

Strait depth altered a bit

BY AUDREY EDWARDS

PETALING JAYA: The Dec 26 tsunami has affected the depth in certain areas of the Straits of Malacca, according to the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN).

Assistant Chief of Staff (plans and operations) Laksamana Pertama Ahmad Kamarulzaman Ahmad Badaruddin, however, said the strait was safe for navigation as the changes were "insignificant."

"In certain areas, the change

is just 0.2m while in the deep areas where the depth is about 100m, the difference is between 1m and 2m.

"A ship normally has a draft (depth of a ship's hull) of 6m and there is normally 30m below that draft. So, there is no possibility that a ship will run aground," he said when contacted yesterday.

LP Ahmad Kamarulzaman said this was based on the results from hydrographic surveys conducted by RMN in two

separate areas in the straits following the tsunami disaster.

The surveys, he added were carried out in two areas - the northern channel approaching the Penang port and the strategic "choke point" off One Fat-hom Bank.

"Even though the initial results did highlight changes in depth in some areas, the difference is insignificant to cause any concerns. Positions of navigational aids such as buoys, navigational beacons and even

underwater wrecks within the surveyed areas have not changed," he said.

LP Ahmad Kamarulzaman, who said the study would continue for a few months, added that the surveys were currently concentrated within areas considered most critical in terms of density of shipping, exposure to the tsunami, depth coverage and strategic perspective.

He said the data from the surveys were compared with navigational charts produced

by the Navy and databases compiled during the last joint survey in 1997 involving Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Japan.

He said that detailed analysis on tidal ranges in Langkawi, Lumut and Port Klang had not shown any abnormalities.

"Checks with the Malaysian Department of Mapping and Survey also confirmed no change in the mean sea levels off the affected coastal areas," he said.

Changes in laws based on people's expectations

KANGAR: The changes to the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code will be people-oriented and not be only based on what the Government or its leaders want.

They would be tailored to meet the people's expectations on law enforcement and punishment that fit the crime, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Mohd Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said.

"The amendments to be tabled by the middle of this year will be based on the countless meetings between the Parliamentary Select Committee and people who are concerned over the increase in criminal activities," he said.

Radzi said all views from NGOs, political parties, women advocate groups, Attorney-General's chamber, religious groups and the police would be taken into consideration.

He said the seven-member committee would, just after its nationwide tour to gather public views, meet in Cameron Highlands on Feb 16 to brainstorm.

"We will invite representatives from relevant groups to help us draw up a draft of the proposed amendments," he said after meeting the Kangar Umno division members in Sena.

The committee, chaired by Radzi, will go to Australia and New Zealand at the end of February to study the criminal laws there.

Among the recommendations to be studied is the parole system for light offenders such as those involved in drink-driving.

Utar students put up 150 pieces of artwork for charity

BY GAVIN GOMEZ

PETALING JAYA: With a dash here and a dab there, 65-year-old Soo Toh Kong found that he has not lost his touch after laying off his brush for over 40 years.

"I just thought it would be a great way for a retiree to spend his time," said Soo, who put up four paintings at the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) art sale yesterday.

He was the oldest of 80 students from the university's Centre for Extension Education (CEE) who put up 150 pieces of their work for sale to help raise funds for tsunami victims.

Soo had taken up a course in Chinese ink painting and calligraphy last year but did not imagine that in just six months he could produce art

pieces that were good enough for sale.

He added that he was surprised at the speed all the students had progressed in the six-month period.

"I will definitely be pursuing more advanced Chinese ink painting courses offered by CEE as I want to develop this hidden passion of mine," he said.

The youngest, 16-year-old Ong Lay Peng said that while she did not put up any of her works, she had enjoyed the course.

"Maybe I will put something up for sale next time," she added.

Another graduate, graphic designer Eric Keoh, said he had learnt so much despite the short time.

"I run my own graphic design company and wanted to expand my experience," he



LOTUS PIECE: Soo explaining his painting to (from left) Utar president Tan Sri Dr Ng Lay Swee, Dr Ling, Kampung Tunku assemblyman Dr Wong Sai Hou, course instructor Sum Kwai Fong and Ong.

said.

Utar Council chairman Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik, who presented the students with certificates, said he was impressed with their skills and creativity.

"This is what the CEE is all about - to promote lifelong learning among Malaysians.

"Most of the students are

working adults who take up these short courses on a part-time basis as they want to keep improving themselves," he told reporters after the event.

He added that CEE would offer more such courses. Last year, it organised 46 short courses, talks, workshops and other training pro-

grammes.

Ling quipped that he would like the university to organise a short course in bartending so he could participate in it.

CEE manager Teong Seow Kin was pleased to see people coming to support the event, which was being held for the first time.

Malaysia may be hub for space travel

BY JOHAN FERNANDEZ

NEW YORK: A leading space authority and a private firm in Florida are eyeing Malaysia as the regional hub in Asia for space travel.

Disclosing this, Fort Lauderdale businessman Bernhard Schutte said Malaysia was well placed to serve as the hub for space tourism due to its central location.

The Florida Space Authority, which is recognised as the leading space authority in the world, and the US private company, Zero G, are looking into the possibility of bringing space tourism to Malaysia and making it the hub for such travel in the region.

"The technology is all there. And there is so much potential for space travel that it can be very popular, not only in Malaysia and the region, but for the Middle East market as well," said the CEO of Digital Media Network Inc, that has a company in Malaysia.

Schutte will be leading a 35-member Florida business delegation to Malaysia at the end of February, which includes Winston Scott, astronaut and executive director of the FSA who had been to space four times.

The authority provides economic development for the state through space-related businesses and educational activities, said Schutte in a telephone interview here.

Also included in the team is Dr Ray Ferrero, president of Nova South Eastern University, which would also study the



SITE TOUR: Ghazalli, (left) Scott, Mida director in New York Phang Ah Thong and Schutte being briefed by an FSA official recently.

prospects of setting up a campus in Malaysia.

It has taken a year to plan the top-level delegation from Florida to visit Malaysia, said Schutte, adding that they would be in Malaysia for a week with visits to Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Kedah.

The Florida delegation would look into investment and business partnerships in space transportation, space tourism,

space education, biotechnology, life sciences and education, oceanography and pharmaceuticals.

Earlier in the week, the Malaysian ambassador to the United States, Datuk Ghazalli Sheikh Abdul Khalid led a delegation to Florida to visit the FSA and other business organisations involved in the business tour of Malaysia.

THE WEATHER

Forecast provided by Meteorological Services Dept valid from 7am - 7pm

LOCAL WEATHER

	PEN. MALAYSIA	SABAH	SARAWAK
MORNING	Fair over all states.	Fair over all residencies.	Cloudy over Kuching and Samarahan. Elsewhere fair.
AFTERNOON	Isolated thunderstorms over Selangor. Isolated showers over West Johor. Elsewhere fair.	Isolated thunderstorms over Sandakan, Interior and Tawau. Isolated showers over West Coast. Elsewhere fair.	Isolated showers over Limbang, Bintulu, Sibul, Sarikei, Kapit, Sri Aman, Kuching, Samarahan, Betong and Mukah. Elsewhere fair.

For the detailed report see: thestar.com.my
The weather in major cities

	Min(°C)	Max(°C)	Weather	Min(°C)	Max(°C)	Weather	
Kuala Lumpur	22	30	partly cloudy	Los Angeles	10	20	partly cloudy
Amsterdam	00	04	partly cloudy	Manila	21	28	partly cloudy
Auckland	12	20	clear	Mecca	16	26	rain
Bangkok	23	31	partly cloudy	Mexico City	06	20	rain
Beijing	-07	06	partly cloudy	Montreal	-26	-18	snow
Berlin	-04	01	snow	Moscow	-03	01	snow
Brussels	-02	03	cloudy	New Delhi	06	17	cloudy
Cairo	06	16	clear	New York	-12	-06	snow
Copenhagen	-02	01	partly cloudy	Paris	-02	06	snow
Dublin	00	05	rain	Rome	03	10	partly cloudy
Frankfurt	-02	01	cloudy	San Francisco	08	13	partly cloudy
Geneva	-01	03	snow	Seoul	-10	01	partly cloudy
Hanoi	13	22	partly cloudy	Singapore	22	29	partly cloudy
Hong Kong	14	19	cloudy	Sydney	19	28	partly cloudy
Islamabad	-02	08	rain	Taipei	13	22	cloudy
Jakarta	22	28	rain	Tokyo	00	05	partly cloudy
Johannesburg	14	25	cloudy	Toronto	-16	-10	snow
London	00	05	cloudy	Washington	-08	-02	snow