milk, eggs, butter, vegetable and palm oil, margarine and cocoa-based beverages.

Some food items which recorded notable price increases in October 2007 compared with the previous month were Spring Onion, fresh prawn, bean curd, shallot, mushroom, long cabbage, carrot, vegetable oil, yam and fresh whole chicken. The increases in prices change ranges from 2.6 per cent to 5.1 per cent.

But some items also recorded notable price decreases. The items were *Kuasi*, banana, apple, *Rumahan bini* (Chub Mackerel), beef sausages, longan (canned), fresh water prawn (*Udang Galah*), *Bakulan*, grapes and tomatoes. The decreases in prices change ranges from 2.6 per cent to 7.8 per cent.

Higher prices of ready-made clothing, material for male and female and footwear led to a 2.3 per cent increase in the cost of clothing and footwear.

The cost of housing, water, electricity and maintenance rose by 0.1 per cent due to higher prices of accommodation (that is maintenance and minor repairs).

The cost of household goods, services and operation dropped by 2.2 per cent due to cheaper prices of furniture, floor covering, household furnishings, household equipments and electrical appliances and utensils and crockery and cutlery and household operation.

Transportation cost increased by 0.3 per cent due to higher prices of car spare parts and certain air fares.

Higher prices of certain holiday packages led to an increase in the cost of recreation and entertainment by 0.4 per cent.

The cost of miscellaneous goods and services declined by 0.2 per cent due to lower prices of ladies personal care and infant care items.

Higher prices of some stationery raised the cost of by 0.1 per cent.

The cost of communication; education; and medical and health remained the same.

The CPI in September 2007 was 0.5 per cent higher than that of the same month in 2006. For the first nine months of this year (January to September, 2007), the CPI rose by 0.1 per cent compared to the same period last year.

Two vessels sophisticated for BLNG

JERUDONG, January 30 - Two large vessels will be built for the use of Brunei Liquefied Natural Gas' project (BLNG) which will also be furnished with sophisticated technology equipment that join with 'Fuel-Efficient Propulsion System' and 'Membrane Containment System'.

The first new vessel will be fully completed on March, 2011 while the second vessel is also expected to follow after in September.

In this regard, two agreements between Brunei Gas Carriers Private Limited, (BGC) and Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering Company Limited, (DSME) from Korea were signed. The signing ceremony was held at the Empire Hotel and Country Club.

Signing on behalf of BGC was Deputy Managing Director, Awang Haji Ibrahim bin Haji Mohd. Yassin while representing DSME was the President and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Sang-Tae Nam.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by the Minister of Energy at Prime Minister's Office, Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Utama Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Yahya as BGC's Chairman for its Board of Directors.



The contract signing ceremony was witnessed by the Minister of Energy at Prime Minister's Office (centre).

BEDB – Alcoa sign business youth development program



Dato Paduka Timothy Ong (left) and Mr. Reinhardtsen (right) at the signing ceremony.

MUARA, January 29 - A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the development of a youth and small business was signed between Brunei Economic Development Board (BEDB) and Alcoa.

Signing on behalf of BEDB was Dato Paduka Timothy Ong while Mr. Reinhardtsen represented Alcoa. The signing ceremony was witnessed by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Dewa Major General (Rtd) Dato Seri Pahlawan Awang Haji Mohammad.

The programme will be implemented by the Youth Development Centre.

TUNGKU LINK, January 30 – The sharing of opinions and ideas as well as experience between the writers from local and abroad in Regional Nation Building Seminar are hoped to be fruitful to help raise nation state efforts to build based on a country's needs.

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Dewa Major General (R) Dato Seri Pahlawan Haji Awang Mohammad stated the matter at the launching of the Regional Nation Building Seminar held at the Chancellor Hall of Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

The minister said, the intellectual group played an important role to form and change society mind towards comprehensive nation state development. Therefore, everyone should wise in planning and implement the development the new world system era so that it still fixed at the line and need norms as well preventive from the attitude which is bad behavior.

A total of ten working papers presented in the two-days working seminar which was attended by more than 100 participant from locally and aboard.

The theme of the seminar was 'Negara Bangsa Dalam Tatanan Baru Dunia' or 'A Nation in a New World System' which focuses on nation building from various aspects that include power issues, country, nationality, culture, language, identity and nationalism.

Regional seminar enhance efforts to build Nation Building



The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports delivers his speech.

DOMBAK



Brunei Darussalam is a country that is rich with cultural heritage. Among the cultural heritage, besides arts and handicraft are traditional dance and music. One traditional instrument still used today is *dombak* or some prefer to call it as *tambur*.

The body of Dombak is made from hard woods which originally had a hole; like the core of two local fruits tree, *tibadak* (Jackfruit) and *tarap* (*Artocarpus Odoratissimus*). The hard woods are chosen to produce the instrument as it does not easily break when fallen or crashed. Meanwhile the top is made from deer skin.

This musical instrument is usually played during *bamukun* - an entertainment held during weddings or gatherings (common for people in Brunei and Sarawak). *Bamukun* is an occasion where a group of men and women exchange *pantun* (quatrains). During *bamukun*, the men will *berjoget* (one type of traditional dances) and the women will play the *dombak*.



Pictures show women playing *dombak* during *bamukun*



Sambal Belacan (Shrimp paste)

Ingredients

Belacan (shrimp paste)	30gm
Red chilli (pound)	200gm
Chilli padi (pound)	3gm
Calamansi juice freshly squeezed	2nos
Salt and sugar to taste	

Method

For authenticity, use a mortar and pestle and pound the chillies (red chilli and chilli padi) and shallot. Halfway through, add *belacan* with sugar and salt. Do not pound to a fine paste but should be coarse.



UBD and UMS sign MoU

TUNGKU LINK, January 22 – The signing of Memorandum of Understanding between Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) are hoped to draft cooperation between the two universities in term of university undergraduate exchange, faculty exchange, publication exchange and research cooperation.

Signing on behalf of UBD was Vice Chancellor of UBD, Dato Paduka Dr. Haji Ismail while presenting UMS was its Vice Chancellor, Yang Berbahagia Profesor Dr. Mohd. Noh Dalimin.

Institution cooperation which is now in the discussion include to organise joint annual conference; research cooperation especially in the field of freshwater fish beside conducting sports activities among universities and boat race between universities.



Vice Chancellor of UBD (second from left) and Vice Chancellor of UMS (third from left) signing the Memorandum of Understanding.

Brunei wins 2 gold medals at Para Games

BERAKAS, January 24 - Brunei Darussalam's contingent brought back two gold, four silver and ten bronze medals from the 4th ASEAN Para Games at Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand.

The two gold medals came from John Vianni Anak Chandau in the Men Shot Put and from Awang Sibuang bin Haji Kalong in the Men Javelin.

The games was held from January 20 to 29. The arrival of Brunei's contingent was welcomed by the Minister of Culture, Youths and Sports, Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Dewa (Rtd) Mejor General Dato Seri Pahlawan Haji Awang Mohammad.

Brunei's contingent best achievement in the Para Games was in the 3rd ASEAN Para Games in Manila, Philippines with 7 gold, six silver and four bronze medals.

Brunei to host book exhibition in February

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 26 - The Brunei Book Fair (BBF) 2008 will be held in February 2008. It is set to become the biggest-ever book exhibition in the Sultanate with the largest number of exhibitors and plenty of side activities for members of the public to participate.

The exhibition which will commence from February 27 until March 5 at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Berakas will feature 110 booths.

A number of activities will be held in conjunction with the BBF 2008. Among others are; a forum entitled "Enhancing Better Business towards Profitability Amongst Asean Countries through E-Marketing"; general quiz; picture puzzle; serial quiz; treasure hunt; mind talent test; the Islamic Poetry Recital Contest; Story Telling Competition; Drawing and colouring competitions; *Jawi* (Arabic) writing and reading competition for Non-Muslim visitors.

Royal Customs and Excise Department marks International Customs Day

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 26 - The Royal Customs and Excise Department celebrated International Customs Day 2008.

This year's theme was "Combating Illicit Trafficking in Drugs and Psychotropic Substances", which was in line with the department's efforts to eradicate the trafficking of drugs.

Present as the guest of honour was Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, Haji Mohd. Rozan bin Dato Paduka Haji Mohd Yunos.

The highlight of the ceremony included a presentation of prizes to the winners of the 6th Marching Competition, Best Counter, Best Officer of the Month and Best Assistant Staff.

The event also saw the presentation of souvenirs to retirees. The Royal Customs and Excise Department became a member of the WCO in 1996, and has been celebrating International Custom Day since 2000.



Deputy Permanent Secretary at Ministry of Finance inspects the custom officer parade.

Brunei-based foreign diplomats hold receptions

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 26 – Two Brunei-based foreign diplomats held receptions to mark national day in this month of January.

The India High Commission held a reception to celebrate the 58th anniversary of India Republic Day at the commission in Madang, Berakas. Present as Brunei's representative was Pehin Major General (Rtd) Dato Awang Haji Mohammad, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, and wife while Indian High Commission was led by its high commissioner, His Excellency Rieward Vicharwant Warjri.

Another reception was held at the Empire Hotel & Country Club, Jerudong by the Australia High Commission to celebrate Australia Day. Brunei was presented by the Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Pehin Dato Dr. Awang Haji Ahmad and wife. Meanwhile Australia High Commissioner, Her Excellency Ruth Adler represented Australia.

12th issuance of Sukuk-Al-Ijarah Securities announced

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, January 28 - The Ministry of Finance announced the successful pricing of its 12th issuance of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities.

An amount of \$30 million was issued that carries a maturity of one year which begins from January 24, 2008 and will mature on January 22, 2009 at a rate of 1.500 per cent.

The Brunei Government has issued \$1,050 million worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since the maiden offering on April 2006.



PHOTO: RAWILI TENGAH

'Merambat' is a common activity seen around the Kampong Ayer (water village). Picture shows a man casting his net from the *titián* (bridge).



PHOTO: MD. HAMADI HAJI MOHAMMAD

Faces of two Brunei generations. Statistics in 2007 revealed that 26.7 per cent of Brunei population belongs to age group 5-19 years old and only 2.8 per cent are aged 65 and above.