



برونى دارالسلام

Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam newsletter

Published by the Department of Information, Prime Minister's Office

MARCH, 2005
VOLUME 20 ISSUE 3

Lower CPI recorded for January 2005

Brunei's Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the month of January 2005 had decreased by 0.4 per cent. The fall, according to Department of Statistics, Department of Economic Planning and Development, was partly due to Year End and Back to School Sale which ran from December 19, 2004 until January 31, 2005.

Statistics had shown that there was a decline of 0.1 per cent on housing, water, electricity and maintenance due to a lower cost of building maintenance.

Prices of household goods, services and operation also fell by 0.3 per cent. It was due to a decrease in prices of household furnishings; kitchen appliances and utensils; crockery and cutlery; and household operation.

The department also cited a decrease in the cost of communication by 0.3 per cent due to lower prices of mobile phones and accessories. Cheaper prices of school accessories had led to the decline in cost of education by 0.1 per cent.

There were also lower prices of clothing and footwear by 6.6 per cent which were due to cheaper prices of ready-made clothing and accessories; materials for male and female; tailoring charges; and footwear.

Cost of miscellaneous goods and services also went down by 0.7 per cent due to lower prices of personal care products and personal effects and other personal goods items.

The department also stated that the prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages and cost of medical and health remained the same from the previous month.

It was also stated that cost of transportation had increased by 0.1 per cent due to higher cost of private road transport. There was also an increase in the cost of recreation and entertainment by 0.5 per cent which was due to higher prices of pets and related equipment and holiday package expenses.

The CPI in January 2005 was 1.9 per cent higher than that of the same month in 2004.

ASEAN Youth Under-21 Football Championship to foster stronger ties

Brunei Darussalam recently hosted a football championship for ASEAN Youth Under-21 from March 12 to 25.

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam officially opened the championship on March 12 at Hassanal Bolkiah National Stadium in Berakas.

This Brunei-hosted football championship was hosted for the second time where teams were vying for the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy. The last tournament was held in 2002.

Nine ASEAN member countries participated the tournament namely; Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

This championship was formed after a royal address by His Majesty on August 27, 1997 at the Institute of Diplomatic and Foreign Relations in Kuala Lumpur where he



His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam officially opens the championship

* Continue on page 7

CONTENTS

Volume 20 Issue 3 MARCH, 2005

ASEAN Youth Under-21 Football Championship	1
Lower CPI recorded for January 2005	1
Brunei-Laos bilateral ties offer opportunities in various fields	3
Palace Newsround	4
Congratulatory Messages	6
Thailand wins Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy 2005	7
Sovereign tours academic institutions in the capital	8
Former president of US, Bill Clinton in the capital	9
Citizens receive keys and land lots	9
Crown Prince work visit	9
HRH Crown Prince and HRH Princess Sarah on official visit to Singapore	10
Honorary medals for more than 1,500 recipients	11
Their Royal Highnesses to Brunei Garrison, Second Battalion	11
RBA's charity netball tournament raise fund for Tsunami victims	11
Brunei - Philippines sign MOU on Academic cooperation in Higher Education	11
SMEDC's 3 rd meeting boosts cooperation for BIMP-EAGA	12
\$394 million to increase water supplies	12
Baiduri Bank launches American Express card	12
National carrier's Business-Class ranked at 5 th place	13
Agribusiness, vital role in economic growth	13
Brunei hosts first Le Tour De Brunei	13
Telecommunication in Brunei	14
Snippets	15
"Green Heart of Borneo"	16



BRUNEI DARUSSALAM NEWSLETTER

is published monthly by the Department of Information. It reports on government, social and business events in the country. All money values are expressed in Brunei dollars \$, unless otherwise stated. Any information in this newsletter may be reproduced; a clipping of the publication would be appreciated. For free subscription (excluding postage) write to the Distribution Division, The Department of Information, Old Airport, Berakas BB 3510, Brunei Darussalam.

Editorial Staff

Editor

Sastra Sarini Haji Julaini
sarini.julaini@information.gov.bn

Reporters

Hajah Noorhijrah Haji Idris
noorhijrah.idris@information.gov.bn

Helena Mohd.Mahathir
Huraizah Ahmad

Layout Designer

Hajah Zaianit Haji Noorkhan
zaianit.noorkhan@information.gov.bn

Photographs

Photography Division of
Department of Information

General inquiries

(673) 2380 400/ext BDN Division
Fax (673) 2382 012

Information Department
<http://www.information.gov.bn>

Information Gallery
<http://www.infofoto.org.bn>



His Majesty and the Prime Minister of Laos



Her Majesty with Madam Khammeung Vorachith



Their Majesties with the Prime Minister of Laos and consort in a dinner banquet in conjunction with the state-visit of the Prime Minister of Laos to Brunei

Brunei-Laos bilateral ties offer opportunities in various fields



His Excellency at the Kuala Belalong Rainforest Research Centre based at Temburong District



Group photo of His Excellency and consort at the Ulu Temburong National Park

Relations between Brunei Darussalam and the Laos People's Democratic Republic are purposeful and practical.

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam said in his royal address in conjunction with the three-day state visit of the Prime Minister of the Laos People's Democratic Republic to Brunei, His Excellency Bounnhang Vorachith on March 23.

On formal level, His Majesty said he believes that the bilateral ties are making sound progress. The sovereign also said that Brunei is very please to see a number of Lao nationals studying in Brunei, especially those who are involved in the training available through Brunei's technical assistance programme under the initiative for ASEAN integration.

"Our joint commission also provides a practical way for us to share ideas and put forward new proposals and I hope it will continue to do this. There is much for it to consider, particularly trade and investment opportunities, continued cooperation in education and culture, and in the development of our tourism industries," said His Majesty.

Brunei Darussalam established diplomatic relations with the Laos People's Democratic Republic on July 27, 1993. On February 26, 1997, Brunei Darussalam formally set up its mission in Vientiane.

PALACE NEWSROUND...



His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam received audiences at the Istana Nurul Iman from:

- ① The Honourable Sidi Morro Sanneh, Secretary of State (Minister), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Gambia on March 3.
- ② The Honourable Dato' Sri Hishammuddin Tun Hussien, Minister of Education of Malaysia on March 7.
- ③ The Honourable Alberto G Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines on March 8.
- ④ His Excellency General Chaisit Shinawatra, Supreme Commander of Royal Thai Armed Forces on March 29.



His Majesty The Sultan and yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam presented diplomatic accreditations and received credentials from newly appointed foreign envoys at the Istana Nurul Iman:

- ① Her Excellency Magdalene Teo Chee Siong, High Commissioner of Brunei to Canada on March 15.
- ② His Excellency Pengiran Dato Paduka Haji Sharifuddin bin Pengiran Haji Yusof, Ambassador of Brunei to Thailand on March 15.
- ③ His Excellency Dr. Ahmed Ali Hanesh, non-resident Ambassador of Libya to Brunei on March 15.
- ④ His Excellency M. Barlas Ozener, non-resident Ambassador of Republic of Turkey to Brunei on March 15.
- ⑤ His Excellency Dr. Wahab Olaseinde Dosunmu, non-resident High Commissioner of Federal Republic of Nigeria to Brunei on March 15.
- ⑥ His Excellency Datuk Ali bin Abdullah, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Brunei on March 31.
- ⑦ His Excellency Bantole Yaba, non-resident Ambassador of Republic of Benin on March 31.
- ⑧ His Excellency Yousif Rashid Alsharhan, non-resident Ambassador of United Arab Emirates on March 31.
- ⑨ His Excellency Eugenius Sawicki, non-resident Ambassador of Republic of Poland on March 31.

PALACE NEWSROUND...



Her Majesty Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha granted audiences at the Istana Nurul Iman for:

- ❶ Madam Sopa Polteja, spouse of Ambassador of Thailand to Brunei on March 19.
- ❷ Her Excellency Pengiran Datin Paduka Hajah Masrainah binti Pengiran Haji Ahmad, High Commissioner of Brunei to Australia on March 19.
- ❸ Datin Hajah Arbi bin Haji Abd Rahman, spouse of Ambassador of Brunei to Thailand on March 31.
- ❹ Madam Sawson HM Husien, spouse of Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Brunei on March 31.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah received audiences at the Istana Nurul Iman from:

- ❶ Her Excellency Pengiran Datin Paduka Hajah Masrainah binti Pengiran Haji Ahmad, High Commissioner of Brunei to Australia on March 19.
- ❷ Her Excellency Magdalene Teo Chee Siong, High Commissioner of Brunei to Canada on March 19.
- ❸ His Excellency Pengiran Dato Paduka Haji Sharifuddin bin Pengiran Haji Yusof, Ambassador of Brunei to Thailand on March 19.
- ❹ His Excellency Thierry Borja De Mozota, Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Defence of France on March 22.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah and Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah received audiences on March 7 at the Istana Nurul Iman from the Honourable Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines and spouse, Madam Rosie Lovely T. Romulo.



Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah received audiences at the Istana Nurul Iman from:

- Her Excellency Pengiran Datin Paduka Hajah Masrainah binti Pengiran Haji Ahmad, High Commissioner of Brunei to Australia on March 19.
- Her Excellency Magdalene Teo Chee Siong, High Commissioner of Brunei to Canada on March 19.
- Datin Hajah Arbi binti Haji Abdul Rahman, spouse of Ambassador of Brunei to Thailand on March 19.

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES

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

- His Excellency Thaksin Shinawatra for his re-election as the Prime Minister of Thailand on March 10.
- His Excellency General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and his Prime Minister, His Excellency Shaukat Aziz in conjunction with the Pakistan's Day on March 23.
- His Excellency President Iajuddin Ahmed, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and his Prime Minister, Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia in conjunction with the republic's Independence Day on March 26.



His Majesty meets officials from respective teams



Royal entourage witness the opening of the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy

Thailand wins Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy 2005

Thailand emerged as the champion for the ASEAN Youth Under-21 Football Championship. The team had won the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy with cash prize of \$20,000 and gold medals.

Thailand defeated the Myanmar football team with a 3-0 score line.

Present to hand the trophy was His Royal Highness Crown Prince

Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah at the Hassanal Bolkiah National Stadium on March 25. Also present were other members of the royal family.

Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy 2005 was officially opened on March 12 by

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.

For this tournament, Myanmar came in second with Laos and Vietnam at third place after losing their semi-finals.



B\$20,000 for the winner



Exciting match displayed during the final of Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy

* From frontpage (Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy)

called for a soccer league where it would deepen the awareness of ordinary people of ASEAN countries.

"Having our best and brightest students, our future leaders, immersed in another ASEAN country will deepen their understanding and allow them to form valuable networks.

"Second, I observe that sports can reach out to people in all walks of life. Of all spectator sports, soccer has the greatest following in Southeast Asia.

"Having an ASEAN or Southeast Asian soccer league will deepen the awareness of ordinary people of ASEAN countries. Let all the best teams of our region compete in the league. If Europe can have a European League, Latin-America a Latin-American League and Africa its African League, why is there not a Southeast Asia League?," said His Majesty.



A student showing his books to His Majesty

Sekolah Tinggi Perempuan Raja Isteri (STPRI), an all girls' school was among the school visited by His Majesty



Football field for extra curriculum activities as one of the many facilities available in the school



Science Laboratory, one of the facilities provided in the school



His Majesty talks to a student of the Raja Isteri Fatimah Primary School

Caring monarch mingles with the students



Sovereign tours academic institutions in the capital

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam made unscheduled tours to three government schools in Bandar Seri Begawan.

The first school came under His Majesty's scrutiny was Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin (SOAS) College. SOAS College is one of the oldest learning

institutions in Brunei. The college had celebrated their Golden Jubilee in 2002.

The second school visited was Sekolah Tinggi Perempuan Raja Isteri (STPRI), an all girls' secondary school. STPRI was established in 1930 as the first all girls' school in Brunei. During His Majesty's visit,

STPRI was holding the orientation program for the lower sixth students.

His Majesty later went to Raja Isteri Fatimah (RIF) Primary School. The school had been utilised since January 1, 1957. Currently there are 300 pupils in the school with 32 teachers.



His Majesty with the former president of the United States, His Excellency President Bill Clinton

Former president of US in the capital

Former president of the United States, His Excellency President Bill Clinton was in the capital for a one-day visit on March 1.

During his stay, His Excellency attended a dinner hosted by His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.

Also present at the dinner was His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah and His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Citizens receive keys and land lots

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam issued land grants and keys to new homes to 190 recipients on March 17. The ceremony was held at Rimba II Primary School in Gadong.

From the total recipients; 65 received land grants under the Rimba National Housing Plan (government servant - division II); 99 received land grants under Rimba National Housing Plan (government servant - division III, IV and V); two received house keys under Indigenous Landless Scheme based at Kampong Rimba, 23 received house keys under the Kampong Ayer Resettlement Housing Scheme in Kampong Rimba and one received house key under the Kampong Ayer Resettlement Housing Scheme in Kampong Mata-Mata.

His Majesty also toured the school; Jerudong International School; several homes of recipients including the homes of village head of Kampong Rimba and village head of Kampong Mata-Mata; Electric Transformer Centre "Gadong II", Grand Motor Sdn Bhd; QAF Brunei; Kingston Beverages and Creamery Sdn Bhd; Brunei Press Sdn Bhd; Jati Transport Sdn Bhd; and Brunei Industrial Development Authority (BINA).

Crown Prince work visit



His Royal Highness mingles with residents of Kampong Ayer

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah was on working visit to Mukim Amo in Temburong District and several mukims of Kampong Ayer of the Brunei-Muara district on March 5 and 30 respectively.

At Mukim Amo, His Royal Highness visited schools, cooperative company, long house, residence of Penghulu of Mukim Amo and home of head of village of Kampong Sibut, house under Brunei Islamic Council assistant, Balai raya and mosque. The Crown Prince also visited Logistics Centre at Outward Bound of Brunei Darussalam, parks and quarry side.

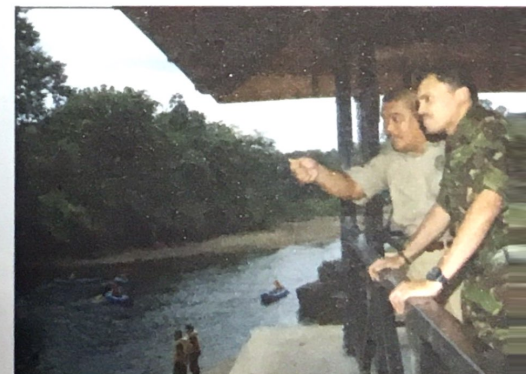
Mukim Amo is the largest mukim in Temburong District with an area of 541 square kilometres.

Among the mukims visited on March 30 were Mukim Tamoi, Mukim Peramu, Mukim Saba, Mukim Sungai Kebun and Mukim Sungai Kedayan.

The Crown Prince visited schools, residences of Penghulu of visited mukims, kain songket weaving enterprise, balai ibadat, mosque, mini museum, police station, boat building business and marine fire brigade station.



A recipient of a new home receives his key from His Majesty



His Royal Highness briefed by an officer



Guard-of-honour to welcome the Crown Prince



His Royal Highness signs a guestbook

His Royal Highness with the Prime Minister of Singapore
His Excellency Lee Hsien LoongTheir Royal Highnesses
at the banquet hosted
by the President of
Singapore and consortHis Royal Highness receives audience from Minister Mentor,
His Excellency Lee Kuan Yew

HRH Crown Prince and HRH Princess Sarah on official visit to Singapore

His Royal Highness the Crown Prince, Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah and Her Royal Highness Princess Sarah were in Singapore for a three-day official visit from March 9 to 12.

During the official visit, His Royal Highness received in audience His Excellency S.R Nathan, the President of the Republic of Singapore, Prime Minister of Singapore His Excellency Lee Hsien Loong, His Excellency Lee Kuan Yew, the Minister Mentor of Singapore, and His Excellency Goh Chok Tong, the Senior Minister of Singapore.

Among places visited by His Royal Highness during the three-day visit were the Ministry of Defence of Singapore, Changi Naval Base, Singapore Commando Headquarter, Mediacorp Caldecott and Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.

While Her Royal Highness went for City Tour, visited Asian Civilisation Museum (ACM), Heritage Park, Singapore Art Museum, Raffles Junior College and Singapore Sports School.

Their Royal Highnesses also visited the Singapore's Botanic Gardens and attended a Singapore Football League match at Bedok Stadium.

During their visit, Their Royal Highnesses attended a banquet hosted by His Excellency President S.R Nathan at the Istana Negara. Their Royal Highnesses also attended a luncheon hosted by His Excellency Senior Minister of Singapore and spouse. Their Royal Highnesses also attended a banquet hosted by Rear Admiral (NS) Teo Chee Hean, the Minister of Defence and spouse at the Grand Hyatt Hotel.



Her Royal Highness on a City Tour in Singapore



Her Royal Highness visits the Asian Civilisation Museum

Honorary medals for more than 1,500 recipients



A recipient receives his honorary medal from His Royal Highness

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam consented to award honorary medals in conjunction with his 58th birthday anniversary.

Presenting the medals on behalf of His Majesty was His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah. The ceremony was held at the Dewan Persantapan Lapau in Bandar Seri Begawan.

Five hundred and forty people received their medals on March 14; 573 received their medals on March 16; and 558 received their medals on March 19.

The medal awarded were *Pingat Bakti Laila Ikhlas* (P.B.L.I), Meritorious Service Medal (*Pingat Jasa Kebaktian* – P.J.K), *Pingat Indah Kerja Baik*, and Long Service Medal (*Pingat Kerja Lama*).

Their Royal Highnesses to Brunei Garrison, Second Battalion

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah and Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah on March 23 visited headquarter of Brunei Garrison and the Second Battalion of The Royal Gurkha Rifles (2RGR) in Seria.

At the Tukur Lines Guard Hall in Brunei Garrison, His Royal Highness inspected the guard-of-honour. Then, Their Royal Highnesses were briefed on the history and roles of 2RGR and Brunei Garrison.

From Tukur Lines, Their Royal Highness had separated itineraries.

His Royal Highness went to Bukit Puan in Labi to witness the jungle training activity of Brunei Garrison. While Her Royal Highness visited the Hornbill School and Family Community Centre.



Her Royal Highness receives a memento from officials of the Brunei Garrison



Winner of RBA charity netball tournament receives a trophy

RBA's charity netball tournament raise fund for Tsunami victims

Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah on March 20 attended Royal Brunei Airlines charity netball tournament. The tournament was held to collect funds for the Tsunami Disaster Relief Fund.

Her Royal Highness also presented the prizes to the winners; and a cheque to the representative of Tsunami Disaster Relief Fund committee.

Brunei – Philippines sign MOU on Academic Cooperation in Higher Education

Brunei Darussalam and Philippines on March 7 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Academic Cooperation in Higher Education. The signing took place at the *Balai Penghadapan of Bukit Kayangan*.

Brunei was represented by His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed

Bolkiah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and his counterpart was the Honourable Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Philippines.

The MOU signed is hoped to enhance the cooperation in higher education and professional training in degree and post degree level.



MOU signed to enhance cooperation in higher education and professional training

Issues on trade and investment cooperation within the Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines-East ASEAN Economic Growth (BIMP-EAGA) region were discussed during the Third Small and Medium Enterprise Development Cluster (SMEDC).

The two-day meeting at the Centerpoint Hotel in Gadong, which commenced on March 1, was participated by the SMEDC working group comprising of government officials and several business persons from member countries.

The prioritisation of industry projects flagship were highlighted at the event including Halal Poultry Industry (Brunei), Business Development Services (Indonesia), Palm Oil Industry (Malaysia) and Seaweed Industry (the Philippines) in order to

SMEDC's 3rd meeting boosts cooperation for BIMP-EAGA



3rd Meeting for BIMP-EAGA Development Cluster was held in Bandar Seri Begawan

promote growth of SME's.

Brunei's Project Official at the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources, Awang Sidop bin Haji Belaman said that the meeting aims to discuss issues relating to regional trade and investment within the BIMP-EAGA region, particularly on

customs, immigration, quarantine, security and Islamic banking.

SMEDC which was set up in 2003 aimed to accelerate recovery and stimulate socio-economic development in the sub-region.

The two day meeting is a follow-up to the SMEDC

second meeting at Balikpapan Indonesia, which discussed preliminary ideas on business plan pertaining to various flagship projects as well as tentative timelines.

A sum of \$394 million under the 8th National Development Plan (NDP) was allocated for projects to increase water source and supplies.

Minister of Development, Pehin Dato Dr. Haji Awang Ahmad stated the matters during the launching of World Water Day on March 22 in Berakas.

Under the 8th NDP, Brunei had been able to supply about 580 million litres of water per day compared to 400 million litres under 7th NDP.

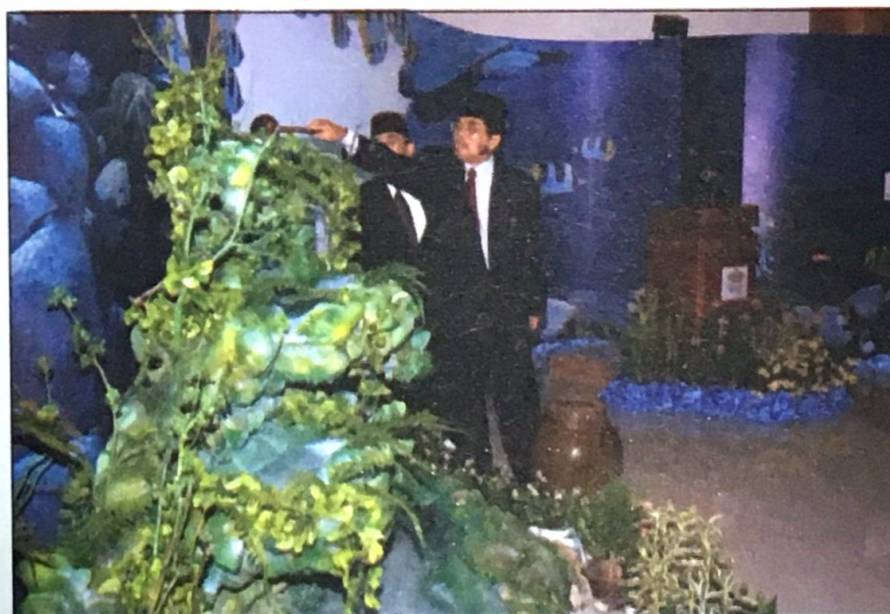
Among the projects in progress and would be

carried out are construction of dams, water treatment plans and changing the water supplies pipes; and also to identify water source that has the potential to develop.

He further added that almost 100 per cent of Brunei people had received clean water supplies according to World Health Organisation (WHO) standard.

World Water Day is celebrated on March 22 every year as agreed by the United Nations; and the theme for this year is 'Water for Life'.

\$394 million to increase water supplies



Minister of Development officially launch World Water Day

Baiduri Bank launches American Express card

Baiduri Bank Group, one of the leading bank in Brunei, had launched its Baiduri-American Express card.

Present to launch the card was Pehin Dato Haji Abdul Rahman, the Minister of Industry and Primary Resources on March 2.

According to the Minister, Baiduri Bank has made several significant achievements evolving from a bank

focusing primarily on corporate banking into an integrated financial service provider offering comprehensive products and services to people.

Also present at the event was General Manager of Baiduri Bank, Mr Pierre Imhof, who stated that the collaboration has given a great opportunity for Baiduri Bank to reinforce itself in the market

leadership.

This is in line with the ongoing commitment to provide world-class financial product and services to meet distinctive need for Brunei consumers he adds.

Also present at the event was Mr Kula Kulendran, Vice-President and Head of Global Network Services for Japan, Asia-Pacific and Australia American Express Incorporation.

National carrier's Business-Class ranked at 5th place

A survey conducted by Skytrax, the world's best known and most recognised independent assessor of airline quality, has ranked Brunei's National carrier, Royal Brunei Airlines (RBA) Business-Class in 5th position out of 21 airlines surveyed in the Asian region.

This is a remarkable improvement as RBA's Business-Class was ranked 16th in 2003. The ranking places RBA behind big-name airlines such as Cathay Pacific, Singapore Airlines, Qantas and All Nippon Airways.

In a ranking of 66 airlines surveyed worldwide, RBA was placed at 9th position.

The Skytrax ranking is based on comprehensive survey of all aspects of airline services including ground service, lounge facilities, inflight comfort and amenities, frequent flyer programs and cabin crew services.



Photos by Royal Brunei Airlines

RBA, the National carrier of Brunei Darussalam made the nation proud with achieving 5th place for its Business-Class

Agribusiness, vital role in economic growth



Pehin Dato Awang Haji Abdul Rahman at the 'Brunei Agri Food 2005' fair in Limau Manis

Brunei Darussalam's overall domestic agriculture industries have shown positive development not only seen in the agricultural output and processing aspects, but also in the preparation of farming product operations.

This was stated by the Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Pehin Dato Awang Haji Abdul Rahman during the launching event for the largest 'Brunei Agri Food 2005' fair in Limau Manis on March 3.

On the other hand, the expo will give evidence on how agribusiness plays a vital role in Brunei's economic growth, he said.

However, a favourable environment is needed to ensure the country's agriculture industries continue to grow.

The agriculture industry has actively taken steps to observe new technologies to help raise the capabilities of domestic agricultural products to assist in placing local products in the global market.

Brunei Agri Food 2005 comprises of 34 international exhibitors including participants from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia, China and Taiwan.

The event also highlighted the achievements and developments of the agriculture industry in the country, showcase the recent advancement in the agricultural production, agro food processing and up-to-date agricultural technologies, and promote investments and trade opportunities in the agricultural sector.

Brunei hosts first Le Tour De Brunei

Brunei Darussalam Cycling Federation (BDCF) with the Ministry of Culture, Youth & Sports and support from the Tourism Department of the Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources hosted the country's first ever Le Tour De Brunei.

The five-stage cycling race involved 48 cyclists from ASEAN countries. There were two categories namely; Individual category and the Team category.

According to President of BDCF, Haji Rosli bin Haji Mohidin, eight teams were involved in the competition including Brunei A, Brunei B, Majlis Sukan Negara (MSN) Malaysia, Le Tour Malaysia, the Malaysian National Team, Benteng Muda Tenggara (Indonesia), Custom Cycling Club Indonesia and the Thailand National Team.

Le Tour De Brunei which offered a total of B\$40,000 prize money started off with 30km time trials from Bukit Shahbandar.

The second stage of the race brought cyclist to travel the longest route from Bandar Seri Begawan to Kuala Belait district covering 167 km.



Cyclers at the 1st Le Tour De Brunei which offered a total of B\$40,000 prize money

The third stage involved a route along Kuala Belait towards Tutong covering a distance of 142km while the next stage of the race was 124km along Muara before ending at Bandar Seri Begawan.

Meanwhile, the final stage involved 60 laps from Jalan Sultan to Jalan Pemancha before ending back at the Taman Haji Sir Muda Omar Ali Saifuddin.

Telecommunications in Brunei



HISTORY

Brunei Darussalam presently has one of the most advanced telecommunication facilities in this region with the fixed line telephone density of 25% second only to Singapore. Brunei Darussalam has an extensive network of external plant consisting of copper and fibre optic cables, completely digital exchanges with adequate international connectivity via the satellite system and the fibre optics submarine cable systems.

Telecommunication was first introduced to Brunei Darussalam in 1920 with the installation of international wireless telegraph circuit linking Brunei Darussalam to Labuan. The first telephone service was introduced in the 1930s linking the British Residence Office and his residence.

Jabatan Telekom Brunei (JTB) was established as a government department in 1952 and has been responsible for the development of communication systems and infrastructure and for the drastic transformation in telecommunication services especially after the country's independence in 1984.

Developments

In August 2004, JTB awarded a computer cable management system project, named DESIGNS, to Siemens Pte Ltd (Siemens) and is aimed at the development of an efficient and flexible Outside Plant Management System to administer the expanding demand for telephone services within the Sultanate.

It is hoped that the project would enhance JTB's existing Network Plant & Equipment Records System into a seamless geographical based system to achieve optimal planning, design, implementation, control, documentation, operation & maintenance of its Outside Line Plant infrastructure, covering its extensive fixed-line network of copper & Fibre optic cables. The geographic information system (GIS) will contain real time graphical and textual data gathered from actual surveys, depicting mainly the entire layout of JTB's Outside Line Plant network covering all four districts in the nation.

The DESIGNS system is aimed at largely supporting various user

groups from the different sections of JTB. With target users comprising of Telecommunications Engineers, System/Network Administrators, Data Entry Operators, Technical Officers & Front Desk Personnel. The system is expected to be fully operational in September 2005. In the realisation of the project, Siemens shall be responsible for the overall implementation of the turnkey project, covering the conduct of external surveys to verify JTB's existing or as built infrastructure; the development and integration of the core application system; the provision and installation of JTB's hardware/peripherals and software licences required, including the smooth network interconnection between data servers in each district; preparation, and accuracy of graphic and non-graphic data for data entry, the transfer of technical know-how through in-house trainings, and the provision of after-sales support.

By embarking on the DESIGNS project it is viewed as a significant contribution from JTB, in its attempts at providing quality service to the public and helping pave the way towards means of sustainable development and developing a globally competitive information & communications technology as one of the overarching goals of the Ministry of Communications.

Mobile Telephony

Year 2004 saw the implementation of GPRS services made available to the growing number of cellular phone users within the Sultanate. Mobile phone users in Brunei Darussalam already have access to WAP are now able to utilise GPRS with their handsets only needing to be configured correctly before they're able to access information from around the world.

The new services that are now available to those with the appropriate mobile phones mean that those with the latest in mobile phone technology are able to capture, send and receive full colour pictures, interact with animated images in text, audio or video, send and receive emails and access real time information like the latest financial figures to latest news updates.

Multimedia Messaging Services or MMS being made available to both DSTcom's Prima and Easi users, have resulted in Mobile phones becoming an ever increasing catalyst in the evolution of everyday lifestyle in tandem with the rapid growth of

technologies. The demand for mobile phone content has been on an unprecedented high with mobile phone content vendors establishing themselves to satisfy users who want mobile phone content such as pictures, media clips, music files and downloadable games.

DSTCom also established Easi Xtra over the last year, meaning that International Roaming was not mutually exclusive to Prima, giving prepaid mobile phone users on the Easi service the ability to travel abroad without having to obtain a phone line in the country they're travelling in. DSTCom's global mobile coverage allows users to roam in more than 68 destinations (126 network operators) around the globe and is also extended to destinations that operate on non-GSM 900/1800 networks such as Korea, Japan, USA and Mexico. By inserting your DSTCom SIM card into a compatible handset designed specifically for each network, mobile phone users are able to remain in touch with loved ones without having to constantly update their contact details whilst on their travels.

3G Telephone Service available soon

Additionally, mobile phone users in Brunei will soon have another alternative with the availability of a second mobile service soon. The government of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam had awarded the 2nd Public Mobile Telephone Service License to a local conglomerate and a government-based company, namely the Consortium of QAF Comserve Sdn Bhd and Telekom Brunei Bhd (TelBru).

The 2nd Mobile License awardees call for the rollout of 3G or third generation wireless services, which refers to near future developments in personal and business wireless technology, especially relating to mobile communications.

3G will usher in many benefits such as roaming capability, video mobile phone, wireless broadband access (peak of 384Kbps) and high speed data communication.

3G network to be implemented will be based on the WCDMA technology that is widely adopted by many countries around the world that includes Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, China, USA and the United Kingdom.

Snippets...

Luxury cars in town on tour

Eighty vintage cars namely Rolls Royce and Bentley were in town as part of the Borneo Experience Tour 2005.

The cars were on display at the Empire Hotel and Country Club.

The luxury cars were in the country from March 7 until 11. The car owners were celebrated to a dinner, hosted by the Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Pehin Dato Haji Awang Abdul Rahman at the Royal Brunei Polo Club on March 7 in Jerudong.



Conference to promote agriculture

Department of Agriculture will be holding a conference on Multifunctionality of Agriculture on May 19 at the International Convention Centre in Berakas.

The aim of this conference is to give the public awareness on the various functions of agriculture; to give a clear picture on how the functions have been assessed in some countries which are active thus giving positive indications; and to get exposure and exchange of ideas among the invited speakers and participants.

The Department welcomes both local and international participants. Registration form is available at <http://www.agriculture.gov.bn>

\$10 million contract for e-service infrastructure

Ministry of Communications in its bid to implement its e-service infrastructure has signed a \$10 million contract with Integrated Communication Sdn Bhd.

The Mincom Portal Services project would be carried out over a period of six months. Once completed, it would materialise the vision for Service Hub for Trade and Tourism (SHuTT), which is to connect the country to the global committee through an information system portal.

Present as signatories for the Ministry was the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Communications, Pehin Dato Haji Awang Abdullah. While his counterpart was the Managing Director of DST Group, Pengiran Haji Mohd Zain.

The agreement was sealed on March 9.

1st Brunei Marathon 2005 in December

Brunei Darussalam will be hosting the First Brunei Marathon 2005 on December 11. The race is sanctioned by Brunei Amateur Athletic Association (BAAA) and endorsed by Brunei Tourism and Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports.

The event is a part of visit Brunei promotion. Sport-tourism is a new add-on to the current eco-tourism and Brunei's unique culture-tourism.

A sum of B\$500,000 (approximately equivalent to US\$300,000) has been allocated for the prizes.

For more information, log on to <http://www.brunemarathon.com>

Brunei In Brief

Official name: Negara Brunei Darussalam

Capital: Bandar Seri Begawan

Land size: 5765 sq. km

Geographical Position: North-west of Borneo Island in Southeast Asia

Population: 349,600 (2003 estimate)

National Carrier: Royal Brunei Airlines

Official Language: Malay

Official Religion: Islam

Official Website: www.brunei.gov.bn



“Green Heart of Borneo”

Brunei has one of the finest conservation policies implemented in the region and indeed the world today. From total land area, 78 per cent of land area is covered by forest, and 41 per cent of the land is gazetted Forest Reserve. Among the most visited forest in Brunei are the Kuala Belalong mini park in Temburong District and Berakas Forestry Recreation Park in Brunei Muara District.

