

The Straits Times

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STRAITS TIMES.



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'Least corrupt' in region

SINGAPORE is still regarded as the least corrupt country in Asia, a Hong Kong-based risk consultancy found in its annual survey that covered 18 countries and territories, including the United States and Australia.

The Political and Economic Risk Consultants also flagged the possibility that pressures arising from the recession could lead to more businessmen resorting to corruption to get by.

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Two brothers to hang

TWO brothers will hang after they were both convicted of murdering an elderly homeless man they were robbing in last month's trial for about four years ago.

Although the judge could not determine which brother was the assailant, both men were still liable for murder under the law.

PRIME PAGE A5

Where are they?

THE Education Ministry is seeking the parents of 152 children who have not been registered for primary school, which is legally compulsory. They are among 1.463 children of primary school age whose parents did not register them for classes this year. The others were mostly found to have gone overseas.

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Light touch, local content

New Acting Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts Lee Teik Yew said in his first cabinet meeting since taking office last week that it was unlikely there would be a total deregulation of the media and other new media. He also said he would push for more locally developed content in animation, movies, scripting or competing.

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CEO pay confuses public

BUSINESS leaders are calling for companies to shed more light on the basis used when disclosing CEO pay. This call comes as companies have annual reports that list remuneration but not different bases for disclosing the pay, making it difficult for investors to compare across firms.

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ABHISIT'S CAR ATTACKED IN THAI ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTEST



The car carrying Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva had its rear window smashed by riot-armed protesters yesterday in Pattaya, where he was holding a weekly Cabinet meeting. About 50 protesters surrounded his motorcade when it ran caught in traffic. He himself escaped unscathed. Earlier, the protesters had surrounded the hotel where he was holding the meeting. PHOTO: THE NATION/USA NEWS NETWORK

PRIME PAGE A3

Kidney cost payment only for S'poreans

By SUEK KHAIR, HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

ONLY Singaporeans will be reimbursed for donating a kidney, for a start.

Payments will be extended to foreigners only when there is enough confidence in the scheme, said Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan yesterday.

Allowing payment to foreigners for a kidney was a major sticking point, both in parliamentary and public debates on the controversial move because of concerns that it would open the door to organ trading, with the poor and vulnerable being exploited.

During the debate, Mr Khaw had insisted that to be fair, the law had to apply to both Singaporeans and foreigners, but yesterday he said a staggered approach allows for safeguards.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

Barisan Nasional loses badly in key by-elections

Sarawak seat retained but Najib's leadership fails to sway most voters

By HAZEL HASSAN & ELIZABETH LOO, MALAYSIAN CORRESPONDENTS

TAMPING/ALOR STAR: The momentum that Malaysia's new Premier Najib Razak had hoped to create came to an abrupt halt last night, after the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) suffered two heavy defeats in three by-elections.

At both Bukit Gantang in Perak and Tumpat in Sabah, the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) increased its majority over the BN.

The only silver lining for a dismal night for the BN was the fact that it easily retained control of its stronghold of Batang as in Terengganu, an effect meaning that the opposition had failed to live up to its boast to make inroads into East Malaysia.

The results, which some have painted as a referendum on Datuk Seri Najib's rule, came just four days after he was sworn in as the country's sixth premier.

They indicated that the BN has not been able to woo back voters in the peninsula after its huge losses in the 2008 general elections.

Mr Najib's charm offensive in the run-up to the polls also appeared to have had little effect on voters.

He had lashed about voters and made-to-realities, released 13 people detained under the Internal Security Act, and also lifted the ban on two opposition papers.

Mr Najib denied that these were election plays. In any case, voters did not buy them.

BN's most significant defeat was in Bukit Gantang, in the general election in March 2008, the opposition won with a majority of 1,166. Yesterday, it almost doubled its winning margin to 2,299, sweeping former Perak minister bear Najib's candidate into parliament.

It was a mixed victory for the man who used to be the PR state government, as all four of its assemblymen defected and the BN collapsed as it lost voting power — a move that triggered much disappointment among Malaysians.

PR had lobbied for the state assembly to be dissolved and fresh polls held in the wake of the saga, but this was rejected by the Perak voters.

With fireworks lighting up the sky at for his voters, Mr Najib said that he plans to return to the sofa to request a dissolution again, to "stabilise the political situation in Perak".

BY-ELECTION RESULTS

Bukit Gantang (Perak)	
■ Opposition (Pakatan Rakyat)	19,071 (46.5%)
■ Ruling (Barisan Nasional)	21,860 (53.3%)
Majority:	2,789

Bukit Selemabau (Kedah)	
■ Opposition (Pakatan Rakyat)	10,239 (42.5%)
■ Ruling (Barisan Nasional)	12,632 (52.5%)
Majority:	2,403

Batang Alor (Sarawak)	
■ Opposition (Pakatan Rakyat)	3,907 (65.6%)
■ Ruling (Barisan Nasional)	2,053 (34.4%)
Majority:	1,854

In Bukit Selemabau, in Kedah, PR's S. Manikavanan garnered 12,032 votes, beating BN's S. Ganesan who polled 10,229 votes. The majority of 2,403 was slightly higher than the 2,362 polled by the opposition in March last year.

The presence of a record 13 independents, who garnered 3,226 votes between them, did not figure much in the final outcome.

BN's only victory yesterday came in Sarawak, where its candidate Malcolin Memon won comfortably by a majority of 1,846 votes, beating 1,007 votes against Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) candidate Lee Wei Kaheng's 2,016 votes.

The figure was more than double the 800-vote majority PR got in the last state election, and appeared to quash opposition leader Phang's claim that the opposition had made inroads into the BN-dominated region of East Malaysia.

Dr P. Sivaraman, senior lecturer of the social science studies centre at Universiti Sains Malaysia, said the results suggest a long hard road ahead for Najib to win back voters.

"It is a clear signal that BN has to overhaul itself. They are saying they will change and help the people. But it has not been translated into action," he said.

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bit.ly/981gpm
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MAKING HEADLINES FROM SINGAPORE TO LONDON. ENJOY WINNING



my paper



WHY WOLVERINE IS **HEARTBROKEN**

Our reporter Kenny Chee meets Hugh Jackman in Sydney

[SEE REPORT ON ENTERTAINMENT A21](#)

PHOTO: INTERNET

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MAN U RUNNING **OUT OF STEAM**




PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

MANCHESTER

LIKE a marathon runner, swaying and stumbling through the final kilometre, Manchester United are left gasping in their Quintuple quest.

And the signs are that the defending English and European champions may be running out of steam.

On Tuesday night, they were dealt a potentially crippling blow in their Champions League defence, as they were held 2-2 by a feisty Porto at Old Trafford in the quarter-finals.

This first-leg result means that the Red Devils must win in their second-leg tie away in Portugal to advance.

The catch? No English team have ever beaten Porto at their Dragao Stadium.

And, judging by their jaded and error-prone performance on Tuesday, Man United manager Alex Ferguson needs all his legendary motivational skills to drag his exhausted players to an epic win next week, reported The Daily Mail.

Worried goalkeeper Edwin van der Sar has said that United desperately need the watertight defence that propelled them into contention for five trophies this season.

He told The Daily Mail: "It is not that they are great goals from the opposition. We have to sort it out and start focusing."

"We have been successful for a long time this season and we have to make sure we get back to that."

Yet, such fatigue is often the case at the business end of a long season.

Man United limped over the line in their Treble season in 1999; Arsenal's Invincibles won only four of their last 12 games in all competitions in 2004, while Blackburn's 1995 champions lost three of their last five.

"When it goes," Ferguson said then as that Blackburn side started to wobble, "it goes quickly, and there is nothing you can do about it."

Those words look truer than ever now.

[SEE STORY ON SPORT A16](#)



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