



برونى دارالسلام

Brunei Darussalam

new s l e t t e r

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- Heritage :** Gasing, a favourite pastime
- In Brunei :** Belait District
- Colours :** Brunei celebrates 23rd National day
- Explore :** Serasa Beach, popular spot for family time

Committee to improve quality of public services established

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, February 22 - His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam said that four sectors comprising of the public services, private sectors, non-governmental organisations and publics are the main pillars for a country to exist as an independent country and capable of facing a competitive and uncertain world.

His Majesty said in his titah (royal speech) to mark the 23rd National Day of Brunei Darussalam. His Majesty said that we have to be open minded to overcome weaknesses and have a proactive attitude to achieve success in public services.

The private sector, said His Majesty, has been urged to contribute to the development of the country, especially in strengthening the country's Gross Domestic Product through more direct and meaningful economic activities.

Non-governmental organisations, said His Majesty, also play an important role in the country's development with their beneficial activities while the public also have their responsibilities and roles to play.

Towards this, His Majesty has consented for the establishment of a committee called the Steering Committee in Providing Services to the Public by Government Agencies.

This committee, said His Majesty, will be incorporated into the Prime Minister's Office and will have the responsibility to improve the quality of services provided to the public.



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ISTANA NURUL IMAN, February 21 - His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam received diplomatic credentials from four newly-appointed non-resident ambassadors to the sultanate.

They were:

1. His Excellency Omar Diwara, Burkina Faso's newly-appointed Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam on February 21.
2. His Excellency Charalambos Christopoulos, Greece's newly-appointed Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam on February 21.
3. His Excellency Par Ahlberger, Sweden's new-appointed Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam on February 21.
4. His Excellency Andreas Zenonos, Cyprus' newly-appointed High Commissioner to



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

1. The Speaker of the Malaysian Parliament, The Honourable Tan Sri Dato' Seri Diraja Ramli bin Ngah Talib on February 22.
2. Chief of General Staff, United Kingdom, His Excellency General Sir Richard Dannatt KDB CBE MC ADC on February 27.
3. Minister of Islamic Affairs of Endowment, Propagation and Guidance of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Saleh bin Abdul Aziz bin Mohamed al- Sheikh on March 5.

Congratulatory messages

His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam sent a congratulatory message to the President of Vietnam, His Excellency Nguyen Minh Triet, on the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries on February 28.

Meanwhile, His Majesty received congratulatory messages from Nguyen Minh Triet, State President, and Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Brunei Darussalam and Vietnam on February 28.



Her Majesty Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha received audiences at the Istana Nurul Iman from:

1. The spouse of the Speaker of the Malaysian Parliament, Raja Puan Sri Dato' Noora Ashikin binti Raja Abdullah on February 22.
2. The spouse of the United Kingdom Chief of General Staff, Lady Philippa Dannatt on February 27.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office in a group photo soon after receiving audience from the Asean Ministers Responsible For Environment at the Istana Nurul Iman.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office received audiences at Istana Nurul Iman from the Asean ministers responsible for environment on March 1.

The Asean ministers were in the country to attend the 2nd Sub Regional Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC); the 12th Asean Ministerial Meeting on Haze (AMMH) and the 2nd Asean Conference of Parties to the Asean Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (COP).

Their Majesties and Her Royal Highness attend Chinese New Year celebration

BERAKAS, February 20 - His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, Her Majesty Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha, Her Royal Highness Pengiran Isteri Azrinaz Mazhar joined the local Chinese community for a get-together ceremony celebrating their new year. The ceremony was held at the International Convention Centre.

Also present were His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's office and other members of the royal family.

The ceremony was highlighted by the thrilling lion dance from Chung Hwa Middle School and PDS International School students. The Tiong Hua community also showcased traditional Chinese and Malay dances.



Their Majesties and Her Royal Highness upon arrival at the International Convention Centre at the get-together ceremony celebrating Chinese New Year.

Royal visit to academic institutions



His Majesty scrutinise the teaching system at the Raja Isteri Pg. Anak Damit Arabic Girls Secondary School.

JALAN TUTONG March 8 - His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam made a royal visit to two Arabic institutions and a college university situated on Mile One in Jalan Tutong.

His Majesty's first stop was at Raja Isteri Pg Anak Damit Arabic Girls Secondary School (SUAMPRI PAD). SUAMPRI PAD was built in 1966 and used a year later. It currently has 441 students studying from Form 1 to 5 and 81 teaching staff. This secondary school also provide a hostel where it currently house 127 students.

His Majesty's next stop was at the Hassanal Bolkia Arabic Boys Secondary School. Throughout the visit, His Majesty was briefed by the school's principal, Ustazah Hjh Asmah Hj Rendah. SMALHB was built in 1964 and officiated in 1967. It has 305 students taking lower and upper six classes with a teaching staff of around 60 people.

The monarch then toured the Seri Begawan Religious Teachers College University. ICT room was one of the areas the monarch toured before a closed-door briefing session with the staff of the school. His Majesty was briefed on courses offered by the college university, its plans and preparations.

The benevolent ruler in his 1428 Hijrah *tithah* early this year announced the upgrading of Seri Begawan Religious Teachers College (which exist since more than 30 years ago) to that of a University College.

The first undergraduate intake will start their courses in August 2007. Programmes offered include Diploma for Religious Teaching and a Bachelors Degree in Religious Teaching for in-service religious teachers.



GASING, a favourite pastime

A favourite pastime activity among Bruneians, particularly the men in the olden days was playing 'Gasing' or top spinning.

Gasing was a popular game not only among Bruneians but it also spread across the region among the Malays such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

Gasing withstood the test of times, hence, today, you are able to see Gasing still spinning in its own deserved glory.

As the top-spinning is played across the region, different countries have different shapes of *Gasing* and different styles of playing. The game can be played either individually or in teams by adult or children.

In Brunei, *Gasing* is usually made of hardwood namely Mengaris or Impas trees. These trees are chosen because of their toughness and weight; and the best part to be taken is just above the trunk where the veins are compact.

With the *Gasing*, you will notice that it comes with a string, wound tightly to its base. The string is usually made from Brunei's indigenous tree like Timbaran or Ara woods. However, other countries may use other materials.

The making process of *Gasing* in the olden days was mainly by hand; but now with the rise of machines, the process of making the *Gasing* into a symmetrical form is much simpler.

One of the styles to play top spinning is the one who top spins the longest time and within the specified area of the circle will emerge as the winner. Other type of the game is by knocking opponent's top out of the circle. The games and rules, however, may also differ from one country to another.

Until now, *Gasing* is still a favourite among the Bruneians and it has become one of the featured activities during His Majesty's birthday celebration. There are also associations formed among the top-spinning players.

Nowadays, *Gasing* is no longer seen as a sports game only, however, it has also become decorative items such as keychain and mini-*Gasing* model for souvenirs.







His Majesty introduced to team's manager.



His Majesty officiates the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy 2007.



Brunei host Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy

BERAKAS, March 3 – Brunei Darussalam hosted the third edition of the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy for ASEAN Youth Football Championship from March 3 to 12.

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam officially launched the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy for Asean Youth Football Championship 2007 at the Hassanal Bolkiah National stadium.

Also present were His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Senior Minister at Prime Minister's Office, His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Malik and His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Mateen.

The championship was participated by eight teams from ASEAN countries namely Malaysia, Singapore, Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and host country Brunei. At the ceremony, His Majesty was introduced to each team manager.

His Majesty and members of the royal family also watched the opening game between Brunei Darussalam and Cambodia where the home team drew 2-2.

Thailand retain championship title

BERAKAS, March 12 – Thailand retained their title as champion for the third edition of the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy for ASEAN Youth Football Championship after defeating Myanmar 5-4 through penalty shootouts.

Present to witness the match at the Hassanal Bolkiah National Stadium in Berakas was His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Senior Minister at the Prime

Minister's Office, who later presented the prestigious trophy to the winner. Also present was His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Malek.

Winner of this championship received \$20,000 cash prize with medals followed by \$10,000 cash prize for first runner-up. This year's second runner-ups are Cambodia and Malaysia who each won \$5,000 cash prize and medals.



His Royal Highness presents the Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy to the captain of Thailand, the champion.



High spirit shown by the teams.



Among the Brunei's team supporters.

Did you know that...

- Brunei became the sixth member of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on January 7, 1984.
- Brunei became a member of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).
- Brunei became the 159th member of the United Nations (UN) on September 21, 1984.
- Brunei joined Non Aligned Movements (NAM) on 1992.

>> CALENDAR OF EVENT 2007

January 1	-	New Year 2007
January 20	-	New Year of Islamic Calendar 1428 Hijrah
February 18	-	Chinese New Year
February 23	-	Brunei's 23 rd National Day
March 31	-	Prophet Muhammad's birthday anniversary
May 31	-	Royal Brunei Armed Forces 46 th anniversary
July 15	-	His Majesty's 61 st birthday anniversary
August 11	-	Israk Mikraj celebration
September 13	-	First Day of Ramadhan
September 29	-	Nuzul Al-Quran celebration
October 13	-	Hari Raya Aidil Fitri
December 20	-	Hari Raya Aidil Adha
December 25	-	Christmas

*subject to changes

Brunei's School Holiday

March 16 to 25	-	First Term School Holiday
June 10 to 24	-	Second Term School Holiday
September 7 to 16	-	Third Term School Holiday
November 30 to December 31	-	Fourth Term School Holiday

>> 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 383,000 people (2006)
- 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 flies frequently to Brunei. Beginning July 2006, Air Asia, the Malaysian 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.

Belait District

In this edition, In Brunei will focus on the Belait District which offer a number of interesting places to visit and unique attractions only found here.

Background

Belait is the largest district in Brunei Darussalam that covers an area approximately 2,727 square kilometers with a population of around 70,000 people comprising of Malay, Chinese and other indigenous groups like Iban, Penan, Murut, and Dusun. Most of them reside in Kuala Belait, the main town and Seria. It has eight mukims namely; Kuala Belait, Seria, Sg Liang, Bukit Sawat, Labi, Sukang, Kuala Balai and Melillas.

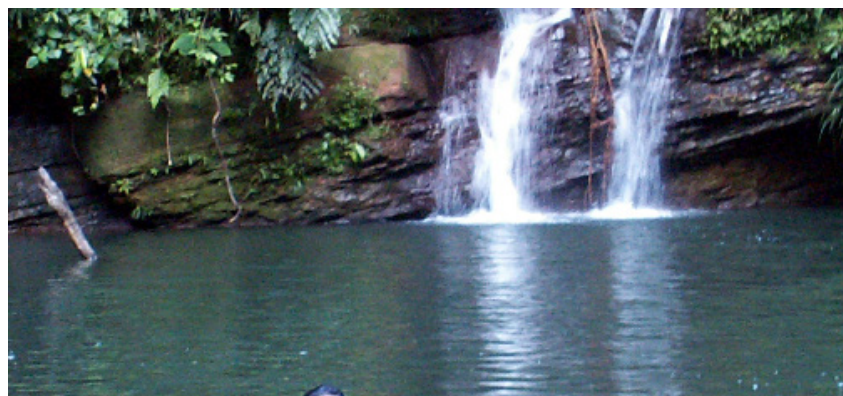
Seria is a very well-known town in the Belait District as this is where Brunei Darussalam's major industries namely oil and gas are mostly located.

The district borders the South China Sea to the north, the Bruneian district of Tutong to the east and the Malaysian state of Sarawak to the south and west.

How to get there?

The district is connected by the Seria/Lumut bypass to the Muara-Tutong highway to the east and by the Rasau Bridge to Sungai Tujoh and Miri in the west. A ferry service crosses the mouth of the Belait River linking Kuala Belait to Kg. Sg. Teraban.

Getting to Belait District via the coastal roads takes more than an hour from Bandar Seri Begawan. It is advisable to rent a car, but the trip can also be arranged through a local tour operator. Access to Miri of the Malaysian state of Sarawak is also possible by a toll bridge road between Kuala Belait and Miri.



A waterfall at Luagan Lalak Recreational Park.

Accommodation

If you wish to stay overnight, there are few places you can stay at. The Riviera Hotel Brunei is the most convenient situated in the heart of the Belait district. Strategically situated at the center of the town of Kuala Belait, you are basically just minutes away from most business and shopping destination to satisfy your business arrangement as well as personal shopping needs.

Sea View Hotel at Jalan Maulana, Kuala Belait is another place to stay at. It is a business and resort style hotel consisting of 61 rooms and 28 Service Apartments strategically located in the town of Kuala Belait. It is within easy reach of all major business and government offices, shopping centres and it is only 15 minutes car ride to the town.

Trademark

Belait District has its own trademark such as Seria itself that is known as an oil town has a number of 'Nodding Donkey' oil wells, quite a common sight in this area.

The Billionth Barrel Monument is another trademark of the Belait District. This monument was commissioned by Brunei Shell Petroleum and was designed by a local architect. It commemorates the production of the billionth barrel of oil by the Seria oilfield. The monument is just a 5-minute drive from the town centre.

The latest landmark in Seria is the Oil and Gas Discovery Centre (OGDC). It is set up by the Brunei Shell Petroleum in September 2002 and aimed at educating the public about science, technology and the environment. The OGDC is opened for visits from Tuesday and Sundays. Admissions fees are \$1 for children below the age of 12, \$2 for teens up to 17 and \$5 for adults.



A 'nodding donkey' at Seria town.

Places of Interest

There are a number of interesting places to visit if you are in the Belait District. One place not to be missed is Kuala Balai. Just 45 minutes from Kuala Belait or a 20-minute drive from the new Seria bypass, a visit to Kuala Balai is like stepping back in time in history. At one time, Kuala Balai, which is carved out of the jungle on the banks of the Belait River, was the largest community in the west of the country. Its highway was the river and the villagers grew crops, fished and, above all, were famous for their *ambulong* (sago).

Kuala Balai is one of the original areas where sago is produced. Historically, *ambulong* or sago was first produced during the early part of the Second World War in the 1940's when rice was hard to come by and people had to find an alternative staple food base. For Kuala Balai residents, they turned to 'Rumbia' or sago palm, from which they extracted the starchy part as food.

Another popular place is Wasai Wong Kadir. It is a 45-minute walk from the Labi road and ideal for those who enjoy or would like to try jungle, trekking up and down steep ridges. The *Wasai* or waterfall, is a popular picnic spot. The walk crosses several steep ridges enroute to the fall, but once you are there, you can enjoy the unspoilt beauty of the jungle and the cool, pure water of the river. Since this is a long walk, it is advised to take with you both drinking water and sun protection gear.

These are some of the interesting places you can visit if you are in the Belait District. More will be featured in the next edition.



Sungai Tujoh Control Post, an exit to Miri, Sarawak



Billionth Barrel Monument



Oil & Gas Discovery Centre in Seria.



Offshore oil platform in Seria.

Brunei celebrates 23rd National Day



Colourful panorama depicting scenes during the 23rd National Day at the Taman Sir Muda Omar Ali Saifuddien



\$4.6 billion for 2007/2008 budget passed

BERAKAS, March 11 – The State Legislative Council passed an amount of \$4.6 billion for 2007/2008 fiscal year budget.

According to the Minister Finance II, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Abdul Rahman, the main focus for this year's budget will be on security; enhancing the private sector and the development of the non-oil sector; development of human resource; capacity building and youth's development; development of the infrastructure and public's facilities; and awareness programs.

The Minister further outlined that about 23.66 per cent from the allocated budget will be spent on national defense and security. While \$138.4 million is allocated for the private sector and the development of the non-oil sector which are directly dealing with industrial development. Meanwhile, a total of \$676 million is also allocated for the same sector under the National Development Plan (NDP).

He also stated that \$986.7 million is allocated for education, human resource development and capacity building. These include the construction of vocational, secondary and primary schools, and enhancing academics through e-learning.

A sum of \$785.4 million is also allocated for construction and provision of public utilities. Among the projects under this budget is the setting up of a new electrical substation that has the capability to produce 114 mega watts of energy scheduled to be complete this year. The development for public housing receive \$106 million with \$473.5 million specially allocated for the development of the National Housing Scheme in Kampong Rimba; Kampong Rataei; Sungai Liang/Lumut; Kampong Lorong Tengah Seria and others.

State Legislative Council HM: Allocated Budget key to nation's development.

BERAKAS, Mac 6 – His Majesty called for all the implementation, monitoring and evaluation system of the budget to be frequently updated to ensure that interested parties could benefit from efficient and effective services.

His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam made the *titah* at the official opening of the First Meeting for the Third Session of the State Legislative Council at the International Convention Centre (ICC).

"This budget, without doubt is the key to generate the nation's development machineries," said His Majesty.

The sovereign further added that the main objective of the budget allocation is for ensuring the welfare of his subjects is continuously maintained.

"On another aspect, we are always told on the importance of spending prudently," added His Majesty.

But in another aspect, we must also look at other priority. Every suggestion and plan must be evaluated, so it would not only be based on the need for value of money but more to the benefit which could bring the nation to create the culture and fame, said His Majesty.

The sovereign also touched on the investment of knowledge and education.

The first session of the State Legislative Council; was held on September 25, 2004 while on September 2, 1005; His Majesty announced the appointment of the new members of the council which included five representatives from four districts. Then on March 15, 2006; First Meeting for the Second Session was opened with the main agenda of state budget allocation.



His majesty delivers a *titah* during the official opening of the First Meeting for the Third Session of the State Legislative Council.

Briefly on State Legislative Council

New control post for Kuala Lurah and Puni

The Minister of Home Affairs, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Adanan stated that Kuala Lurah and Puni will soon have new control post where \$3million have been allocated.

He also stated that another \$4million is allocated for Puni's control post. Both budget are part of the 8th National Development Plan.

According to the Minister, Kuala Lurah control post is the busiest control post compared to Sungai Tujoh and the Brunei International Airport, recording as high as two million people entering and exiting through this post.

Kuala Lurah control post is the exit point from Brunei to Limbang, Sarawak. While Puni control post is the exit point in the Temburong district to the Malaysian state, Sabah.

PVC type for ID smart card

The new PVC Smart Card introduced in 2005 managed to overcome the problems faced by the previous ID card.

According the Minister of Home Affairs, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Adanan, the PVC Smart Card is suitable with the climate and it no longer received any complaints.

The previous Smart Card introduced in 2001 received several complaints as it was not laminated and was not durable enough under the local climate.

The Minister also said that should there be any problems with the current Smart Card, members of the public are welcomed to replace their cards with no charges imposed provided it is still valid within the ten-year expiry date.

Bruneians use Smart Card as their new identification card replacing the previous one which was using paper laminated paper.

Local companies welcomed implement e-government projects

Local companies are welcomed to participate in the implementation of e-government projects.

This was stated by the Minister of Communications, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Abu Bakar.

He said the government has allocated almost one billion for the implementation of this project. Therefore it is up to the locals to accept the offers or tenders.

When asked when the public will be able to carry out their transactions online, the Minister said that after a review, the public will be able to do so when all the systems are centralised. This will be realised once the solution content is implemented in the second half of the next five years.

Microsoft Office in Brunei

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN , February 26 – Microsoft Corporation opened its sales and marketing office in the Sultanate which marked the first multinational software technology company to establish its presence here.

Present to officially opened the office was His Royal Highness Crown Prince Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office

The office is the 13th in Asia Pacific and located at 13-1, PGGMB Building, Jalan Kianggeh, in the capital.

The opening of the subsidiary office comes just weeks after the company announced the global release of its most important software to date - Microsoft Windows Vista, the 2007 Office system and Exchange Server 2007.

The company develops, manufactures and licences a wide range of software, including operating systems for personal computers, mobile phones, and intelligent devices. Also included are server applications for distributed environments and productivity applications for information workers.



His Royal Highness officiates the Brunei Microsoft Office and the launching of Windows Vista and Microsoft Office 2007.

Efforts to reverse destruction of the environment must begin now



Her Royal Highness at the opening ceremony of the 5th ISB Borneo Global Issues Conference.

BERAKAS, March 3 - Terrible floods, deadly landslides, poisoned rivers, dwindling-water supplies and watching our young growing up breathing noxious fumes, these are just some of the painful and lethal legacies that we stand to inherit and pass on to our children and their children.

This was highlighted in a *sabda* by Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Sarah during the opening ceremony of the 5th ISB Borneo Global Issues Conference (BGIC) at the International Convention Centre.

Her Royal Highness continued to state that the rising temperature of the earth's atmosphere is bringing with it dire consequences of drought, disease, floods, deadly storms and rising seas.

"We have witnessed these tragic events happening on previously unheard of scales in many parts of the world, and even the most developed nations in the world have struggled to cope, in the face of the devastation wrought by environmental disasters.

"With the facts and evidence before us, we must begin our efforts now, to reverse the destruction of the environment, before it is too late. There are solutions in sight and we must start by shifting the perception of global warming as an abstract threat, to that of a pressing reality.

"We must promote real action and advocate international laws, that will help to sustain and preserve our forests, seas, rivers and wildlife and ultimately mankind itself," said Her Royal Highness.

National Day's congratulatory messages

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam received congratulatory messages from the heads of states and foreign dignitaries in conjunction with the 23rd National Day of Brunei Darussalam:

They were from:

His Majesty Al-Wathiqu Billah Al-Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Mahmud Al-Muktafi Billah Shah, Yang Di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia; His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand; His Majesty King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Guardian of the Two Mosques; His Majesty King Mohamed VI of Maghribi; His Majesty Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates; His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf, King of Sweden; His Majesty King Albert II, King of Belgium; Her Majesty Queen Koningin Beatrix Wilhelmina Armgrad, Queen of the Netherlands; His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, King of Cambodia;

Also sending the congratulatory messages were;

Their Excellencies President Dr. Haji Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia; President S.R. Nathan of Singapore; Senior General Than Shwe, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar; President Choummaly Sayasone of the Lao People's Democratic Republic; President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo of Philippines; President Nguyen Minh Triet of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; President Horst Kohler of Germany; President Vladimir V.Putin of the Russian Federation;

President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam India and President General Pervez Musharraf of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Their Excellencies Major General Michael Jeffery, Governor-General of Australia; President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan; The Right Honourable Michaelle Jean, Governor General of Canada. Their Excellencies President Dr. Bashar Al-Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic; President Stjepan Mesic of Croatia; President George W.Bush of the United States of America; President Lech Kaczynski of Poland; President Roh Moo-hyun of Korea; and Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, President of Bangladesh;

Their Excellencies President Hu Jintao of China; President Jacques Chirac of France; President Nursultan Nazabayev of Kazakhstan; President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia; President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine; President Ahmet Necdet Sezer of Turkey; President Boni Yayi of Benin; President Felipe Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and Her Excellency Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of Switzerland. Their Excellencies Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of Nigeria; President Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki of South Africa and His Highness Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai. The Right Honourable Dato' Seri Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi, Prime Minister of Malaysia; Their Excellencies Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore; General Soe Win, Prime Minister of Myanmar; Bouasone Boupphanh, Prime Minister of Laos; Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia and Nguyen Tan Dung, Prime Minister of Vietnam;

Their Excellencies Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister of Pakistan; Mohamed Ghannouchi, Prime Minister of Tunisia; Dr Fakhrudin Ahmed, Chief Adviser to the Non-Party Government People's Republic of Bangladesh and Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the United Nations.



16th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting adopt Nuremberg Declaration

NUREMBERG, GERMANY, March 15 – The Nuremberg Declaration was endorsed by the Ministers attending the 16th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting.

Brunei Darussalam was represented by His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, the Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister, where he attended the plenary session of the 16th EU-ASEAN Ministerial Meeting.

The Ministers received briefings on recent developments, assessed current cooperation and exchanged views about the future which His Royal Highness highlighted the 'Heart of Borneo' programme as an excellent example of modern multilateral cooperation in complex environmental matters.



His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed Bolkiah with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of German Federation at the reception in conjunction with the 16th AEMM Meeting.

Ministry of Finance announce 5th issuance of Sukuk-Al-Ijarah Securities

COMMONWEALTH DRIVE, February 15 – The Ministry of Finance announced the successful pricing of its fifth issuance of the short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities.

An amount of \$90million was issued that carries a maturity of 91 days which began from February 20 and will mature on May 17, 2007 at a rate of 3.150 per cent.

The short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities is the fifth issued by the Government of Brunei Darussalam following the successful maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Brunei-Singapore inks health pact

BERAKAS, February 10 - A memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the health sector between Brunei Darussalam and Singapore was reached with the signing held in the Republic on February 9.

The MoU foster greater cooperation between both nation-states where among others it will enable both parties to share experience in healthcare activities; promote training exchanges between both countries; and promote business opportunities in the healthcare sector.

This MoU is inline with the strategic plan outlined by Brunei's Ministry of Health for 2000 to 2010.

Present as signatories were Pehin Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Suyoi, Brunei's Minister of Health while his counterpart was Mr. Khaw Boon Wan, Singapore's Minister of Health.



40th ASEAN Logo

Bruneian won 40th ASEAN anniversary logo design

JALAN KEBANGSAAN, February 15 - A Bruneian made his home country proud as his logo design came out as the winner for the 40th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) anniversary logo.

The winning logo was submitted by Haji Othman bin Haji Salleh.

According to ASEAN's official website, the number "40" incorporated into the logo design gives a clear representation of ASEAN's 40th Anniversary. The two sharp points of the "4" meet in a manner to symbolise ASEAN's harmonious and key role in the progress and development of a dynamic Asia. It also alludes to the "heart" of a resilient caring and sharing ASEAN Community. Through the use of the official ASEAN colours of blue (peace, stability), red (courage, dynamism), white (purity) and yellow (prosperity), and the ASEAN emblem, the 40th Anniversary logo reflects the goals and values that are fundamental to ASEAN and is an expression of ASEAN's ambition of becoming one community.

The selection of the logo was done through a region-wide competition. National-level contests to design a 40th Anniversary logo for ASEAN were organised by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the ten ASEAN Member Countries and the national winners went on to compete at a regional final that took place at the end of January 2007.

The logo will be used to brand events and activities that are held to commemorate ASEAN's 40th Anniversary throughout 2007. Any party that is interested in using the logo for this purpose would need to apply for permission from the appropriate authorities.

Haji Salleh is currently a senior designer at the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports where art and designs have been a large part of his life. He studied art and began his career as a designer in 1977 for the state television, Radio Televisyen Brunei (RTB).

Haze fund: Call for speedy set up

JERUDONG, March 1 – ASEAN member countries are urged for a speedy set up of the ASEAN haze fund. It will serve as a strong manifestation on the commitment agreed.

ASEAN should also improve and choose a critical and important component stated in the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution by ensuring that it will be fully implemented.

This was stated by the Minister of Development, Pehin Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Abdullah at the 12th ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Haze.

The Minister, as chairman for this round of meeting outlined that since the endorsement of the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution on November 25, 2003, ASEAN have taken steps in implementing the agreed declaration.

At this session, the Ministers discussed the early preparation in the case of possible haze to occur in this region due to open fire or forest fire. They also re-evaluated the region's weather update and forecast.

This meeting also saw the Ministers providing a report on fire prevention, monitoring and the progress achieved by each country in facing haze.



The Minister of Development chaired the 12th ASEAN Ministers Meeting on Haze.

Brunei's Girl Guides celebrate World Thinking Day

BERAKAS, February 25 –The Girl Guides Association of Brunei Darussalam celebrated World Thinking Day on February 25. The ceremony was held at the headquarters of the Girl Guides Association in Kg. Anggerek Desa. Present at the ceremony was Her Royal Highness Princess Hajah Masna.

Also present were His Majesty's granddaughters, Yang Amat Mulia Pengiran Anak Raheemah Sanaul Bolqiah and Yang Amat Mulia Pengiran Anak Hariisah Widadul Bolqiah.

Some 500 Girl Guide members were present at the "Thinking Day 2007" which carried the theme 'Discover Your Potential: Take the Lead and Grow Friendship.

World Thinking Day was first held in 1926 at the 4th Girl Guides/Girl Scouts International Conference. It is observed every year on February 22, marking the mutual birthdays of Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scout movement and his wife Olave, who served as World Chief Guide.



Aerial view of Serasa Beach



Sports complex built to accommodate water sports

Serasa Beach, popular spot for family time

Legendary for its natural environment, Brunei Darussalam also boasts a number of beautiful beaches situated along the shorelines facing South China Sea where they have become popular spots for families to spend quality time and as a place to hang out.

One of the famous beach is Pantai Serasa ('pantai' is a Malay word which means beach). It is located within Mukim Serasa in the Brunei Muara District. To reach it, this sandy white beach is only about 30-minutes drive from the Brunei International Airport if you are commuting via the highway. It is also a few minutes from the Muara port where ferry services to the Malaysian state of Labuan, Sabah is located.

Pantai Serasa in its physical size looks like a two-way street with sands on both sides where you will have to make a U-turn at the very end of the beach as it is a dead end.

On most Sundays and public holidays, this beach is packed with picnic-goers and a popular spot for motor enthusiast to hang out.

Several years ago, the authority built a sports complex that caters water sports such as regatta, water jet skiing and fishing.

Along the beach you will notice a few stalls set up which are quite popular among the locals especially with the famous 'soto' (noodle with soup) and grilled foodstuff.

A number of restaurants are also

available with one situated at the Brunei Yachts Club and the sports complex.

On a bright sunny day, you will notice several yachts sailing with the wind. Meanwhile, a couple of small boats will be visible to the naked eyes, docking on the serene and calm waters.

The beach has undergone a major facelift a few years ago as it was threatened by corrosion. Now, the beach is widened and there are more parking areas for visitor's convenience.

Pantai Serasa is one of the most popular venues to spend your weekend. The calm environment with windy breath of fresh air will surely make a mark in one's heart as the place to spend time with your family and loved ones.



Serasa beach best location for yacht

KUIH SAPIT

Ingredients:

- 605 g wheat flour
- 1 coconut
- 4 eggs
- 454 g sugar
- Oil

Method:

• Sift wheat flour. Grate the coconut to get coconut milk. Beat eggs and sugar until combined. Add in wheat flour and coconut milk and stir well or not too thick. Grease the 'sapit tembaga' mould on both sides and heat it up. Scoop one table spoon into the mould. Flip the mould over to grill on the both side. Roll or fold up the sapit while it is still hot.



Brunei's commitment on youth development

Sixty per cent of Brunei Darussalam's total population comprise of youth. In Brunei's context, youth are those aged between the age of 15 and 40 years old. The Government of His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam realised the importance of developing the youth to their full potential as they are considered as a valuable asset for the future, who will also become the future leaders. Therefore it is only natural that several programmes are introduced to ensure the positive development of the youth.

To achieve the target, the government had spent huge amounts of budget in developing infrastructures and also conducting programmes and activities. In infrastructure development, few learning institutions; vocational and technical were built to accommodate the growing numbers of youth that require not only the normal discipline of education but also technical skills.

One of the technical institutions is the Youth Development Centre (Pusat Pembangunan Belia) based at Kampong Tanah Jambu. The centre is managed by the Division of Youth and Sports Development, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. Before the establishment of the centre, one pilot project namely Youth Development and Training Scheme (under the Youth and Sports Department) was held in 1992 to 1995 based at the Youth Centre in Bandar Seri Begawan. Later on May 11, 1996, the scheme was replaced with Youth Development Programme and the administration handled by the current management. On June 2, 1996, the centre was relocated to the current Youth Development Centre.

This centre offer skill training programmes for youth who could not further their formal education and also for job seekers. The programmes available are computer and office handling; cooking and catering; cakes and pastry-making; grooming and basic sewing. Besides skill programmes, participants also undergo self-development programme and work-placement programme.

For more exposure and challenging experience, the programmes held are not only involving locals but also involving regional and international youth as a whole. Among the activities are sports, exchange programmes, seminars,

forums, camping and religious events.

His Majesty in his titah at the closing of the Third ASEAN Summit in Manila on December 15, 1987; expressed Brunei's readiness to play active roles in ASEAN youth exchange programmes.

On March 25, 2000, His Majesty launched a regional Quran reading competition namely South East Asian (SEA) Youth Quran Reading Competition. The biennial competition features the best youth Quran readers (male and female) from SEA countries. The competition will be held for the fourth time in April this year.

Recently on March 3 to 12, Brunei Darussalam hosted the third Hassanal Bolkiah Trophy (HBT) for ASEAN Youth 2007. This biennial football championship features youth football teams from ASEAN countries competing for the prestigious trophy.

This year's championship featured eight-teams from ASEAN countries namely Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and host-country, Brunei Darussalam. Once again, Thailand emerged as the champion after defeating Myanmar by penalty of 5-4. Thailand was also the champion for HBT 2005.

The championship was formed after a titah by His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivered on August 27, 1997 at the Institute of Diplomatic and Foreign Relations in Kuala Lumpur. The excerpts are as follows:

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

"Second, I observe that sports can reach out to people in all walks of life. Of all spectators' 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.

The first HBT kick-off was held in year 2002, which was won by Indonesia while Thailand became first runner up.

The nation had also hosted the International Youth Camp in year 2001 in conjunction with the Visit Brunei Year 2001.

Besides participating in programmes hosted by domestically, Brunei youth are also active regionally and internationally. Among the yearly event joined is the Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Programme (SSEAYP). Brunei is also actively involved in programmes like the

ASEAN Students Exchange Programme and ASEAN Youth Camp of Creative Arts.

Besides the government, the private sectors and non-governmental associations (NGO's) are also called to support the youth development programmes.

One of the programmes by private sector is LiveWIRE Brunei. It is a Brunei Shell Sponsored community programme created for the purpose of increasing the interest of the young to venture into business. In this programme, youth are provided with training, mentoring and encouragement. LiveWIRE was officially launched in Brunei on May 1, 2001.

Another contribution made to develop Brunei's youth and economy is done by the building of 'Sumbangsih Mulia'. The building of Sumbangsih Mulia is not only to answer government's call for support and assist local youth involvement in Small Medium Enterprise (SME) but also to help the nation in diversifying the country's economy through business activities. The building was built by one of Brunei's prominent business, Yang Berhormat Pehin Goh King Chin.

The \$2.4 million building located at Beribi Industrial Estate features two blocks of the most modern SME buildings on four acres of land. The building can accommodate about 131 stalls and 200 car-parking lots are available. The small businesses and any SMEs are welcome to move and do business here. The rental charges are at affordable rate.

Another worth to mention is the Koperasi Belia Kitani Berhad (KBK). KBK was officially registered on the April 28, 2005 with the Department of Cooperative Registrar under the auspices of Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports and Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources.

The cooperative have a mission, to meet the call of the national agenda, and in-line with the objectives of National Youth Policy. They intend to venture into the retail sector which will provide jobs among the youth and to uplift the personal development of the youth.

Compared to other cooperatives, KBK Berhad is unique because it focuses on leveraging youth and permanent residents of Brunei Darussalam through business activities. KBK also has access to conduct any businesses in any part of Brunei. (For more information on KBK; log on to: www.beliakitani.com).

As a whole, any youth development programmes, plans or activities cannot be promoted without the cooperation of everyone. Cooperation among government, private sectors and public are required for the projects to be hold successfully.

The declaration of Brunei Youth Day on every August 1 portrays Brunei's appreciation made by youth to the development of the nation.



Brunei celebrates 23rd National Day

Brunei Darussalam gained her full independence on January 1, 1984 and celebrates it every February 23. The joyous occasion this year is celebrated on February 24 with the theme "Iltizam Memperkasa Keupayaan Bangsa" or "Commitment empowering the Nation's Capabilities".

This year's celebration began on February 11 with the hoisting of the giant national flag at the open foyer of the Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Foundation's complex. With that, 30,000 mini national flags for vehicles were also distributed to members of the public alongside a number of posters designed by Information Department in the bid to promote the auspicious occasion.

On February 22, His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam and male members of the royal family joined scores of Muslims to perform the thanksgiving prayers to commemorate the 23rd National Day. The main focal point was the Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddin Mosque in the capital. Similar mass prayers were held in other main mosques and prayers' halls nation-wide.

The highlight of the celebration was the general assembly on February 24 where some 16,000 people comprising of students, uniformed personnel, government officials and the private sectors took part in the parade.

Thousands of people from all walks of life turned up at the Tama Sir Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddin to witness the grand spectacles staged for the celebration and via a live nation-wide telecast.

The capital is visibly seen decorated with festive lights during the National Day celebration. Many activities were also organised in conjunction with the celebration.

As such, a website was also created at www.nationalday.org.bn

