

Petronas Sees Unchanged Pre-tax Profit This Year
Bernama
5 June, 2013

KUALA LUMPUR, June 5 (Bernama) -- National oil company Petronas expects its pre-tax profit to remain unchanged this year as better contribution from Canada and Uzbekistan is offset by declining crude oil prices and lower contribution from Sudan.

President and group chief executive officer Tan Sri Shamsul Azhar Abbas said the crude oil prices are expected to average around US\$95-US\$100 per barrel this year from US\$112 per barrel in the first quarter of this year.

"The global economic uncertainties are expected to lead to continued volatility in oil prices and global oil demand which may affect Petronas' performance," he told reporters at the company's first quarter financial results briefing here today.

Also present were chairman Tan Sri Sidek Hassan and Petronas' top management.

Shamsul Azhar said for the first quarter ended March 31, 2012, the company's pre-tax profit was slightly down to RM28.8 billion from RM29.8 billion in the same period last year.

Revenue, however, rose to RM76.67 billion from RM75.25 billion previously, he added.

"Profit for the quarter decreased primarily due to lower margins resulting from higher operating and non-operating expenses, partially offset by decommissioning adjustment during the period," he said.

However, he said, first quarter revenue benefited from higher trading volume for both crude oil and natural gas on the back of stronger demand from customers coupled with the effect of the strengthening US dollar against the ringgit.

Total assets, he said, increased to RM498.7 billion as at March 31, compared to RM489.2 billion as at Dec 31 last year, primarily due to profits generated during the quarter.

On exploration and production, he said the company made four successful discoveries locally and internationally.

"Total production for the quarter rose to 2.15 billion barrels per day compared to 2.11 billion barrels per day in the corresponding quarter last year," he said.

On other developments, Shamsul Azhar said resumption of production in South Sudan in April this year, after a 15-month shutdown due to a dispute between the country and its neighbour Sudan, is only expected to recover to 120,000 barrels per day next year.

He said South Sudan's operation currently produces 200 barrels per day, with the first commercial cargo expected any time now.

Shamsul Azhar said apart from Sudan, the company is expected to start production from Brazil's Campos Basin, comprising Blocks BM-C-39 and BM-C-40, in the fourth quarter of this year.

The blocks, located in the shallow waters 95km offshore Rio De Janeiro state, is 40 per cent

owned by Petronas through its wholly-owned unit Petronas Brasil E&P Limitada.

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