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17th LegCo: Policyholders required to be courageous and transparent



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivering a *titah* (royal speech) during the Opening Ceremony of the 17th of Legislative Council (LegCo) Session.

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 15 - His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam in a *titah* (royal speech) said that policyholders are required to be courageous and transparent.

During these meetings, there should be no limits imposed on discussions to restrict the view of council members because the opportunity only occurs once a year, therefore it is appropriate for council members to engage in vigorous, yet healthy discussions. His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam highlighted this matter in a *titah* during the Opening Ceremony of the 17th Legislative Council (LegCo) session which was held at the LegCo Building.

His Majesty underlined the government's efforts to improve the country's economy, manpower, and fiscal situation.

"These require the commitment of all parties, especially those in charge of government policies," said His Majesty.

His Majesty constantly follows the progress of the council members during dialogue sessions with ministries in order to convey the issues raised by village and *mukim* residents, as well as local entrepreneurs.

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PKBN passing out parade: Youth pioneers in the country's development

TEMBURONG, March 10 - Trainees of the National Service Programme (PKBN) are an example of quality human capital, who are diligent and brave to come forward.

They portray a positive image for the race and country that refuses to sit still without doing anything.

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam said the matter in a *titah* (royal speech) during the 10th PKBN passing out parade at the PKBN Training Camp, Batu Apoi.

His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam added that these youths symbolise a significant feature of an independent country capable of producing a reliable future generation, and the goal of PKBN to make youth understand the true meaning of nationhood.

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6. His Majesty presents and receives Letters of Credence



8. Maintain assets usability at high level capacity and readiness



10. Unscheduled visit to PGK: Set high standards training policies



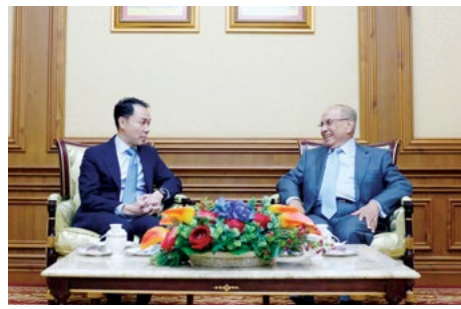
11. Unscheduled visit to MOH: Overcome weaknesses accordingly



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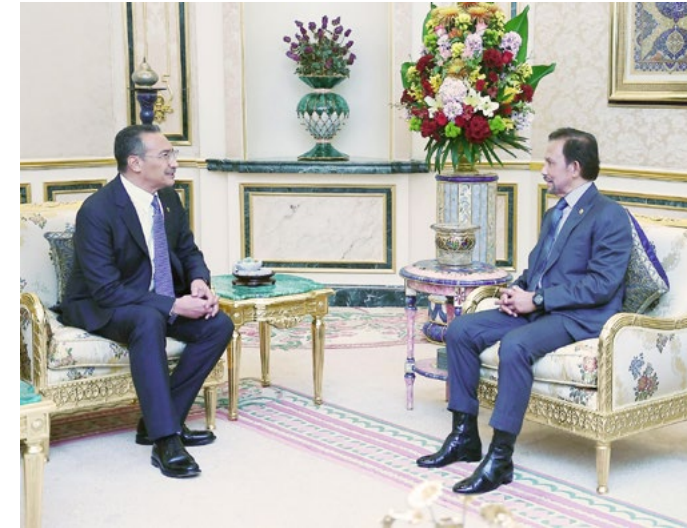
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His Majesty receives audiences

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam received in audience at Istana Nurul Iman:



Yang Berhormat Dato' Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia on March 1.



His Excellency Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore on March 22.

Her Majesty receives audiences

Her Majesty Duli Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha binti Al-Marhum Pengiran Pemancha Pengiran Anak Haji Mohamed Alam received in audience at the Istana Nurul Iman:



Her Excellency Nahida Rahman Shumona, High Commissioner of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Brunei Darussalam on March 16.



Datin Dayang Hajah Mariani binti Haji Bungsu, spouse of the newly-appointed High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam to the Republic of India; and Pengiran Salina binti Pengiran Haji Alli, spouse of the newly-appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Brunei Darussalam to Belgium on March 16.

His Royal Highness the Crown Prince receives audiences

His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah ibni His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office received in audience at Qashr Al-Meezan:



His Excellency Mehmet Suat Akgun, the outgoing Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Turkey to Brunei Darussalam on March 2.



His Excellency Dato Paduka Haji Awang Alaihuddin bin Pehin Orang Kaya Digadong Seri Lela Dato Seri Utama Haji Awang Mohd. Taha, newly-appointed High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam to the Republic of India and His Excellency Awang Haji Adnan bin Haji Mohd. Ja'afar, newly-appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Brunei Darussalam to Belgium on March 10.

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His Royal Highness The Crown Prince receives audiences (continued)

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Her Excellency Nahida Rahman Shumona, newly-appointed High Commissioner of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Brunei Darussalam on March 10.



His Excellency Heng Aik Yeow, newly-appointed High Commissioner of the Republic of Singapore to Brunei Darussalam on March 10.

His Majesty presents and receives Letters of Credence

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 8 - His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam presented Letters of Credence to newly appointed Brunei Darussalam Envoys and received Letters of Credence from newly-appointed Foreign Envoys to Brunei Darussalam.

His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam first presented Letters of Credence to His Excellency Dato Paduka Haji Awang Alaihuddin bin Pehin Orang Kaya Digadong Seri Lela Dato Seri Utama Haji Awang Mohd. Taha, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam to the Republic of India; and His Excellency Awang Haji Adnan bin Haji Mohd.

Ja'afar, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Brunei Darussalam to Belgium.

His Majesty then received Letters of Credence from Her Excellency Nahida Rahman Shumona, High Commissioner of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Brunei Darussalam; and His Excellency Heng Aik Yeow, High Commissioner of the Republic of Singapore to Brunei Darussalam.

After the ceremony, His Majesty received in audience the newly appointed Brunei Darussalam Envoys. His Majesty then received in separate audiences the newly appointed Foreign Envoys to Brunei Darussalam. The ceremonies took place at Istana Nurul Iman.

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His Majesty sends congratulatory messages

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam consented to send congratulatory messages to:

- His Excellency Dr. Arif Alvi, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Imran Khan, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the government as well as the people of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on the occasion of Pakistan Day on March 22.
- His Excellency Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith following his recent appointment as the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and also to His Excellency Dr. Phankham Viphavanh following his appointment as the Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on March 23.
- His Excellency Md. Abdul Hamid, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh; and Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the government as well as the people of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the occasion of the People's Republic of Bangladesh's Golden Jubilee Independence Day on March 25.

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His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam presenting a Letter of Credence to His Excellency Dato Paduka Haji Awang Alaihuddin bin Pehin Orang Kaya Digadong Seri Lela Dato Seri Utama Haji Awang Mohd. Taha, High Commissioner of Brunei Darussalam to the Republic of India.



His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam presenting a Letter of Credence to His Excellency Awang Haji Adnan bin Haji Mohd. Ja'afar, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Brunei Darussalam to Belgium.



His Majesty receiving a Letter of Credence from Her Excellency Nahida Rahman Shumona, High Commissioner of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to Brunei Darussalam.



His Majesty receiving a Letter of Credence from His Excellency Heng Aik Yeow, High Commissioner of the Republic of Singapore to Brunei Darussalam.

News

17th LegCo: Policyholders required to be courageous and transparent (continued)

From page 1



His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and the Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office attendance at the 17th Legislative Council Session.

These sessions should be continued from time to time, without waiting for the commencement of the LegCo meeting sessions.

"There are plenty of important issues to be discussed, such as the reduction in the government's fiscal due to unpredictable global oil price. What has happened to our nation's economic production? If there are any negative elements, how should they be addressed?" stressed His Majesty.

This also applies to other issues, such as the Employees Trust Fund (TAP) Scheme which still raises a major concern regarding its capacity to provide security for members who have families to support after retirement.

These can be examined at a discussion level, without the need to provide solutions or decisions, it is important to first look for diverse views, particularly among the appointed council members.

His Majesty was also aware that almost half of the allocated annual budget is employees' salary, with the reminder for recurring expenses.

Nevertheless, several projects under the Fiscal Consolidation programme introduced by the Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE) since financial year of 2018/2019 has already begun to produce results.

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17th LegCo: Policyholders required to be courageous and transparent (continued)



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam and Their Royal Highnesses in a group photo with members of the Legislative Council (LegCo).

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Earlier, His Majesty said, as we know, the Coronavirus outbreak left a profound global socio-economic impact, including Brunei Darussalam, but Alhamdulillah, with the coordinated efforts of all parties and through constant prayers, our country has been able to contain the outbreak successfully.

"My highest congratulations go out to all of the frontliners, as well to as all levels of society that work together with the government. May this situation continue to endure," said His Majesty.

Brunei Darussalam through the Manpower Planning and Employment Council (MPEC), has successfully reduced the unemployment rate. With the implementation of several initiatives under the Economic Blueprint, the country will be able to generate job opportunities for locals.

"It is hoped that these opportunities will not go to waste, due to choosiness over jobs, which is a detrimental mindset," said His Majesty.

This year, Brunei Darussalam will be chairing meetings at the ASEAN level, with the theme 'We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper' that carries a broad meaning at the ASEAN level and indeed, for Brunei Darussalam itself.

Also in attendance at the 17th LegCo Session were His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office; His Royal Highness

Prince Mohamed Bolkiah; His Royal Highness Prince Haji Sufri Bolkiah; and His Royal Highness Prince Haji Jefri Bolkiah.

His Majesty's entry into the conference hall was accompanied by a procession carrying the *Cokmar* (ceremonial mace).

Speaker of the 17th LegCo Session is Yang Berhormat Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Lela Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Abdul Rahman bin Dato Setia Haji Mohamed Taib, assisted by Yang Dimuliakan Pehin Orang Kaya Pekerma Jaya Dato Paduka Awang Haji Judin bin Haji Asar, Clerk to LegCo and Dayang Rose Aminah binti Haji Ismail, Assistant Clerk to LegCo.



The Opening Ceremony of the 17th LegCo Session.



Also in attendance at the 17th LegCo Session were His Royal Highness Prince Mohamed Bolkiah; His Royal Highness Prince Haji Sufri Bolkiah; and His Royal Highness Prince Haji Jefri Bolkiah.

PKBN passing out parade: Youth pioneers in the country's development (continued)



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam with the best trainees.

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"Once the youth understands this, it is when they deserve to be hailed as heroes," said His Majesty.

This can be seen when over 200 PKBN alumni stepped forward to become volunteers to assist in curbing the Coronavirus outbreak and this has become the benchmark for the youths to be ready to shoulder major responsibilities.

His Majesty said that as PKBN matures, then the country's hopes are also greater in order to see our generation of youths capable of becoming community leaders and pioneers in the country's development.

"In this regard, to become a great leader, youths must have strong personality and self-identity," said His Majesty.

Earlier, His Majesty lauded the PKBN trainees' determination in undergoing the three months training with enthusiasm and patience.

Upon arrival, His Majesty inspected the parade comprising PKBN trainees and march past.

His Majesty then consented to present awards to six trainees: Best in Drill 12886 Awang Mohamad Hamizan bin Zulkhairi and 12668 Dayang Nurin Alya Widyana Naqibah binti Saifulbahrin, both in Platoon 4; Best in Physical Training 12699 Awang



His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam during the visit to Sultan Hassan Secondary School.



His Majesty during the visit to Bumiputera Complex.

Mohammad Hakif bin Mohammad, Platoon 3 and 12850 Dayang Khairunnisaa binti Shafiee, Platoon 2; Best Male Trainee 12883 Awang Muhammad Nur Ridhwan @ Raiezwan bin Radimas of Platoon 5 and Best Female Trainee 12846 Dayangku Ardini Haziqah binti Pengiran Haji Mohd. Ali of Platoon 6.

His Majesty then toured an exhibition by youth volunteers and

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His Majesty inspecting the parade by the 10th National Service Programme (PKBN) intake.

PKBN passing out parade: Youth pioneers in the country's development (continued)

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mingled with the trainees. His Majesty also consented to sign a commemorative parchment.

PKBN has produced 3,177 alumni since its formation including the 10th PKBN intake who began their training on November 29, 2020 and were trained by 100 officers and coaches from the Royal Brunei Armed Force, Royal Brunei Police Force, Fire and Rescue Department, Outward Bound Brunei Darussalam, Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPU SB) and professional volunteers assisted by PKBN alumni.

From the 10th PKBN passing out parade, His Majesty visited several places in Pekan Bangar; Sultan Hassan Secondary School, Bumiputera Complex, Radio Television Brunei, Temburong Branch, Tamu Aneka Temburong, Pekan Bangar Boat and Passenger Terminal Jetty.



His Majesty during the visit to Radio Television Brunei, Temburong Branch.



His Majesty during the visit to Pekan Bangar Boat and Passenger Terminal Jetty.



His Majesty during the visit to Tamu Aneka Temburong.

Maintain assets' usability at high level of capacity and readiness

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 31 - As a security institution, the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF) bears a huge responsibility in defending the religion, the nation and the country. To achieve this objective requires a line of truly authoritative leaders who must possess noble qualities as a chief or senior military officer in RBAF.

They must also steer clear of negative elements, such as the inclination to build up their positives and power for their own benefit, rather than the interests of the country.

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam said the matter in a *titah* (royal speech) during a visit to the Ministry of Defence (MinDef).

In the *titah*, His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam stressed on the duty of senior officers to ensure that every member is given fair treatment without resorting to the practice of favouritism, cronyism, and nepotism. It should be a priority or a must for all, that there is no abuse of power of violation of any rules and if that occurs, then no one should escape punishment, in other words no one is above the law.

Another matter of priority is for all levels of leadership to be responsible in empowering the spirituality of each member based on the core values of RBAF, which are piety, courage,



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivering a *titah* (royal speech).

professionalism and loyalty.

"Through that, insyaaAllah, blessings will be conferred upon RBAF. I am convinced that if these values continue to be practised by all levels in the Armed Forces, the blessings will be magnified and all negative elements dispersed. This is why

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His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam inspecting the Guard of Honour.

I believe that such noble values are essential, as part of the course and training curriculum," said His Majesty.

"The next step is making efforts to bolster the image and credibility, for RBAF to truly become a respected and revered organisation. To achieve this, all parties and levels within the force must always show solidarity and the will to work together, regardless of their respective areas of responsibility," highlighted His Majesty.

His Majesty further added that all problems must be addressed through the proper channels in the chain of command, instead of being shared on social media, which can affect the integrity and reputation of RBAF.

In this field, all parties must not be apathetic. Any shortcomings or weaknesses must be addressed together. The RBAF care centre was established for this very purpose in attending to all issues.

In this respect, senior officers, in particular, should show sensitivity and commitment towards any problems and complaints coming from officers and subordinates.

Senior officers are also responsible for ensuring the standards of officers and subordinates. It is also important for them to understand and to know the level of standards that need to be achieved by officers and subordinates.



His Majesty mingling with RBAF personnel.

The quality of young officers is more determined by the Officer Cadet School at the Defence Academy of RBAF, as an early education centre for officers.

His Majesty hopes that the centre will continue to produce disciplined and professional military officers, while at the same time is capable of nurturing aspects of spirituality and genuine loyalty, given the 10 years of the centre's establishment, during which it managed to train 2,216 officers, including 605 officer cadets.

"I am confident that the senior officers have so far been able to act wisely in implementing any plans, including the capacity to overcome all issues being faced by personnel of RBAF. These are among the challenges to be addressed in the best possible way," said His Majesty.

With regard to challenges, it includes the challenge of maintaining the usability of RBAF's assets, which cannot be taken lightly, the capacity and readiness of these assets must always be at a high level.

Therefore, all levels in RBAF must really make sure that the usability of these assets is always at a high level of capacity and readiness.

His Majesty added, in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with the evolution of ever-growing advanced technology, the establishment of the Cyber Defence Unit at RBAF should also be realised, considering that RBAF will observe its 60th anniversary.

Additionally, it also serves as a buffer against cyber threats which can have serious implications for the level of operations and defence systems of Brunei Darussalam.

From the aspects of defence and security, responsibility is a shared obligation that must be nurtured without compromise.

"Lastly, it is my hope that all senior officers will be able to carry out their duties with transparency and trust in upholding the country's defence institutions, and in maintaining the security and well-being of Brunei Darussalam," said His Majesty.

Accompanying His Majesty during the visit were His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office; and His Royal Highness 920 Captain (U) Prince 'Abdul Mateen.

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Unscheduled visit to PGK: Set high standards for training policies

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 17 - It is vital for the Royal Brunei Police Force (RBPF) to have an outstanding training policy, which among other things, determines the selection of officers and personnel who are qualified to undergo any type of mandatory training within the force, Special Operations Squad (PGK).

Therefore, RBPF needs to set high standards for its training policies for each type of training to be carried out. The methods used to determine these standards should be up-to-date and internationally recognised.

"I would like the Operations Department to make operational movement plans or operations for the short term and the long term, which should set the policy and standards related to PGK training," said His Majesty Sultan Haji Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-



His Majesty Sultan Haji Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivering a *titah* (royal speech) during an unscheduled visit to the Special Operations Squad (PGK) Complex.

Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam in a *titah* (royal speech) during an unscheduled visit to the PGK Complex.

His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam hopes that PGK has the current expertise for the establishment of such standards.

Earlier, His Majesty said that PGK is an elite force and the pride of RBPF. The squad's preparedness, vitality and prestige should be given priority, so that it is capable of performing its assigned duties and responsibilities.



His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam during the visit to the PGK Complex.

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Maintain assets' usability at high level of capacity and readiness (continued)

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His Majesty received a royal salute and inspected the guard of honour comprising five officers and 105 other rank personnel of Company D, Third Battalion Royal Brunei Land Force (3Bn RBLF).

His Majesty was then ushered to the Tower Block for a photo session with members of the Defence Executive Committee and RBAF senior officers before proceeding to the Bolkiah Garrison



His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office during meet and greet session with RBAF personnel.

gymnasium.

His Majesty then proceeded to the Bolkiah Garrison Officers' Mess for a meet and greet session with senior officers from the Royal Brunei Land Force, Royal Brunei Navy, Royal Brunei Air Force, Joint Force Headquarters, Training Institute RBAF, Ministry of Defence, British Loan Service Officers and Loan Service Doctors from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



His Royal Highness 920 Captain (U) Prince 'Abdul Mateen during the meet and greet session with RBAF personnel.

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"PGK must constantly be aware of people's high expectations for its personnel in carrying out their responsibilities towards the peace and security of this country," said His Majesty.

Following His Majesty's previous visit in October 2019, RBPF has obviously undertaken a number of initiatives and efforts to increase and bolster the fitness level of PGK personnel, through improving the training and requirements, particularly in terms of logistics and infrastructure, in addition to maintaining the overall image of the force. Nevertheless, there are still issues and problems that require appropriate attention and action.

On leadership, His Majesty said that all organisations need to have a competent leader, particularly when in charge of an elite team.

His Majesty added that discipline, the willing to look after the welfare of personnel and listening to the problems of subordinates are some of the most important qualities in leading an elite team. Selfish behaviour such as the arbitrary adjustment of existing policies, according to personal capacity, is inappropriate and also issuing orders and penalties which change according to whim and does not follow the proper Standard Operational Procedures (SOP).

An example of this is the fitness training set out for PGK personnel, where the complete 3 km run in special PGK gear has been replaced with a 1.6 km run with the personnel wearing only vests. This should not be allowed to happen as it can compromise the personnel's performance standards and physical strength.

"Therefore, in my view, RBPF should make plans for the immediate replacement of leadership at the PGK. The candidates must not only be mature, but also qualified and possess leadership qualities that are apposite to the awarding of the PGK Barrett and badge, not be chosen due to partisanship or cronyism. It is my hope that the PGK will have the right officers in the right posts," stressed His Majesty.

In ensuring safety during training, particular attention should be made to other operational assets such as vehicles, where vehicles are reportedly insufficient in number.

It is surprising that PGK only has a few operations units to the extent of borrowing vehicles from the Department of Criminal Intelligence.

"If this is true, then it will affect the effectiveness of PGK's operations in carrying out its roles and responsibilities. How can PGK perform according to expectations if it lacks vehicles that are functioning properly?" said His Majesty.

His Majesty would like these issues to be addressed in an



His Majesty during the visit to the Special Operations Squad (PGK) Complex, appropriate manner, by the relevant parties.

Any amelioration plans for PGK, such as human resources development, the acquisition of equipment and assets, as well as the maintenance of infrastructure should not be done only on paper.

"These issues should be noted and all developments reported back to me," said His Majesty.

"The relevant parties must give their cooperation in ensuring the effective functioning of plans so that PGK can perform its duties and responsibilities as an elite squad on par with its regional counterparts," added His Majesty.

Earlier, His Majesty was delighted to learn of the joint exercises between PGK and the Special Forces Regiment of the Royal Brunei Armed Forces (RBAF), which allows both sides to exchange views and knowledge, as well as to improve proficiency and to promote professionalism.

"I welcome PGK's plan for its involvement in joint training with elite squads on a regional and international level, as well as locally," said His Majesty.

During the unscheduled visit to the Special Operations Squad Complex, RBPF, His Majesty took a closer look at the squad's equipment and weaponry.

The Special Operations Squad, RBPF plays a role in safeguarding His Majesty and the royal family, and to combat terrorism, criminals and militants. During its early days since its establishment in 1974, the squad was previously known as the Police Special Section. In 1980, the squad was renamed as the Special Operations Squad.

Unscheduled visit to MoH: Overcome weaknesses accordingly

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 4 – The issue of medicine shortage and depleted stocks in hospitals and health centres, especially in the three districts beyond Brunei-Muara was highlighted by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam in a *titah* (royal speech) during an unscheduled visit to the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital to get their medicine which is burdensome, especially for the elderly.

In recent years, there have been persistent reports of changes in medicine brands, which raises the question, why, and were these changes made in order to get cheaper prices.

His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam

Patients are sometimes forced to go to Raja Isteri Pengiran

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Unscheduled visit to MoH: Overcome weaknesses accordingly (continued)

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questioned whether MoH has ever based its selection process from visiting pharmaceutical companies, in order to ensure medicine quality and consumer safety.

His Majesty acknowledged that MoH is trying to provide proper health services, but there are still obvious weaknesses in certain areas, such as patients being made to wait for long periods to see a doctor, which inevitably results in resentment and annoyance.

“More serious still is that patients have to wait for hours in order to receive treatment at the Accident and Emergency Department, due to a continual lack of doctors. As a rule, there shouldn't be such a deficiency in this department, but it still happens. Why? Is the administration aware of this matter, and if so, what has been done or what action has been taken to address it? If any action has been taken, then why is it still ongoing?” said His Majesty.

His Majesty added that those in charge of the administration should conduct a first-hand investigation of the situation. It is not enough to just read or receive reports, particularly if there had never been any reports at all. The meaning of the Accident and Emergency Department is a place to receive treatment immediately.

However, these are not only weaknesses that concern the public interest, there are also weaknesses related to the management of the ministry's own staff, such as the service scheme, which has not been updated. This has led to many qualified officers within the ministry receiving a Higher National Diploma (HND) salary scale, which is believed to have originated from their Scheme Allied Health Professional (AHP) services not being renewed.

“Similarly, a number of paramedics are reportedly engaged in nurse's positions because the paperwork for the provision of paramedics has not been completed by the administration even though it has already took 10 years,” said His Majesty.

In the *titah*, His Majesty said that there is also a tendency for government nurses to move to private hospitals. His Majesty questioned on why is this happening and urges MoH needs to conduct a study on it.

“Also worth examining are equipment and mechanisms, such as how many ambulances are required for each district and how many drivers are needed? There are also reports of paramedics occasionally taking over as ambulance drivers, despite the fact that these paramedics have not been given training on how to drive an ambulance. These are not trivial matters; they are crucial in ensuring efficiency and safety,” added His Majesty.



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivering a *titah* (royal speech).

His Majesty also said that MoH has launched its strategic plan in September 2019, with a focus on five objectives – excellence in healthcare services, the prevention and control of infectious diseases, public protection through effective policies and regulations, immunity through the use of optimum and innovative resources, and a transparent and proactive administration.

All of these objectives are impressive, but we have yet to see them being reached. The MoH was provided with a huge budget of almost \$400 million, and is expected to deliver excellent services for citizens and residents.

“The services are being supplied by four government hospitals. Given this, there is no reason why good and quality services cannot be provided but these are all determined by the quality of the management and administration – if both are good, then the results will be good,” said His Majesty.

Being provided with a huge budget and sufficient equipment is just a standard process in achieving goals. The most essential component is human resources because here have been cases where the achievements were outstanding, despite a small budget allocation and modest equipment.

“Within MoH, there are various levels of officers and staff from

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His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam during the visit to Department of Scientific Services.



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the highest to the lower ranks. All of them are required to carry out their respective duties well and perfectly,” said His Majesty.

In dealing with COVID-19, MoH can be seen as successful in managing the COVID-19 pandemic with the integrated cooperation of various parties. This is a remarkable fact which is worthy of our gratitude.

On the other hand, there are reports of MoH employees violating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), such as one health centre instructing the cleaning staff to clean the equipment for storing swab samples such as glass tubes and refrigerators.

His Majesty stressed, in accordance with the SOPs, the cleaning process should have been performed by a nurse, instead of a cleaner who was not trained to conduct the procedures.

In a similar manner, there were violations in the delivery of swab samples, by failing to isolate the samples and even putting them in the same vehicle for conveying blood and urine test samples. In keeping with the SOPs, the delivery should have been made with a different vehicle.

“Such incidents indicate the deficiencies of the management and the administration, same goes to another ongoing issue which is the overdue or delayed Coronavirus allowances for some frontliners, such as ambulance drivers and nurses,” said His Majesty.

Israk Mikraj 1442H: Obedience to five pillars of Islam, attain blessing

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 10 - The primary of all pious deeds is the five pillars of Islam that is compulsory for all Muslims, the five time daily prayers, which is the mainstay for Islam and its pillar, according to the *hadis* of Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh).

Prayer and *zakat*, both pillars of Islam is not separated by Allah the Almighty, because the prayer is evidence of the relationship between a servant and God, while *zakat* is a symbol of existence of the bond of responsibility among fellow human beings.

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam stated the matter in a *titah* (royal speech) to mark the Israk Mikraj for 1442 Hijrah/2021 Masihi

It can be summarised that the command to perform the prayer and issuing the *zakat* hold secret goodness for all, where with the prayer we are shielding ourselves from the evil in the world while by issuing the *zakat*, it will purify our property by the means of fulfilling the rights of the *zakat* beneficiaries.

The wealth we have, does not belong to us entirely, rather there are parts that belong to asnaf or beneficiaries of *zakat*.

“If we understand the wisdom or secret of these two pillars, we are bound to perform them because the blessings that can be attained by both in this world and the hereafter,” said His Majesty.

The blessing for those who pray is serenity and protection while for those who issue the *zakat*, are promised proliferation of wealth, and it will not diminish and in the hereafter, it will be rewarded with heaven by Allah the Almighty.

It is a general prerequisite that to attain heaven is through obedience to Allah the Almighty and Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) where among the features of this is performing the prayers and issuing *zakat*, while also not forsaking other dutiful deeds.



His Majesty during the visit to Department of Scientific Services.

Apart from that, there has been some confusion regarding payment. Several nurses complained that they should have received five payments, but instead received only three.

During the unscheduled visit, His Majesty toured the departments and sections under the ministry, including the Medical Superintendent Community Health, Community Health Services, the Administration and Finance and Operational Unit, the Permanent and Deputy Permanent Secretaries' offices, the Minister of Health's office, Department of Scientific Services (DSS), the Toxicology Section, the Food Chemistry Section, the Environment Section, the Illicit Drugs Section, the Physical Evidence Section, and the Forensic Biology and DNA Section.



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivering a *titah* (royal speech).

“I believe that Muslims in the country are well-versed with the obedience concept and are implementing it in their daily lives. This is why Allah the Almighty has revealed some consequence of this, which is through the blessing of peace, prosperity and security, including this extraordinary situation where as if our country is truly free from the transmission of the Coronavirus pandemic, although people out there are continuously still struggling to combat it,” said His Majesty.

His Majesty added that is a form of protection of Allah the Almighty on us, because we have fulfilled our duty of prayers, *zakat*, fasting, reciting Al-Quran, reciting the *zikir* continuously.

His Majesty praised Allah the Almighty for the abundance of peace, harmony and health that we all can reap.

In concluding the *titah*, His Majesty said that we all should be thankful because we are still capable of performing pious deeds because of the continuous protection from Allah the Almighty.

Uphold religion, value customs and traditions

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 29 - The vision of the Department of Adat Istiadat Negara is clearly to provide the public with knowledge and understanding on *adat istiadat* or customs and traditions, while its mission is to perform customs and traditions ceremonies and inform the citizens and residents about customs and traditions as a cultural heritage.

However, these efforts for development will require a leader as the planner and source for ideas, in addition to being a driving force, but if the leader is weak and lacking in ideas, then how can the organisation function effectively.

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam stated the matter in a *titah* (royal speech) at the Special Meeting of the Adat Istiadat Council.

In the *titah*, His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam said that the Department of Adat Istiadat Negara does not yet have a planner with brilliant ideas on how to empower the customs and traditions. Even upgrades, where necessary, are still not being implemented. It seems as though they are just waiting for instructions, without making any proactive plans.

This is in stark contrast to the role and responsibility of the Department of Adat Istiadat Negara in preserving conventions (*adat resam*) so that they remain acceptable, well-ordered and applied accordingly. They are also responsible for contemplating and planning schemes for overcoming any deficiency, weakness or fault, so that our customs could thrive, become enriched, further refined and remain unique.

His Majesty touched on the basic role of the Department of Adat Istiadat Negara and for the Adat Istiadat Council not be concerned with matters outside of their own duties and responsibilities. Such as pondering over the refurbishment of the Seri Begawan Religious Teachers University College (KUPU SB) whether it should be refurbished; there are other, more relevant parties to serve this purpose.

Similarly, the sprucing up of Bandar Seri Begawan with various projects is not the responsibility of the Department of Adat Istiadat Negara and the Adat Istiadat Council, when relevant parties are available for this.

"It is more important for the department and the council to fulfil their own duties and responsibilities, so that there will be no further occurrences of negligence or oversight," said His Majesty.

These need to be done in accordance with the customs and traditions guidelines or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) – if there are any – with precision and immediacy, instead of being delayed.

For instance, the public had already learned of the news of the



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam delivering a *titah* (royal speech).



His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam and His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Advisor to Adat Istiadat Council upon arrival at the Prime Minister's Office Building.

passing of Al-Marhum His Royal Highness Prince Haji 'Abdul 'Azim ibni His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, in advance through other means due to the delayed official announcement, and the announcement was left entirely to Radio Television Brunei.

Similarly, the announcement on mourning attire caused a frantic rush among men to buy white cloth to line their *songkok*, while women searched for white headscarves. The funeral management was also found to be improper.

His Majesty also pointed out that during the funeral ceremony, there were various issues which should not have occurred, such as the use of *cangkul* for the royal tomb. In the past, a scooping basket (*bakul pungkis*) would be used, rather than taking the short route of simply digging the soil. This is where the customs need improving upon. If we do not want any improvements, then there is no need for us to have customs.

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His Majesty; His Royal Highness the Crown Prince; His Royal Highness Prince Haji Sufri Bolkiah, Chairman of the Council; His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Malik, Second Deputy Chairman of the Council; His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Mateen, Third Deputy Chairman of the Council; and His Royal Highness Prince Haji Jefri Bolkiah, Fourth Deputy Chairman of the Council at the meeting.



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His Majesty also commented on the functions and responsibilities of the Department of Adat Istiadat Negara which is to provide assistance and advisory services to government agencies, non-governmental organisations, associations, and learning institutions on matters pertaining to customs and traditions.

His Majesty questioned if the Department of Adat Istiadat Negara is unable to carry out its work properly, then how can it advise and guide other parties on an appreciation of the customs and traditions? By virtue of this, the Department of Adat Istiadat Negara will need to undergo self-evaluation to rectify its administration.

Earlier, His Majesty said that Brunei Darussalam is standing firm because of religion and the customs and traditions, religion is upheld and the customs are valued. Both are interchangeable with our national identity.

Hence, His Majesty emphasises that like religion, customs also need to be preserved because it is the sweetness and beauty of

the race, and a nation with customs and traditions has prestige. Therefore, we must never relinquish the customs.

Customs form the main pillar of the institution of the monarchy and the nation. It should be supported and strengthened, instead of being left to deteriorate and fall into decline.

"Customs does not belong to any particular group, which is the royalty, but to the nation, where everyone is obliged to ensure that it continues to develop and stand out," said His Majesty.

Also in attendance were His Royal Highness Prince Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah, the Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Advisor to Adat Istiadat Council; His Royal Highness Prince Haji Sufri Bolkiah, Chairman of the Council; His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Malik, Second Deputy Chairman of the Council; His Royal Highness Prince 'Abdul Mateen, Third Deputy Chairman of the Council; and His Royal Highness Prince Haji Jefri Bolkiah, Fourth Deputy Chairman of the Council.

His Majesty pays last respects

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 4 - His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam consented to attend the funeral of Allahyarham Yang Berhormat Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Honorary Professor (Dr.) Haji Awang Mohd. Jamil Al-Sufri bin Begawan Pehin Udana Khatib Dato Seri Paduka Haji Awang Umar in Kampung Mabohai.

Allahyarham Yang Berhormat Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Honorary Professor (Dr.) Haji Awang Mohd. Jamil Al-Sufri passed away at around 7a.m. yesterday at Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital at the age of 99.

His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam performed the funeral prayer led by Yang Berhormat Pehin Datu Seri Maharaja Dato Paduka Seri Setia (Dr.) Ustaz Haji Awang Abdul Aziz bin Juned, the State Mufti.

Allahyarham was born on 8 Syaaban 1339 Hijrah / December 10, 1921 Masihi at Kampung Sungai Kedayan.

Allahyarham's academic journey began at the Pekan Brunei Malay School from 1928 to 1935, after which he pursued his



His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam attend the funeral of Allahyarham Yang Berhormat Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Honorary Professor (Dr.) Haji Awang Mohd. Jamil Al-Sufri.



His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam attends the funeral of Allahyarham Yang Berhormat Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Honorary Professor (Dr.) Haji Awang Mohd. Jamil Al-Sufri.

studies abroad at Sultan Idris Teacher Training College in Tanjong Malim, Perak from 1939-1941 and 1947 to 1948, before receiving education at the Kani Yosezyo Training Centre in Kuching, Sarawak from 1944 to 1945. From 1950 to 1951, Allahyarham studied at the Serdang College of Agriculture before attending City of Worcester Teachers College in the United Kingdom from 1956 to 1957.

Allahyarham began serving with the Government of Brunei Darussalam as a Trainee Teacher (1939-1947), Assistant Headmaster (1948-1950), Manager of School Gardening (1951-1955), Advisor of Teaching Methods (1957-1960), Director of the Brunei Language Board (1961-1964), Director of the Language and Literature Bureau (1965-1976), Advisor to the Language and Literature Bureau (1977-1981) and Chairman of the Education Council (1983).

Allahyarham was also a member of the Brunei Legislative Council from 1959 to 1963, where among the prominent positions he held was as member of the Privy Council, Council of Succession, Religious Council and Malay Islamic Monarchy (MIB) Supreme Council. He held the post as Principal of the Brunei History Centre from 1982 up to his demise.

By the consent of His Majesty's *titah*, Allahyarham was bestowed the Manteri Tiga Puluh Dua title of 'Yang Dimuliakan Pehin Orang

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His Majesty pays last respects (continued)

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Kaya Amar Pahlawan' and promoted to the Manteri Empat title, 'Yang Dimuliakan Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Mahajara'. Allahyarham was also bestowed with several State Decorations and Honorary

Medals, among them, Darjah Kerabat Seri Utama Yang Amat Dihormati (DK); Darjah Paduka Seri Laila Jasa Yang Amat Berjasa, Second Class (DSLJ); and Darjah Seri Paduka Mahkota Brunei Yang

Amat Mulia Second Class (DPMB).

Allahyarham was buried at Tanah Perkuburan Rangas, Bandar Seri Begawan.

Combat COVID-19, share strategies and good practices



Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah binti Pengiran Haji Salleh Ab. Rahaman delivering a *sabda* (royal speech).

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 6 - Brunei Darussalam and ASEAN continue to work together to face the challenges of COVID-19 through the sharing of strategies and best practices.

The pandemic's repercussion on humanity, healthcare, economic stability, food systems, education, mental and physical well-being has been unprecedented.

Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah binti Pengiran Haji Salleh Ab. Rahaman highlighted this in a *sabda* (royal speech) during the launch of the 17th International School Brunei Borneo Global Issues Conference (ISB BGIC) 2021 at the

International Convention Centre (ICC), Berakas.

Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah as the Royal Patron of ISB BGIC added that in the face of these new challenges, world leaders are working tirelessly to adapt and innovate in ensuring continuity of normal life as much as possible.

"Therefore, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam's Government alongside fellow ASEAN member states continue to work collaboratively to combat challenges presented by this global pandemic, through active sharing of strategies and good practices that benefit their citizens," said Her Royal Highness.

Her Royal Highness also stressed that Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Chairmanship this year, themed 'We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper', is a culmination of commitments to find ways in safeguarding the well-being and livelihoods of people in post-pandemic recovery plans and for continued regional peace and stability.

"Indeed, these efforts are consistent with ISB BGIC's theme this year, where the focus is on addressing inequality in the face of deepening crisis, whether that means improving access to social welfare, quality health services or education

systems. Lack of accessibility only serves to further exacerbate social inequality," said Her Royal Highness.

Her Royal Highness then added, the situation poses challenges as well as new opportunities including opportunities to advocate and create more inclusive, equitable systems that can promote a high quality of life for all people, as the youth are well placed as important agents of change.

The conference provides a platform for our youth to engage in dialogue and debate resolutions, to produce policies advocating more inclusive and equitable systems, at the same time mitigating the negative impacts of COVID-19 across every aspect of human life.

ISB BGIC, said Her Royal Highness, encourages strong and diverse partnerships which strive for mutually respectful and peaceful collaborations.

For our youths, said Her Royal Highness, the failure to adapt and innovate education continuity for children and young people will have a severe impact, particularly for countries with already low learning outcomes, low resilience to shock and inadequate infrastructure to resist and rebuild.

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Her Royal Highness Paduka Seri Pengiran Anak Isteri Pengiran Anak Sarah in a group photo with participants of the 17th International School Brunei Borneo Global Issues Conference (ISB BGIC) 2021.

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Her Royal Highness added that the growing 'digital divide' within and among countries globally has never been starker than in the current context of global COVID-19 pandemic. There is urgency for all countries to improve accessibility to good-quality internet connections, as well as hardware such as computers as the world is forced to work and study from home.

This 'lost generation' can result in significant loss in human capital, and in turn, vital economic opportunities for any nation, added Her Royal Highness.

The conference led by students for students is a testament to the contributions and generous support of participating schools, organisers, teachers, speakers, sponsors and supporters.

We should all be proud to contribute towards this important social investment and demonstrating their renowned "Bruneian heart" and combined community care in nurturing and empowering youth voice, youth engagement and youth action.

ISB BGIC this year focus on Sustainable Development Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities.

During the conference, delegates will debate and decide on resolutions to address inequalities based on race, gender, age and education opportunities. This year's theme, Reduced Inequalities, is on significant issues that have been greatly exacerbated by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its devastating impact on global economies and communities as well as public health, livelihoods, and survival.

ISB BGIC will be held for four days from March 5-8 involved 300 delegates from 22 schools across the country.

Laura Thomas, ISB Executive Principal in her keynote address expressed pleasure in hosting the conference, to promote meaningful multi-sectorial cooperation and collaboration within the local community as well as enhancing educational experiences to benefit the nation and people in post-pandemic recovery.

Two local speakers shared their views on the conference's



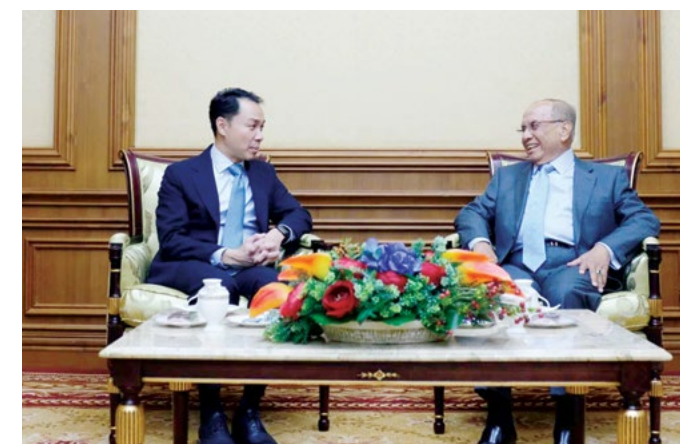
Her Royal Highness launching the 17th ISB BGIC 2021 at the International Convention Centre (ICC).

theme, 'Reduced Inequalities'. Awang Mohammad Isamuiddin bin Abdullah Juna, the Acting Director of Prisons and Dayang Noorsurainah Tengah, Member of the Board of Directors at An-Nur Harapan, shared their views on the conference's theme.

Earlier, Her Royal Highness presented certificates of participation to representatives from 22 government and private schools attending the conference.

The ISB BGIC is an annual student-led Model United Nations style conference where participants represent countries to address various views on current real world issues.

LegCo Speaker receives courtesy call



Yang Berhormat Speaker of the Legislative Council and His Excellency High Commissioner of Singapore to Brunei Darussalam during the courtesy call.

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 31 - Yang Berhormat Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Lela Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Abdul Rahman bin Dato Setia Haji Mohamed Taib, Speaker of the Legislative Council (LegCo) received a courtesy call from His Excellency

Heng Aik Yeow, High Commissioner of Singapore to Brunei Darussalam held at the Dewan Majlis Building.

The courtesy call was the first official meeting held between the two sides where both expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the close ties between the two countries which has been established for a long time.

His Excellency Heng Aik Yeow stated that various benefits are being enjoyed by the citizens and residents of Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Singapore under the leadership and cooperation of both countries, including in the fields of education, health and exchange of visits.

Both sides touched on regional issues of mutual concern and interest and hoped that the issues of the regional community would be resolved as soon as possible for the well-being and safety of the community.

Both sides also touched on the active participation of the Members of the LegCo in discussing national issues and youth development in the country during the recent LegCo Meeting.

COVID-19: 25 new import cases recorded in March

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 31 - Twenty-five import COVID-19 cases was reported in March, bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 212.

Case 187 was announced on March 1; a 20 year old man who arrived in the country from United Kingdom on February 14.

Case 188 was announced on March 4; a 35 year old man who arrived in the country from India via Kuala Lumpur on the February 19 on board Royal Brunei BI 874.

Case 189 was announced on March 6; a 43 year old man, who arrived in the country on February 21 from Jakarta, Indonesia.

Case 190 was announced on March 7; a 42 year old man who arrived in the country from Indonesia via Singapore on the February 22 on board Royal Brunei BI 004.

Case 191 was announced on March 9; a 43 year old man who arrived in the country from Bangladesh via Kuala Lumpur on the February 24.

Case 192 was announced on March 10; a 41 year old man who arrived in the country from India via Malaysia on the March 5.

Cases 193 to 199 were announced on March 14. All cases arrived in the country from Malaysia via Singapore on March 1.

Cases 200 to 202 were announced on March 16. All are from the Philippines who arrived in the country on March 3.

Case 203 was announced on March 17; a 43 year old man who arrived in the country from the Philippines on March 3.

Cases 204 and 205 were announced on March 20. Case 204 is a 34 year old man and case 205 is a 43 year old man, who both arrived in the country from Indonesia on March 7.

Case 206 was announced on March 21; a 46 year old man who arrived in the country from Jakarta on board Royal Brunei Airlines BI 736 on March 7.

Case 207 was announced on March 28; a 31 year old woman who arrived in the country from the United Kingdom on March 14.



Yang Berhormat Minister of Health (left) during press conference on the latest COVID-19 situation in Brunei Darussalam.

Cases 208 to 210 were announced on March 30. Case 208 is a 49 year old man who arrived in the country from Manila; case 209 is a 24 year old man who arrived in the country from Nepal via Kuala Lumpur; and case 210 is a 59 year old woman who arrived in the country from Egypt via Kuala Lumpur. The three cases arrived in the country on the March 17.

Cases 211 and 212 were announced on March 31. Case 211 is a man aged 38 year old who arrived in the country from Kuala Lumpur. While, case 212 is a man aged 55 year old who arrived in the country from Manila.

The announcements were made by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Md. Isham bin Haji Jaafar, Minister of Health during a series of press conference on the latest COVID-19 situation held at the Al-'Afiah Hall, Ministry of Health (MoH); as well as via press releases issued by the ministry.

The last local COVID-19 case was reported on May 6, 2020. Meanwhile, the total number of imported cases since the last one is 71.

Six hundred and fifty-nine people are currently undergoing mandatory self-isolation, while 15,708 have completed their mandatory self-isolation since March 2020.

In the meantime, 220 samples have been tested for the SARS CoV-Two Virus, bringing the total number of lab tests since January 2020, to 114,134 tests.



Yang Berhormat Minister of at the Prime Minister's Office during press conference on the latest COVID-19 situation in Brunei Darussalam.

were both adopted on April 14, 2020.

Furthermore, the Joint Statement of the AMRI to Minimise the Negative Effects of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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Moving towards digital community

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 12 - The COVID-19 pandemic changed the world in 2020, including the momentum of ASEAN Community building. Due to global lockdown, ASEAN's information sector became not only a vital source of data, but it also became responsible in ensuring the information conveyed was correct and timely. This was stated by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Haji Awang Abdul Mokti bin Haji Mohd. Daud, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office, at the 15th Conference of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (15th AMRI) and Related Meetings held via video conference at the Prime Minister's Office.

In the Plenary Session of the 15th AMRI, the Minister at the Prime Minister's Office delivered a statement about the increased importance of the information sector due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the Minister was pleased that AMRI's actions on fake news and misinformation were in line with the Leaders' Declaration of the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 and the Joint Statement of the Special ASEAN Plus Three Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019, which

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The 15th Conference of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (15th AMRI) and Related Meetings held via video conference.

endorsed in 2020 demonstrates AMRI's commitment to strengthen cooperation in enhancing public communication, and supporting the free flow of information during and after COVID-19 in ASEAN. From a positive perspective, COVID-19 has accelerated the process of moving towards a more digitised way of living.

Even in lockdown, media technology has enabled us to sustain communication through digital means; improve our knowledge and use of digital technology; and develop digital commerce and trade. However, increased use of digital and social media has also given rise to the spread of fake news and misinformation; misuse of media technology; and cybercrime as well as cybersecurity attacks. In this regard, AMRI must not be complacent in countering the negative aspects of the "new normal".

The Minister made four suggestions, which are to strengthen coordination in urgently addressing fake news, specifically through the ASEAN Task Force on Fake News; to continue shaping a community that are responsible users of media; to engage with other sectors to counter cybercrime; and to ensure timely information on travel bans and restrictions. On this, Brunei Darussalam proposed for the information sector to work closely with other sectors and relevant national agencies in broadcasting travel updates and information.

Brunei Darussalam, as ASEAN Chair for 2021 has chosen the theme "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper," which underscores ASEAN's collective pursuit to improve the well-being and livelihood of its people, especially as the region works to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The theme emphasises that ASEAN needs to work together to realise shared interests and confront challenges of common concern. All this will ultimately enable the people of ASEAN to thrive, prosper, and secure sustainable development, for the benefit of present and future generations.

The theme of the 15th AMRI "ASEAN: A Digital Community with Accessibility for All" is relevant to Brunei's chairmanship goals, and welcomed the Framework for Promoting Accessibility for All in ASEAN Digital Broadcasting endorsed by the AMRI in December 2020. Brunei Darussalam supports the initiative to increase access for all groups of people including those with disabilities and senior citizens, and has launched the first phase of sign language interpretation on 'Berita Perdana' national primetime news on February 1.

The Minister also highlighted an excerpt of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam's *titah* (royal speech) at the 37th ASEAN Summit, in which His Majesty stated that the regional outlook and post-2025 Community Vision will be shaped by actions in the coming years. These must therefore be arranged well so future generations can face the next era with confidence and optimism.

The information sector is as important as the health and finance sectors in helping ASEAN recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and build a more prepared, dynamic and sustainable community. AMRI's support towards Brunei Darussalam's aim to promote Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD) in 2021 is important. SHIELD is an overarching approach to better shield the society, economy and the broader developmental agenda, as well as to enable a swift and collective response in mitigating impacts of emergencies and disasters. This work in particular includes supporting the use of digital technologies to facilitate the digital transformation of the region, enhancing communication practices and cooperation during crisis situations, and strengthening media and information cooperation with other relevant sectorial bodies, stakeholders, and partners within and beyond the region.

The Conference began with an Opening Ceremony in which His Excellency Anucha Nakasai, Minister attached to the Prime Minister's Office of the Kingdom of Thailand as AMRI Chair for 2020 and 2021, in his opening remarks touched on the important role played by AMRI in maintaining ASEAN's effective role under the fields of media and information, especially in light of the unprecedented situations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. His Excellency stated that ASEAN is moving towards a digital community with accessibility to all, through the reinforcement of digital skills of ASEAN citizens and ensuring that no one is left behind.

His Excellency Dr Phan Tam, Vice Minister, Ministry of Information and Communications, Viet Nam was the Deputy Chair of the Conference. Also attending were Ministers and senior officers from other ASEAN member states as well as the Secretary-General of ASEAN.

The 15th AMRI discussed and endorsed three outcome documents

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Moving towards digital community (continued)

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which will be elevated to the 38th and 39th ASEAN Summits for the Leaders' notation, namely the Framework for Developing Digital Readiness among ASEAN Citizens; Framework for Promoting Accessibility for All in ASEAN Digital Broadcasting; and the Joint Media Statement of the 15th AMRI and Related Meetings.

The 15th AMRI also noted the report of the 18th Senior Officials Meeting Responsible for Information (18th SOMRI), the 6th SOMRI+3 and the 3rd SOMRI+Japan which included Brunei Darussalam's reports on ASEAN cooperation with the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the ASEAN Plus Three. Brunei Darussalam is currently the country-coordinator for ASEAN-ROK dialogue

relations.

In the afternoon, the Minister also attended the 6th AMRI+3 Meeting together with Ministers and Heads of Delegation from other ASEAN member states as well as the Plus Three Countries. The Meeting was chaired by Thailand.

The 15th AMRI Conference was preceded by the 18th SOMRI, the 6th SOMRI Plus Three Meeting and the 3rd SOMRI Plus Japan Meeting held on March 10, which was attended by senior officers from the Prime Minister's Office, Radio Televisyen Brunei and the Department of Information.

The 27th ASEAN Economic Ministers Retreat officially commences

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 2

- The 27th ASEAN Economic Ministers Retreat officially commenced via video conferencing at the Sepakat Room of the International Convention Centre (ICC), Berakas.

The meeting was chaired by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Dr. Awang Haji Mohd. Amin Liew bin Abdullah, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister of Finance and Economy.

ASEAN Economic Ministers from ASEAN member states and Dato Paduka Lim Jock Hoi, ASEAN Secretary-General attended the virtual meeting. Representing Brunei Darussalam was Yang Mulia Dato Seri Paduka Dr. Haji Abdul Manaf bin Haji Metussin, Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy (Economy).

Taking into account that the spread of COVID-19 has not yet subsided, a full-fledged recovery in the region will require continued unflinching cooperation in the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) integration agenda, particularly to look into immediate-to-long term goals of efforts to revive the ASEAN economy.

The two-day retreat will endorse Brunei Darussalam's 10 Priority Economic Deliverables PEDs as ASEAN Chair for 2021 in-line with the theme 'We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper'.

Divided into three strategic thrusts, the PEDs will focus on recovery in the region through initiatives such as streamlining non-tariff measures and investment facilitation, providing a recovery plan for ASEAN tourism sector, and opening new markets and partnerships for ASEAN with the launch of the possible ASEAN-Canada FTA negotiations.

The second strategic thrust is digitalisation for a resilient ASEAN by focussing on the work in providing a safe, secure and harmonised e-commerce environment and digital ecosystem. This includes



Yang Berhormat Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister of Finance and Economy, ASEAN Secretary-General and Yang Mulia Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy (Economy) at the virtual meeting.

initiatives such as the ASEAN Agreement on E-Commerce and a regional action plan in the area of cyberspace.

The third strategic thrust is sustainability efforts towards advancing an inclusive and sustainable economic growth through initiatives such as support and guidance for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), development of a regional framework for Circular Economy and cooperation in sustainable energy transitions.

The meeting will also discuss and provide guidance on the post COVID-19 recovery efforts in the region including initiatives implemented under ASEAN, Comprehensive Recovery Framework; progress under the ASEAN Economic Community including 2021 priorities of sectoral bodies under the purview of AEM and the Post 2025 Vision for the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC); ASEAN external economic relations including progress in ratifying the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement as well as status of the review on ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA).

During the Consultation with ASEAN Business Advisory Council (ASEAN-BAC), the ASEAN-BAC, led by Yang Berhormat Siti Rozaimeryanty binti Dato Seri Laila Jasa Haji Abdul Rahman, Legislative Council member as ASEAN-BAC Chair briefed the ministers on the priorities and initiatives for 2021.

Among the priorities for this year are: a legacy project called 'Harnessing Impact for Resilient Employability Digitally (HIRED)' and action lines that would contribute to the economic recovery in the region.

The 27th AEM Retreat was preceded by the Preparatory Senior Economic Officials Meeting (Prep-SEOM) on March 1.

The meeting was chaired by Dr. Hajah May Fa'ezah binti Haji Ahmad Ariffin, Permanent Secretary (Economy) at the Ministry of Finance and Economy; and was attended by all senior economic officials of ASEAN member states, officials from the ASEAN Secretariat and officers from the Trade Division at the Ministry of Finance and Economy.

EV Pilot Project: Driving Towards a Greener Nation

JERUDONG, March 25 - Based on the Brunei Darussalam National Climate Change Policy (BNCCP) that was launched on July 25, 2020, carbon emission from the land transport sector in 2018 was at 13.6 per cent, and was the third largest sector in terms of greenhouse gas (GHG) emission in the country.

The BNCCP has set 10 strategies to pave way towards the country's resilience in climate change and low carbon emission.

"Electric Vehicle (EV) is the third strategy, with the target of increasing EV shares to 60 per cent of the total vehicle sales in this country by 2035," said Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Abdul Motalib bin Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Setia Dato Paduka Haji Mohammad Yusof, Minister of Transport and Infocommunication during the launching of the EV Pilot Project at BRIDEX Hall 2.

The Minister of Transport and Infocommunications said that the EV Pilot Project will involve various stakeholders with the target of making evaluations and studies on the effectiveness of the EV, along with the public's response, after two years of implementation.

"The policies and programmes have been, and will continue to be reviewed and monitored by an action group which was established early last year, namely Electric Vehicle Joint Task Force (EVJTF) led by Ministry of Energy. Through the whole of nation approached with the involvement of government, non-government agencies and stakeholders, the objective of EVJTF, among others to discuss the short and long-term need for EV implementation, so that the country is better prepared before the widespread deployment of EV in the country," said the Minister.

The Minister explained that the annual average of new vehicle registration in Brunei Darussalam for the past five years was 12,658 vehicles per year.

"By 2035, according to an early study conducted by the EVJTF with the Brunei Darussalam Climate Change Secretariat, it is estimated that 11,400 new vehicles are expected to be registered, with 6,800 vehicles or 60 per cent are Electric Vehicles or EV," added the Minister.

Towards achieving the target, policy drafting and programmes to encourage EV ownership including incentives; infrastructure provision; customer protection; capacity development programmes including retraining and upskilling; emergency response; waste disposal and continuous dissemination are currently being



Yang Berhormat Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism; Yang Berhormat Minister of Development; Yang Berhormat Minister of Energy; Yang Berhormat Minister of Transport and Infocommunications; and Yang Mulia Deputy Minister of Energy during the launch of the pilot project.

implemented and planned under the role of EVJTF, and these are carried out with industry players and other stakeholders.

With the consent of His Majesty the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, an initiative has been provided for the duration of the EV Pilot Project, where vehicle licences (VL) for any EV involved or otherwise in the project are exempt from payment until a later establishment of the VL rate for EV based on electric motor power. One of the main activities that will be implemented during the pilot project is to identify strategic locations where EV charging stations will be installed in phases according to the people's need.

The project was officially launched by Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Haji Ali bin Apong, Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism; Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Ir. Awang Haji Suhaimi bin Haji Gafar, Minister of Development; Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia (Dr.) Awang Haji Mat Suny bin Haji Md. Hussien, Minister of Energy; Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Abdul Motalib bin Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Setia Dato Paduka Haji Mohammad Yusof, Minister of Transport and Infocommunications; and Yang Mulia Dato Seri Paduka Awang Haji Matsatejo bin Sokiaw, Deputy Minister of Energy as Co-Chairmen of and members of the Brunei Darussalam National Council on Climate Change.

The theme 'Driving Towards a Greener Nation' is suitable towards achieving the goal of Strategy 3: Electric Vehicles under the BNCCP.

Bangladesh Golden Jubilee National Day reception

GADONG, March 26 - The High Commission of Bangladesh in Brunei Darussalam marked their 50th Independence and National Day with a celebration at the Rizqun International Hotel.

Yang Berhormat Dato Seri Setia Awang Abdul Motalib bin Pehin Orang Kaya Seri Setia Dato Paduka Haji Mohammad Yusof, Minister of Transport and Infocommunications and spouse were the Guests of Honour.

Her Excellency Nahida Rahman Shumona, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Brunei Darussalam expressed her appreciation to the Brunei Government for the support towards the Bangladesh community, especially low-skilled workers during the early days of the pandemic and a generous donation to over a million Rohingyas living in camps in Bangladesh.

Her Excellency also congratulated the Brunei Government for the successful containment of the COVID-19 pandemic with an effective decision to close the borders and enforcing strict health



Yang Berhormat Minister of Transport and Infocommunications and spouse with Her Excellency High Commission of Bangladesh in Brunei Darussalam during the cake-cutting ceremony.

measures, which has made Brunei a safe place and a country to learn from, while many countries are still reeling from the pandemic.

Towards inclusive, sustainable development in ASEAN

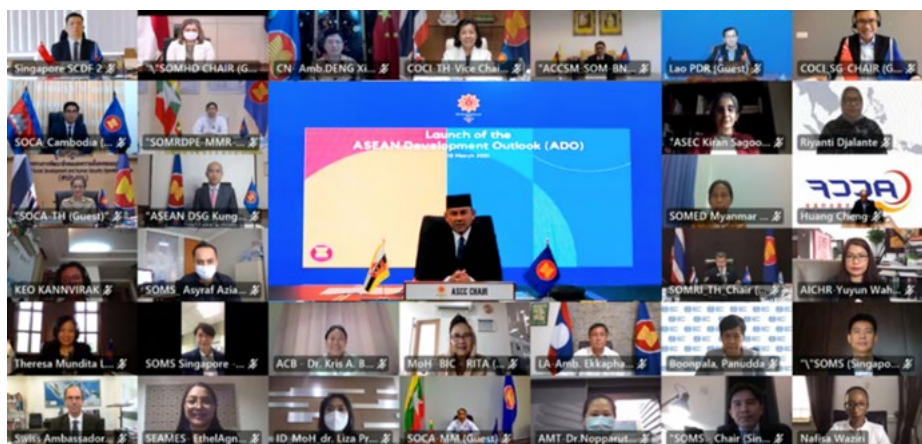
BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 16 – The ASEAN Secretariat today launched the inaugural ASEAN Development Outlook (ADO), a regional publication to chart progress towards sustainable human development in the ASEAN region and to identify key challenges with examples of best practices for the future.

According to the press release, the 2021 edition of the ADO focuses on inclusive and sustainable development in ASEAN across four key thematic areas, namely the ASEAN Identity; natural and built environment; livelihoods; social welfare and health to help navigate and steer regional cooperation, and chart a vision of the ASEAN Community in coming years.

This took into account of the major drivers of change in the region which will create opportunities and present risks for current and future population. The ADO publication is expected to be one of the outcome documents for the 38th ASEAN Summit.

The ADO publication is a product of joint collaboration between the University of Cambridge and the ASEAN Secretariat under the overall guidance of the ASEAN Senior Official Meeting on Rural Development and Poverty Eradication (SOMRDPE), with contributions from ASEAN Member States, ASEAN Sectorial Bodies across the ASEAN Community pillars and ASEAN's strategic partners. The publication is made possible with the support from the ASEAN-China Cooperation Fund.

The ceremony, held through video conference was attended by Yang Berhormat Major General (Rtd) Dato Paduka Seri Haji Aminuddin Ihsan bin Pehin Orang Kaya Saiful Mulok Dato Seri Paduka Haji Abidin, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports of Brunei Darussalam, as the Chair of ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council together with His Excellency Dato Paduka Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary General of ASEAN and; His Excellency Zhao Yingmin, Vice Minister of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China; as well as ASEAN



Yang Berhormat Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism; Yang Berhormat Minister of Development; Yang Berhormat Minister of Energy; Yang Berhormat Minister of Transport and Infocommunications; and Yang Mulia Deputy Minister of Energy during the launch of the pilot project.

senior officials, ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, and lead researchers from University of Cambridge. "This milestone publication of ADO is timely, especially against the backdrop of the unprecedented year of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will add value to ASCC's work for inclusive, resilient and sustainable development in ASEAN" said the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports in his remarks.

Whilst welcoming the comprehensive assessment of the current situation, challenges, opportunities, lessons learned, and best practices which will also serve as an excellent source of strategic, yet practical policy recommendations for ASEAN and respective member states.

The Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports also expressed his confidence that the publication will also support the work of ASCC's sectorial bodies as ASEAN progress towards the realization of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, so that no one is left behind.

In the morning, Senior Officials Committee for the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council (SOCA) Leaders attended the 16th Coordinating Conference on the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (SOC-COM) co-chaired by His Excellency Kung Phoak, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for

ASCC and Hajah Nor Ashikin binti Haji Johari, Permanent Secretary (Community and Culture), Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, as Brunei Darussalam's SOCA Leader and Chair of SOCA, via video conference.

Also present were Senior Officials for ASEAN Political-Security Council, Senior Officials for ASEAN Economic Community Council and ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights; ASEAN Committee of Permanent Representatives; Chairs of Sectorial Bodies under ASCC and other ASEAN Entities.

With the theme "Towards Post-COVID Recovery and Resilience in ASEAN", the conference, amongst others, discussed the findings and recommendations of the report of the Mid-Term Review of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 as well as the development of the ASEAN Community Post-2025 Vision which is part of Brunei Darussalam's priorities as ASEAN Chair for 2021.

The conference also deliberated on necessary operational resources to promote Post-COVID Recovery and Resilience in ASEAN.

In the afternoon, SOCA leaders attended the 1st ASCC Partnership Conference chaired by His Excellency Kung Phoak, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASCC via video conference.

The Minister said that Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN2021 Chairmanship theme of "We Care, We Prepare, We Prosper", underscored ASEAN's collective pursuit to improve the well-being and livelihood of its people, alongside ensuring that the whole of ASEAN Community and its partners

their representatives, His Excellency Dato Paduka Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary General of ASEAN as well as their respective delegations.

During the meeting, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports urged ASCC to keep building on its coordinated responses as it moves out of the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, while keeping in step with community-building efforts.

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Ensure ASCC is future-ready, forward looking

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 31 - The 25th ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Council Meeting was held via video conference. The meeting was chaired by Yang Berhormat Major General (Rtd) Dato Paduka Seri Haji Aminuddin Ihsan bin Pehin Orang Kaya Saiful Mulok Dato Seri Paduka Haji Abidin, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports as the Chair of ASCC Council, and was attended by ASCC Ministers or

their representatives, His Excellency Dato Paduka Lim Jock Hoi, Secretary General of ASEAN as well as their respective delegations.

During the meeting, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports urged ASCC to keep building on its coordinated responses as it moves out of the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, while keeping in step with community-building efforts.

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can sustainably prosper together. This will show how relevant the association is to the people.

The Minister also outlined the need to re-imagine, and re-engineer, how ASEAN, and its institution work, at the most fundamental level by renewing past commitments, strengthening cross-sectoral and cross-pillar coordination, in parallel with COVID-19 recovery and post-2025 vision efforts; while strengthening ASEAN's centrality through ASEAN-led mechanisms. This will ensure ASCC to be future-ready and forward-looking.

In support of Brunei Darussalam's ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council ASCC2021 priorities and deliverables, amongst others, the meeting agreed on the following - the submission of the draft Regional Policy Framework of Fostering Greater Understanding, Tolerance and a Sense of Regional Agendas among the people of ASEAN, for adoption, at the 38th ASEAN Summit.

To realise this, a High-Level Cultural Forum on Promoting an Adaptive Community of Greater Understanding and Tolerance will be held this year. This is part of ASEAN's efforts to build on its preventive work.

The prioritization of a transformative Social Protection is emphasised, to realise the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and as lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to align with the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework.

In this regard, Brunei Darussalam together with the ASEAN Secretariat, are working on introducing a Comprehensive Framework on Care Economy which would allow ASEAN to have policies to enhance readiness and responsiveness of social protection measures.

This will also look into harnessing economic opportunities that may arise from the need to enhance care for our



Yang Berhormat Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports chairing the 25th ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) Council Meeting.

people.

The ASCC Council's role should be expanded to look into ASCC-related cooperation with Dialogue Partners. In this regard, the meeting agreed to establish an Innovation Platform Dialogue within ASCC. The meeting also encouraged ASCC Sectorial Bodies to look into possible expansion of platforms with Dialogue Partners.

The meeting underscored the importance of youth development and commended the spirit of volunteerism amongst the ASEAN youths and welcomed youth's passion in giving back to the society through implementation of youth-led projects.

The meeting also looked forward to the establishment of the ASEAN Aid which is expected to imbue ASEAN citizens with a sense of regional agendas and greater awareness as well as expanding public's mindshare on ASEAN developments.

The meeting also noted that the Financial Rules for the ASEAN Disaster Management and Emergency Relief (ADMER) Fund will be revised to allow the public to contribute to the ADMER Fund.

The 25th ASCC meeting commended the other areas of focus, including Health and Development, Environment and Climate Change, Social Welfare, Education, Youth and Sports, Culture and Information, Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, Human Resources Development, as well as the follow-up to the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the ASCC Blueprint 2025.

The meeting agreed to forge ahead to better organise regional efforts and guide ASEAN as it progresses with its community building efforts, in tandem with the ASEAN Political-Security Community Pillar and ASEAN Economic Community Pillar.

The meeting supported Brunei Darussalam's proposal to establish a Strategic and Holistic Initiative to Link ASEAN Responses to Emergencies and Disasters (ASEAN SHIELD) and welcomed the proposed establishment of a Roadmap and Terms of Reference for the High-Task Force (HLTF) for the ASEAN Community's Post 2025 Vision, as mandated by the Hanoi Declaration on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision.

Brunei economy shows positive growth in 2020

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 18 - Brunei Darussalam's economy in 2020 grew by 1.2 per cent which was attributed to an increase in the Non-Oil & Gas sector by 9.0 per cent. Meanwhile, the Oil & Gas Sector recorded a decline of 4.9 per cent. The overall growth in 2020 was achieved after the gross domestic product (GDP) in the first nine months recorded a positive growth.

In the fourth quarter (Q4) 2020, Brunei Darussalam's GDP at current prices was valued at BND4.1 billion compared to BND4.8 billion in Q4 2019. The Oil & Gas Sector, comprising oil & gas mining and manufacture of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), which accounted for 44.8 per cent of the total gross value added (GVA). Meanwhile, the Non-Oil & Gas Sector, which includes downstream

activities such as the manufacture of petroleum and chemical products, contributed 55.2 per cent.

At constant prices, GDP recorded a negative growth of 1.4 per cent year-on-year in Q4 2020. This was due to a decrease in the Oil & Gas Sector by 8.6 per cent. Meanwhile, the Non-Oil & Gas Sector recorded an increase of 7.4 per cent.

The decline in the Oil & Gas Sector was mainly due to a decrease in the production of crude oil from 122.7 thousand barrels per day in Q4 2019 to 105.1 thousand barrels per day in

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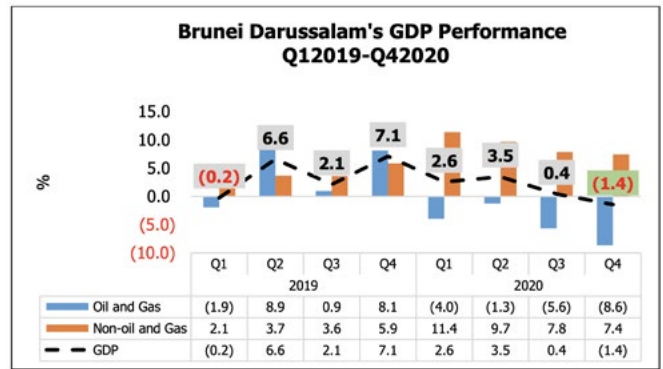
Q4 2020. Natural gas production also recorded a decrease from 34.5 million cubic metres per day in Q4 2019 to 32.5 million cubic metres per day in Q4 2020. In addition, LNG production declined from 982,117 MMBtu per day to 901,071 MMBtu per day during the same period of time.

Meanwhile, the growth in the Non-Oil & Gas Sector was mainly due to the downstream activities following the increase in the production of petroleum and chemical products, with a GVA of BND362.5 million at constant prices.

This was followed by an increase in the subsector of Wholesale and Retail Trade which contributed by an increase in the domestic demand as travel restrictions remain effective amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The increase in this subsector was also in line with the increase in retail sales driven mainly by the sales of Computer & Telecommunication Equipment. The Health Services subsector also increased in line with the increase in both government and private health services activities.

In addition, the Agriculture, Forestry & Fishery sector also recorded an increase of 27.5 per cent in Q4 2020. This was due to an increase in the production of subsectors such as Fishery, Livestock & Poultry and Vegetable, Fruits & Other Agriculture. An increase in Fisheries activities was mainly due to the production of farm prawns under aquaculture industry. In addition, an increase in livestock & poultry activities was mainly associated with an increase in the production of cattle and broiler. Meanwhile, paddy production was the biggest contributor to the increase in the Vegetables, Fruits & Other Agriculture subsector.

By expenditure approach, negative GDP growth was mainly due to a



GDP by Expenditure at Constant Prices

	Q4 2019	Q4 2020	% Growth
Domestic Demand	4,001.0	3,954.0	(1.2)
Government Final Consumption Expenditure	1,206.2	1,140.9	(5.4)
Household Final Consumption Expenditure	1,035.6	1,087.6	5.0
Gross Capital Formation	1,759.2	1,725.4	(1.9)
External Demand	3,844.0	3,452.6	(10.2)
Exports	3,844.0	3,452.6	(10.2)
GDP	5,122.8	5,049.7	(1.4)

decrease in the external demand (exports of goods and services) by 10.2 per cent. Domestic demand also recorded a decrease of 1.2 per cent due to decreases in the Government Final Consumption Expenditure by 5.4 per cent and Gross Capital Formation by 1.9 per cent particularly government investment. However, this growth was moderated by an increase in the Household Final Consumption Expenditure by 5.0 per cent.

Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure of the total value of goods and services produced in a particular period after deducting the cost of goods and services used up in the process of production.

CPI increases 1.9 per cent

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 22 - The Consumer Price Index (CPI) in January 2021 increased by 1.9 per cent year-on-year compared to January 2020. Prices of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages increased by 4.1 per cent. Meanwhile, Non-Food prices increased by 1.3 per cent.

The CPI increase was largely attributed to increases in the prices and costs of Transport (6.2 per cent); Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages (4.1 per cent); and Education (1.9 per cent). However, this was moderated by decreases in prices and costs of Clothing and Footwear (4.3 per cent); Furnishings, Household Equipment and Routine Household Maintenance (1.1 per cent); and Restaurants and Hotels (0.5 per cent). The increase in prices of Transport was largely attributed to rise in prices of motor vehicles.

Rising prices of Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages was driven by the hike in food prices such as vegetables; chicken; as well

as beef and buffalo meat. The increase in the price of vegetables was due to uncertain weather conditions. Meanwhile, the increase in the price of chicken, beef and buffalo meat was due to increased domestic demand following travel restrictions and limited import supply. Furthermore, the rising cost of Education is due to the increase in tuition fees of selected private educational institutions.

On a month-on-month basis, the CPI in January 2021 increased by 0.5 per cent compared to December 2020. The Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages Index increased by 0.1 per cent while the Non-Food Index increased by 0.6 per cent.

The CPI is a measure of price changes of goods and services paid by the consumer in a specified period and compiled on a monthly basis. The list of goods and services in the CPI is based on the average expenditure per household from the Household Expenditure Survey (HES).

RPPI Q4 2020 decreases 4.9 per cent

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, March 29 - Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) today published Brunei Darussalam's Residential Property Price Index (RPPI) for the fourth quarter of 2020 (Q4 2020). The index is compiled using data sourced from the banks in Brunei Darussalam, and is published with close cooperation from the Ministry of Development, in particular the Authority for Building Control and Construction Industry (ABCI).

In Q4 2020, the RPPI was at 90.6 showing the decrease of 4.9 per cent year-on-year compared to Q4 2019, and a decrease of 12% quarter-on-quarter compared to the previous quarter (Q3 2020).

Based on the mortgage data obtained from the banks, there were

131 transactions for private residential properties in Q4 2020, compared to 182 transactions in Q3 2020. The majority of these transactions were for detached house (53.4 per cent) followed by semi-detached houses (19.9 per cent); terrace house (18.3 per cent); apartments (3.8 per cent) and land (4.6 per cent).

The median purchase price for all types of private residential properties was \$254,000 in Q4 2020 – lower by 5.0 per cent compared in Q4 2019 and higher by 2.1 per cent compared to Q3 2020. The median prophase prices for specific types of properties were \$289,000 for detached houses; \$250,000 for semi-detached houses; \$202,500 for terrace houses; \$210,000 for apartments; and \$75,000 for land.