

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

About Brunei...

Brunei Darussalam is on the north western shore of Borneo and shares a common border with the Malaysian state of Sarawak. Set like a crown slightly askew, 75 per cent of its 5,765 square kilometres land area is covered by equatorial rainforest. Its economy is dominated by the oil and gas industry.

Brunei is divided administratively into four districts: Brunei-Muara, Belait, Temburong, and Tutong. A district comprises several mukim and a mukim comprises several villages. Headman of a mukim is called Penghulu and headman of a village is called Ketua Kampung.

Brunei's official language is Malay but English is widely spoken. Its official religion follows the Sunni strand of Islam. His Majesty The Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam is the head of the Islamic faith. Other religions are also practised in Brunei including Christianity and Buddhism.

Short historical background

The Brunei civilisation has existed for more than 1,500 years pre-dating Islam. In the course of time the civilisation transformed into an empire. At its height the Brunei Empire covered vast areas of Borneo, the Sulu archipelago and parts of Mindanao.

Ancient Chinese texts contained some information on Brunei's imperial history: Brunei's old name was Puni and it traded with the Chinese Empire in AD 518, 523, 616, 669, 977 and from 1369 to 1643. Muslim influence was established in Brunei since AD 977 and Arabic characters were used before 1370. The ancient Chinese texts also said that the Brunei ruler, Awang Alak Betatar, embraced the Islamic faith in 1371 to coincide with his marriage to a princess from a neighbouring kingdom.

Brunei signed a series of treaties with Great Britain since the 1800s, the one signed in 1888 marked the beginning of its next stage of development as a British protectorate that lasted for 96 years. Whilst a British protectorate, Brunei was modernised where governing power was centralised, the monarchy was regenerated, the administration system was based on the public service model and state presence covered all areas within its territory. Brunei resumes its status as an independent and sovereign nation-state on January 1, 1984.

News snippets from January to December 2019

UNISSA signs MOU with Indonesian university

The Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Tazkia University College of Islamic Economics (STEI Takzia) on January 9, 2019.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND100 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on January 10, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.5625 per cent with maturity date on April 11, 2019 (based on a 91-day tenor).

This is the 165th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND12.51 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of January 10, 2019 stands at BND347.5 million.

Management Services Department receives ISO accreditation

The Management Services Department (MSD) of the Prime Minister's Office received the ISO 9001:2015 accreditation on January 15, 2019.

MSD previously received the PBD ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management System in 2012 and 2015.

KUPU SB signs MOU with Labuan Education Department

The Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (KUPU SB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Education Department of Labuan on January 15, 2019.

Brunei cancer centre adds immunotherapy to its cancer treatments

The Brunei Cancer Centre (TBCC) of the Pantai Jerudong Specialist Centre (PJSC) will introduce immunotherapy as an add-on modality of treatment along with the other form of cancer therapy it offers, the Borneo Bulletin reported January 17, 2019.

UTB signs MOU with Bangladesh university

The Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology (DUET), Gazipur, Bangladesh on January 16, 2019.

The MOU enables UTB and DUET to work together on the undergraduate and postgraduate students and academics exchange; joint research, conferences and seminars, student supervisions; and share tactical expertise between the two institutions.

DUET is a leading engineering and technology university in Bangladesh.

Municipal Department introduces payment app for building taxes

Through the Municipal Department, the Ministry of Home Affairs officiated the launching of a mobile app for payment of building taxes on January 22, 2019.

Payment of the building tax can be made online through the Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam (BIBD) Berhad and Baiduri Bank Berhad websites or via the BIBD Mobile App and the Baiduri Personal i-Banking Mobile App.

RIPAS Hospital introduces auditory implant surgery

The Ministry of Health is providing auditory implant surgery services at the Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital this year, the Borneo Bulletin reported January 28, 2019.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND100 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on February 7, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.6875 per cent with maturity date on May 9, 2019 (based on a 91-day tenor).

This is the 166th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND12.61 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of February 7, 2019 stands at BND347.5 million.

UBD signs MOU with Singapore university

The Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), the Borneo Bulletin reported February 14, 2019.

The MOU formalises the start of collaboration between UBD and SUTD in the exchange of students, faculty members, collaboration in lifelong learning and continual education.

It also provides a platform for collaboration in research areas such as data analytics and biodiversity.

Brunei and Lao PDR sign MOUS

Brunei Darussalam and Lao People's Democratic Republic signed the following Memoranda of Understanding (MOUS) on February 16, 2019:

1. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the national chambers of commerce of both nation-states
2. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Education

Brunei establishes wholesale network operator

Brunei has combined the network infrastructure of its telecommunication operators under one organisation called the Unified National Networks Sendirian Berhad (UNN), the Borneo Bulletin reported February 27, 2019.

Brunei's telecommunication operators comprised Telekom Brunei Berhad (TelBru), Datastream Technology Sendirian Berhad (DST), Progresif Cellular Sendirian Berhad (Progresif) and Brunei International Gateway Sendirian Berhad (BIG).

UNN is a subsidiary of Darussalam Assets Sendirian Berhad.

Brunei HR company signs MOU with British counterpart

Brunei-based human resource (HR) organisation, Syarikat Pakar Tenaga Bersatu (PTB), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Nisai Group Limited (Nisai) on February 27, 2019.

The MOU enables the establishment of the NISAI-NOCN (National Open College Network)-PTB Centre in Brunei.

Brunei signs Double Taxation Agreement with India

Brunei Darussalam and India signed the Agreement for the Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with Respect to Taxes – TIEA and ACT on February 28, 2019.

To date, Brunei signed 19 double taxation treaties and 11 exchange of information agreements.

Brunei and Malaysia sign MOU

Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Movement of Prisoners on March 5, 2019.

The MOU is associated with the transfer, escorting and movement of prisoners from areas between Sabah and Sarawak via Brunei and the movement of prisoners within Brunei via Sarawak. It facilitates the transfer of prisoners between Malaysia and Brunei, without compromising the security and safety of the prisoners, as well as the public.

Brunei and Korea sign MOU

Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Korea signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MOUS) on March 11, 2019.

1. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Investment Promotion Cooperation
2. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Recognition of the Korean Intellectual Property Office as an International Searching Authority and International Preliminary Examining Authority Under the Patent Cooperation Treaty for the Brunei Darussalam Intellectual Property Office

3. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Scientific and Technological Cooperation

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND24.5 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on March 7, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.18125 per cent with maturity date on March 5, 2020 (based on a 364-day tenor).

This is the 167th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND12.63 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of March 7, 2019 stands at BND322 million.

Brunei and Vietnam sign MOU

Brunei Darussalam and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Use of Hotline for Information Exchange to Address Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing on March 27, 2019.

UNISSA receives accreditation from and signs MOU with Moroccan university

The Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) received accreditation for teaching Arabic from the Mohammed V University of Morocco, the Borneo Bulletin reported April 9, 2019.

UNISSA also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Mohammed V University.

Brunei and Malaysia sign agreement on agriculture industries

The Strategic Alliances Agreement on the Multiuse Products for Agriculture between the International Halal Trade Hub and Services Sendirian Berhad (IHTHS) of Brunei Darussalam and the Economic Development Management of Malaysia (EDMO) on April 10, 2019.

The collaboration on the multiuse agriculture products is envisioned to accelerate growth and increase crop output in the agriculture industry of both nation-states.

Ministry of Health and Gleneagles JPMC sign MOU

The Ministry of Health and Gleneagles JPMC Sendirian Berhad signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on April 18, 2019.

The MOU enables Gleneagles JPMC Sendirian Berhad to fund two major projects under the ministry's Health Promotion Centre: the Workplace and Health (WAH!) Programme and the Happy Environment and Lifestyle (HEAL) Programme. The

funding is part of Gleneagles JPMC Sendirian Berhad corporate social responsibility efforts.

Gleneagles JPMC Sendirian Berhad will provide BND120,000 funding for the two major projects.

The goal of the WAH! Programme is to encourage workplaces to provide a supportive environment and initiate actions to enable employees to be more active, eat healthier, be smoke-free, and be in a good mental health.

The programme also aims to catalyse the rolling out of workplace healthy lifestyle programmes or workplace health promotion programmes in all government ministries by 2021.

The objectives of the HEAL Programme is to support physical activity interventions in community settings through building, strengthening and maintaining social networks that create opportunities for physical activities.

The programme aims to enhance awareness and knowledge of the various health benefits of regular physical activity and discourage sedentary behaviours within community settings.

It also seeks to engage and form partnerships with the community, schools, private businesses and health centres, as well as sports and recreational stakeholders to encourage people to participate in culturally appropriate physical activities.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND100 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on April 11, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.6250 per cent with maturity date on July 11, 2019 (based on a 91-day tenor).

This is the 168th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND12.73 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of April 11, 2019 stands at BND322 million.

Brunei Darussalam and Bangladesh sign MOUS

Brunei Darussalam and Bangladesh signed the following Memoranda of Understanding (MOUS) on April 22, 2019:

1. Memorandum of Understanding on Scientific and Technical Cooperation in the field of Agriculture
2. Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation in the field of Fisheries
3. Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation in the field of Livestock

4. Memorandum of Understanding on the field of Cooperation in the Supply of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)
5. Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation in the field of Youths and Sports
6. Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation in the fields of Culture and the Arts
7. Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation Agreement between the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Brunei Darussalam (NCCIBD) and the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI)
8. Ghanim International Cooperation Sendirian Berhad of Brunei Darussalam and Taj Food Industries Limited of Bangladesh (a subsidiary of the Nizam Group of Companies)
9. Memorandum of Understanding on Joint Collaboration for the Provision of Professional Skills Development and Training in Petroleum Geoscience comprising three signatories: Dimension Strata Sendirian Berhad of Brunei Darussalam, Green Power Limited of Bangladesh and the Department of Geology of the Faculty of Earth and Environment Science, University of Dhaka

UNISSA sign MOU with Saudi Electronic University

The Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Saudi Electronic University (SEU) on April 22, 2019 in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The MOU enables strategic collaboration in the field of online Arabic language studies. Under the MOU, UNISSA now has full access to use SEU's free 16-level Arabic language programme for the Arabic language instruction. SEU also offers free Arabic language exams.

The partnership enables UNISSA to improve the effectiveness of its online Arabic teaching and learning in Brunei Darussalam and enhance its International Test System of Arabic Language, Arabic Language Test and Arabic Language Empowerment Programmes, which are carried out by its Faculty of Arabic Language.

Brunei and Singapore sign agreements to establish sea bass hatchery

The Department of Fisheries of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism of Brunei Darussalam signed two contracts with the Barramundi Asia (B) Sendirian Berhad: the Sea Licence Agreement and the Land Lease Agreement on May 3, 2019.

The contracts enable the setting up of hatchery and nursery for the production of juvenile barramundi (Asian sea bass) for supply to offshore fish cages.

Under the contracts, Barramundi Asia (B) Sendirian Berhad is granted licences to initiate its intention to develop a 6,613-hectare area at the Nankivell Offshore Aquaculture Site and a 25.1-hectare site located at LOT6054 in Kampung Meragang.

The company will invest BND18 million for phase one of the project for the culture of barramundi in offshore cages in Brunei Darussalam, and adopt the advanced technologies and sustainable aquaculture husbandry and farming practices used in Europe.

At the conclusion of phase one, the project is expected to produce 4,000 metric tonnes of barramundi by 2024.

The farm will increase its production gradually to 36,000 metric tonnes by 2032, thereby achieving a biomass worth over BND324 million once the company is running at maximum operational capacity.

Brunei extends moratorium on capital punishment including the sharia criminal laws

Brunei has extended a moratorium on capital punishment that also covers the sharia criminal laws, the government announced May 5, 2019.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND100 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on May 9, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.6875 per cent with maturity date on August 8, 2019 (based on a 91-day tenor).

This is the 169th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND12.83 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of May 9, 2019 stands at BND322 million.

Brunei enforces competition law on January 1, 2020

Brunei Darussalam will enforce Section 11's prohibition on Anti-Competitive agreements of the Competition Order 2015, with the provisions associated with this prohibition to take effect on January 1, 2020.

The objective of the Competition Order 2015 is to promote market efficiency and consumer welfare in Brunei's economic landscape through the prohibition of anti-competitive conduct including Anti-Competitive Agreements (cartel), Abuse of Dominant Position and Anti-Competitive Merger.

Since the enactment of the Competition Order 2015, the regulatory framework of the Order has been put into place gradually, starting with the establishment of the Competition Commission of Brunei Darussalam and its implementing arm, the Department of Competition and Consumer Affairs of the Department of Economic Planning and Development, Ministry of Finance and Economy.

Section 11 of the Competition Order 2015 prohibits anti-competitive agreements between two or more businesses that have the intention to limit, prevent, distort or

restrict domestic competition, regardless of how the agreement was reached and where the agreement was made – within or outside Brunei.

Anti-competitive agreements include price fixing, bid rigging, market sharing and supply limitation agreed among businesses.

UBD strengthens partnership with the Chinese University of Hong Kong

Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) signed two Student Exchange Agreements (SEAS) with the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), which renewed the five-year partnership between the two universities.

The agreements were signed on June 14, 2019. The agreements formalised the on-going collaborations between the two universities in addition to the university-wide student exchanges that both institutions started in 2015.

The scope of the renewed agreements focuses on student mobility with emphasis on entrepreneurial training, global mind set and global skills.

The Faculty of Medicine at CUHK is also one of the partner medical schools of the Pengiran Anak Puteri Rashidah Sa'adatul Bolkiah Institute of Health Sciences (PAPRSB IHS) of UBD since 2017. Both faculties collaborate on the undergraduate medical programme. PAPRSB IHS has 10 partner medical schools including those from the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Australia and Hong Kong.

Brunei launches new grant for local businesses

The Darussalam Enterprise (DARe) is introducing a co-matching grant scheme for local micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMES) and co-operatives to encourage growth through sharing the cost and responsibility of investment on June 17, 2019.

Under the scheme, businesses will invest in 30 per cent of the total cost of a project, whilst DARe will finance 70 per cent of the total cost for a maximum of BND20,000.

The co-matching grant scheme is divided into two categories:

- i. 'Starting Up' category, which offers up to BND10,000
- ii. 'Expansion' category, which offers up to BND20,000

Both schemes require businesses to be registered and based in Brunei Darussalam; 100 per cent owned by citizens or permanent residents; and meet the national definition of MSMES.

Companies wishing to apply for the Starting Up category must be businesses registered under 12 months seeking to use the funds to obtain certification, equipment or market their business within the next 12 months.

Companies wishing to apply for the Expansion category are required to provide financial records. Project funding under this category is for a span of 12 months for company expansion, which includes the use of technology. Expansion must feature equipment for upgrading productivity; and marketing and consulting services for accredited certification.

Each application must produce a business plan that demonstrates the potential for further development and commercialisation; and focuses on target market, potential competition, revenue stream, product and service uniqueness, realistic scalability and projection, and project duration.

Brunei phases out the Microcredit Financing Scheme

Effective June 15, 2019, the Microcredit Financing Scheme offered by the Darussalam Enterprise (DARe) in collaboration with Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam (BIBD) will no longer be open to new applications.

Brunei and Russia sign security cooperation MOU

The National Security Committee of Brunei Darussalam and the National Security Council of the Russian Federation signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the field of bilateral security cooperation, the Borneo Bulletin reported June 19, 2019.

Brunei signs agreement with China

Brunei Darussalam and the People's Republic of China signed the Protocol on Inspection, Quarantine and Veterinary Sanitary Requirements for Wild Aquatic Products to be exported from Brunei Darussalam to the People's Republic of China on June 25, 2019.

The agreement facilitates the export of wild aquatic products from Brunei Darussalam to the People's Republic of China.

According to the Department of Fisheries, Brunei's fish exports increased from 1,209 metric tonnes in 2017 to 1,763 metric tonnes in 2018, a haul valued at BND10.53 million, with 34 per cent of this total being exported to China.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND50 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on June 20, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.6250 per cent with maturity date on June 18, 2020 (based on a 364-day tenor).

This is the 170th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND12.88 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of June 20, 2019 stands at BND322 million.

Brunei and Indonesia sign Plan of Action on Health

Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia signed the 'Plan of Action on Health' after the 1st Joint Working Group (JWG) on Health Cooperation Meeting on July 9, 2019.

The Plan of Action covers cooperation on information exchange on public health (disease control, environment health, occupational health and food safety); information exchange on health promotion; information exchange on traditional medicines; medicine products and health technology regulations; information exchange on traditional and complementary medicines; identifying mutually agreed areas in the exchange of health and medical experts; developing exchange and internship programmes for health professionals in specific specialties and joint research and development in the area of non-communicable diseases (NCDS).

The signing of the Plan of Action on Health is part of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on health cooperation between Brunei Darussalam and Indonesia.

Brunei attempts to increase beef production

The Ministry of Primary Industry and Tourism (MPRT) signed a Land Lease Agreement for the Batang Mitus Agricultural Development Area (KKP Batang Mitus) with the PDS Abattoir Sendirian Berhad, with the main objective of boosting the domestic beef production.

The Land Lease Agreement was signed on July 10, 2019. With the newly leased 55-hectare plot, PDS Abattoir Sendirian Berhad plans to increase the number of cattle to 7,000 by 2020, through the use of the feedlot system.

The feedlot project will be carried out in two phases: the first will be funded with a BND7-million third party financing by the Bank Islam Brunei Darussalam (BIBD), which is expected to support the building of two cattle sheds and the planting of grass fodder.

The second phase entails the addition of two more cattle farms.

The project is expected to generate employment opportunities for locals, in addition to increasing domestic beef production for self-sufficiency; ensuring Halal and clean meat supplies for local consumption; and stabilising prices in the local market.

The initiative will also help to lower the demand for imported meat and eliminate indirectly the health risk from countries experiencing the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) and Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD).

Brunei-based fertiliser plant secures gas supply for 20 years

The Brunei Fertiliser Industries Sendirian Berhad (BFI), Permai Holdings Sendirian Berhad and Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Sendirian Berhad (BSP) signed the Commercial Agreements on July 16, 2019.

Under the agreements, BSP will supply 0.5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas to BFI over the next 20 years.

BFI is currently under construction at the 55-hectare site at the Sungai Liang Industrial Park in the Belait District.

UNISSA signs MOU with Indonesian university

The Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Universitas Islam Riau (UIR), Indonesia, the Borneo Bulletin reported on July 17, 2019.

The MOU enables Cooperation in areas such as student and academic staff exchanges, research and seminars.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND100 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on July 11, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.6250 per cent with maturity date on October 10, 2019 (based on a 91-day tenor).

This is the 171st sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND12.98 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of July 11, 2019 stands at BND322 million.

UNISSA strengthens Islamic finance research cooperation with Malaysia

The Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the International Syariah Research Academy (ISRA) of Malaysia on July 23, 2019.

The MOU enables UNISSA to enhance its strategic cooperation on Islamic financing issues via research with Malaysia.

It is envisioned to assist the university better achieve its core objective of delivering Islamic studies programmes in a more systematic and efficient manner, and improve academic excellence in publications and research via modern technology.

It is part of UNISSA's efforts to fulfil its mission of becoming a leading Islamic university with respect to propagating Islamic knowledge in line with global needs.

ISRA was established by the Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) as an Islamic finance and Syariah (sharia) related research institution. ISRA also acts as a Syariah (fatwa) knowledge repository for Islamic finance and carries out research on contemporary issues as well as in the Islamic finance industry.

The academy was established to promote innovation and dynamism in the Syariah field through pioneer research and intellectual dialogue.

Brunei and Egypt strengthen bilateral relations

Brunei Darussalam and the Arab Republic of Egypt signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MOUS) on August 5, 2019.

- i. Memorandum of Understanding on Cultural Cooperation
- ii. Memorandum of Understanding on Economic and Technical Cooperation.

PUJA strengthens links with ICE UK

The Institution of Surveyors, Engineers and Architects (known locally by its Malay acronym, PUJA) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) of United Kingdom on August 8, 2019.

Brunei becomes signatory to mediation convention

Brunei Darussalam signed the United Nations (UN) Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation on August 7, 2019.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND100 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on August 8, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.3750 per cent with maturity date on November 7, 2019 (based on a 91-day tenor).

This is the 172nd sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND13.08 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of August 8, 2019 stands at BND322 million.

Brunei improves irrigation of paddy cultivation sites

The Department of Agriculture and Agrifood of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism signed an agreement on two projects for the construction of additional irrigation systems for rice cultivation areas in the Brunei Muara District.

The projects comprised the 'Imang Reservoir Improvement', which is carried out by the Foundation Contractor & Engineering Sendirian Berhad and the 'Limpaki Seed

Production Irrigation Pipelines’, which is done in collaboration with the Seri Ghanimi Contractor Sendirian Berhad.

The agreement was signed on August 14, 2019.

The two projects are part of the three main projects under the Irrigation Scheme to be implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Agrifood and funded under the 11th National Development Plan’s ‘1101-002 Building Additional Irrigation Scheme’ for paddy planting sites in the Brunei Muara District.

The Imang Reservoir Improvement project is carried out to improve the storage and water quality capacity of the Imang Dam. It will involve digging and deepening the Imang Dam basin, clearing and removing approximately 724,000 square metres of weeds covering the dam’s surface, the construction of permanent saddle dams in the low-lying areas to prevent overflow from the dam, and activities associated with the construction of coffer dam and haul roads.

This project is expected to increase the storage capacity of the Imang Dam to 1,000,000 cubic metres and raise water supplied from the dam to paddy cultivation areas in the Brunei Muara District by an additional 10 per cent.

The Limpaki Seed Production Irrigation Pipeline project is aimed at providing an efficient water supply to the new 50-hectare paddy plantation site at the Limpaki Agricultural Development Area.

It involves the connection of the main 450-mm diameter polyethelene pipe at the existing Batong agriculture development site (known locally by its initials, KKP) to the KKP Limpaki and the installation of the polyethelene pipe (315mm and 125mm in diameter) to complement the supply of the network of irrigation systems to the entire KKP Limpaki.

The implementation of the new irrigation system at the KKP Limpaki will enable high-quality paddy varieties to be cultivated in the area.

UNISSA receives ISO certification

The Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) achieved the ISO 9001:2015 certification for quality management, the Borneo Bulletin reported August 28, 2019.

Associated news snippet...

Brunei public invited to learn language of Quran at UNISSA

The Borneo Bulletin reported November 2, 2012 that the Centre for Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning (CPKL) of the Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) is introducing and opening the programme, “Let’s Learn the Language of the Al-Quran” to the public.

Under the programme, members of the public who are keen to learn the Arabic

language and acquire knowledge of the Quran are offered three modules: basic, intermediate and advanced courses.

Each course runs for three months and costs BND60 per module.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND34.1 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on September 5, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.6250 per cent with maturity date on September 3, 2020 (based on a 364-day tenor).

This is the 173rd sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND13.08 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of September 5, 2019 stands at BND341.1 million.

Airline supports national football association

Royal Brunei Airlines Sendirian Berhad (RB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the National Football Association of Brunei Darussalam (NFABD) on September 17, 2019.

Under the MOU, RB supports the NFABD in terms of providing special fares for the players and officials on official duties.

BSP, BSM sign deals with Hengyi

Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Sendirian Berhad (BSP) and Brunei Shell Marketing Company Sendirian Berhad (BSM) each signed a commercial agreement with Hengyi Industries Sendirian Berhad on September 18, 2019.

The agreements enable Hengyi Industries Sendirian Berhad to supply crude oil and fuel products for the Brunei Darussalam domestic market.

Mobile app for vehicle and driving licence renewal

The Land Transport Department (JPD) of the Ministry of Transport and Infocommunications launched the TransportBN Mobile App on September 18, 2019.

The app enables the public to renew their vehicle and driving licences without having to go to the Land Transport Department and post office service counters.

TransportBN helps the public to access information on the demerit point system, Drive Safety Practice System (SIKAP), public bus, driving licence renewal, and vehicle licence renewal.

Ministry of Defence signs MOU with UBD and UTB

The Ministry of Defence signed two Memoranda of Understanding (MOUS) on the Collaboration in Research, Innovation and Technology with the Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and the Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB) on September 18, 2019.

Brunei upgrades a section of the Ministry of Education

The Borneo Bulletin reported September 24, 2019 that the Human Capital Development Section of the Ministry of Education has been upgraded and renamed Department of Educators Management.

Brunei provides cyber security for the public and private sectors

The Ministry of Transport and Infocommunications implemented cyber security services for the public and private sectors, effective September 25, 2019.

The ministry offers three types of services:

1. Promote awareness of cyber security threats
2. Improve response capabilities towards cyber incidents via effective crisis management
3. Improve legal enforcement capabilities in mitigating cyber threats

The three services are implemented by the Information Technology Protective Security Services Sendirian Berhad comprising the Cyberwatch Centre, National Cyber Incident Response Centre via the Brunei Computer Emergency Response Team (BruCERT) and the National Digital Forensics Laboratory.

UTB enhances research projects

The Universiti Teknologi Brunei (UTB) is set to enhance the smart agriculture and smart environment in Brunei Darussalam through research projects after it signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ANIAN Sendirian Berhad (ANIAN) on September 26, 2019.

UTB is collaborating with Wireless and Photonic Network Research Centre (WiPNET) and Institute of Tropical Forestry and Forest Products (INTROP) of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Mimos Berhad in Malaysia, Faculty of Forestry at Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia, National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT) Asia Centre in Thailand, IPB University in Bogor Indonesia, and Badan Pengkajian dan Penerapan Teknologi (BPPT) Indonesia on a project called, 'NAPC: Networked ASEAN Peat Swamp Forest Communities', which is an Internet of Things-based (IOT) solution for peat swamp forest monitoring, targeting the environmental and agricultural issues.

This project is funded by the ASEAN-ICT Virtual Organisation projects of 2018 from the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology (NICT), Japan.

Through the MOU, ANIAN will provide UTB with LoRaWANTM (Long Range Wide Area Network) outdoor and/or indoor gateways and to provide and administer LoRaWANTM network coverage for the NAPC: Network ASEAN Peat Swamp Forest Communities, Smart Agriculture project and UTB's IOT lab.

ANIAN will also provide technical support to UTB staff and students in terms of knowledge transfer and provide work placement opportunities for the students during their studies as well as employment opportunities after their graduation.

UTB also receives funding and technical support from the Authority for Information Technology Industry of Brunei Darussalam (AITI) and ANIAN for the Smart research projects that will be the first of its kind to be deployed in Brunei.

ANIAN is a Communications Solutions provider and Systems Integrator. The company is principally involved in providing integrated IOT, Information Technology (IT), business intelligence (BI) and communication solutions to implement Smart Nation projects for various industries including Water, Agriculture, Transportation, Energy, Oil and Gas, Utilities, Telecommunications, Finance, Property Management and Healthcare for both government and commercial clients.

ANIAN is currently deploying a LoRa-based communications network to facilitate IOT implementations across Brunei territory, which will allow universities, government and private sectors to undertake projects for Smart City, Smart Agriculture, Smart Building and Smart Environment use cases.

The deployment of smart technologies is part of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 in Brunei Darussalam.

Brunei and Singapore enhance aquaculture cooperation

Brunei Darussalam and Singapore announced October 2, 2019 the establishment of a working group in agriculture.

The working group is geared towards the streamlining of private sector collaboration in the area to attract more investment and create employment opportunities, especially in the aquaculture industry.

Brunei opens another Islamic gallery

Brunei Darussalam officially opened the Balai Khazanah Islam Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah on October 12, 2019. The management and administration of the gallery are under the Prime Minister's Office.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND100 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on October 10, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.3750 per cent with maturity date on January 9, 2020 (based on a 91-day tenor).

This is the 174th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND13.21 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of October 10, 2019 stands at BND341.1 million.

Brunei enhances regional cooperation

Bruneian company, Majubina signed a cross border and trade initiative and Halal Network Marketing in the BIMP-EAGA Region with the PT BEST Indonesia on October 19, 2019.

The agreement enables collaboration to focus on the Brunei Darussalam BIMP-EAGA Business Council's (BD-BEBC) primary objectives: create sustainable downstream services and self-employment; and promote cluster business development.

BIMP-EAGA provides policies on Customs, Immigration, Quarantine and Security (CIQS) that give advantages for Bruneian businesses to expand within the region by promoting the socio-economic activities for economic growth that can lead towards industrial development.

On the strategic note, the BD-BEBC officially recognises the Network Marketing Businesses as part of the mainstream economic activity in Brunei on tertiary industry. The Network Marketing Businesses is also seen as contributing to the sustainable business eco system that complements each other from supply chain management, production, trading and market demand.

Brunei implements first phase of the commercial paddy plantation project

Brunei Darussalam implemented the first phase of the 500-hectare Commercial Paddy Plantation Project at the Kandol Agricultural Development Area in the Belait District on October 28, 2019.

The first phase aims to make use of 20 of the 500-hectare plot of land as a test bed for a commercial paddy plantation to contribute to Brunei Darussalam need for rice by end of 2019.

The operation is carried out by the PaddyCo Sendirian Berhad, a government-linked company (GLC) under Darussalam Assets Sendirian Berhad.

Brunei rebrands its leading hotel

The Empire Hotel and Country Club was renamed The Empire Brunei on October 29, 2019. The event also unveiled the hotel's new logo.

Politeknik Brunei signs MOUS with international educational institutions

Politeknik Brunei (PB) signed Memorandum of Understanding separately with two international institutions of higher learning: the Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta, Indonesia and the Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN), Malaysia on October 31, 2019.

The MOU with the Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta covers the offer of higher education for health workers with Levels 3 and 4 Diploma, or by profession.

The MOU with UNITEN looks to develop on-going relations between the two institutions and provide opportunities for global learning and academic pursuits for students and faculty members through exchange and collaboration.

Poltekkes Kemenkes Yogyakarta was established by uniting six health academies since 1983. They include the Department of Health Analysts, Nutrition, Nursing, Dental Health (Dental Nursing), Midwifery and Environmental Health.

UNITEN is a private university wholly owned by TNB that offers academic programmes in areas of engineering, information technology, business management and other related fields.

Brunei enforces competition law in 2020

Brunei Darussalam will enforce the Competition Order 2015 on January 1, 2020 the Borneo Bulletin reported November 1, 2019.

Brunei launches new planning guidelines and planning information systems

The Department of Town and Country Planning of the Ministry of Development launched three planning guidelines and two planning information system on November 4, 2019.

The three planning guidelines are the planning and standard guidelines for extensions in housing development for the 2019 edition of the National Housing Scheme; planning and standard guidelines for the 2019 edition of the Industry Development; and guidelines for the supplementary planning for Soil Density and Plot Ratio in the 2019 edition of the housing development.

The newly launched systems are the planning information for land use (i-PG), and an information system for planning and development (i-PK).

The launch of the three new planning guidelines is intended to co-ordinate effective planning and the process of planning approval application, in line with current developments.

The publication of these guidelines is also part of the continuing efforts of the Department of Town and Country Planning to support strategic objectives to create sustainable development by optimising land use and efficient development management.

The newly introduced i-PG will impart information on the planning policy through a geoportal system available at the Survey Department and acts as the department's initiative in achieving its Smart Nation objective through the sharing of information with government organisations and the public.

The i-PK is an online platform for law firms to forward applications for information on the planning and development. Through this system, the Department of Town and Country Planning hopes to improve its application process for public convenience.

Flag carrier unveils new brand campaign

Brunei Darussalam flag carrier, Royal Brunei Airlines Sendirian Berhad (RB) unveiled its new brand campaign that features Bruneian hospitality on November 4, 2019.

The brand campaign was led by the airline's Digital and Marketing team in collaboration with the M&C Saatchi Singapore.

KUPU SB signs MOU with USM

The Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (KUPU SB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) on November 4, 2019.

Financial Intelligence Unit signs MOU with Philippines counterpart

The Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) of the Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC) of the Financial Intelligence Unit of the Republic of the Philippines on November 13, 2019.

Under the MOU, both signatories agree to cooperate in the exchange of financial intelligence that may assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons suspected of money laundering and terrorism financing.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND100 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on November 7, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.4375 per cent with maturity date on February 6, 2020 (based on a 91-day tenor).

This is the 175th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND13.31 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of November 7, 2019 stands at BND341.1 million.

Brunei renames MEMI

Brunei Darussalam has renamed the Ministry of Energy, Manpower and Industry (MEMI) as the Ministry of Energy, effective November 19, 2019.

The industry remit will be transferred to the Ministry of Finance and Economy, and the Manpower and Employment Council (MPEC) will become established under the Prime Minister's Office to replace the Manpower Council (MPC).

National oil company undergoes restructuring and reorganising

The Brunei National Oil Company Sendirian Berhad (also known as PetroleumBRUNEI) is undergoing restructuring and reorganisation of its functions, the Borneo Bulletin reported November 21, 2019.

The restructuring of the company is set to begin with the transfer of its regulatory functions to a newly established Petroleum Authority by end of 2019.

The company's commercial functions will become synergised and optimised through the reorganisation of its assets.

Associated news snippet...

Brunei establishes national oil company

Brunei's oil exploration now extends internationally after the government established the Brunei National Petroleum Company Sendirian Berhad (also known as PetroleumBRUNEI) by passing the Brunei National Petroleum Company Order on January 5, 2002. PetroleumBRUNEI has been registered as a government-owned company on January 14, 2002.

PetroleumBRUNEI manages the government's business interests in joint venture oil companies and formulates Brunei's hydrocarbon policy. Its remit to engage in hydrocarbon business overseas lessens Brunei's dependence on its domestic oil and gas reserves.

Oil was first struck in Brunei in 1929 but commercial production began in 1932.

Brunei strengthens air services link with ROK

Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Korea signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Air Services, the Borneo Bulletin reported November 25, 2019.

The MOU improves the traffic rights between Brunei Darussalam and the Republic of Korea and deepen cooperation between the designated airlines and destination points of both countries.

Brunei provides new initiative to assist MSMES

Darussalam Enterprise (DARe) will collaborate with micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMES) to secure business opportunities with large companies in Brunei Darussalam through a new initiative called DARe LINKS, the Borneo Bulletin reported November 29, 2019.

DARe LINKS will operate an online portal (<https://darelinks.dare.gov.bn/>), which will consolidate business opportunities offered by large companies in Brunei and profile the portfolio and competencies of the MSMES to facilitate business matching and linkages.

The programme, which is in a pilot phase will collect feedbacks from the MSMES and large companies continually and implement changes as it goes along.

Brunei launches Early Detection and Cancer Prevention Services

Brunei Darussalam launched the Early Detection and Cancer Prevention Services at the Pantai Jerudong Specialist Centre (PJSC) on November 30, 2019.

The centre offers cancer screening to the general public.

TelBru launches new subsidiary

Telekom Brunei Berhad (TelBru) launched its new subsidiary company, imagine Sendirian Berhad (imagine) on December 6, 2019.

The new subsidiary, imagine, will offer products and services such as mobile and broadband whilst exploring other lifestyle, technology choices and beyond for home, work, and on the move.

Brunei launches Child Development Centre Project

The Ministry of Health launched the Child Development Centre Project at the Child Development Centre (CDC) in Kampung Kiarong on December 7, 2019.

The project entailed the refurbishment of existing infrastructure in order to establish a playground to accommodate paediatrics; dental, psychology and medical social workers; communication, audiology, teacher of hearing impairment; occupational therapy and early development programme; and psychotherapy.

The CDC is a place where children are referred to when parents or professionals need to know about their development, learning or behaviour.

CDC provides services for children with the following conditions.

1. Learning difficulties
2. Neurodevelopmental disorders – (autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, specific learning difficulties)
3. Neurological disorders such as cerebral palsy
4. Neuromuscular disorders such as Duchenne muscular dystrophy

5. Speech, language and communication disorders
6. Psychological, behavioural, socialisation and parenting difficulties
7. Visual and hearing impairments
8. Inherited conditions (syndromes)
9. Motor disorders
10. Metabolic disorders
11. Associated problems such as behavioural issues, feeding/nutritional problems
12. Aspiration and recurrent respiratory infections
13. Orthopaedic complications
14. Medical problems such as asthma, seizures
15. Sleep disorders
16. Social and family problems

Brunei establishes action plan to check antimicrobial resistance

The Borneo Bulletin reported December 8, 2019 that the Brunei Darussalam Antimicrobial Resistance Committee (BDAMRC) has formulated the Brunei Darussalam Antimicrobial Resistance National Action Plan 2019-2020.

The national action plan outlines four objective strategies: awareness and education, surveillance and research, infection prevention and control and appropriate use of antimicrobials.

Four corresponding technical working groups were formed to address human and animal health and how the two interact in order to operationalize the national action plan.

BDAMRC comprises the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism.

UBD signs MOU with local environmental company

The Centre of Advanced Material and Energy Sciences (CAMES) of Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the CIC Environmental Services on December 9, 2019.

The MOU enables research collaboration efforts between industry and the local research institution.

CIC Environmental Services was incorporated in 1997. CIC is a waste management company that specialises in hydrocarbon and hazardous waste management in industries in Brunei Darussalam.

CAMES was formed in 2015 with the primary function of conducting research in the fields of energy and advanced materials to attain sustainable living. CAMES provides a platform for researchers and industries from various fields to come together to conceptualise ideas, and find solutions to problems associated with energy and advanced materials.

CAMES mission is to support economic diversification through innovations and high-quality graduate training. This research collaboration will be the second of its kind for CAMES.

Brunei issues more sharia-compliant bond (sukuk)

The Autoriti Monetari Brunei Darussalam (AMBD) has issued a BND26 million sukuk (sharia-compliant bond) on December 5, 2019 at a rental rate of 1.1250 per cent with maturity date on December 3, 2020 (based on a 364-day tenor).

This is the 176th sukuk issuance.

With this issuance, the government has issued BND13.34 billion worth of short-term Sukuk Al-Ijarah securities since its maiden offering on April 6, 2006.

Total holdings of Brunei government sukuk outstanding as of October 10, 2019 stands at BND334.6 million.

Brunei to farm Atlantic Salmon

The Strategic Development Capital Fund under the Ministry of Finance of Brunei Darussalam signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 8F Asset Management Pte Ltd, a private equity fund management company from Singapore.

The MOU was signed on December 10, 2019.

The MOU formalises the intention to invest in a land-based farming facility for Atlantic Salmon, using recirculating aquaculture system (RAS), with the capacity of 10,000 tonnes whole-fish-equivalent per annum.

The facility will be run and supported by Pure Salmon Pte Ltd, which is the global operating company for 8F's investments. It will provide a range of expertise to the facilities globally, through its team of industry veterans in hatchery, production, processing, purchasing, quality assurance, distribution and brand management.

With the land-based RAS facility, over 99 per cent of the water is recirculated using proprietary, cutting-edge filtration and oxygenation systems. The system ensures that the water is free from plastic, diseases and sea lice, which would in turn negate the use of any antibiotics or pesticide, a problem being faced by majority sea-cage farming methods.

The project is expected to generate 145 employment opportunities, once operational. The facility will also supply salmon products such as fillets and smoked salmon domestically and regionally.

Brunei and Oman increase capital for the Brunei Oman investment company

The State General Reserve Fund (SGRF) of the Sultanate of Oman and the Brunei Investment Agency (BIA) agreed to increase the capital of Oman Brunei Investment

Company (OBIC) by another USD100 million, bringing the total capital of the company to USD200 million.

The agreement was signed on the side lines of the 19th Bilateral Consultative Meeting (BCM) between the ministries of foreign affairs of the Sultanate of Oman and Brunei Darussalam, in Muscat on December 9, 2019.

OBIC is a private equity company capitalised jointly by SGRF of Oman (50 per cent) and BIA (50 per cent).

OBIC was established in 2009 after the two governments of the Sultanate of Oman and Brunei Darussalam signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to establish a Joint Investment Fund. The company invests in private equity of high-growing sectors through acquisition, or by investing in existing companies or starting new projects.

Brunei to export muskmelon to China

A Protocol between the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism on the Phytosanitary Requirements for the export of fresh melon from Brunei to China was signed on December 16, 2019.

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