

SIN CHEW HIGHLIGHTS
15 JAN 2004

1. KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Abdullah has wished Sin Chew Jit Poh readers a happy Chinese New Year. His new year greeting card also conveys an important message wishing there is racial harmony and political stability. The greeting in bold calligraphy "Spring will always be around if there is harmony among the people and the world will be peaceful if there is political stability" is the first by Datuk Seri Abdullah since he took over the rein. It also indicates his wishes of "new expectation in a new year". Lead story. page 1.

2. SHAH ALAM: Some staff of Selangor Land and Mines Department are involved in the alteration of 12 pieces of agricultural lands valued at RM117 million for personal gains. Initial investigations show some major developers, businessmen and individuals have been cheated in the scam. The department's director Datuk Ahmad Termizi says the 117 hectares of lands are located in Ulu Langat, Klang and Kuala Langat. page 1.

3. KUALA LUMPUR: Two robbers who tried to attack policemen with parangs when cornered were shot and wounded in Taman Seri Damansara. They were arrested when they sought treatment at Tanjung Karang Hospital. Both have previously been convicted for criminal offences including drug offences. page 2.

4. KUALA LUMPUR: The government will maintain the 13-year educational system. Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohd. says the proposed 12-year system creates problems. Under present system, students will spend six years in primary, five years secondary and two years in pre-university education. The 12-year system is to shorten secondary and pre-university education into six years instead of seven. page 3.

5. SYDNEY: An independent research organisation suggests that Australia should issue only short term visas the people in Singapore, Malaysia and other countries which have been infiltrated by terrorist groups. It feels that US, England and France should also be included. However, Australian Immigration Minister explains the obtaining of visas does not necessarily mean one can enter the country. page 4

6. KUALA LUMPUR: Inland Revenue Board CEO Tan Sri Zainal Abidin confirms that tax evaders to be charged in courts this year include VIPs and senior government officers. He says action will be taken against offenders irrespective of their positions so that it will not be accused of taking action only against "ikan billis". page 5.

7. KUALA LUMPUR: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir says he will try his best to help BN campaign in the coming general election to ensure its victory. He says he managed to bring progress to the nation as the Prime Minister with the coalition's support. He says it's time for him to pay back the BN when addressing a reception given by the BN. page 9.

8. KUALA LUMPUR: Banks and Finance companies will be held responsible for car registrations cards kept in their premises. Parliamentary Secretary to the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry Ng Kum Hoon says they must immediately inform the police and get a replacement from the Road Transport Department should any card has been found missing. page 14.

9. SINGAPORE: Singapore has arrested two more people suspected to have been involved in J.I. under the ISA and 12 others are under surveillance. One of them arrested is the father in law of a J.I. bomb expert who was shot dead in the Philippines. So far 37 suspected terrorists have been arrested under ISA. page 14.

10. MIRI: Police have shot dead a highly "dangerous" man of a gang six hours after the robbery of a jewellery shop in a shopping complex in Miri.

They recovered a shot gun, cartridges, bullets, handphones and large quantity of jewellery. page 36 --BERNAMA