



## Expression of love costlier on Valentine's Day

Emotional connection to celebration drives increased demand and triggers price hikes for flowers, chocolates and fine dining.

Report on  
page 4

# Street fare feeding obesity rate spike

Penang's *char kway teow*, *nasi kandar* among calorie dense public favourites high in fat, sugar and salt that could lead to poor metabolic health, says food technology expert.

Report on  
page 3

## Cabinet to discuss streamlining agencies

Proposal to address issue of overlapping functions needs to be deliberated by ministers before decision can be made, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Report on > page 2

## 'Posting fake content to attract views, followers unethical'

Aside from eroding public trust and fuelling misinformation, such acts could lead to legal consequences, academics warn.

Report on > page 6



Suggestions have been made to promote affordable, nutritious meals at hawker centres and introduce government incentives for businesses offering healthier options. — MASRY CHE ANI/THE SUN





Anwar arriving for the Finance Ministry's monthly gathering in Putrajaya yesterday. —BERNAMA/PI

# Move to streamline govt agencies after Cabinet nod

➤ Secretariat for Rationalisation of Federal Statutory Bodies was set up last year to address issue of overlapping functions, save funds, says PM

**PUTRAJAYA:** A proposal to streamline several government agencies to address the issue of overlapping functions will be presented to the Cabinet soon, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I had assigned the then Treasury secretary-general Datuk Seri Asri Hamidon to give several proposals to streamline several agencies and present them to the chief secretary to the government. I will decide after it has been presented to the Cabinet."

Anwar, who is also the finance minister, was speaking at the Finance Ministry's monthly

gathering yesterday.

He had said on Sept 3 that the government had established a Secretariat for the Rationalisation of Federal Statutory Bodies to address the issue of overlapping functions and to save funds.

Following that, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar announced the appointment of Asri to lead a special committee for the purpose.

"I have instructed that no company should be established under an agency without approval from the highest level because

thousands of these companies are incurring huge losses.

"However, deciding to cancel these (companies) is not easy but if it must be done, we must do it. This reflects or gives meaning to what is called institutional reform," said Anwar.

He urged the Public Service machinery to think and act fast to drive the country's growth, Bernama reported.

Meanwhile, Anwar said he and Türkiye President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had also discussed the implementation methods of policies and major strategies during their meeting on Tuesday.

Also present were Finance Minister II Senator Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan, Deputy Finance Minister Lim Hui Ying, Shamsul Azri, Public Service Director-General Tan Sri Wan Ahmad Dahlan Abdul Aziz and Treasury Secretary-General Datuk Johan Mahmood Merican.

## Use iPayment at all ministries, depts by March: Anwar

**PUTRAJAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim wants the use of the Federal Government Electronic Receipt System (iPayment) to be expanded to all federal ministries and departments by March.

He emphasised the need to accelerate the system's implementation to ensure that the public could promptly benefit from its enhancements and streamlined services.

"It is important to remember that the true measure of success lies in how the majority of people experience the benefits of the reforms we are discussing. That is why I am calling for the iPayment programme's implementation to be expedited, moving the projected timeline from the end of April to early March," he said at the launch of Phase 2 of the iPayment system.

The system offers government service users the option to make payments online using debit, credit and prepaid cards as well as internet banking, QR code and e-wallet.

"In my view, iPayment is a significant step forward, not only as a new initiative but also in delivering direct benefits to the people by enhancing efficiency and reducing lengthy bureaucratic delays."

Anwar said Malaysia must move at a faster pace to stay ahead and avoid falling behind in digital transformation.

He added that the country's progress in this field has remained relatively stagnant compared with several other nations such as Estonia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

"When we look back 10, 15 or even 20 years, we were far ahead with all the strengths we had, but various challenges arose, ultimately causing our progress to stagnate.

"Therefore, we must catch up, and when we talk about institutional reforms, including in the public service, extraordinary speed is essential."

iPayment is an integrated electronic collection system developed by the Accountant-General's Department to manage and standardise government service payments.

It was developed in early 2022, with Phase 1 introducing an online portal. Phase 2, which began yesterday, expands its capabilities by adding payment channels at counters and through mobile applications. — Bernama

## 'Adopt new ways to implement policies, reforms'

**PUTRAJAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim wants the implementation of policies and institutional reforms in the country to be carried out swiftly by using more effective methods.

He said attention must be given to these efforts as there are still parties using old methods and approaches.

Citing the empowerment of English language among school students, Anwar said the old approach to implementing this policy needs to be changed.

"In addition to strengthening Bahasa Melayu, it is necessary to provide a slight shift to ensure the mastery of English as a second language, especially among secondary school students.

"If we follow the usual projection, our decision taken in 2023 will be drafted (as policy) in 2024 and finalised in 2025. Then we will trial it in 2026 and begin the initial stage in 2027 while only (in) 2028 we will try to implement it. This cannot continue any more, it's (the) old (way of) planning."

He was speaking at the Finance Ministry's monthly gathering yesterday.

Previously, Anwar had said that the level of English proficiency among students would be improved starting this year, while the position of Bahasa Melayu would be strengthened without compromise.

He also stressed that efforts to reform any government policies and institutions must bring significant benefits to the people.

"We talk about institutional reform for the people, (but) they do not see its impact. This is the problem that we describe as a disconnect between the policies and new initiatives which we present with (the aim of) bringing direct benefits to the people."

Anwar praised the good performance shown by Khazanah Nasional Bhd, Permodalan Nasional Bhd and the Employees Provident Fund thus far. — Bernama

## US plan for Palestine condemned

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The United Nations Association of Malaysia has strongly condemned a recent announcement of United States (US) President Donald Trump's administration as an attempt to undermine Palestinian sovereignty and violate international law.

Its president Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed said the proposal, which includes plans to relocate Palestinians from their homeland, "is diabolical, bereft of merit and highly provocative", Bernama reported.

"It suggests ethnic cleansing, and runs counter to the consistent and established efforts by the international community, including previous US administrations, to safeguard and promote the rights of the Palestinian people."

## Joint exercise to boost oil spill response

**SINGAPORE:** Government agencies and departments from Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia conducted a joint table-top exercise to enhance regional coordination and strengthen response capabilities for oil spills.

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said the exercise involved representatives from MPA, Indonesia's Directorate-General of Sea Transportation, Malaysia's Environment Department and oil spill response experts from International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Limited.

MPA said the exercise focused on coordination procedures to ensure swift and clear communication among the littoral states during oil spill. — Bernama

## Govt committed to improving global perceptions and CPI ranking

**PUTRAJAYA:** The government has reiterated its commitment to improving global perceptions of the country's governance efficiency and transparency, according to the office of the Chief Secretary to the Government.

The office outlined that the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) would serve as a benchmark for Malaysia's ambition to rank among the world's top 25 nations by 2033.

Earlier, Transparency International Malaysia (TI-M) disclosed that Malaysia had retained its 57th position in the CPI for the second consecutive year.

It said led by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar, a special task force on CPI has been operational since October 2024.

The task force comprises senior officials from various ministries, experts and TI-M representatives, with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission acting as its secretariat.

Six CPI focus groups have also been established to analyse data from CPI surveys, with the findings playing a crucial role in shaping future strategies and actions.

On Tuesday, TI-M president Dr Muhammad Mohan said the country's score remained the same as last year at 50 points.

Among Asean countries, Malaysia ranked second best after Singapore (84 points), followed by Vietnam (40), Indonesia (37), Thailand (34), the Philippines (33), Laos (33), Cambodia (21) and Myanmar (16 points).

The CPI is based on 13 surveys and expert assessments measuring the perceived level of corruption in public sectors in 180 countries and territories worldwide.

This year, Denmark, Finland and Singapore are the top three countries and deemed "clean countries" while Venezuela, Somalia and South Sudan are at the bottom of the index. — Bernama

## Annual national 'Cleanup Day' planned

**PUTRAJAYA:** Hari Cuci Malaysia or Malaysia Cleanup Day will be held nationwide every year on the last Saturday of September.

Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming said the programme would be spearheaded by his ministry, adding that the initiative would be carried out using a whole-of-nation approach, involving federal agencies, state governments, educational institutions and private entities.

"This is in line with the United Nations initiative, which designates Sept 20 as World Cleanup Day to address growing waste pollution and raise public awareness on environmental cleanliness.

"Malaysia is one of the top tourist destinations.

"Through this initiative, we aim to enhance the country's image as a clean and safe destination so that we would continue to win the hearts of tourists from all over the world." — Bernama

# Rich foods feed obesity spike

■ BY DEEPAKASHMI MANICKAM  
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➤ Street fare with excessive coconut milk, sugar and carbohydrates leads to poor metabolic health, says expert

**PETALING JAYA:** Famous for its delicious foods and desserts, Penang has gained a new name as Malaysia's "fat" state due to its obesity rate of 56.5%, which is above the national average of 54.4% as recently announced by Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad.

The state also recorded higher-than-average rates of high cholesterol (37.4%), high blood pressure (35.4%) and diabetes (20.5%), which reflects a growing number of non-communicable disease (NCD) cases as highlighted in the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2023.

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu Food Technology Programme lecturer Assoc Prof Dr Mohamad Khairi Mohd Zainol said Penang's famous *char kway teow*, *nasi kandar* and deep-fried street snacks are often calorie-dense and high in fat, sugar and salt.

"These dishes, typically prepared with refined carbohydrates and coconut milk (could) lead to excessive calorie intake and poor metabolic health.

"Reducing the oil and sugar content, opting for grilling over deep frying and incorporating more vegetables can make a big difference," he said, adding that healthier options do not have to

compromise on taste.

He also said vendors and home cooks can adopt alternative methods, such as steaming or air frying, while still preserving the distinct flavours that Penang is known for.

Mohamad Khairi said limited access to healthy food options in some areas, particularly among lower income groups, worsens the problem.

He suggested promoting affordable, nutritious meals at hawker centres and introducing government incentives for businesses offering healthier options.

"Food reformulation, such as using healthier oils or reducing portion sizes, can also cater to health conscious consumers."

He recommended introducing nutrition education in schools and communities through cooking workshops and awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of balanced diets and stressed that the perception of healthy food being tasteless or expensive must be addressed to shift public habits.

Mohamad Khairi said preserving Penang's culinary

heritage while promoting healthier lifestyles require collective action from residents, food vendors and policymakers so that future generations can still enjoy Penang's treasures while safeguarding their health.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Diabetes Educators Society president and Subang Jaya Medical Centre senior diabetes educator Yong Lai Mee said Penang's serious diabetes rate is closely linked to obesity.

She said excess fat, particularly visceral fat, plays a critical role in developing insulin resistance, which is a condition in which the body becomes less responsive to the biologic.

"This forces the pancreas to work harder to produce more insulin, eventually leading to pancreatic dysfunction, higher blood sugar levels and diabetes."

Yong emphasised that Penang's reputation as a food haven, coupled with sedentary lifestyles, significantly contribute to health issues.

An International Medical University study in 2021 showed food accessibility influences dietary patterns, leading to increased calorie intake from

sugar and animal products. "About 50% of Malaysians live sedentary lifestyles, further risking obesity and diabetes."

She said a lack of awareness is another pressing issue, with nearly 8% of diabetics in Penang unaware of their condition due to insufficient education on risks and symptoms.

"Some individuals do not experience symptoms, while others may avoid screening due to social stigma surrounding diabetes," she said, while recommending expansion of community-based health screenings to debunk misconceptions about the disease.

Yong said effective diabetes management requires empowering patients with knowledge as it is a serious condition in which self-management plays a crucial role, adding that Malaysia faces a shortage of trained diabetes educators, with only 2,000 of them catering to 3.9 million sufferers.

She called for a body to monitor and standardise credentials and qualifications to ensure high-quality education for patients, adding that as Malaysia is projected to be an aged nation by 2035, poorly controlled diabetes could pose a significant healthcare burden.

## Envoy ends term with Malaysians in heart

■ BY AZMAN UJANG  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Former Brazilian ambassador to Malaysia Ary Norton De Murat Quintella said he will miss Malaysia very much but most of all, he will miss Malaysians.

"It would be hard to find anywhere else with people as kind, generous and warm-hearted as

Malaysians. You have a gift for friendship. It is as simple as that," he said in a farewell message.

Quintella, who returned to Brazil on Monday at the end of what he described as "five years of wonderful, fulfilling and perfect happiness in Malaysia," said when he was frequently asked about what he would miss of his time in Kuala Lumpur, most suspected it would

be the food.

"Indeed, I still haven't figured out how I will manage without my periodic doses of *laksa* and *roti canai*. However, it is Malaysians whom I will miss most of all."

Quintella said he considers himself a friend to every single Malaysian and is indebted to the country. Although he lived here without his family for professional reasons, he never felt lonely, not

even during the movement control order implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Befriending Malaysians does that to you. It makes life easier and more enjoyable. It makes you feel relaxed and secure and just plain happy, difficult as circumstances may be at times.

"I will always have this country in my heart wherever I may be, and I am ever grateful for all the exhilarating days I spent here, for so many blessings received, so much generosity and so many friendships. Thank you Malaysia. Thank you Malaysians."

Quintella added that so much has happened between Malaysia and Brazil over the past few years, with many bilateral agreements about to be signed that will bear fruit in the years ahead.

Of significance was Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's visit to Brazil last November to participate in the G20 Summit.

In October this year, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio da Silva will be in Kuala Lumpur to participate in the Asean Summit and Related Summits.



Quintella says he had five years of 'wonderful, fulfilling and perfect happiness' in Malaysia.

## SPM 2024 conducted smoothly

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) 2024 examination, held from Dec 2 to Feb 6, was conducted smoothly, with 402,956 candidates sitting for the exam at 3,337 centres nationwide.

The Education Ministry said

despite the examination coinciding with the northeast monsoon season, which caused floods in several states, it proceeded successfully.

"This was made possible through early preparedness, efficient management and close cooperation

with government agencies, such as the National Disaster Management Agency, Armed Forces, police, Civil Defence Force, Fire and Rescue Department, Volunteer Department, Social Welfare Department, Health Ministry, state education

departments, schools, parents and the community."

The ministry also expressed appreciation to the 126,636 examination personnel, including 5,780 volunteers from the public, such as retired teachers. — Bernama





# Expressing love on Valentine's Day a costly affair

➤ Increased pricing of gifts reflects efforts of businesses to maximise profits while catering to heightened consumer spending: Academic

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Celebrated annually on Feb 14, Valentine's Day is traditionally associated with romantic gestures and expressions of love. However, it has since evolved globally as a commercial phenomenon, with businesses capitalising on heightened consumer spending on gifts and dining experiences.

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan Entrepreneurship and Business Prof Datuk Dr Nik Maheran Nik Muhammad said businesses strategically adjust prices during the Valentine's season to maximise revenue.

"A recent survey found that 48% of Malaysians see Valentine's Day as an opportunity to express love, reinforcing its significance for nearly half of the population. This emotional connection drives increased demand for flowers, chocolates, and fine dining, which prompts businesses to adjust their pricing accordingly," she said.

Nik Maheran said businesses implement strategic pricing during Valentine's Day to balance demand and profitability.

"The floral industry increases the prices of roses by 50%-100% due to supplier costs and limited availability.

"Premium chocolates experience a 10%-25% markup, often with exclusive packaging to justify the higher prices. Restaurants frequently switch to fixed price menus which are inflated by 20%-50% as couples seek special dining experiences to mark the occasion."

She also noted that retailers in the jewellery and luxury goods sectors subtly increase base prices before offering "discounts" to create a perception of savings, while hotels and travel companies take advantage of the occasion to raise room rates and romantic getaway packages by 20%-60%.

Nik Maheran said such pricing strategies reflect the efforts of businesses to maximise profits while catering to heightened consumer spending on Valentine's Day.



Nik Maheran said for florists, Valentine's Day is a crucial period that often compensates for slower sales during the rest of the year. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

"For florists, Valentine's Day is a crucial period that often compensates for slower sales during the rest of the year. In 2024, some florists reported a nearly 50% drop in Valentine's Day sales compared with 2023, underscoring the risks of relying too heavily on a single day for revenue."

She said this suggested that while demand remains high, economic factors and shifting consumer preferences are affecting sales.

Premium florist White On White managing director Thong Weng Seng, who has over 20 years of experience, said while flower prices rise significantly during Valentine's, profit margins do not necessarily increase.

"There are many factors contributing to price hikes, but the main one is supply and demand. Bouquets are in high demand during Valentine's and suppliers charge us more. We only adjust prices in relation to costs, including materials and labour."

He added that during this period, the cost of materials increases by 50%-70%, florists require additional manpower and also spend more on advertising and operational expenses.

"Despite the price increases, customers are still willing to pay higher prices because gifting flowers is not just about buying them. It carries a sentimental value, emotions, and is an

expression of love."

While some consumers accept seasonal price hikes, others have expressed frustration.

A frequent Valentine's Day shopper who asked to be known as Daniel, 24, said he always bought flowers for his girlfriend because it is a tradition and she loves them.

"But the price hikes are ridiculous. A bouquet that usually costs RM80 can go up to RM150 or more. I understand supply versus demand, but the truth is that businesses are taking advantage of the occasion."

To manage costs, Daniel has started exploring alternatives.

"Last year, I ordered flowers earlier to avoid peak pricing, and I also planned a picnic date. It saved me a lot while still making the day special. I think more people are looking for creative ways to celebrate without overspending."

Aaron Raj, 25, said he believes Valentine's Day has become too commercialised.

"I used to buy flowers, but now I just find other ways to celebrate, like giving my girlfriend a handwritten letter, a do-it-yourself ribbon flower bouquet and a home-cooked meal," he said.

"She appreciates thoughtful gestures more than expensive gifts, so this works for us."

## Perak cross-state initiative to draw Chinese tourists

**IPOH:** Perak has forged its first-ever collaboration with Selangor and Negeri Sembilan to promote cross-state tourism, particularly to attract more visitors from China.

State Tourism, Industry, Investment and Corridor Development Committee chairman Loh Sze Yee said the initiative, led by the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry, aims to offer a wider range of tourism products to meet diverse traveller preferences.

"Through this collaboration, we want to create a travel network where Chinese tourists don't just visit Selangor or Negeri Sembilan, but also experience Perak's unique attractions," he said after attending a business matching session in conjunction with a familiarisation trip for Chinese tourists to Perak on Tuesday.

Among Perak's key tourism offerings are the Royal Town of Kuala Kangsar, Tanjung Tualang Tin Dredge No. 5, and Kampar Mining Museum, which showcases the state's rich history and heritage.

Loh said 55 major players from China's tourism industry, and 30 from Perak participated in the event, exploring potential partnerships to strengthen the state's position as a preferred travel destination.

He encouraged local industry players to seize the opportunity to expand their businesses and enhance their tourism offerings through collaboration.

Meanwhile, Loh urged the authorities to expedite RM52 million in funding for Phase 2 of the Sultan Azlan Shah Airport upgrade, which involves large-scale infrastructure improvements.

He said the first phase, costing RM8 million, is already 90% complete, but further expansion is needed to accommodate the growing number of travellers.

Once fully upgraded, the airport is expected to handle at least 700,000 passengers annually, up from its current capacity of 500,000, strengthening Perak's tourism appeal.

In addition to the airport upgrades, a cargo terminal will be built on more than 10ha of land owned by the Perak State Development Corporation near the airport. — Bernama

## Express bus ticket prices to be monitored

**SHAH ALAM:** The Land Public Transport Agency will monitor any increase in express bus ticket prices ahead of the Aidilfitri festive season.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke said the agency will take action against any drastic or unreasonable price increases as express bus company operators have been given the green light to impose a 10% surcharge during the festive season.

"Express buses for the festive period are allowed (to impose) a 10% surcharge and that is normal, (it) has been implemented for years.

"However, the agency will monitor if there is any unreasonable or drastic increase and we (the ministry) will take action through the agency," he said when asked to comment on the increase in express bus ticket prices ahead of the Aidilfitri festive season.

Loke had said in March last year that the 10% surcharge for express bus fares during festive seasons is justified by taking into account several aspects, including additional bus service capacity and payment for bus hire.

He added that the 10% surcharge increase is not a new thing but has been implemented in the past 20 years during the festive season, which is for a week before and a week after the festival day. — Bernama

## Don't overcharge traders, Raya bazaar organisers told

**PORT DICKSON:** Organisers of Ramadan and Aidilfitri bazaars in Negeri Sembilan have been reminded not to burden traders with exorbitant rental fees.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun said overcharging would place a financial strain on traders, and subsequently affect the prices of goods.

"Typically, in this state, non-governmental organisations or groups coordinate the stalls. They apply for permits from their respective local authorities and manage various aspects, including waste management, electricity, water, and cleanliness. I hope they will handle these matters properly.

"When it comes to rental rates, discuss, don't

impose excessive fees, and don't pressure the traders. The state government is not involved, we provide opportunities for everyone to do business. I'm aware of cases of high rental fees, but they're difficult to prove," he said after officiating at the Bukit Pelandok Agropoint here on Tuesday.

He also reminded traders to maintain the cleanliness of their respective bazaar sites, warning that failure to do so could result in fines and forfeiture of their deposits.

"The most important thing is cleanliness, which must be managed well. I've issued a warning not to leave rubbish behind. I don't want concession workers having to clean up scattered trash on the morning of Raya," he said.

On a separate matter, Aminuddin, who is also Port Dickson MP, said the ban on setting up public tents at Port Dickson Beach is meant to maintain the area's cleanliness and prevent immoral activities.

He said the facilities provided near the beach, including public toilets, are sufficient and safe for visitors to use.

"Without tents, it's easier for enforcement officers to carry out cleaning activities. The actual intent is to provide convenience to the public," he said.

The Port Dickson Municipal Council had announced a ban on setting up tents at Port Dickson's public beaches via its social media channels. — Bernama





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# Concern over consequences of rising online fake content

➤ Misleading or sensationalised social media posts could negatively impact public trust, says communications specialist

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA  
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**PETALING JAYA:** The spreading of misleading and fake content on social media to gain followers has become a growing concern, with experts warning that it erodes public trust, fuels misinformation and could lead to legal consequences.

International Islamic University Malaysia department of communication head Assoc Prof Dr Tengku Siti Aisha Tengku Azzman said misleading or sensationalised content could negatively impact public trust.

Studies show that fake news often spreads faster than the truth, leading to serious consequences.

Commenting on a recent case of Malaysian influencer Ammar Mohd Nazhan, who claimed his friend went missing for 48 hours in Indonesia after a live-streamed paranormal session on TikTok, she said what was once feared as a serious offence is now common practice.

"Driven by peer pressure, the fear of missing out (FOMO) and the pursuit of online popularity have become a social norm.

"However, it's a dangerous gambit and nobody should share information on social media without verifying its accuracy."

Indonesian police confirmed that Ammar's false claim was created solely to attract views and followers.

A spokesman stated that under Article 14 of Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions Law, those convicted of spreading false news could face up to 10 years' imprisonment and a RM271,000 fine.

Tengku Siti Aisha stressed that influencers and content creators must take responsibility for verifying their material as they are role models with the ability to shape attitudes and behaviours, particularly among young adults and adolescents.

She emphasised the importance of proper research before publishing

content and avoiding commentary on topics outside their area of expertise.

"Young people are more influenced by social media trends than adults and in the long run, FOMO and peer pressure can lead to anxiety and depression.

"Continuous exposure to social media content can also impair the development of critical thinking skills, making it more challenging to discern credible information from fake ones."

She also warned that the sharing of misleading or sensationalised content could lead to divisions and disagreements within society.

She urged the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia

Commission (MCMC) to develop stricter regulations or guidelines to prevent social media users from sharing misleading content.

"While cyber laws are evolving to regulate online information sharing, controlling content remains challenging since the internet has no central gatekeeper.

"Therefore, while laws and guidelines can be updated to address current issues, social media users must also take personal responsibility for what they post and share."

Universiti Teknologi Mara mass communication lecturer Fadzillah Aishah Ismail, who also teaches media law, cautioned that influencers could face legal action for causing harm or public unrest, even if they claim their content is for entertainment or just a prank.

"In Malaysia, the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA 1998) regulates misinformation and false content.

"Under Section 233, offenders could be jailed up to a year or fined up to RM50,000, or both."

She pointed out that social media platforms struggle to control misleading content due to freedom of speech principles, which allow followers to freely share private and confidential information.

However, she added that such platforms must comply with CMA 1998 to prevent harmful digital content and work closely with MCMC to remove misleading posts.

"Given the current digital landscape, Malaysia should introduce mandatory training for influencers, similar to content creator guidelines implemented in Singapore and the United Kingdom.

"This will ensure that influencers understand the relevant laws and ethical standards. Such training would protect the public from misinformation and reduce legal risks for the influencers," she said.



Screen grab from the controversial video showing the woman who allegedly went missing after a paranormal encounter and was later found 'unconscious' in a jungle.

## Death of Taiping prison inmate under investigation

**SUNGAI PETANI:** Investigations are ongoing into the death of a Taiping Prison inmate last month, allegedly due to assault, said Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

He added that police have opened an investigation paper and are conducting a thorough probe.

"This process includes taking statements from everyone involved, whether inmates or prison officers on duty on the day of the incident (Jan 17). This investigation process is ongoing," he said.

Speaking after the Inmates' Thaipusam Meet-and-Greet event and a working visit to Sungai Petani Prison on Tuesday, he added that the Parliamentary Special Select Committee has requested the Home Ministry to provide feedback on the Taiping incident.

"Human Rights Commission chairman Datuk Seri Mohd Hishamudin Md Yunus also contacted me to express his wish to meet the parties involved.

"We will provide full cooperation, but this process must be carried out in an orderly and phased manner. What is important is the Prisons Department always fulfils its responsibilities and fully cooperates with all stakeholders in investigating an incident."

Earlier, Perak acting police chief DCP Zulkafli Sariaat reported that a case was received on Jan 17, and an investigation paper has been opened under Section 302 of the Penal Code. — Bernama

## Seven held over RM1.3 million loan fraud

**KUALA TERENGGANU:** Police have arrested seven individuals, including a female officer of a financial institution, on suspicion of fraudulently obtaining personal financing totalling RM1,325,000 from the company in which she was employed.

Terengganu police chief Datuk Mohd Khairi Khairudin reported that three men and four women, aged between 26 and 55, were apprehended in Terengganu, Johor and Selangor on Monday following intelligence work by the Terengganu Commercial Crime Investigation Department.

"Apart from the officer, those arrested included traders and housewives.

"Police also seized 15 automated teller machine cards and six mobile phones."

Mohd Khairi revealed that a report was lodged on Jan 28 by a manager of the financial institution involved, claiming to have been deceived in personal financing applications by seven individuals, involving over RM1 million.

However, once the financing was approved, all the suspects — who had posed as civil servants when submitting applications — failed to pay the monthly instalments. — Bernama

## Members of GISB Holdings plead not guilty

**SHAH ALAM:** A total of 22 individuals linked to GISB Holdings Sdn Bhd (GISBH), including its CEO Nasiruddin Mohd Ali, pleaded not guilty at the High Court yesterday to a charge of being part of an organised criminal group.

All 22, comprising 13 men and nine women, made their pleas before Judge Datuk Seri Latifah Mohd Tahar after the charges were read out separately once the case was transferred to the High Court.

Apart from Nasiruddin, the other 12 are Hasnan Abd Hamid and Mohd Shukri Mohd Noor, both 54, Mohd Fazil Md Jasin, 58, Mokhtar Tajuddin, 61, Shuhaimi Mohamed, 57, Muhammad

Zahid Azhar@Nadzri, 52, Mohamad Sayuti Omar, 36, Muhammad Afdaluddin Latif, Mohd Dhirar Fakhrur Razi and Abu Ubaidah Ahmad Shukri, all 35, Mohammad Adib At-Tamimi Asa'ari, 33, and Muhammad Fajrul Islam Khalid, 29.

The nine women are Hamimah Yakub, 72, Azura Md Yusof, 58, Asmat@Asmanira Muhammad Ramly, 45, Mahani Kasim, 55, Siti Salmiah Ismail, 58, Siti Hajar Ismail, 52, Khalilatul-Zalifah Mohammad Jamil, 28, Nurul Jannah Idris, 29, and Nur Jannah Omar, 33.

They were charged with being members of an organised crime group at a premises in Bandar Country

Homes, Rawang, between October 2020 and September 11, 2024.

The charges were framed under Section 130V(1) of the Penal Code, which provides imprisonment of between five and 20 years.

DPP Shafiq Hashim did not propose bail, as the offence falls under the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act (Sosma) 2012.

Lawyer Datuk Rosli Kamaruddin, representing 21 of the accused except for Hamimah, informed the court that bail applications for his clients were in progress.

"Of the total, 17 applications have been filed but are not yet complete and we will submit affidavits such as

health certificates.

"Meanwhile, four more applications will be filed this week. Everything will be completed within a week before being submitted to the DPP."

The court set March 17 to hear the bail applications for the 21 defendants, except for Hamimah, who was granted a RM40,000 bail in two sureties on Jan 13.

On Oct 23, 2024, Nasiruddin, Azura, Mohammad Adib At-Tamimi Asa'ari and 19 top leaders of GISBH were charged at the Selayang Sessions Court with being members of an organised criminal group since 2020. — Bernama



# Philippines budgets US\$35b for 10-year military buildup

► Shopping list includes submarines and missiles

**MANILA:** The Philippines is looking to buy more military hardware to modernise its arsenal, including additional BrahMos missiles from India and at least two submarines, the chief of the armed forces said yesterday.

The Philippines is on the third phase of its modernisation programme called "Horizons". It has earmarked US\$35 billion (RM156 billion) for the buildup over the next decade as it aims to counter China's military might in the region.

"It's a dream for us to get at least two submarines," said General Romeo S. Brawner Jr in a speech to leading business figures.

"We are an archipelago. So we have to have this type of capability, because it's really difficult

to defend the entire archipelago without submarines."

In 2022, the Philippines bought a US\$375 million BrahMos anti-ship missile system from India, and has orders for more.

"We are getting more of this (system) this year, and in the coming years," Brawner said.

The Philippines has previously said it is eyeing mid-range missiles and at least 40 fighter jets to boost its defence capabilities.

It is expecting deliveries this year of at least two corvette vessels from South Korea, which last year elevated its ties with Manila to a strategic partnership.

Brawner also said Manila is trying to get South Korea to join the Quad, which groups Australia, Japan, Philippines and the US.

The Philippines' military buildup comes as tensions between Manila and Beijing have escalated in the South China Sea, where the two have clashed in recent years.

Brawner said the military has observed an

increase in "illegal, coercive and deceptive" actions by China in the South China Sea.

"We have seen also an increase in the number of vessels in the West Philippine Sea on a daily basis," Brawner said, using Manila's term for waters in the South China Sea that fall within its exclusive economic zone.

From 190 vessels in 2021, the Philippines is now seeing a daily average of 286 Chinese ships around Manila's maritime zone, he said.

China's embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Chinese authorities have previously said their actions in the region were lawful.

Brawner added that a "joint maritime activity" with the US and Canada in Manila's maritime zone was underway. He said Manila is also eyeing joint activities with France, Italy and the United Kingdom.

These activities are meant to ensure an effective presence in the South China Sea, Brawner said. — Reuters

## Duterte likely to face criminal charges

**MANILA:** The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in the Philippines has recommended filing criminal charges against Vice-President Sara Duterte over an alleged threat to assassinate President Ferdinand Marcos Jr and others, the agency's head said yesterday.

"We have finally recommended the filing of inciting to sedition and grave threats against Duterte," NBI director Jaime Santiago told radio broadcaster DZBB in an interview.

Santiago said the recommendation has been submitted to the Justice Ministry, which will decide if it will conduct a preliminary investigation.

In a brief comment sent through her media officer, Duterte said the recommendation was "as expected".

The case stems from her remarks in November that she has spoken with an assassin and instructed him to kill Marcos, his wife and his cousin, the speaker of the Philippine House, if she were to be killed. She has denied threatening them and reiterated last week that she made no such threat.

Duterte has been embroiled in a long-running row with former ally Marcos. She is facing a separate impeachment complaint over the threat she made and for allegedly misusing public funds through her positions as vice-president and education minister. — Reuters



### PIOUS DEED

... Buddhist devotees offering food to monks yesterday in the southern Thai town of Narathiwat to mark Makha Bucha Day, which celebrates the creation of an ideal and exemplary community. — AFP/PIIC

## 10 million take holy dip on key day

**LUCKNOW:** More than 10 million devout Hindus seeking absolution from their sins took a dip in holy waters in northern India during a span of four hours yesterday, authorities said, as they braced for millions more to swarm the site of the Kumbh Mela.

Authorities stepped up the number of police officers and put air ambulances on standby in the city of Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh state on one of the holiest days of the Hindu festival, considered the world's largest gathering of humanity.

"There are more people in this city in one day than the population of many countries, and the numbers are swelling by the minute," said state police chief Prashant Kumar.

The numbers arriving had pushed infrastructure arrangements to the brink, making delays and traffic jams inevitable. Media said vehicles were backed up for hundreds of kilometres from the city.

More than 10 million people had bathed by 8am, authorities said, with more expected.

The full moon yesterday, known as *Magh Purnima*, makes it one of the holiest days in the six-week-long festival, held at the confluence of India's three holiest rivers.

Maintaining safety can prove a challenge at the festival, despite stringent precautions. — Reuters

## HK police defend widening activists probe

**HONG KONG:** Police here have questioned at least 10 family members and associates of overseas democracy activists wanted for national security crimes in the span of a month, with the top brass defending the probes as normal police work.

In December, authorities placed bounties on six pro-democracy figures based abroad for allegedly violating the Chinese city's national security laws, a move criticised by the United States as "transnational repression".

Deputy police commissioner Andrew Kan said police have looked into the Hong Kong-based associates of bounty targets, adding that it is normal to collect intelligence from individuals with links to wanted fugitives.

The aunt and uncle of London-based activist Carmen Lau were taken from their Hong Kong home on Monday and were seen leaving a police station hours later.

"The national security apparatus has expanded its reach to my extended family. This is nothing more than an attempt to intimidate Hong Kongers," Lau said on X.

National security police confirmed to AFP on six occasions since Jan 13 that it had "brought individuals to police stations" to help with investigations.

At least 10 individuals, including the wife, son, three siblings and three ex-colleagues of former pollster Chung Kim-wah, were questioned during that period.

Most left the police stations within hours and no arrests have been made.

None have publicly commented on their situation. Under the national security law, those who "assist with the handling of a case" must follow confidentiality rules.

Political dissent in Hong Kong was effectively quashed by a sweeping national security law imposed by Beijing in 2020 after the huge, sometimes violent protests of the year before.

Authorities have placed bounties on 19 overseas democracy advocates since 2023 while scores of opposition figures have been arrested and jailed in Hong Kong.

The bounties are seen as largely symbolic given that they are for people living in nations

unlikely to extradite political activists to Hong Kong or China.

The US-based Hong Kong Democracy Council said the latest developments showed how China is "expanding the scope of its tactic of targeting friends and family of dissidents".

Lau and Chung said they have cut ties with former associates still based in Hong Kong.

Chung was an executive at one of Hong Kong's last independent polling bodies, the Hong Kong Public Opinion Research Institute.

Aside from government popularity ratings, the institute conducted polls on the political identity of Hong Kongers and their views on the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, which is a sensitive issue in Hong Kong and mainland China.

Hong Kong security chief Chris Tang said in January that the move to question Chung's ex-colleagues had "absolutely nothing to do with the results of (the group's polls)".

The institute said days later that it had suspended all self-financed research activities "due to various technical reasons". — AFP

## Russia offers India advanced jet

**BENGALURU:** Russia has offered to make its fifth-generation stealth fighter jet Sukhoi Su-57 in India for the Indian Air Force, a Russian and an Indian official said.

A spokesman for Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport said the fighter jet could go into production as early as this year if the Indian government accepts its offer.

A Russian industry source and an Indian official said an informal offer had been made by Russia in talks with officials of the Indian government and state-owned planemaker Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.

The move comes as the Indian Air Force is keen to shore up its fighter squadrons, which have fallen to 31 from 42, at a time when China is expanding its air force. — Reuters



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SCAN ME

# 'AI statement fails to address national security'

➤ US, Britain not signatories to agreement

**LONDON:** A final statement at an artificial intelligence (AI) summit in Paris did not address questions of "national security", a UK government spokesperson said on Tuesday after Britain failed to sign the communiqué.

The closing deal at the gathering agreed to prioritise securing AI technology with regulation to make it "open" and "ethical".

Neither Britain nor the United States – home to two of the world's three largest AI industries – signed the agreement. British Prime Minister Keir Starmer had previously urged the UK to forge its own path when it comes to AI regulation.

A UK government spokesperson said: "We felt the declaration did not provide enough practical clarity on global governance, nor did it sufficiently address harder questions around national security and the challenge AI poses to it."

However, the UK agreed with "much" of the declaration and would "continue to work closely with our international partners", the spokesperson added.

There was no indication that key industry players, such as OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, would support the deal, which agreed that AI should be "sustainable for people and the planet".

"You would only ever expect us to sign up to initiatives that we judge to be in our national interest," a 10 Downing Street spokesman told reporters.

Last month, Starmer pledged to make the UK a "world leader" in AI, announcing plans for companies to be able to test their innovations in the UK before regulating the technology.

The UK would be "pro-growth and pro-innovation on regulation", he said, adding that the government would regulate it in the way "that we think is best for the UK".

US Vice-President J.D. Vance warned European allies against over-regulating the AI sector and China against using the technology to tighten its grip on power.

The confrontational remarks punctured the unity that France had hoped to project for the two-day meeting.

"Excessive regulation could kill a transformative sector just as it is taking off," Vance told global leaders and tech industry chiefs at the Grand Palais, calling on Europe to show "optimism rather than trepidation".

Minutes earlier, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called for "collective, global efforts to establish governance and standards that uphold our shared values, address risks and build trust".

Modi co-hosted the summit with French President Emmanuel Macron, and his country will host the next meeting on advancing global rules.

Macron said rules are "the foundation, alongside innovation and acceleration, of what would allow AI to arrive and endure".

China, France, Germany and India were among 60 signatories who agreed that it is a priority that "AI is open, inclusive, transparent, ethical, safe, secure and trustworthy" under "international frameworks". – AFP

## Nurses suspended over death threats

**SYDNEY:** Two nurses here have been suspended from work for threatening to kill Jewish patients and refusing to treat them in a video, triggering an investigation by police.

The video was shared by a TikTok user named Max Veifer, who says he is from Israel, and shows him talking to a man and woman wearing medical scrubs.

"I am so upset that you are Israeli. Eventually you are going to get killed and go to (hell)," said the man after Veifer mentioned he is from Israel.

When asked why he would be killed, the woman used an obscenity and said: "It is Palestine's country, not your country."

She said she would not treat any Jewish patients and instead kill them.

With a threatening gesture, the man said he had already sent many Israelis who visited the hospital to hell.

Reuters could not independently verify the footage and it was not immediately clear if the full video of the conversation had been uploaded by the user. Some of the woman's words had been beeped out in the video.

Reuters could not immediately contact the two nurses.

New South Wales state Health Minister Ryan Park said the nurses have been "stood down immediately", pending an investigation.

"The investigative process now takes place. I do not want to leave a sliver of light to allow any of them to think that they will ever work for New South Wales Health again."

New South Wales state police said its antisemitic taskforce is investigating a social media video depicting alleged health workers making threats.

Veifer, who posts videos about the Middle East, has 102,000 followers and his videos have been liked by 4.2 million users. – Reuters

## Aid agency official fired after critical report

**WASHINGTON:** The US Agency for International Development (USAID) inspector-general was fired on Tuesday, a day after his office published a report critical of the Trump administration's efforts to eliminate the agency, its official said.

Paul Martin had served as the agency's inspector-general, a position requiring US Senate confirmation, since December 2023.

He was informed by an email from Office of Presidential Personnel deputy director Trent Morse. No reason was provided. The White House did not have any comment.

The report said the move to dismantle USAID has crippled its ability to conduct oversight of unspent aid worth US\$8.2 billion (RM36.67 billion).

It also said staff cuts and stop-work orders have made it difficult to ensure taxpayer-funded aid ends up in the hands of intended recipients.

Hundreds of USAID programmes representing billions of dollars of US assistance came to a halt after US President Donald Trump ordered a freeze on most foreign aid on Jan 20, saying he wanted to ensure it was aligned with his "America First" policy.

On Tuesday, Trump called USAID "incompetent and corrupt" as he tasked Elon Musk with scaling down the agency, which had more than 10,000 staff at home and overseas before all but just over 600 were put on leave or fired.

The Trump administration last week took steps to put most of USAID's workforce on administrative leave but the move was blocked by a judge on Friday.

In fiscal year 2023, the United States disbursed US\$72 billion of aid on initiatives, including women's health in conflict zones, clean water access, HIV/AIDS treatments, energy security and anti-corruption work. It provided 42% of all humanitarian aid tracked by the United Nations last year. – Reuters



### OPPOSING CRUELTY ...

French animal rights activists protesting in front of the European Parliament in Strasbourg against living conditions of farm animals and their genetic selection in the intensive poultry farming industry. – AFP/PICT

## Trump blasts judges, constitutional clash looms

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump slammed "highly political judges" on Tuesday as his new administration veered closer to a constitutional clash with the courts over his plans to overhaul the government.

With the Republican Party controlling Congress and loyal to Trump, he has largely ignored the legislature as he carried out his policies.

But he has faced pushback from the courts since taking office, with media outlets reporting a dozen orders issued against the administration – five of them on Monday – from some 40 lawsuits.

Lashing out on Truth Social, Trump said: "Billions of dollars of fraud, waste, and abuse, has already been found in the investigation of

our incompetently run government. Now certain activists and highly political judges want us to slow down or stop.

"Losing this momentum will be very detrimental to finding the truth, which is turning out to be a disaster for those involved in running our government. Much left to find."

Trump first ran up against the judiciary over an attempt to freeze US\$3 trillion (RM13.4 trillion) in federal grants and loans, a deferred resignation programme for government workers and a plan to transfer transgender inmates to men's prisons.

He has also clashed with judges over his abolition of birthright citizenship, sending Venezuelan migrants to Guantanamo Bay, funding cuts to the National Institutes of

Health, firing a government ethics watchdog and placing workers from the US Agency for International Development on leave.

Injunctions have been placed on each of these actions and on Tuesday, a federal judge ordered Trump to restore public health web pages that were removed last month.

A federal judge also upbraided the White House on Monday for failing to comply with his order to end the federal funding freeze.

Concerns are mounting that Trump could defy the rulings, prompting a full-blown constitutional crisis.

Vice-President J.D. Vance has fuelled speculation over a coming clash, claiming that judges lack the authority to "control the executive's legitimate power". – AFP



## One killed in Russia missile attack on Kyiv

**KYIV:** A predawn Russian missile strike on the Ukrainian capital killed at least one civilian and injured four others yesterday, sparking several fires in the city of three million people, Ukrainian officials said.

Residents woke to a series of powerful explosions that shook the capital as local officials said air defences were engaging the largest ballistic missile salvo to target Kyiv in weeks.

Nearly three years since Russia launched its invasion, the attack comes amid a concerted peace push by US President Donald Trump, who has said his team is in touch with both Kyiv and Moscow and that he wants a rapid end to the bloodshed.

A column of smoke could be seen rising above the city in the aftermath of the attack as an emergency services crew sifted through rubble next to the damaged buildings.

"We don't have windows, everything is broken here. It's horrible," said Anzhela Karnatova.

Another Kyiv resident, Nina Kyslenko, said she had come to the dry cleaner's where she works to survey the damage after receiving a call from police who told her the windows and doors had been destroyed in the attack.

"There were explosions all morning. Everything is ruined," she said of her dry cleaning shop, where shards of glass were scattered around the floor.

The air force said it shot down six of seven ballistic missiles fired. Out of 123 drones, the military shot down 71 and likely used electronic countermeasures against 40 more, it added.

A nine-year-old child was among the injured, local officials posted on Telegram.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said: "(Russian President Vladimir) Putin is not preparing for peace. He continues to kill Ukrainians and destroy cities."

Photos shared by the state emergency services showed rescuers putting out flames engulfing a non-residential building in the region surrounding Kyiv. — Reuters



Palestinians walking past ruins in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip. — AFP/IC

## Trump plan risks new crises, say Arab officials

### ► Egypt to host summit to address Palestinian issues

**DUBAI:** President Donald Trump's plan to take over Gaza and resettle Palestinians, which has drawn global condemnation, will threaten a fragile ceasefire in the enclave and fuel regional instability, senior Arab officials said yesterday.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit warned the World Government Summit in Dubai that if Trump pressed ahead with his plan, he would lead the Middle East into a new cycle of crises with a "damaging effect on peace and stability".

Trump enraged the Arab world by declaring unexpectedly that the United States would take over Gaza, resettle its over two million Palestinian population and develop it into the "Riviera of the Middle East".

After 16 months of Israeli air strikes in the Gaza war, Palestinians fear a repeat of the "Nakba", or catastrophe, when nearly 800,000 people fled or were driven out during the 1948 war that led to the creation of Israel. Trump has said they would have no right to return.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared on Tuesday the ceasefire

in Gaza would end and the military would resume fighting Hamas until it was defeated if the group did not release hostages by midday on Saturday.

Hamas later issued a statement renewing its commitment to the ceasefire and accusing Israel of jeopardising it.

Hamas has gradually been releasing hostages since the first phase of a ceasefire began on Jan 19, but on Monday said it would not free any more over accusations Israel was violating the deal.

"If the situation explodes militarily once more, all this (ceasefire) effort will be wasted," Aboul Gheit said.

Gulf Cooperation Council head Jassem al-Budaiwi called on Trump to remember the strong ties between the region and Washington.

"But there has to be give and take. He says his opinion and the Arab world should say theirs. What he is saying won't be accepted by the Arab world."

Trump has said the Palestinians in Gaza, an impoverished tiny strip of land, could settle in countries such as Jordan, which already has a huge Palestinian population, and Egypt, the Arab world's most populous state. Both have rejected the proposal.

For Jordan, Trump's talk of resettlement comes close to its nightmare of a mass

expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, with the idea of Jordan becoming an alternative Palestinian home long promoted by ultra-nationalist Israelis.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi partly views it as a security issue. He believes groups like Hamas are an existential threat to Egypt and beyond and would not welcome any members of the group crossing the border and settling in Egypt.

Egypt will host an emergency Arab summit on Feb 27 to discuss "serious" developments for Palestinians.

Aboul Gheit said the idea of the Arab Peace Initiative floated in 2002, in which Arab nations offered Israel normalised ties in return for a statehood deal with the Palestinians and full Israeli withdrawal from territory captured in 1967, would be reintroduced.

Trump's plan has upended decades of US policy that endorsed a two-state solution in which Israel and a Palestinian state would coexist.

So far, 16 of 33 hostages taken from Israel have been freed as part of the ceasefire deal's first phase due to last 42 days.

In exchange, Israel has released hundreds of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including some serving life sentences for attacks. — Reuters

### BRIEFS

#### ISRAEL AIRSTRIKE ON DUO TRYING TO RETRIEVE DRONE

**TEL AVIV:** The Israeli military said it conducted an airstrike yesterday in the Gaza Strip, targeting two people attempting to retrieve a drone that had crossed into the Palestinian territory. The military said the drone had flown from Israeli territory and was subsequently targeted by an Israeli warplane in southern Gaza. "Recently, several attempts to smuggle weapons into the Gaza Strip using drones have been detected," the military said. — AFP

#### NORTH KOREA CONDEMNS TAKEOVER PROPOSAL

**SEOUL:** North Korean state media denounced President Donald Trump's proposal to take over Gaza and relocate Palestinians as bluster and accused Washington of robbery. "The slim hopes of Palestinians for safety and peace are being crushed", a commentary carried by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. "The world is boiling like a porridge pot over the bombshell declaration," KCNA said. The commentary also criticised calls to take over the Panama Canal and Greenland. — Reuters

#### 139 STRANDED FISHERMEN RESCUED FROM ICE FLOE

**MOSCOW:** Russia's emergency services said yesterday that it had rescued 139 fishermen stranded on an ice floe drifting in the Sea of Okhotsk in the Western Pacific. Earlier, the ministry said about 300 were stranded and that some of them refused "to leave without a catch under any circumstances". It later said a rescue operation involving helicopters and vessels had brought 139 stranded people ashore. — Reuters

## Zelensky offers land swaps to end war

**WASHINGTON:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he was ready to swap land in negotiations with Russia, which freed at least one American prisoner in what US President Donald Trump described on Tuesday as a goodwill gesture on ending the war.

Zelensky has in the past refused to cede any territory after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

But in an interview with *The Guardian* published on Tuesday, he said Kyiv was ready for serious talks ahead of a meeting tomorrow at the Munich Security Conference with US Vice-President J.D. Vance.

"We will swap one territory for another," Zelensky said, adding that he was ready to trade land in Russia's Kursk region, which Ukraine seized in a surprise offensive last year.

He acknowledged that Ukraine would not be able to enjoy security guarantees just with European partners.

"Security guarantees without America are not real security guarantees," he said.

Trump took office vowing to end the war in Ukraine, possibly by leveraging billions of dollars in US assistance sent under former president Joe Biden, to force Kyiv into territorial concessions.

In the first known visit by a member of the Trump administration to Russia since he returned to the White House last month, envoy Steve Witkoff secured the release of Marc Fogel, an American jailed since 2021 on drug charges.

"We were treated very nicely by Russia," Trump told reporters of Fogel's release.

"Actually, I hope that's the beginning of a relationship with which we can end that war."

Trump greeted Fogel at the White House on Tuesday night after he landed in the United States, recounting a meeting with Fogel's 95-year-old mother at a campaign rally at which he promised her to "get him out".

The White House described his release as part of an "exchange", with Trump saying a second detainee would be released, without offering further details.

There was no immediate comment from Russia, where state-run news agencies quoted the White House announcement.

Earlier in the week, Trump had floated the possibility that Ukraine "may be Russian someday", words quickly welcomed by Moscow. — AFP



# Trump demolishing global order

**F**OLLOWING Donald Trump's inauguration, John Harris, the founding editor and editor-in-chief of *Politico* – an American digital newspaper reporting on politics on both sides of the Atlantic owned by Axel Springer, a German news publisher and media company – had this comment on the 47th US president: “But the second occasion of Trump taking the oath of office also put him in an entirely new light. For the first time, he is holding power under circumstances in which reasonable people cannot deny a basic fact: He is the greatest American figure of his era.”

Trump appears to have liked this obsequious and flattering judgement so much that it provided the lead for his opening lines in his first speech to world leaders gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos on Jan 23: “This has been a truly historic week in the United States. Three days ago, I took the oath of office, and we began the golden age of America.”

“The recent presidential election was won by millions of votes. It was a massive mandate from the American people that hadn’t been seen in many years. And some of the political pundits, even some of my so-called enemies, said it was the most consequential election victory in 129 years. That’s quite nice.”

“Our country will soon be stronger, wealthier and more united than ever before, and the entire planet will be more peaceful and prosperous as a result of what we’re doing and going to do.”

“My administration is acting with unprecedented speed to fix the disasters we’ve inherited from a totally inept group of people and to solve every single crisis facing our country.”

## Fulfilling election promises

For now, his domestic priorities relate to electoral promises made during his campaign. They include:

☞ Making the US safe through securing the border with Mexico and Canada;



ANOTHER TAKE  
BY LIM TECK GHEE

enhanced screening and deportation of aliens; redefining birthright citizenship for children of illegal immigrants; and related policies counter to those of the Joe Biden administration.

☞ Draining the swamp in the federal bureaucracy and dismantling the American deep state. Objectives in what has been described as a purge of the public service workforce include bringing efficiency, higher productivity and ideological alignment with Trump’s *Maga* (Make America Great Again) and merit manifesto through the removal of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility employees and programmes.

☞ Implementation of new energy, environment and climate change policies aimed at moving away from American and global climate action agreed to by the Biden administration; the ramping up of domestic oil and gas production (Trump’s clarion call to “drill, baby drill”); and the suspension of grants, contracts and financial incentives provided to clean energy programmes such as electric vehicles, wind turbines and solar panels.

☞ Bringing back American values related to family, religion (Christian), traditional gender ideology and whatever is deemed necessary to restore the nation’s sense of exceptionalism and superiority.

## Public approval of Trump 2.0

For now, there has been little or no resistance to the small mountain of executive actions issued by Trump’s administration that, according to Democrat opponents, are not only challenging the American political and cultural order. They are also upending the established constitutional system of checks and balances.

With a Republican majority in the Senate and House of Representatives secure, and the Democrats leaderless, dispirited and in disarray, Trump has begun to successfully reshape the American order.



The ‘reciprocal’ tariff war that Trump is unleashing and committed to will have consequences for the larger global order and rule of law that G7 and allies of the US have espoused. — **AFPPIC**

*“With a Republican majority in the Senate and House of Representatives secure, and the Democrats leaderless, dispirited and in disarray, Trump has begun to successfully reshape the American order.”*

What is significant is that his actions on the domestic front are supported by a majority of Americans.

According to a CBS News/YouGov poll conducted in early February, 53% of respondents approve of the job he is doing in his first month at office. This is the highest approval rating in Trump’s two terms in office. The results of this and similar ongoing polls will undoubtedly embolden Trump and the Republicans in further redefining and reshaping the political, economic and cultural landscape of the US according to Trump’s vision.

Analysts poring over the polling numbers and assessing public response to the policy changes have noted that US presidents enjoy a honeymoon period following their inauguration.

Whether Trump’s approval rating will continue to hold up and he can continue with his grip on power to advance his populist *Maga* programmes will depend to a large measure on the economy and whether the American public can benefit from his promises of a wealthier and more prosperous nation through “the largest tax cuts in the history of our country” and his tariff policy directed against

every country that trades with the US.

In the same poll that provided his high approval rating, two-thirds of respondents said his administration had not focused enough on lowering prices. This included half of the Republicans surveyed.

The concern of ordinary Americans with rising consumer prices, unmet health and housing issues, and simply meeting everyday needs is a challenge that cannot be dispelled with rhetoric, executive orders or “unprecedented speed” tariffs. Neither can it be met through looking for solutions outside the US.

## Rule of law

Trump has consistently maintained that “tariff is the most beautiful word” in his dictionary. However, most economists in the US and the rest of the world see it as not only the wrong answer for what needs reform in the US.

They also regard it as a double-edged sword which will raise the inflation rate and cost of living for Americans and disrupt the global market negatively.

Trump himself has conceded that Americans will bear “some pain” from any tariff war but that the pain will be worth the gain in manufacturing jobs returning to the US.

Away from the US and global economy, the “reciprocal” tariff war that Trump is unleashing and committed to will have consequences for the larger global order and rule of law that G7 and allies of the US have espoused, and which had the US as its principal proponent and upholder.

The ending of the myth that we have an international system where countries interact and resolve disputes primarily through established legal frameworks and institutions, with no single power dictating actions, fostering stability and predictability in international relations may perhaps be the most consequential outcome of Trump’s presidency.

*Lim Teck Ghee’s Another Take is aimed at demystifying social orthodoxy. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com*

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# Reframing perception of scarcity

**I**N a world obsessed with accumulation, where success is often measured by the excess we own, the idea of “enough” feels almost radical.

We live in an age where marketing strategies are designed to make us feel perpetually inadequate – there is always a better phone, trendier outfit, newer car. But what if we reframe our perception of scarcity? What if, instead of chasing more, we recognise the power of sufficiency?

This mindset shift is more than just personal fulfilment; it is a critical pivot towards sustainability, mental well-being and a more equitable world. The way we define “enough” has far-reaching consequences – not just for our individual lives but for the planet itself.

Scarcity is often manufactured rather than real. The luxury industry thrives on the illusion of exclusivity. Fast fashion operates on the premise that last season's wardrobe is outdated. Tech giants roll out minor upgrades, making yesterday's gadgets obsolete. The scarcity mindset tells us we do not have enough, so we must always want more.

Consider the case of Ronald Read, a janitor and gas station attendant from Vermont who lived modestly his entire life. Despite his humble earnings, he quietly amassed a US\$8 million (RM35.52 million) fortune, which he donated to charity upon his death. Read never chased more – he lived within his means, embraced sufficiency, and yet, paradoxically, he

had abundance. His story starkly contrasts with the high earners drowning in debt, chasing status symbols they can barely afford.

Our addiction to more is not just a psychological issue; it is an environmental crisis. The fashion industry alone is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions and 20% of wastewater production.

Electronics contribute to 50 million tonnes of e-waste annually. Landfills overflow with items we once thought were essential but discarded when something shinier came along.

A thought-provoking example is Japan's “*mottainai*” philosophy, which loosely translates to “don't waste what is valuable”.

The Japanese culture, rooted in minimalism, places high importance on appreciating and utilising resources to their fullest potential. From *kintsugi* (the art of repairing broken pottery) to capsule wardrobes, Japan demonstrates that having less does not mean lacking – it means valuing what we have.

Beyond the financial and environmental implications, the scarcity mindset significantly impacts our mental health. Studies show that chronic materialism is linked to higher levels of anxiety, depression and decreased life satisfaction.

When we define our worth by what we own, happiness becomes an ever-moving target. Contrast this with the voluntary simplicity movement, which advocates intentional living – owning less but experiencing more.



The luxury industry thrives on the illusion of exclusivity. Fast fashion operates on the premise that last season's wardrobe is outdated. – REUTERSPIC

In 2010, Joshua Becker, a suburban dad, stumbled upon minimalism when a neighbour pointed out how much time he spent managing his possessions instead of making memories with his family. This realisation led him to downsize, declutter and focus on what truly mattered. Today, his philosophy has inspired millions to redefine success beyond material wealth. Embracing sufficiency does not mean abandoning ambition or progress. It means redefining growth to be more sustainable and purpose-driven.

Some businesses are leading the way in shifting from profit maximisation to value creation. Take Patagonia, for instance. The outdoor apparel brand famously ran a campaign with the bold headline: “Don't Buy This Jacket”. Instead of encouraging unnecessary

consumption, the company urged customers to repair, reuse and recycle their gear. This counter-intuitive strategy not only reduced waste but deepened customer loyalty – proving that sustainability and profitability can go hand in hand.

Similarly, Ikea is transitioning towards a circular economy model, offering furniture take-back programmes and second-hand resale initiatives. These efforts challenge the traditional business model that thrives on endless consumption and promote longevity and responsible ownership.

Adopting the mindset of “enough” requires conscious effort but it is deeply rewarding. Here are some actionable ways to shift perspectives:

➤ **Practise gratitude** – Studies show that regularly listing things we are grateful for can rewire the brain to focus on abundance rather than

scarcity.

➤ **Adopt the “One In, One Out” rule** – Before buying something new, let go of something you no longer use.

➤ **Invest in experiences over things** – Research indicates that experiences bring more long-term happiness than material possessions.

➤ **Support sustainable brands** – Choose businesses that prioritise ethical production and environmental responsibility.

➤ **Redefine success** – Move away from material benchmarks and towards fulfilment, purpose and impact.

The concept of sufficiency is not about deprivation – it is about freedom. Freedom from the cycle of endless wanting, freedom from the burden of excess and freedom to live with intention. It is about recognising that having more does not equate to being more.

If society collectively shifts its mindset, the ripple effects will be profound – less waste, lower financial stress, improved well-being and a planet that can breathe a little easier.

The choice is ours: Do we continue running on the treadmill of never-ending consumption or do we step off and find contentment in enough? In the words of Lao Tzu: “He who knows he has enough is rich.” Maybe, the key to a better world is not acquiring more but realising we already have everything we need.

**Dr Praveena Rajendra** is a

certified mental health and awareness practitioner specialising in narcissistic abuse recovery.

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## DeepSeek: Catalyst for Southeast Asia's AI ambitions

**COMMENT**  
By Neil Foo

**THE** launch of DeepSeek, a revolutionary AI (artificial intelligence) platform designed with a low-cost, scalable model, is set to reshape the global AI industry.

For Southeast Asia, a region brimming with technological potential and a rapidly growing digital economy, DeepSeek's arrival could not be timelier.

DeepSeek is set to reshape the AI industry, bringing changes that will particularly benefit small and medium-sized tech enterprises.

Assistant professor at Nanyang Technological University Benjamin Ho noted that while China's AI capabilities are attractive, Southeast Asian countries will evaluate offerings based on commercial viability and national security considerations. Malaysia, with its strategic push for AI adoption, is likely to be a key beneficiary.

### Lowering barriers to AI adoption

DeepSeek's low-cost model addresses one of the most significant barriers to AI adoption in Southeast Asia: affordability.

By making advanced AI technologies accessible to small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and startups, DeepSeek is poised to accelerate the region's digital transformation. This will have profound implications for Southeast Asia's tech ecosystem, which is already experiencing rapid growth driven by a young, tech-savvy population and

increasing internet penetration.

Southeast Asian firms often compete with larger Chinese and Western tech giants that have substantial AI resources.

With DeepSeek levelling the playing field, local companies can harness advanced AI capabilities at a fraction of the cost. This will allow regional tech firms to develop competitive products and services tailored to local market needs, potentially increasing their valuations and attractiveness.

Lee Choon Wool, CEO of Starbox Group Holdings Ltd, a Nasdaq listed company, welcomes the new change: “DeepSeek's low-cost model is really a game-changer. It allows many SME like ours to integrate AI-driven solutions and deploy cutting-edge AI models without excessive upfront costs.”

“We will see many opportunities in the fields of AI-driven automation for cost reduction, personalised marketing and e-commerce AI, AI-powered content creation for digital businesses and AI training and reskilling services.”

### Key implications

➤ **Empowering SME and startups:** SME form the backbone of Southeast Asia's economy, contributing significantly to GDP and employment. However, many have struggled to adopt AI due to high costs and technical complexities.

DeepSeek's affordable model will enable these businesses to leverage AI for process automation, customer insights and product innovation, fostering competitiveness.

➤ **Driving sector-specific innovation:** DeepSeek's scalability and ease of use make it ideal for sector-specific

applications. For instance:

➤ **E-commerce:** AI-powered recommendation engines and supply chain optimisation.

➤ **Fintech:** Fraud detection and personalised financial services.

➤ **Healthcare:** Telemedicine and diagnostic tools to improve access to quality care.

➤ **Agriculture:** Predictive analytics for crop monitoring and yield optimisation.

➤ **Strengthening regional collaboration:** DeepSeek's launch encourages cross-border collaboration within Southeast Asia, enabling tech companies to share knowledge, resources and best practices. This collaborative approach will enhance the region's collective ability to compete on the global stage.

### Identifying incoming opportunities

For investors, the key to leveraging DeepSeek's impact lies in identifying companies that can effectively integrate AI into their business models. Some of the most promising areas include:

➤ **AI-powered SaaS (software as a service) companies:** Startups offering AI-driven business solutions, such as automated workflows and cybersecurity enhancements.

➤ **Digital banking and payment platforms:** Companies leveraging AI to improve credit scoring, fraud prevention and personalised financial products.

➤ **Smart manufacturing and robotics:** AI-powered automation solutions that enhance operational efficiency in industrial sectors.

Countries like Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, which already have

thriving digital economies, stand to gain the most from DeepSeek's advancements, making them key targets for investment.

### Investment hotspots

Elon Musk, CEO of Tesla TSLA and SpaceX, is optimistic about the Southeast Asian market: “The AI revolution will be globally disruptive, and markets like Southeast Asia have a unique advantage with their rapid digital adoption and willingness to embrace new technologies.”

Sundar Pichai, CEO of Alphabet GOOG echoes: “Southeast Asia represents a key growth area for AI and cloud services. Our investment in AI research and development in Malaysia is a step towards ensuring that businesses in the region have access to the latest AI innovations to drive economic growth.”

Several public tech companies in Southeast Asia are poised to benefit from DeepSeek's advancements. Investors should monitor these firms for AI-driven growth potential:

➤ **Starbox (Nasdaq: STBX)** – A rising fintech and advertising company leveraging AI to optimise customer acquisition and digital marketing strategies.

➤ **Sea Limited (NYSE: SE)** – A leading digital entertainment, e-commerce and fintech company operating in Indonesia, Vietnam and beyond.

➤ **Grab Holdings (Nasdaq: GRAB)** – A major player in ride-hailing, food delivery and financial services, increasingly incorporating AI-driven optimisation.

➤ **GoTo Group (IDX: GOTO)** – Indonesia's tech giant, formed through the merger of

Gojek and Tokopedia, with investments in AI-powered logistics and fintech.

➤ **Bukalapak (IDX: BUKA)** – An e-commerce platform leveraging AI for personalised recommendations and supply chain efficiencies.

➤ **Razer Inc (HKEX: 1337)** – A gaming and fintech company that integrates AI in hardware, payments and cloud services.

These companies, along with promising startups, stand to gain from AI innovations.

### Key takeaways

DeepSeek's arrival marks a pivotal moment for Southeast Asia's AI landscape. By democratising access to advanced AI technologies, DeepSeek is unlocking new opportunities for SME, startups and tech companies.

For investors, this presents a golden opportunity to tap into Southeast Asia's growing tech ecosystem and capitalise on the transformative potential of AI.

As Southeast Asia continues to rise as a global tech hub, companies that embrace DeepSeek and leverage its capabilities will be at the forefront of innovation.

For those looking to invest in the future of technology, Southeast Asia's tech sector offers a compelling proposition – one that is poised for exponential growth in the years to come.

**Dr Neil Foo** has over 30 years' experience in international markets and has helped companies embrace AI digitalisation and smart industry 4.0 business integration.

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# What's driving Malaysia's market boom?

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Knight Frank Malaysia has released its latest report *Real Estate Highlights 2H'24*, offering a comprehensive analysis of Malaysia's property market. Complementing the forward-looking insights of the recently published Malaysia Commercial Real Estate Investment Sentiment Survey 2025, this report covers five key sectors (industrial, office, retail, hospitality and high-rise residential), and highlights a strong performance in 2024 across several of these sectors.

Significant developments in Klang Valley, Johor, Penang, and East Malaysia are driving the market forward, with strategic investments and evolving demands fuelling continued optimism. From sustainable industrial spaces to the recovery of the hospitality sector and increasing demand for green-certified offices, Malaysia's property market is well-positioned for sustained growth into 2025.

Knight Frank Malaysia executive director Judy Ong remarked, "Malaysia's property market continues to grow, underpinned by sustained demand for housing, shifts in global supply chains fuelling demand for industrial spaces, rising data centre investments and strong recovery in the hospitality segment. Coupled with rising demand for sustainable and green-certified developments, the industry is poised for a progressive and dynamic year ahead."

Below are some key market highlights across the different geographical locations:

## Industrial sector

JOHOR is positioning itself as a hub for sustainable and high-tech industries, leveraging ESG principles, renewable energy, and cutting-edge technologies to drive growth in logistics, clean technology, and advanced manufacturing.

- Infrastructure upgrades like port enhancements and advanced industrial parks, alongside significant foreign direct investments and a growing data centre ecosystem, are solidifying Johor's status as a regional trade and investment hub.
- With a strong focus on sustainability and high-tech ecosystems, Johor's industrial market is poised for sustained growth. Addressing resource challenges, such as water and energy consumption, through government and private sector collaboration will further enhance its appeal to investors.

The industrial market in PENANG is expected to thrive in 2025 due to strong foreign and domestic investments, along with new industrial parks contributing to its growth as a global technology hub, particularly with initiatives like Penang Silicon Design and Silicon Island.

- Infrastructure improvements such as the expansion of Penang International Airport and new public transport projects will enhance connectivity, attracting more businesses to the region.
- A focus on sustainability is shaping industrial developments, with green practices and renewable energy integration becoming increasingly important, as demand for industrial space continues to rise alongside the growth of manufacturing, logistics, and e-commerce fulfillment.

SABAHA's industrial growth is driven by its strategic location as a gateway to Southeast Asia and global markets, with proximity to key shipping routes and neighboring BIMP-EAGA regions.

- To sustain momentum, authorities need to prioritize improving infrastructure and identifying suitable areas for large-scale industrial developments.

SARAWAK's industrial sector is set for significant growth driven by strategic infrastructure development, a strong emphasis on renewable energy, and government support –

## ➤ Key developments in Klang Valley, Johor, Penang and East Malaysia fuelling growth: Knight Frank report



Malaysia's property market is poised for growth this year, supported by sustainable industrial spaces, a recovering hospitality sector, and demand for green offices. – PEXELS PIX

creating a solid foundation for sustainable growth.

- Enhanced transportation infrastructure including new roads, airports and seaports will improve connectivity and reduce costs, unlocking new areas for industrial development and boosting economic activity.

- The state's leadership in renewable energy, especially in hydropower and green hydrogen projects, positions Sarawak as a hub for sustainable industrial growth, fostering investments in energy-efficient technologies and practices.

## Office sector

The KLANG VALLEY office market is gradually recovering, with rents and occupancy rates improving, driven by resilient demand from local and international occupiers, especially global companies setting up shared service offices.

- With 0.8 million sq ft of new office space completed in 2024 and 1.5 million sq ft expected by 1H'25, larger floor plates in KL Fringe and Petaling Jaya are gaining traction due to strong amenities and connectivity. Developments like The Exchange TRX and Sunway Square Corporate Tower 2 are projected to draw significant interest.

- While investment activity remains cautious, prime office assets with strong tenancy profiles and strategic locations such as TRX and Sunway Square are positioned to attract long-term investors seeking stability and growth.

JOHOR BAHRU is gaining traction among tenants for Grade A office spaces due to lower rental rates and operational costs, coupled with attractive incentives from the JS-SEZ.

- The city's affordability compared to Singapore makes it appealing for companies looking to establish a presence in the region.

- As demand grows, older office buildings are likely to be refurbished or repurposed to meet the need for modern workspaces.

The PENANG office market is projected to stay stable in 2025, despite the addition of 480,000 sq ft from two new office towers.

- Older office buildings may see rental rates dip due to increased supply, but demand for modern, well-equipped spaces is expected to remain strong, reflecting current tenant needs.

- Overall, the market will likely favour newer developments that meet evolving preferences over older properties.

The KOTA KINABALU office market is stable, with rental and occupancy rates steady as no new supply is expected.

- Government efforts to attract multinational corporations are likely to keep demand strong for office spaces in prime areas.

- As prime office space approaches full occupancy, there may be new opportunities for developing high-quality offices in strategic locations.

SARAWAK's commercial property sector is thriving, fueled by infrastructure development and a focus on sustainability, with the PCDS 2030 aiming for major GDP growth through initiatives like carbon trading and renewable energy.

- From 2021 to 2023, the state attracted over RM21.5 billion in investments, creating over 11,000 jobs and advancing in sectors such as renewable energy, healthcare, and education.

- These developments are driving demand for commercial spaces and are aligned with Sarawak's goals of achieving RM282 billion in GDP and a median household income of RM15,000 by 2030.

## Retail sector

- The retail sector in KLANG VALLEY is seeing cautious optimism due to government initiatives like increased cash handouts and wage adjustments, which support household income and spending on essentials despite inflation pressures.

- A growing number of community-focused retail spaces like Bloomsdale Shopping Gallery and Elmina Lakeside Mall are emerging, reflecting strong tenant interest and a shift towards curated consumer experiences.

- Retailers need to adapt to changing consumer behaviors and government policies, focusing on

value-driven products and technological innovations to maintain growth and resilience in a competitive market.

JOHOR BAHRU's retail market is thriving, with higher occupancy rates and more shoppers in malls, indicating a positive trend in consumer engagement.

- Retailers are adapting to changing consumer needs by broadening their product ranges and adding entertainment and health facilities to shopping experiences.

- The arrival of new brands is boosting the retail landscape, driven by strong spending power from the Singapore dollar.

PENANG's retail market is expected to stay stable in 2025 driven by factors like rising retail spending, new brand entries, more flight routes, and increased tourism activity.

- The opening of Sunshine Mall in October 2024 and the upcoming Waterfront Shoppes Phase 1 will intensify competition, particularly on Penang Island.

- This heightened competition may lead to lower occupancy rates and rental prices in the retail sector.

Prime shopping malls in KOTA KINABALU are strategising to improve operations and boost their market presence by filling vacant spaces and refining tenant mix.

- By curating a tenant mix that resonates with consumer preferences, these malls aim to draw more visitors and enhance consumer spending.

- This approach is expected to lead to increased turnover rents, promoting the financial health of the retail assets.

## High-end high-rise residential sector

The KLANG VALLEY residential market is projected to experience stable growth in 2025, fueled by government support for homeownership and a steady overnight policy rate from Bank Negara Malaysia, creating a favorable environment for buyers.

- Key initiatives like the Housing Credit Guarantee Scheme and the Residensi Madani aim to enhance affordability, targeting middle-income and B40 groups with tax relief and the construction of affordable housing units.

- Despite challenges like inflation and geopolitical tensions, Malaysia's strategic location and ongoing infrastructure improvements position its property market for resilience and attract investment from both locals and foreigners.

The high-rise residential market in JOHOR BAHRU is thriving, with many upcoming project launches, especially near the new RTS Link station, which boosts demand and pricing.

- Despite land scarcity in the city centre, there's a surge of activity in surrounding areas particularly in Iskandar Puteri, where positive market sentiments are fueling new developments.

The high-rise residential market in PENANG is on a positive trend, driven by a strong economy, stable interest rates, and improvements in the job market and wages.

- Key infrastructure projects like the Penang LRT Mutiara Line and upgrades to the Penang International Airport are set to enhance connectivity and increase demand in the property sector.

The residential market in Greater KOTA KINABALU is likely to experience a slowdown in new launches as existing developments move through their phases.

- High-rise residential projects are expected to see steady growth in established and strategically located neighbourhoods, while demand for landed residential properties continues to rise.





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## Binastra awarded RM250m deal to build data centre for AIMS Group

**PETALING JAYA:** Binastra Corporation Bhd's wholly owned subsidiary, Binastra Builders Sdn Bhd, has accepted a letter of award valued at RM250.37 million from MYT DC3 Sdn Bhd to construct a data centre for AIMS Group.

The contract represents Binastra's first accomplishment for the financial year ending Jan 31, 2026 (FY26).

The new project involves the development of a six-storey data centre in Cyberjaya, Selangor, a hub for digital infrastructure. Construction is set to commence on Feb 26, with a phased completion timeline ranging from June 15 and Dec 15 this year.

Binastra managing director Datuk Jackson Tan Kak Seng said that as Cyberjaya rapidly transforms into Malaysia's digital infrastructure hub, the company is committed to supporting to the ecosystem.

"Our focus is on delivering high-quality, resilient, and future-ready data centres that serve a wide range of industries, from cloud computing to enterprise digital storage. Notably, our projects remain solid amidst the recent discussions on the impact of artificial intelligence chip availability on local data centres," he said in a statement.

AIMS Group is an ecosystem-centric, carrier-neutral data centre provider in Southeast Asia.



Following the strategic acquisition by DigitalBridge, a global leader in digital infrastructure investment in 2023, and strong support from TIME dotCom Bhd, AIMS Group has further solidified its position as a dominant player in the data centre industry.

Having built a growing presence in the digital infrastructure landscape, Binastra's portfolio now includes four blocks of data centres, including three in Bukit Jalil. The new data centre project brings the group's total secured data centre contract value to RM1.24 billion.

Binastra said the steady pipeline of projects reflects its capability to meet the evolving demands of the Klang Valley market, blending technical expertise with a commitment to energy-efficient, sustainable solutions.

## RM288 million palm product exports to Central Asia in 2024

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia exported 54,665 tonnes of palm oil and palm-based products worth RM288.23 million to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in Central Asia in 2024, said Plantation and Commodities Deputy Minister Datuk Chan Foong Hin.

He said the Plantation and Commodities Ministry, through the Malaysian Palm Oil Council (MPOC), remains committed to strengthening Malaysia's position

► We're committed to strengthening Malaysia's position as key supplier to region and to enhance market dominance in Pakistan: Deputy minister

as a key player in supplying palm oil to Central Asia while enhancing its market dominance in Pakistan.

"Central Asia is an important export destination for Malaysian palm oil. In recent years, MPOC,

as the agency responsible for promoting Malaysian palm oil, has implemented various initiatives in the region," he said during a question-and-answer session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday in response to Datuk

Mohd Isam Mohd Isa (BN-Tampin) about the ministry's efforts to position Malaysia as the leading player in palm oil supply in Central Asia and to regain dominance in palm oil distribution in Pakistan.

Chan said Pakistan is among the top 10 importers of Malaysian palm oil, with imports of 860,260 tonnes last year.

"The ministry focuses on the demand for edible oil and the strategic location of the country as a gateway to Central Asia," the deputy minister added.

Chan said the ministry held discussions with the Port Qasim Authority chairman about the advantages of using Pakistan's port infrastructure to facilitate the Malaysian palm oil distribution to Central Asia during Plantation and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Johari Abdul Ghani's visit in January.

Malaysia's exports are expected to remain between 18% and 25% of Pakistan's total palm oil imports, depending on price dynamics and current market conditions.

Meanwhile, in response to an additional question from Mohd Isam on the reinstatement of the Smallholder Replanting Financing Scheme to full grants, Chan said the ministry has presented the proposal to the Finance Ministry.

Responding to an additional question from Nurul Amin Hamid (PN-Padang Terap) on the ministry's efforts to explore palm oil innovation for energy production in Asia, particularly Japan, Chan said the ministry will participate in a global expo in Osaka, Japan, this year to explore the use of palm biomass waste for electricity generation.

"Japan is a market we should explore, especially for biomass waste to generate electricity. However, we do not strongly encourage raw material exports to Japan, we should focus on producing high-value materials before exporting, such as pelleting biomass," he added. — Bernama



Chan speaking during a question-and-answer session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

## CPO prices to remain stable this year: Analysts

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Crude palm oil (CPO) prices are expected to remain stable this year, ranging between RM4,000 and RM5,000 per metric tonne (MT), according to analysts.

MIDF Amanah Investment Bank Bhd's research arm, MIDF Research, said that for this month, stability will be driven by restocking activities ahead of Ramadan, alongside slower

palm oil output and lower closing stock levels.

"The CPO price for delivery ended the month at RM4,600 per MT, with an average price of RM4,673 per MT (-8.7% month-on-month, +23.5% year-on-year) due to concerns over escalating supply risks pre-Ramadan," MIDF Research said in a note yesterday.

Echoing MIDF, CIMB Securities Sdn Bhd expects CPO prices to remain firm, given the low palm oil stock levels in key producing and consuming countries.

"We maintain our average CPO price forecast of RM4,200 per MT for 2025 and project planters to report better earnings in the fourth quarter of 2024, supported by higher CPO

prices and increased production from Indonesia," it added.

CIMB also reiterated its "overweight" rating on the sector, with Sime Darby Plantation, IOI Corporation, and Hap Seng Plantations as its top picks.

Meanwhile, Hong Leong Investment Bank Bhd Research maintained its 2025 and 2026 CPO price assumptions of RM4,000 per MT

and RM3,800 per MT, respectively, as well as its 'neutral' stance on the sector.

"We maintain the view that CPO price will remain at an elevated level in the near term, (possibly until the end of the 1Q 2025, on the back of weak near-term output prospects), and CPO price strength to dissipate post-1Q 2025," it added. — Bernama

## Services sector revenue in 2024 hits record high of RM2.4 trillion

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's services sector revenue surged 6.3% to a new high of RM2.4 trillion in 2024 compared with RM2.3 trillion in the previous year, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM) said yesterday.

Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the steady performance was largely underpinned by the continued recovery of tourism-related industries, driven by 25 million international tourist arrivals and rising domestic travel activity.

The wholesale and retail trade, food and beverage (F&B), and accommodation segments remained key contributors, supported by sustained consumer demand and increased travel activity.

Meanwhile, the services sector registered 6.2% growth in revenue to RM627.9 billion in the fourth quarter of 2024 (Q4'24). Mohd Uzir said the growth was contributed by favourable performance in all segments of the sector, driven by the expansion of the wholesale and retail trade, F&B, and accommodation segment, which increased by RM24.3 billion or 5.4% to RM475.2 billion.

He added that the services sector's steady expansion was driven by higher consumer spending, increased dining-out activities, and improved hotel occupancy rates.

"This growth was further supported by a 17% year-on-year (y-o-y) rise in international tourist arrivals, adding 2.5 million tourists, along with a surge in domestic travel during the holiday season," he said in a statement.

The services sector's performance was also bolstered by the information and communication, and transport and storage segments, which grew by 6.5% y-o-y to reach RM87.2 billion in Q4'24.

Meanwhile, the professional, real estate, and administrative and support services segment registered a robust growth of 10.8% y-o-y in the quarter reviewed, primarily fuelled by heightened business activities across key activities such as accounting, legal, architecture, and veterinary services.

Mohd Uzir reported that e-commerce income in Q4'24 stood at RM310.2 billion, marking a 3.7% y-o-y increase, primarily driven by a 7.7% rise in the services sector. — Bernama

# TOA Paint ramping up capacity to meet demand

► Company to keep prices stable throughout 2025 despite costlier raw materials

■ BY AIMIE SHAZRIE  
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**PUTRAJAYA:** TOA Paint Products Sdn Bhd, a regional player in the paint and coating industry, is ramping up its production capacity, with its Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, plant expected to produce up to 2 million gallons annually.

Country manager Thomas Lai said the expansion comes as the company seeks to meet increasing market demand while maintaining cost efficiency.

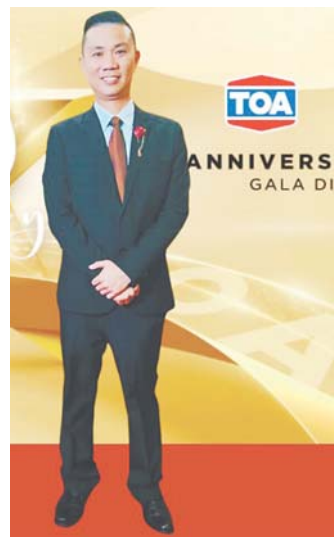
Despite rising raw material prices, he said, TOA Paint has committed to keeping prices stable throughout 2025, focusing on internal cost optimisations rather than passing the burden onto consumers.

"Our group treasury actively manages forex risks daily, ensuring that despite currency fluctuations in Southeast Asia, our overall product gross profit margin remains strong," he told *SunBiz* following the launch of TOA Paint's new product line recently.

Lai disclosed that TOA Paint is diversifying its product portfolio. "The company confirmed plans to introduce new products every year, potentially expanding into categories beyond paints and coatings, such as adhesives and industrial chemicals."

TOA Paint has established itself as the market leader in Thailand and is now looking to expand its dominance across Southeast Asia, he said.

"With a strong presence in key regional markets, the company is strategically investing in innovation, sustainability and advanced manufacturing capabilities to strengthen its competitive edge. As demand for high-performance and eco-friendly coatings rises,



Lai says TOA Paint plans to introduce new products every year, potentially expanding beyond paints and coatings, into adhesives and industrial chemicals.

TOA is well positioned to capture new growth opportunities," he added.

Lai highlighted that sustainability remains a core focus for TOA Paint, which is making efforts to incorporate eco-friendly raw materials, reduce volatile organic compound emissions and improve energy efficiency across its operations.

"These initiatives align with global trends favouring greener construction materials and sustainable industrial practices."

"The company is also actively engaged in corporate social responsibility programmes, supporting local communities through skill development initiatives and education on environmentally responsible painting

solutions," he said.

Additionally, TOA Paint is expanding its offerings in marine coatings, a crucial segment in the shipping and offshore industries.

Lai said the company's newly developed marine paint products are designed to reduce maintenance costs, enhance fuel efficiency and minimise environmental impact by lowering carbon emissions. "As stricter regulations drive demand for sustainable maritime solutions, TOA Paint's innovations in this sector position it as a key player in the future of eco-conscious coatings."

TOA Paint also focuses on educating consumers about proper marine paint applications, ensuring that users maximise the lifespan and effectiveness of their coatings, Lai disclosed.

"While our marine paint products are designed for a wide range of vessels, including fishing boats, yachts, and catamarans, many customers lack awareness of essential anti-fouling techniques. By providing guidance on correct application methods, TOA aims to enhance product performance, reduce maintenance costs, and support sustainable marine practices."

Lai said TOA Paint's localised research and development (R&D) teams provide a competitive edge over global brands, allowing the company to develop products that cater to regional climate conditions, customer preferences, and regulatory requirements. "By having R&D teams based in key markets across Southeast Asia, TOA can quickly adapt formulations to suit varying levels of humidity, temperature, and environmental factors that affect paint performance."

In addition, the company's deep understanding of local market dynamics allows it to outmanoeuvre global competitors, according to Lai.

He said competitors often rely on standardised formulations that may not be as effective in Southeast Asia's diverse conditions.

"By continuing to invest in localised innovation, TOA strengthens its position as a dominant regional player while reinforcing its commitment to sustainability and performance-driven solutions," Lai added.

## TNG Digital collaborates with UNHCR to enhance financial inclusion for refugees

**KUALA LUMPUR:** TNG Digital Sdn Bhd has disbursed more than RM1 billion into payroll accounts as part of its broader initiative to enhance financial inclusion for refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia.

TNGD CEO Alan Ni highlighted the company's role in facilitating secure salary disbursements through its digital ecosystem.

"Since the issue of financial access for refugees began, we have disbursed over RM1 billion into payroll accounts. This reflects our dedication to ensuring individuals, regardless of their status, can securely receive and manage their income," he said at the launch of a partnership between TNG Digital and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) yesterday.

The move, in collaboration with UNHCR, underscores TNG Digital's commitment to integrating vulnerable communities into the formal financial system, ensuring

greater economic participation and security.

The initiative stems from a memorandum of understanding signed on World Refugee Day 2024 last June. It enables UNHCR-registered refugees in Malaysia to access a range of essential financial services via TNG eWallet.

The services include payroll deposits into registered eWallet accounts, secure payments and fund transfers, visa card transactions for online or offline payments, ATM withdrawals, GoRewards points and cashback incentives.

The effort aims to address longstanding financial barriers faced by refugees, who often struggle to access banking services due to their legal status.

Ni said TNG Digital's partnership with regulators, including Bank Negara Malaysia, has refined the eKYC (electronic Know-Your-Customer) verification process to ensure secure identity validation through



From left: Visa Asia-Pacific head of global acquirers senior vice-president Previn Pillay, Ni, Aubin and PayNet chief marketing officer Gary Yeoh at the launch.

UNHCR records.

He said refugees and asylum seekers often operate in the informal

economy, leaving them vulnerable to unstable income streams and financial insecurity. "By integrating

them into a regulated payroll system, TNG Digital's initiative enhances their financial stability and economic independence."

Beyond payroll integration, Ni said, TNG Digital is exploring future financial solutions for refugees, including microfinancing, savings programmes and insurance access, to enhance their self-reliance further. "Malaysia continues to evolve as a regional fintech hub, and this initiative signals a major step towards financial inclusivity, ensuring that no one is left behind in the country's digital economy."

UNHCR representative in Malaysia Louise Aubin stressed that such partnerships are crucial in protecting and empowering displaced communities.

"This collaboration enables refugees to securely receive wages, manage savings and participate in the local economy, basic financial rights that many of us take for granted," she added. — by AIMIE SHAZRIE



# Tripartite collaboration to boost MSME agri-financing

► CGC Digital, Funding Societies and FarmByte to provide farmers with wider access to capital for growth and expansion

**KUALA LUMPUR:** CGC Digital, Funding Societies and FarmByte signed a MoU to narrow the financing gap for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) in the agriculture segment.

This strategic collaboration seeks to enhance access to financing and support the growth of agricultural businesses, thereby contributing to Malaysia's food security agenda and economic resilience.

Further, this collaboration aims to have a positive impact on local farmers.

By providing innovative financing options, local farmers will have better access to the capital needed for sustainable operations and business expansion.

CGC Digital CEO Yushida Husin said the company is committed to supporting initiatives that address Malaysia's critical food security issue.

"By collaborating with Funding Societies and FarmByte, we aim to close the funding gap and enable local farmers to have the financial access they need to thrive."

"This collaboration is a significant step towards building a resilient and sustainable agricultural sector that can meet the growing demands of our nation," she said.

Funding Societies group chief operating officer Wong Kah Meng said this partnership with CGC Digital reflects the company's shared commitment to empowering underserved businesses across Malaysia.

"We strive to build a more inclusive financing ecosystem that fuels the growth of micro and small enterprises."

"This collaboration not only strengthens the agricultural value chain but contributes to food security and economic resilience in Malaysia," he said.

Through this MoU, CGC Digital, Funding Societies, and FarmByte will leverage their combined expertise to implement innovative financing solutions that address the unique needs of MSMEs in the agriculture sector.

As a leading credit guarantee provider, CGC Digital will help reduce risks and improve access to financing.

It will enhance its default prediction model by using farm-level data as an alternative risk measure for agribusinesses.

This will make lending safer through data-driven credit evaluations.

Funding Societies will offer quick and flexible financing using alternative credit assessments to support farmers and agribusinesses without traditional collateral.

FarmByte will provide farm-level data and insights to improve credit scoring, increase the

accuracy of risk evaluation, and expand financial access.

FarmByte CEO Syed Aiman Kifli Syed Jaafar said the partnership with CGC Digital and Funding Societies aligns with the company's vision to revolutionise farming by providing farmers with both financial and technological resources.

"Our goal is to empower MSMEs in the agriculture sector with greater access to financing, enabling them to scale their businesses and enhance productivity."

"Through this collaboration, we are bridging the financial gap and equipping ecopreneurs with the resources and support needed to drive a more resilient and sustainable agro-food ecosystem," he said.



From left: Yushida Husin, Wong, and Syed Aiman Kifli after the MoU signing ceremony.

## December jobless rate dips to 3.1%, lowest in decade

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The domestic unemployment rate declined to 3.1% in December from 3.2% in November, bringing the 2024 average to 3.3%, down from 3.4% in 2023, in line with Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd's forecasts.

The research firm said although the month-on-month decline in unemployment slowed to 0.4% from -0.9% in November, marking a 41-month downtrend, it was the slowest pace in five months.

The number of unemployed individuals fell to 544.3k from 546.7k in November, approaching the pre-pandemic level of 525.2k in February 2020.

The number of actively unemployed dropped to 432.8k from 436.2k in November, the lowest since March 2020, when it stood at 422.9k.

Kenanga noted that the employment growth remained steady at 0.2% month-on-month in December, unchanged from November, marking the seventh consecutive month of expansion, driven by continued hiring in the services sector.

According to the Department of Statistics (DoSM), employment in services continued to rise, particularly in wholesale and retail trade, arts, entertainment and recreation, and accommodation and food & beverage services.

Employment also grew in manufacturing, construction, and agriculture, while mining and quarrying saw a decline.

By employment status, employees and own-account workers maintained their growth at 0.1% and 0.4%, respectively, while employers edged up to 0.3% from 0.2% in November.

Meanwhile, the number of unpaid family workers rebounded to -0.1% from -0.2% in November, following two months of decline.

"We expect the labour market to remain steady in 2025, backed mainly by a steady domestic demand following the impact of increased minimum wages and government salary hikes, boosting private consumption growth."

"Additionally, robust recovery in the tourism-related sector, the realisation of approved investments and record-high federal government spending is set to drive employment growth," Kenanga said in a note.

The research firm also noted that the 2024 GDP growth forecast remains at 5%, and it expects Q4'24 growth to moderate to 4.6%.

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# Vietnam to raise 2025 GDP growth target to 8%

► Minister says country faces mixture of opportunities and challenges

**HANOI:** Vietnam will officially revise up its gross domestic product growth target for 2025 to at least 8% from 6.5%-7%, driven by stronger industrial manufacturing, Minister of Planning and Investment Nguyen Chi Dung said yesterday.

The new target comes as Vietnam, an export-reliant economy, is confronting the risks from intensifying global trade disputes, including new duties on its steel exports to the United States.

Imports and exports are both expected to grow 12% this year, Dung said in Parliament, adding that the trade surplus is estimated at US\$30 billion (RM134 billion).

Dung said Vietnam would face a mixture of opportunities and challenges this year, "but the challenges are more prominent, threatening to leave significant impacts on the economy".

ANZ Research said in a note on Wednesday the mix of US tariffs, weak demand in China and a strong American economy was changing the export environment for Asian economies.

Vietnam's trade surplus with the United States hit a record high of more than US\$123 billion last year, US data showed.

"Vietnam stands out as the most exposed to higher across-the-board American tariffs and being a priority target if the United States focuses on economies among the top

contributors of the US trade deficit," ANZ Research said.

Vietnam grew 7.09% last year, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia.

Dung said industrial manufacturing and foreign investment would lead this year's economic growth, noting that the industrial production and construction sector is expected to grow 9.5%.

Foreign investment inflows are expected to be US\$28 billion, while domestic retail sales are expected to rise 12%, he said.

"We will also prioritise keeping inflation under control and ensuring macro stability." He said inflation is expected to be 4.5%-5% this year.

The revised GDP growth target is subject to approval from the Parliament, which began a week-long meeting yesterday. – Reuters

## Gillette India's profit rises on strong grooming product demand

**MUMBAI:** Gillette India posted a higher second-quarter profit, driven by strong demand for its grooming products.

Gillette India, known for its razors and shaving creams, posted a profit of 1.26 billion rupees (RM64 million) for the quarter ended Dec 31, compared with 1.04 billion rupees a year earlier.

The company continues to see strong demand for its new products and designs, including its multi-blade systems and gel shaving creams, while sustained demand for its higher-priced products has further boosted its revenue.

Rural consumer demand in India has gathered pace over the last few quarters, while urban demand has slowed down.

Revenue from the core grooming segment, which produces razors and accounts for about 80% to Gillette India's total revenue, increased 11% to 5.71 billion rupees during the reported quarter.

Sales from its smaller segment, oral care, dropped more than 8%.

The company has also been ramping up its advertising spend in an effort to compete with private labels offering cheaper alternatives.

Its advertising and promotion expenses rose nearly 30%, widening its total quarterly expenses by 4%.

Shares of Gillette India were down 3.27% yesterday amid a broadly weaker market. – Reuters

## Foxconn says its aim is cooperation with Nissan, not acquisition

**TAIPEI:** The chairman of Taiwan's Foxconn said yesterday that the company's aim is cooperation with Nissan, not acquisition, as the Japanese automaker's future hangs in the balance after stepping back from merger talks with Honda.

Struggling Nissan is again at crossroads after sources said last week that negotiations with bigger rival Honda to create the world's No. 4 automaker had been complicated by growing differences.

The deal would have been the latest chance in a car industry facing a huge threat from China's BYD and other electric vehicle entrants.

Nissan is open to working with new partners such as Taiwan's Foxconn, the world's largest

contract electronics maker and Apple's main iPhone maker, sources said last week.

Speaking to reporters at Foxconn's corporate headquarters in New Taipei, outside the capital Taipei, its chairman Young Liu said his company was not looking to acquire Nissan, but it would consider taking a stake if that was needed for cooperation.

"Purchasing its shares is not our aim; our aim is cooperation," he added, in Foxconn's first public comments about its talks with Nissan.

Foxconn is also talking about cooperation with France's Renault given that company's stake in Nissan, Liu said. Renault owns 36% of Nissan, including 18.7% in a French trust.

Nissan and Renault declined to comment on Liu's remarks.

Nissan shares ended down around 6%, while Foxconn shares closed 1.1% lower.

Nissan and Honda are both due to release their quarterly financial results today.

While Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer, is best known for its role as an Apple supplier, it also has ambitions in the electric vehicle sector as it seeks to diversify its business.

Liu said Foxconn would not get into being an auto "brand" and would only provide commissioned design and manufacturing services. – Reuters

## SoftBank books surprise loss of ¥369 billion in Q3

**TOKYO:** Japanese technology investor SoftBank Group booked a surprising net loss of ¥369.2 billion (RM10.7 billion) in the October-December quarter as valuations at its Vision Fund investment arm fell.

In particular, SoftBank was hit by unrealised valuation losses for Chinese ride-hailing company Didi Global, South Korean e-commerce platform Coupang and AutoStore Holdings.

The result will further raise questions about how SoftBank will fund one of its most ambitious undertakings – a hefty investment in OpenAI.

Cash and cash equivalents dropped to ¥4.7 trillion (RM137 billion) as of end-December from ¥6.2 trillion in March which was the end of the previous financial year.

Sources said in January that SoftBank was in talks to invest up to US\$25 billion (RM112 billion) in the ChatGPT creator.

Recent media reports have said that figure has grown to US\$40 billion though some of that amount would later be

syndicated out to other investors.

SoftBank has also committed to investing US\$15 billion in Stargate – a venture with OpenAI and Oracle that will build AI data centre capacity in the United States and which has been backed by US President Donald Trump.

The announcements mark a return to the aggressive SoftBank of old which rocked the technology investment world by taking big bets on startups through its Vision Funds.

The third-quarter result compares to an LSEG consensus estimate of a net profit of ¥234 billion drawn from four analysts and a profit of ¥950 billion in the same period a year earlier.

The Vision Fund unit posted an investment loss of ¥352.7 billion, breaking a run of two consecutive quarters in the black.

Vision Fund 1 has had a gross gain of US\$21.6 billion since its inception in 2017 while Vision Fund 2, which covers a broad suite of earlier-stage startups, has logged a US\$22.2 billion loss since 2019. – Reuters



A man walking past a sign of SoftBank and Y!Mobile outside a telecommunications shop in Tokyo. – AFPIC



# US economy 'in pretty good place': Powell

➤ Fed chairman in no rush to tweak interest rate policy

**WASHINGTON:** US Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell, in his first appearance before Congress since the inauguration, vouched for the strength of the economy President Donald Trump inherited even as he deferred on questions about tariffs, Elon Musk's role in government, bank account safety, and other issues reflecting the unsettled nature of the administration's first weeks.

Powell's twice-a-year trips to Capitol Hill often go far beyond the ostensible purpose of discussing the state of the economy and monetary policy – issues where the Fed chair had much to say, almost all of it good given a 4% unemployment rate, inflation nearing the Fed's 2% target, and ongoing growth.

"We are in a pretty good place with this economy," Powell said, noting that the Fed was in no hurry to make any further interest rate

cuts, but stood ready to do so if inflation declines further or the job market weakens.

But in over two hours before the Senate Banking Committee, under its new chairman South Carolina Republican Tim Scott, the Fed's core mission of maintaining stable prices and maximum employment seemed secondary.

Senators questioned him about the fate of a separate agency, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, that Trump wants to limit or eliminate; they asked whether Musk's team had tried to access the Fed's systems and whether bank accounts were still safe given Musk's involvement at the US Treasury; they grilled him on possible steps to ease bank regulation.

Most notably they quizzed him on whether Trump's imposition of new import taxes on different countries and commodities might lead to higher inflation, an issue the Fed is

concerned about and monitoring but which policymakers do not want to be seen as judging.

"The standard case for free trade ... logically still makes sense," Powell said at the hearing.

"(But) it's not the Fed's job to make or comment on tariff policy. Ours is to try to react to it in a thoughtful, sensible way."

"It is tariffs, immigration, fiscal and regulatory policy. Those will all go into a mix and we will try to make sense of it."

It may take time.

Since Trump took office, he has imposed and then delayed extensive import taxes against major trading partners Mexico and Canada, leaving Fed policymakers still with little tangible to analyse or model.

Higher inflation "is a possible outcome which will depend very much on specific facts" of what goods are taxed and by how much, Powell said.

"In some cases it does not reach the consumer much, in some cases it does."

Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at

Nationwide, said because of the shifting landscape around so much of the economy, she now expects the Fed to cut rates just once this year, and not until the second half.

"Fed officials want to assess the evolution of inflation and the labour market, especially considering large uncertainties surrounding prospective macroeconomic policy changes from the Trump administration regarding tariffs, immigration, regulations and fiscal policy."

In his prepared remarks to the committee, Powell said "the economy is strong overall and has made significant progress toward our goals over the past two years," with a 4% jobless rate considered around the level of full employment, and inflation lower though still above target.

"We do not need to be in a hurry to adjust our policy stance. We know that reducing policy restraint too fast or too much could hinder progress on inflation," he said, reiterating language used after the Fed's January meeting that further cuts would hinge on inflation declining or a clear weakening of the job market. – Reuters



French President Emmanuel Macron (right) speaking with Altman at the startup campus Station F during an event on the sidelines of the Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris. – AFP/IC

## OpenAI CEO dismisses Musk's offer as tactic to disrupt

**PARIS:** The nonprofit that controls ChatGPT maker OpenAI is not for sale, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman told Reuters on Tuesday when asked about Elon Musk's offer to buy it.

"I have nothing to say. I mean, it's ridiculous," Altman said on the sidelines of an AI summit in Paris.

A consortium led by Musk said on Monday it had offered US\$97.4 billion (RM435 billion) to buy the nonprofit that controls OpenAI, another salvo in the billionaire's fight to block the artificial intelligence startup from transitioning to a for-profit firm.

As of Tuesday afternoon, the two sides could not agree on the status of the bid or even if it was ever received.

Musk's lawyer, Marc Toberoff, told Reuters that he sent the offer by e-mail on Monday to OpenAI's outside counsel at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz.

A source close to OpenAI's board said the

board had not received any formal bid from the Musk side yet.

"The company is not for sale. It's another one of his tactics to try to mess with us," Altman said, referring to Musk.

In an internal message to OpenAI employees on Monday, Altman said the board, though it had not officially reviewed the offer, planned to reject it based on the interest of OpenAI's mission.

Musk cofounded OpenAI with Altman in 2015 as a nonprofit, but left before the company took off due to a discrepancy in the company's direction and funding sources with Sam Altman and other co-founders. In 2023, he launched the competing AI startup, xAI.

OpenAI, in the process of raising US\$40 billion, is also seeking to transition into a for-profit from a nonprofit entity, which it says is required to secure the capital needed for developing the best AI models.

The complicated transition involves putting a price tag on OpenAI's non-profit control of the for-profit arm.

Delaware attorney-general Kathy Jennings has said she is reviewing OpenAI's proposed changes to ensure the company is "adhering to its specific charitable purposes for the benefit of the public beneficiaries, as opposed to the commercial or private interests of OpenAI's directors or partners."

Legal experts said Musk's bid complicates the fair value OpenAI has to decide for charitable assets in the conversion in exchange for giving up control.

"It does help set a price point for the thinking about the valuation of the nonprofit assets," said Robert Weissman, co-president at consumer rights watchdog Public Citizen.

"If it were to occur as proposed, the regulators have a duty to ensure that if there's a sell-off of assets to a for-profit entity, that fair market value is obtained." – Reuters

## Ford CEO says Trump policy uncertainty creating chaos

**NEW YORK:** The Donald Trump administration's tariff threats and animosity towards electronic vehicles are producing a "lot of cost and a lot of chaos" for Ford, CEO Jim Farley said on Tuesday.

While Trump has spoken about the priority of strengthening manufacturing in the United States, the administration thus far has been the source of tremendous "policy uncertainty" with constantly evolving tariff plans and a lack of clarity whether tax credits favouring EVs will be rolled back, he said.

Appearing at a conference, Farley described Trump's initial plan to enact 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada as a disaster for US companies that operate across the region, while providing an unfair advantage to European and Asian automakers that also import to the United States.

Trump last week suspended the tariffs for 30 days following concessions from Mexico and Canada.

But they have not been removed as a possibility by the White House, which yesterday announced plans to enact 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum.

Farley said Ford buys most of those two metals from US firms, but that the company's suppliers have international sources.

"So that price will come through, and there may be a speculative part of the market where prices come up because tariffs are even rumoured.

"So far what we're seeing is a lot of cost and a lot of chaos," he said. – AFP

## Australia will not curb 'green' aluminium exports to US: Minister

**SYDNEY:** Australia's Industry Minister Ed Husic said yesterday the nation's plan to boost "green" aluminium exports would not be derailed by the threat of US tariffs and American customers would only end up paying more for a product in global demand.

After US President Donald Trump said he would consider an exemption for Australia from a flat 25% tariff on steel and aluminium imports, his adviser Peter Navarro told CNN in an interview "Australia is just killing our aluminum market."

The executive order imposing tariffs said the volume of aluminium from Australia had surged after it was granted a tariff exemption by Trump in 2018, and was 103% higher in 2024 than the average volume for 2015 to 2017.

Husic said yesterday that Australia would argue vigorously for a new exemption for its aluminiums, and would not cut back aluminium exports to the United States, where there is high demand on the West Coast. – Reuters



# 70% of Germans worry about rising cost of living

## ➤ 'Out of touch' politicians 'overwhelmed' by task of reviving economy: Survey

**BERLIN:** Most Germans are worried about the economy and high prices as Europe's biggest economy, once the region's economic engine, now contracts, a survey showed ahead of a Feb 23 election.

The online survey by German reinsurer R&V of 1,000 Germans from Jan 23 to 25 showed that 70% worry about the rising cost of living, up from 57% in the previous survey in summer.

"Inflation may have dropped, but the absolute prices have remained high," said Isabelle Borucki from Philipps University of Marburg, an adviser in the study.

Of the respondents, 68% fear an economic downturn, up from 48% in the previous survey. Increasing competition from abroad, high energy costs, elevated interest rates and uncertain economic prospects have taken their toll on the Germany economy, which contracted in 2024 for two years in a row and has become one of the top concerns among voters.

The election was called after Chancellor Olaf Scholz's three-way coalition with the Greens and the Free Democrats collapsed in November.

He now leads a minority government with just his Social Democrats and the Greens.

Disagreements over how to save Europe's largest economy contributed to the coalition's demise, with the dire situation reflected in the country's storied auto industry, with Volkswagen and others cutting jobs as they look to remain afloat.

More than six out of 10 people in Germany

consider politicians in both the government and the opposition to be overwhelmed by their tasks.

"Germans' trust in politicians is frighteningly low," said study director Grischa Brower-Rabinowitsch.

"Many people no longer feel represented, political debates often seem out of touch with reality and driven by party political calculation."

Three out of four Germans are worried about the polarisation of society, up from 48% in the summer.

The sharp increase is attributed to a series of high-profile killings in public spaces by people with an immigrant background and how the parties reacted to them, the director of the study said.

Migration is interpreted as the central political problem, Brower-Rabinowitsch said.

"This builds up enemy images that can lead to further division." – Reuters



Scholz (right) and other Social Democrat leaders attending a photoshoot in Berlin. – REUTERS/SPIC

## Heineken beats profit forecasts, launches share buyback

**THE HAGUE:** Heineken yesterday reported forecast-beating profit, launched a share buyback and predicted more growth ahead, even amid the threat of disruption from a global trade war.

The world's No. 2 brewer saw an 8.3% increase in annual organic operating profit, surpassing analysts' forecast of 5.3% and exceeding its own expectations of up to 8%.

The company announced a €1.5 billion (RM6.9 billion) share buyback programme spanning two years, and forecast further growth in operating profit of between 4% and 8% in 2025.

"We are quite pleased with a solid set of results," chief executive Dolf van den Brink told journalists, adding that Heineken had grown

sales volumes in all regions as a result of new investments and its portfolio of more expensive beers.

The performance will further reassure investors who have criticised Heineken for both over- and under-promising with its outlook in recent years, and for volatility in its results.

Its 2025 profit guidance was in line with analyst expectations for 5.8% growth.

Fourth quarter revenues and volumes, meanwhile, grew ahead of analyst forecasts.

"This is an excellent set of results from Heineken," analysts at RBC Capital Markets said in a note.

Van den Brink also told journalists that the company had taken into account risks stemming from US tariffs on countries like

Mexico, where Heineken brews some beer for the American market, when assessing the outlook.

US President Donald Trump has threatened 25% tariffs on Mexico and Canada, levies on goods from Europe and imposed 25% duties on all imported steel and aluminium.

Such moves could affect brewers by driving up the price of cans or affecting sales of imported beer.

The US accounts for less than 5% of Heineken's global revenues and the company therefore did not expect any major impact, van den Brink and chief financial officer Harold van den Broek said.

They added that the company was prepared for multiple scenarios. – Reuters

## Ryanair depicts Spanish minister as clown in ad campaign

**MADRID:** A row between Ryanair and Spain's leftist government flared up on Tuesday with the budget airline launching a new ad campaign depicting Consumer Rights Minister Pablo Bustinduy as a clown.

Bustinduy's ministry in November slapped five low-cost airlines – including Ryanair – with a combined fine of €179 million (RM827 million) for "abusive practices" such as charging passengers for hand luggage or printing boarding passes at terminals when they did not have them.

Irish no-frills carrier Ryanair's share of the fine was the largest at €107.8 million.

"Ryanair demands that the minister cancels his illegal fines," the company wrote in a press release accompanied by a photo of Ryanair's outspoken CEO Michael O'Leary posing next to a life-size photo of Bustinduy sporting a red nose and a multicoloured wig.

The same image of the minister appears on Ryanair's social networks as part of a promotional campaign encouraging customers to "book at a crazy price (before a clown raises prices)".

Ryanair said in a post on X that the "illegal" fines are contrary to both European Union law and previous rulings from the European Court of Justice, warning they will lead to increases in fares in Spain.

O'Leary has lashed out at Bustinduy before, referring to him as "a crazy communist minister" who fined airlines that "have no choice but to restrict carry-on bags" at a news conference in Brussels last month.

Bustinduy, who has a PhD in philosophy from the New School for Social Research in New York which is known for promoting strong state involvement in the economy, told reporters his ministry had applied the law "rigorously" based on a 2014 ruling from the European Court of Justice.

"My obligation is to defend the rights of Spanish consumers. That is what I have done and that is what I will continue to do," he said, adding "no pressure campaign or insult" would make him back down. – AFP

## Schindler sees slight revenue, margin improvement in 2025

**BERN:** Swiss lift and escalator maker Schindler yesterday forecast low single-digit revenue growth and improved margins for 2025, as the services market grows while new construction activity remains subdued.

Schindler's margins began to show a recovery in 2024, driven by improved pricing and restructuring measures, including a digitalisation programme.

The company said it expected its earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) margin to be around 12% this year.

The adjusted EBIT margin rose to 12.5% in the fourth quarter of 2024, up from 11.4% in the same period a year earlier.

Schindler said that while new installations fell globally, and notably in China, the country's service market expanded and made up more than 10% of the company's modernisation revenues in 2024.

Schindler is less exposed to China's property crisis than its competitors like Finland's Kone, with around 13% revenue exposure to the country.

Its fourth quarter sales fell 3.5% to 2.86 billion Swiss francs (RM14 billion), below analysts' average forecast of 2.95 billion francs in a poll compiled by Vara Research.

Fourth quarter orders were stable at 2.85 billion francs, but slightly missed consensus expectations of 2.88 billion francs.

Schindler said it would propose a dividend of 6 francs per registered share and per participation certificate, up from 5 francs last year. – Reuters



# MARKET ROUND-UP: FEBRUARY 12

## Bursa Trade Statistic

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

12 Feb 2025

### Participation

Retail (17.99%)	Institution (41.64%)	Foreign (40.37%)
Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)
<b>+28.28</b>	<b>-42.58</b>	<b>+14.31</b>
Bought (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)
493.29	1087.49	1082.11
Sold (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
465.01	1130.08	1067.80

Preliminary status (Excluding Trade Amendments) | Final data, refer to Bursa website

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**Sources:** Bursa Malaysia, Bernama, shareinvestor.com and websites

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## Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	12,192.10 +68.11
FBMKLCI	1,603.05 +13.10
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	530.17 +3.35
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	164.27 -1.84
CONSTRUCTION	284.90 +0.70
FINANCIAL SERVICES	19,434.40 +175.20
ENERGY	818.27 -7.10
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	531.07 +2.06
HEALTH CARE	2,238.92 +9.50
TRANSPORTATION	1,062.88 -5.97
PROPERTY	1,075.91 +1.67
PLANTATION	7,516.54 +115.80
FBMSHA	11,978.00 +43.94
FBMACE	5,217.31 -13.40
TECHNOLOGY	59.10 -0.44

**TURNOVER: 3.150 bil** **VALUE: RM2.662 bil**

## FBM KLCI breaches 1,600 level, ends at one-month high

**BURSA** Malaysia bounced back yesterday to end at a one-month high after the previous session's sell-off, boosted by gains in heavyweights, amid the upbeat showing in regional peers despite Wall Street's mixed performance overnight.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI closed at its intraday high of 1,603.05, an increase of 13.10 points or 0.8%, anchored by bargain hunting in banking, telecommunications, plantation, and utility stocks.

The FBM KLCI opened 2.37 points higher at 1,592.32 compared with Monday's close of 1,589.95.

The broader market, however, remained negative with decliners outpacing gainers 534 to 492, while 480 counters were unchanged, 812 untraded and 10 suspended.

Turnover improved to 3.15 billion units worth RM2.66 billion from 3 billion units worth RM1.85 billion on Monday.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors Sdn Bhd head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan said yesterday's rally in the FBM KLCI was reinforced by US Federal Reserve (Fed) Chair Jerome Powell's testimony, in which he signalled that the Fed is in no rush to ease interest rates further.

"Given this development, we anticipate that most central banks across Asia, including Bank Negara Malaysia, will maintain their current interest rate policies in the near term," he said.

Among heavyweights, Maybank added 14 sen to RM10.60, CelcomDigi was 13 sen firmer at RM3.93, SD Guthrie bagged 18 sen to RM4.98, Public Bank rose five sen to RM4.50, and Petronas Gas climbed 44 sen to RM17.76.

Among the active counters, TWL fell half-a-sen to 2 sen, MyEG improved three sen to RM1.04, RGB International put on 3.5 sen to 43.5 sen, while Harvest Miracle, Ingenieur Gudang, and CIMB were flat at 16 sen, 5.5 sen, and RM8.40 respectively. - Bernama

## Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [RM]	+/- [%]	VOLUME ('00)
TWL	0.020	-0.005	-20.00	4,304,297
HSI-PWB9	0.110	-0.030	-21.43	1,170,874
HSI-PWDK	0.075	-0.025	-25.00	1,023,712
HSI-CWCC	0.215	0.025	13.16	1,016,101
MYEG	1.040	0.030	2.97	783,123
HSI-PWDC	0.065	-0.020	-23.53	558,170
HM	0.160	-	-	539,995
INGENIEU	0.055	-	-	381,113
RGB	0.435	0.035	8.75	335,951
CIMB	8.400	-	-	328,966
HSI-CWCA	0.140	0.025	21.74	304,743
PBBANK	4.500	0.050	1.12	294,240
ASIAPLY	0.145	-	-	282,009
WIDAD	0.040	-	-	266,990
GENETEC	1.420	-0.180	-11.25	248,507
CAPITALA	0.840	-0.005	-0.59	233,007
GAMUDA	4.490	0.010	0.22	230,322
YTL	2.060	0.040	1.98	225,930
INARI	2.620	0.010	0.38	221,389
CBHB	0.320	-0.005	-1.54	216,763



## Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [RM]	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	91.960	1.160	343
F&N	26.500	0.500	832
XIAOMI-C32	1.300	0.485	116
PETDAG	19.980	0.480	2,152
PETGAS	17.760	0.440	2,324
ALLIANZ-PA	19.820	0.420	15
UTDPTL	31.600	0.360	7,284
DLADY	31.020	0.300	396
HEIM	24.800	0.300	2,533
AJI	15.460	0.260	797
HLBANK	20.640	0.240	4,169
HLIND	13.820	0.240	1,555
BKAWAN	20.200	0.200	45
SDG	4.980	0.180	19,300
SUNCON	4.160	0.180	56,960
KLK	20.380	0.160	2,071
PPB	11.800	0.160	2,618
HSI-CWCS	0.390	0.155	26,450
GESHEN	5.100	0.150	425
AMBANK	5.940	0.140	58,935

## Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [%]	VOLUME ('00)
FBMKLCI-CQ0	0.010	100.00	9,114
HSI-PWB0	0.010	100.00	2
NIHSIN-PA	0.020	100.00	1,495
PBBANK-C1E	0.010	100.00	53,043
SPBNRG-WA	0.010	100.00	2,686
SOP-C1T	0.085	70.00	1,100
EKOVEST-C67	0.025	66.67	651
MYEG-C7H	0.025	66.67	4,725
SEROL-WB	0.050	66.67	6
HSI-CWCS	0.390	65.96	26,450
SUNCON-C18	0.065	62.50	35,285
XIAOMI-C32	1.300	59.51	116
SIME-C86	0.015	50.00	1,445
TENAGA-C2M	0.015	50.00	3,125
SPRITZER-CA	0.125	47.06	7,360
BPURI-WB	0.160	45.46	23
TM-C1Q	0.080	45.46	863
ALIBABA-C40	0.150	42.86	2,304
BYD-C33	0.190	40.74	540
SUNCON-C24	0.035	40.00	87,121

## World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA [US]	44,593.65	+123.24	+0.28
S&P 500 [US]	6,068.50	+2.06	+0.03
NASDAQ [US]	19,643.86	-70.41	-0.36
NYSE [US]	20,168.21	+50.33	+0.25
EURO STOXX 50 [EUR]	5,411.27	+20.36	+0.38
FTSE 100 [UK]	8,790.46	+13.07	+0.15
DAX [GER]	22,114.51	+76.68	+0.35
NIKKEI 225 [JPN]	38,963.70	+162.53	+0.42
TOPIX [JPN]	2,733.33	+0.32	+0.01
HANG SENG INDEX [HK]	21,857.92	+563.06	+2.64
CSI 300 [CHN]	3,919.86	+36.72	+0.95
SH SE COM [CHN]	3,346.39	+28.33	+0.85
KOSPI INDEX [SK]	2,548.39	+9.34	+0.37
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	184.48	-0.90	-0.49
ASX 200 [AUS]	8,535.26	+51.26	+0.01
ALL ORDINARIES INDX [AUS]	8,799.61	+48.04	+0.55
SENSEX INDEX [IND]	75,986.75	-306.85	-0.40
FBM KLCI	1,603.05	+13.10	+0.82
STRAITS TIMES INDEX [S'PORE]	3,870.09	+9.32	+0.24
WTI [US\$/BBL]	72.53	-0.79	-1.08
BRENT [US\$/BBL]	76.31	-0.69	-0.90
GOLD [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	2,916.90	-15.70	-0.54
SILVER [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	32.20	-0.13	-0.39
PLATINUM [US\$/T OZ]	985.33	-3.81	-0.39
COPPER [COMEX] [US CENTS/LB.]	461.95	+1.85	+0.40
COPPER 3MO [LME] [US\$/MT]	9,358.00	-89.50	-0.95
CORN [US CENTS/BU.]	498.75	+0.75	+0.15
WHEAT [US CENTS/BU.]	580.00	+3.00	+0.52
SOYBEAN OIL [CBOT] [US CENTS/LB.]	46.49	-0.12	-0.26
COCOA [ICE] [US\$/MT]	10,302.00	+424.00	+4.29
RUBBER [S'PORE] [US CENTS/KG]	200.60	+5.60	+2.87

As at 5pm, Feb 12

## Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [RM]	VOLUME ('00)
MPI	21.540	-0.580	2,136
PCHEM	4.140	-0.190	81,312
GENETEC	1.420	-0.180	248,507
IDEAL	3.850	-0.150	120
PANAMY	17.300	-0.140	34
CANONE	2.320	-0.130	29
FRONTKN	3.780	-0.120	54,399
ABLEGLOB	1.720	-0.110	9,593
HSI-PWB5	0.395	-0.110	20
MRDIY-C38	0.045	-0.105	900
AYER	7.000	-0.100	11
DIALOG	1.780	-0.100	155,584
HSTECH-H17	0.120	-0.100	40,000
NSOP	3.980	-0.100	215
MCEMENT	4.700	-0.090	3,598
ALLIANZ	19.200	-0.080	157
BURSA	8.240	-0.080	30,444
MBMR	5.790	-0.080	7,943
SHL	2.270	-0.080	40
SAB	3.000	-0.080	731

## Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [%]	VOLUME ('00)
UNISEM-C39	0.005	-90.91	7,460
AFFIN-C18	0.005	-75.00	1,000
HSI-CWA3	0.005	-75.00	2,304
HSI-PWDH	0.010	-71.43	154
MRDIY-C38	0.045	-70.00	900
TFP-WB	0.005	-66.67	1,100
AEON-C31	0.005	-50.00	1,078
ANEKA-WA	0.005	-50.00	5,142
BAIDU-C2	0.005	-50.00	5,910
CMSB-C50	0.005	-50.00	4,420
HSI-PWB3	0.005	-50.00	3,670
HSI-PWB0	0.005	-50.00	125,902
HSI-PWBZ	0.010	-50.00	15,116
HSI-PWDM	0.040	-50.00	19,010
IUM-C95	0.005	-50.00	200
KGROUP	0.005	-50.00	84,373
MAXIS-C51	0.075	-50.00	500
MRDIY-C30	0.005	-50.00	3,398
NATGATE-CA	0.005	-50.00	8,052
OCR-WE	0.005	-50.00	6,750

# MARKETS/FROM THE BROKERS

SUNBIZ presents extracts of a selection of commentaries and research reports received from stockbrokers on counters that could be of interest to investors.

Compiled by SunBiz Team

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## Steel Hawk wins manpower supply deal from Petronas unit

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Oil and gas services and equipment provider Steel Hawk Bhd's wholly owned subsidiary Steel Hawk Engineering Sdn Bhd (SHE) secured a contract to supply manpower from PRPC Utilities and Facilities Sdn Bhd.

The contract was signed on Nov 29, 2024, and the announcement was made following the consent obtained from PRPC on Feb 12, 2025, for Steel Hawk to release this information to Bursa Malaysia.

Under the terms of the contract, SHE will provide manpower for bagging operations PRPC's solid product warehouse.

The contract is on a call-out basis with no fixed contract value, and it will be valid for three years.

PRPC is a subsidiary of Petronas Refinery and Petrochemical Corporation Sdn Bhd (PRPC), a member of the Petrolia Nasional Bhd (Petronas).

To recap, on Feb 3, 2025, Steel Hawk announced the extension of its existing contract to provide ONMCM services for Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd.

This extension will cover the period from Jan 1, 2025 to Dec 31, 2025 following the expiration of the original contract on Dec 31, 2024.

Furthermore, on Nov 12, 2024 the group was appointed as a panel contractor for five available packages to provide CMW works for Petronas and 27 of its Downstream Operating Plant Units.

This appointment has a three-year term with an option for two one-year extensions at Petronas's discretion.

Steel Hawk deputy chairman and executive director Datuk Sharmam K Michael said the company remain optimistic about the outlook for the oil and gas industry, particularly given Petronas' continued investment as outlined in its latest Activity Outlook for 2025-2027.

## Ringgit ends flat against dollar on cautious sentiment

**THE** ringgit ended flat against the US dollar yesterday on cautious sentiment regarding the current economic outlook.

At 6pm, the ringgit stood at 4.4680/4725 versus the greenback compared to Monday's close of 4.4680/4730.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said market participants remained anxious on policy uncertainties under US President Donald Trump.

"The currency market participants remain anxious about Trump 2.0 policies and how the US Federal Reserve (Fed) would react to the policy," he told Bernama.

In his semi-annual monetary policy report to Congress, Fed chair Jerome Powell signalled that the central bank was in no rush to ease interest rates further and would wait until next quarter before cutting rates again.

Meanwhile, the ringgit was traded mostly lower against a basket of major currencies.

It strengthened versus the Japanese yen to 2.9106/9137 from 2.9352/9387 at the close on Monday, but slipped against the euro to 4.6351/6398 from 4.6128/6179 previously and depreciated vis-a-vis the British pound to 5.5613/5669 from 5.5430/5492.

The local note was mostly higher against Asean currencies. The ringgit rose versus the Indonesian rupiah to 272.7/273.2 from 273.1/273.5 at Monday's close, gained against the Philippine peso to 7.68/7.69 from 7.69/7.70 previously and climbed vis-a-vis the Thai baht to 13.0953/1151 from 13.1768/1986.

However, it eased against the Singapore dollar to 3.3028/3064 from 3.3006/3048 on Monday.

## Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5185	4.3855	4.3755
1 Australian Dollar	2.8670	2.7520	2.7360
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3380	3.2420	3.2340
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1600	3.0770	3.0650
1 Euro	4.6900	4.5400	4.5200
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5720	2.4780	2.4620
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3380	3.2420	3.2340
1 Sterling Pound	5.6360	5.4590	5.4390
1 Swiss Franc	4.9850	4.7740	4.7590
100 UAE Dirham	124.4600	118.0500	117.8500
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7960	3.5360	3.3360
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.2500	59.6400	N/A
100 Danish Krone	64.4600	59.3400	59.1400
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.6100	55.7100	55.5100
100 Indian Rupee	5.3000	4.9800	4.7800
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0286	0.0259	0.0209
100 Japanese Yen	2.9490	2.8550	2.8450
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.8000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.4400	38.1400	37.9400
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6500	1.5400	1.3400
100 Philippine Peso	7.8800	7.4300	7.2300
100 Qatar Riyal	125.3300	118.9800	118.7800
100 Saudi Riyal	121.8400	115.6700	115.4700
100 South Africa Rand	25.3100	22.8700	22.6700
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5600	1.4400	1.2400
100 Swedish Krona	42.9600	39.1400	38.9400
100 Thai Baht	13.8600	12.3000	11.9000

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

## RGB International Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM0.71



Source: Bloomberg

**RGB International (RGB)** is the leading distributor of Aristocrat, Light & Wonder, and Konami's electronic gaming machines (EGM), holding a dominant 70-80% market share across Asian casinos. Aspired to be the leading one-stop solution provider for casinos, RGB has partnered with a major China-based company to provide cutting-edge security surveillance solutions. RGB is sitting on a strong net cash position of RM156 million, or 25% of its market capitalization.

We expect a blockbuster year for RGB, forecasting a 32% profit CAGR over 2023-26. RGB is in a prime position to capture 60-70% of new EGM orders from its largest market, the Philippines, driven by 1) a robust pipeline of new integrated resorts set to open, 2) ongoing upgrades following the privatisation of PAGCOR's casino operations, and 3) growing global replacement market. With the recent legalisation of gambling in the UAE and Japan, we estimate that the total addressable market for EGMs is projected to expand by 17k over 2024-27. This growth builds on the existing 44k EGMs currently in operation, reflecting the significant potential opportunities from newly opened market. These dynamics provide strong visibility for our RGB's projected sales of 4.5-5.5k units across 2024-26.

We see RGB as the driving force behind casino success. With an extensive portfolio of renowned brands and in-depth industry expertise, RGB provides casinos with innovative, high-performance solutions that maximise player engagement.

BUY with RM0.71 TP. - **Phillip Capital Research, Feb 12**

## Plantations

Neutral



Source: PublicInvest Research

**MALAYSIA'S** palm oil industry kicks off 2025 with a low inventory level of 1.57m mt as production saw a steeper than expected drop due to heavy rainfall in East Malaysia. It was also the lowest level since April 2023. Given shorter working month in February, we expect production to pick up as early as next month. Following the positive data, CPO futures rose RM92 to RM4,596/mt.

Palm oil inventories registered a 7.6% MoM drop to 1.57m mt, the lowest level since April 2023. Meanwhile, the stock-to-usage ratio climbed from 8.6% to 9.1% as production saw a steeper decline than the exports.

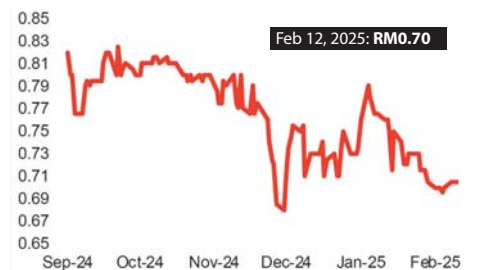
CPO exports saw another steep decline, down 12.9% MoM to 1.1m mt, mainly dragged by China (-79.2%), India (-38.1%), and the Middle East (-25.6%), partially offset by strong demand from the EU (+2.3%), and the US (+17.2%). We attributed the weaker demand to two notable factors, namely uncompetitive CPO prices and slow demand for vegetable oil in the beginning of the year.

CPO production dropped 16.8% MoM to 1.57m mt as the heavy rainfall in East Malaysia affected harvesting and logistics activities. It was also the steepest drop since Jan 2016. The steep decline was dragged by lower production from Peninsular Malaysia (-18.3%) and East Malaysia (-15.1%).

Despite registering lower production on a YoY basis, we expect better results from most of the plantation companies under our coverage as CPO price saw a strong performance, recording a 31.6% gain YoY in Q4'24. Ta Ann posted the steepest production drop, down 11.5% followed by Sarawak Plantation's 9.8%. - **PublicInvest Research, Feb 12**

## MGB Bhd

Outperform. Target price: RM1.16



Source: PublicInvest Research

**MGB** has secured a high-rise construction job from its parent company, LBS Bina Group, for RM194.7 million. The contract's scope includes the construction of a 22-storey service apartment and a 2-storey fast-food restaurant. This new job is expected to contribute 5.8% per annum on average to the group's earnings over the 28 months contract period.

The contract, worth RM194.7 million, was awarded to MGB's wholly owned unit MGB Construction & Engineering SB by LYK Architect SB, on behalf of Casa Inspirasi SB for a development project in Cameron Highlands. The project, spanning 4.1 acres in Tanah Rata, consists of two phases: a two-storey fast food restaurant and a 22-storey serviced apartment with retail spaces, parking and amenities. Both phases are scheduled to commence simultaneously on Feb 17 and are expected to be completed within 28 months.

With this job win, the group's orderbook is estimated to have reached RM1.27 billion, providing earnings visibility for the next 2-3 years. Our projections indicate that this job will contribute approximately 5.8% per annum on average, from FY25 to FY27F, assuming a high single-digit margins.

The group continues to prioritise building affordable homes by leveraging innovation, technological advancements, and enhancements in its construction processes. Additionally, it seeks to secure new government projects and expand its footprint in Saudi Arabia through strategic partnerships with Nordimpianti System S.R.L. and MCT Italy S.R.L. In the near term, potential growth drivers include the development of the Kertih Terengganu Industrial Park.

OUTPERFORM with RM1.16 TP. - **PublicInvest Research, Feb 12**





# the Sun **LYFE**

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## Love languages

*Express your feelings truly  
this Valentine's Day - P22*



### WEEKLY FOCUS

#### MONDAY

Technology and  
social media

#### TUESDAY

Travel  
and leisure

#### WEDNESDAY

Fashion  
and beauty

#### THURSDAY

Home  
and living

#### FRIDAY

Food  
and beverage

**INSIDE**

**P23**

Fictional  
heartthrobs

**P24**

Sweet melodies  
of guzheng

**P25**

Dark Nuns  
premieres today

**P26**

Kiss of Life to  
play live gig in KL



# Exploring love languages

➤ Secret to building lasting, fulfilling relationships

■ BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

**V**ALentine's Day is a time to celebrate love in all its beautiful forms. While love is universal, the way we express and experience it is deeply personal. Renowned relationship counsellor and author Gary Chapman introduced the concept of "love languages" in his book *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts*. These love languages help us understand how we give and receive love, making our relationships more meaningful.

This Valentine's Day, take the opportunity to discover your partner's love language and express your affection in a way that truly aligns with them.

## Words of affirmation

For some, love is most effectively communicated through words of affirmation. This love language thrives on verbal expressions of affection and appreciation.

Compliments, kind words and meaningful conversations are powerful tools for filling the emotional love tank of someone whose primary love language is words of affirmation.

When we understand this love language, we can actively work to uplift our loved ones with genuine compliments, encouragement and verbal expressions of love and gratitude. A simple "I love you" or "I appreciate you" can have a profound impact on someone who speaks this love language.

## Acts of service

For others, love is best conveyed through acts of service. Actions, they say, speak louder than words. When someone's primary love language is



Physical touch is a powerful love language that encompasses everything from hugs and kisses to holding hands and cuddling.

acts of service, they feel most loved when their partner helps with tasks, runs errands or simply makes an effort to ease their daily burdens.

Understanding this love language means recognising that small gestures like cooking a meal or giving a helping hand can make a significant difference in a relationship. It is about demonstrating your love through your actions rather than your words.

## Receiving gifts

Gifts are more than just material possessions, they can be powerful symbols of love and affection. For those whose love language is receiving gifts, a thoughtful present represents the depth of your care and affection. It is not about the cost of the gift, but the sentiment behind it.

Gift-givers should understand that it is the thought and effort put into selecting a gift that matters most.



In today's busy world, it is easy to get caught up in distractions, but for individuals whose primary love language is quality time, undivided attention is the ultimate gift.

Remembering special occasions, surprising your partner with a small token of appreciation or simply picking something that reflects their interests can speak volumes to someone who values receiving gifts as a love language.

## Quality time

Quality time is a love language that emphasises the importance of being present with your partner. In today's busy world, it is easy to get caught up in distractions, but for individuals whose primary love language is quality time, undivided attention is the ultimate gift.

Spending quality time means putting away your phone, turning off the TV and actively engaging in meaningful conversations and activities together. It is about making your loved one feel valued and cherished by giving them your full focus and presence.

## Physical touch

Physical touch is a powerful love language that encompasses everything from hugs and kisses to holding hands and cuddling. For those who speak this love language, physical affection is the most direct



Love languages are unique ways individuals express and receive affection.

way to convey love and affection. Understanding this love language means recognising the significance of physical touch in building and maintaining a healthy relationship. It is about being attentive to your partner's need for physical closeness and intimacy.

## Navigating love languages in relationships

The key to successful relationships lies in understanding both your own love language and your partner's. Often, couples have different primary love languages, which can lead to misunderstandings and unmet needs if not recognised and addressed.

Communication is essential when it comes to love languages. Open and honest conversations about your

preferences and needs can help bridge any gaps in understanding. Additionally, making an effort to express love in multiple ways, even if they are not your primary love language, can help strengthen your connection.

Remember love languages can evolve over time and may differ in various relationships you have. Flexibility, empathy and a willingness to adapt are crucial to maintaining healthy, loving relationships.

Love languages provide a valuable framework for understanding how we give and receive love. By recognising and embracing these languages, we can deepen our connections, enhance our relationships and create lasting bonds with our loved ones.



Expressing love in your partner's preferred language can strengthen relationships. — ALL PICS FROM PEXELS





**D**O not have a Valentine's Day date yet? Fret not – there are many fictional characters on standby to sweep you off your feet. Trust us, they are way better than real lovers – no heartbreaks or heartaches, just charm and pure, unconditional love for their partners. The best part? In this fantasy world, you get to be their true love!

We have curated a list of on-screen characters for you to spend Valentine's Day with. So grab your snacks, get cosy and check them out.

#### Our top fictional boyfriend picks:

##### 🔥 Mateo Chavez – 9-1-1: Lone Star

Mateo Chavez is the kind of guy who will restore your faith in men. Thanks to his infectious optimism and unique ability to see the good in every person, it is impossible not to love Mateo! A firefighter with a troubled past, Mateo will hold your hand through every moment – both good and bad. Also, we love a short, tough king. Go on and steal our hearts, Mateo!



Troy, *High School Musical*.

##### 🔥 Troy Bolton – High School Musical

Unable to break free from your *High School Musical* crush? We do not blame you! Troy Bolton is everyone's favourite with his dreamy blue eyes, unmatched basketball prowess and sweet voice. Troy is the ideal boyfriend because he is willing to do whatever it takes to be with his girl. He embodies what typical high school jocks could be if they just followed their hearts – theatrical, easygoing and kind. So, this Valentine's Day, go soaring and flying with Troy because there is not a star in heaven that you cannot reach.

##### 🔥 Lord Nicholas Devereaux – The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement

If you are a fan of the rivals-to-lovers trope, Lord Nicholas Devereaux may be the Genovian heir for you. He may start off saying he unequivocally loathes you, but let us be honest – he is just playing hard to get. Beneath that princely arrogance and playful teasing lies a heart that would give up everything for love. Remember when he got down on one knee to profess his love to Princess Mia Thermopolis before her coronation or when he gave up the throne so she could be queen? We bet he would do the same for you!



Nicholas (right), *The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*.



Mateo, *9-1-1: Lone Star*.

## Dream dates

➤ Fictional hotties to keep you company this Valentine's Day



Han Do, *Unmasked*.

##### 🔥 Han Do – Unmasked

Rookie producer Han Do may not have it all figured out, but that is part of what makes him so real. As a typical K-drama character should, he is the first one holding out an umbrella when the rain hits. His love for animals runs deeper than his patience for people, so if you have got a soft spot for furry friends, you are already halfway there. Beneath his tough exterior is someone who adapts, helps solve problems and always keeps an eye out for those he cares about. Whether he is protecting you or searching for the truth, Han Do has got your back.

#### Our top fictional girlfriend picks:

##### 🔥 Mabel Mora – Only Murders in the Building

If you are into murder mysteries, conspiracy theories and podcasts, Mabel Mora is your perfect match. With a sharp eye for solving crimes, she will keep you on your toes and turn every moment into an adventure. Mabel might not trust someone easily – living in a building full of murderers will do that to you – but once she lets you in, she is your ride-or-die. Do not be fooled by her dark humour, beneath the sarcasm is a heart of gold. You may not know where she is headed next (or which crime scene she will stumble upon) but one thing is for sure, life with Mabel will be full of excitement!

##### 🔥 Janine Teagues – Abbott Elementary

Second-grade teacher Janine Teagues might not be everyone's first pick, but honestly, it is their loss. Sure, she is socially awkward and overly optimistic, but she is kind and sincere, which is why we root for her. She will help you take on the world, even if she has no idea what

she is doing. Janine is not afraid to say what is on her mind, especially when it comes to the dismal school system. Yes, she has the spark that makes the world go round and you will want to spend every minute of Valentine's Day with her!

##### 🔥 Yun Jiwon – Love Your Enemy

Yun Jiwon is a force of nature – fiercely independent, loyal and unapologetically passionate, even if that means challenging a deep-rooted family rivalry for love. When you are with her, you know she is in it for the long haul. She will fight for you and sometimes with you – but only because she cares so deeply. Her loyalty is unmatched, no distance will stop her from finding her way back to the one she loves. If you want someone who will stick with you through the ups and downs of love and life, she is your girl!

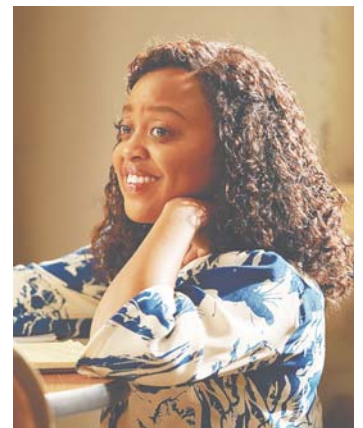
Are you ready for your date? Watch these amazing fictional characters and spend an unforgettable Valentine's Day with them on Disney+ Hotstar.



Jiwon, *Love Your Enemy*.



Mabel, *Only Murders in the Building*.



Janine, *Abbott Elementary*.





Sim says the sound of the *guzheng* has a calming and soothing effect on her.

■ BY S.TAMARAI CHELVI

A good way to instil interest among the younger generation in traditional Chinese musical instruments would be to combine traditional and contemporary music, said Sim Li Mei, 27, a *guzheng* player who hails from Klang.

She grew up in a family steeped in traditional Chinese art and music. Her father is an artist but also plays various musical instruments. Her sister plays the *guzheng* while her brother plays the *erhu*.

After watching her sister play the *guzheng*, she decided to follow her footsteps at the age of eight. Sim has performed on stage as a solo artist or alongside her siblings. If you manage to catch her performances, do not be surprised to hear traditional tunes along with international pop tracks and local Malay songs.

"Combining traditional instruments with pop music or other modern genres is a great way to spark interest among younger audiences and introduce them to the beauty of traditional music.

"Music is a universal language and collaborations between traditional and modern instruments can bridge cultural and generational gaps. It is an innovative way to ensure traditional instruments remain relevant and appreciated," said Sim.

#### Appealing to Gen Z

We asked Sim if Gen Z youth show any interest in learning traditional musical instruments in today's fast-paced world with easily accessible music via apps and smartphones.

"Yes, I believe many in Gen Z are interested in exploring traditional musical instruments. Our fast-paced work and studies often lead us to seek hobbies that help us relax and reconnect with ourselves. Traditional music offers a therapeutic and artistic outlet.

"Moreover, social media platforms have played a huge role in promoting these instruments, giving them more exposure and making them more appealing to younger audiences," explained Sim.

#### Preserving culture

Traditional musical instruments hold immense cultural value, representing the history, art and soul of a community.

"Beyond their aesthetic appeal, they teach us patience, perseverance and discipline. Playing traditional music is also deeply personal and healing, as it allows us to connect with our inner selves.

"Preserving these instruments ensures future generations can continue to appreciate their beauty and significance while staying connected to their heritage. I started playing the *guzheng* when I was eight years old, and over time, my appreciation for its complexity and cultural significance deepened," she said.

#### Sound of music

Sim said the sound of the *guzheng* has a



Sim playing the *guzheng* at the 3 Damansara mall. – ALL PICS BY AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

## Blending old, new with *guzheng*

► Musician Sim Li Mei explains why traditional instruments appeal to her

positive effect on her.

"The sound of the *guzheng* has a calming and soothing effect on me. What is unique about the instrument is its ability to express a wide range of feelings – cheerful and lively tones as well as sentimental and melancholic ones.

"I find music often speaks more powerfully than words. While words can sometimes be misinterpreted, on the other hand, music conveys pure emotion, creating a personal and universal connection for everyone who listens," she said.

Not only does her mind become calmer, but by playing the *guzheng*, she has learned to become more focused and disciplined.

"What I love most about playing the *guzheng* is its ability to ground me. Whenever I play, it forces me to focus entirely on the present moment, reminding me to take life one step at a time. The instrument allows me to fully immerse myself in the emotions conveyed by the music, and I strive to become part of the melody.

"It was evident to me whenever my mind is preoccupied with other thoughts, my ability to play the instrument diminishes. Playing the *guzheng* is both a discipline and an emotional connection for me," she said.

#### Music transcends boundaries

Playing the *guzheng* may look easy but Sim faced many challenges.

"For me, the most challenging aspect of mastering the *guzheng* is controlling my breath. Proper breath control significantly impacts the pacing and fluidity of

my performance.

"I also play other Chinese instruments, such as the *liuqin* and the *dizi* (Chinese flute). Playing the *dizi* taught me the importance of regulating my breath, a skill I have carried over into my *guzheng* practice. Each instrument offers its own lessons, but they all contribute to my growth as a music player," she said.

One of her most memorable performances was in 2022 during a Malaysia Day celebration.

Sim and her brother played the *guzheng* and *erhu* alongside musicians from diverse cultural backgrounds. She said the harmony between the instruments was truly inspiring.

"I felt a profound sense of unity through the music. It was especially gratifying to see our friends from other races embracing the Chinese *guzheng*, highlighting the universality of music and its ability to bring people together," she said.

#### Looking forward

Sim plans to explore more traditional instruments, not only Chinese ones, but also those from other cultures, such as Indian and Malay instruments. She is also interested in the unique musical instruments of Sabah and Sarawak.

"I am also keen on collaborating with musicians who play various instruments to experiment with new sounds and create innovative musical experiences. Through these efforts, I hope to expand my understanding of music while sharing its universal language with a broader audience," added Sim, who is an architect by profession.



Sim is keen to explore collaborations with other musicians from diverse cultural backgrounds who play traditional instruments.



BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

A spin-off tale from the original film *The Priests* (2015), *Dark Nuns*'s gripping story of faith, humanity and the ultimate battle against evil is set to open in Malaysian cinemas today.

Led by actresses Song Hye-kyo and Jeon Yeo-been, *Dark Nuns* will follow two nuns that break sacred rules to save a boy possessed by a demon.

With differing stances from the priests surrounding them, the duo embark on a dangerous exorcism ritual that will challenge their faith and push them to their limits.

In an interview, Jeon delved into her character Sister Michela and how she approached the role.

"I could feel Michela's backstory through the script. I imagined, as someone following the teachings of Father Paolo, who scientifically denies the existence of exorcisms, Michela would have lived suppressing her ability to see spirits.

"However, since her problems remained unresolved, I felt she might have turned to tarot cards for answers. The irony of a nun using tarot cards struck me as a defining image of her character," she explained.

Jeon also claimed despite starring in *Dark Nuns*, she has always been and remains terrified of occult films.

"Despite this fear, I felt a strong desire to be part of this film. I thought, as a creator, I might feel less afraid. This aspect of overcoming fear influenced how I portrayed Michela, a character



Jeon hopes to become a senior actor like Song (right) one day.

## Nuns battle evil demon

➤ South Korean horror film set to terrify Malaysian audiences from today



Jeon faces inner turmoil as a nun dealing with a demonic possession.

who struggles with fear but eventually grows stronger."

She also spoke on working alongside Song, who plays Sister Junia, claiming the famous actress's eyes carried a lyrical depth and how Song stood like a strong, silent pillar on set during filming.

"Though Michela and Junia are different in nature, I felt the same powerful presence from both. There were moments when I was deeply moved and leaned on her emotionally," she said.

Actor Moon Woo-jin, who plays the possessed boy Hee-joon, also revealed he was drawn to the opportunity to play such a



Moon says it was all about having the mindset to do things properly, which helped him achieve good results on set and at school.

character as it is not a role that comes around often.

"I felt grateful for the chance and challenged myself to give it my best.

"I approached the shoot with a strong determination to succeed," he said, adding that he used actor Park So-dam's performance in *The Priests* as a source of inspiration.

## Natural remedies to keep mosquitoes away

THE threat of dengue fever is ever-present. It is a reality of life in the tropics. Therefore, the smell of mosquito coils and insecticides are normal in every Malaysian



Garlic is ideal as a mosquito repellent as the smell dissipates easily.

household. They are not in any way pleasant but many Malaysians have grown accustomed to them.

But if you are sensitive or even allergic to these smells, there are a number of natural remedies available. These inherently smell much better and are much less toxic.

Here are a few natural items that can be used to combat the growing number of dengue cases.

### Basil and lemongrass

These herbs are effective, natural mosquito repellents. The leaves of the former are poisonous to mosquito larvae. They can be crushed and mixed with water, then used as an insect-repellent spray.

The latter contains citronella that helps conceal the smell of carbon dioxide and lactic acid, which attract mosquitos. Plant lots of lemongrass in the garden and in pots around the

house for a mosquito-free environment.

### Garlic

It is not just vampires that dislike garlic but bloodsuckers such as Aedes mosquito abhor them as well!

Boil some garlic in water and fill the liquid in a spray bottle. Garlic contains sulphur, making it one of the most potent methods to rid homes of these pesky pests.

A great thing about using garlic water as spray is that the smell does not linger, dissipating soon after doing its job of wiping out the mosquitoes.

### Beer

Believe it or not, another smell that mosquitoes hate is beer!

If your home has a well-stocked bar, then pour some beer into a small dish and leave it in the open the next time you are about to enjoy a frothy lager.



Mosquitoes apparently hate the smell of beer.

While this will not kill the mosquitoes, it will help keep the insects at bay as they absolutely abhor the smell of beer.

This is especially useful for those who have sensitive skin. However, clove oil tends to evaporate quickly and it is more of a short-term solution.

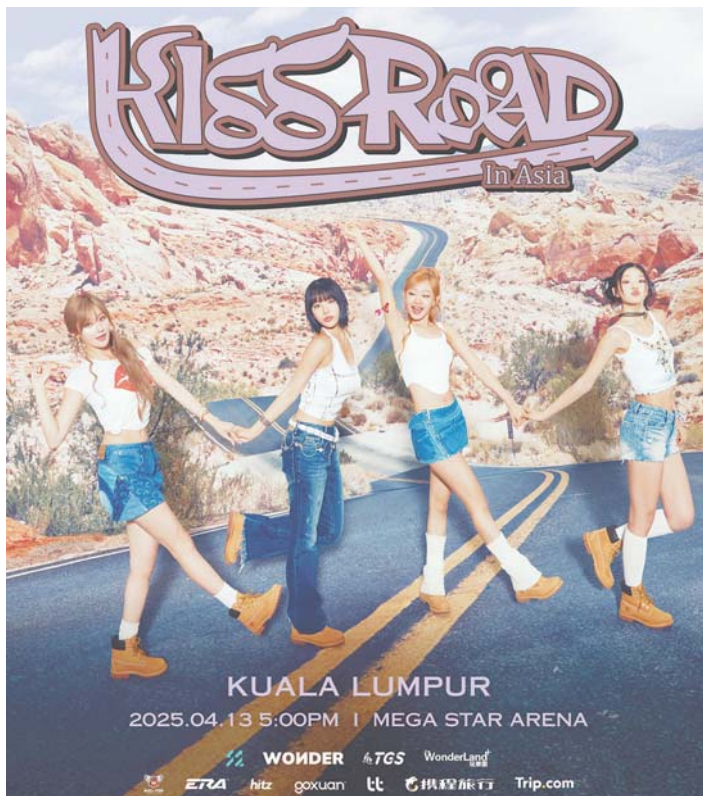
### Clove

Not only does this spice have antibacterial and antioxidant properties but it may also repel mosquitoes. Crush some cloves to mix along with a safe and neutral smelling skin oil to create an effective mosquito repellent.

These natural remedies and repellants are just some of the ways to combat the pesky Aedes mosquito. Whichever option is chosen, it will at the very least smell better than spraying a can of insecticide! – by **R.BALA**



Kiss of Life will play at Mega Star Arena KL on April 13.



## Kiss of Life set to enchant KL

► Group's tour comes after successful year of hits

**K**-POP girl group Kiss of Life is bringing its first world tour to Malaysia on April 13. The 2025 Kiss of Life World Tour (Kiss Road) will take place in Mega Star Arena KL.

Comprising Belle, Natty, Julie and Haneul, the group has been on everyone's radar for its catchy pop music that highlights the different tonality of the members' voices.

The group's name embodies its mission, which is to breathe new life into the music industry with fresh energy, dynamic concepts and authentic artistry.

With hits such as *Midas Touch*, breakout summer single *Sticky* and *Igloo* under its belt, Kiss of Life has been captivating audiences since

its debut in 2023.

Following the success of *Sticky*, which topped iTunes charts and broke into the Top 10 on Billboard's World Digital Song Sales Chart, the two-year-old group released its EP *Lost Yourself* (2024) that showcased its distinctive style, establishing the band's status as a global phenomenon.

Kissy (the group's fandom name) can expect a refreshing night of performances and stunning visuals at the concert. Tickets for the Kiss Road tour, ranging from RM338 to RM798, goes on sale this Saturday. The tickets also feature fan benefits. Visit official ticketing sites for details of these fan specials.

## Kendrick Lamar brings *Not Like Us* to Super Bowl stage

**KENDRICK** Lamar commanded the Super Bowl stage earlier this week as its half-time headliner, yet another feather in the cap for the rapper who has ascended to new heights of stardom.

Lamar performed a string of his classics while toying with his audience who had one major question: will he perform *Not Like Us*, the searing diss track that served as the knockout blow in his beef with *Hotline Bling* rapper Drake?

### Headliner performance

The infectious hit released in May 2024 hears the Pulitzer laureate Lamar — the first solo rap artiste to helm a half-time show at the Super Bowl — use his punchlines to accuse Drake of paedophilia.

"I wanna perform their favourite song but you know they love to sue," he said, seemingly setting the stage for the Grammy-winning track to be played.

Instead, Lamar's set segued in to *Luther* (with Sza) and *Black Panther's* soundtrack *All the Stars*, as he shared the stage with the songstress.

He began the set atop the hood of a 1987 Buick GNX and offered classics such as *Humble*, *DNA* and tracks from his most recent album *GNX*, including *Squabble Up* before sending fans into a frenzy as he delivered a knife-twisting rendition of *Not Like Us*.

Lamar cut the profanity and the word "paedophile" but rapped the hook "tryna strike a chord and it's probably A-minooooo" on live television in front of an estimated 100 million viewers.

When delivering the lyric "say,

Drake, I hear you like 'em young", Lamar looked right into the camera, flashing a mocking smile assumably at the Canadian rapper, while sporting a chain with a massive "lower case A" pendant as a nod to his famed hook.

### Invitation to more litigation

The performance is all but sure to kick off more legal wrangling: Drake recently filed a defamation suit against his own record label Universal Music Group (UMG), which also represents Lamar.

Drake is notably suing UMG and not Lamar himself, but questions abounded leading into the Super Bowl set over whether performing the song on one of the top stages could open the door to further litigation.

*Not Like Us* dominated the set but it was also a performance that paid homage to the 37-year-old rapper's expansive oeuvre.

Born in Compton, California, Lamar is renowned as one of contemporary music's most impactful writers, with his verses offering personal insights on systemic issues such as race discrimination and structural poverty.

His poignant lyricism soundtracked the Black Lives Matter movement, earning him the title "the voice of a generation".

### Appearance by Uncle Sam

Lamar's set included a narrator played actor Samuel L. Jackson, dressed as Uncle Sam — a character emblematic of American patriotism that has frequently appeared in



Lamar performing at the half-time show of Super Bowl LIX. — AFP/IC

military propaganda.

Lamar did not make any direct references to President Donald Trump who attended the game, but used the platform to offer a symbolic critique on the marginalised treatment of hip-hop and Black Americans at large.

"Too loud, too reckless, too ghetto. Mr Lamar, do you really know how to play the game? Then, tighten up," the actor jeered.

Troupes of dancers dressed in red, white and blue coalesced into an American flag formation during the performance.

### Solidarity with Gaza and Sudan

Another notable cameo came from tennis legend Serena Williams, who also hails from Compton and briefly dated Drake.

The set was also punctuated by a protestor who unfurled a flag in support of Gaza and Sudan during the performance. However, production company Roc Nation said the moment was not rehearsed.

"The individual hid the item and unveiled it late in the show," said the NFL, adding that the protestor was part of the 400-member field cast.

The protestor was seen in photos

standing atop Lamar's centrepiece car, wielding the flag emblazoned with images of heart and a fist as well as the words "Gaza" and "Sudan".

The person was later escorted out by security. New Orleans police said no arrest or summons was issued.

Lamar's showcase has now been named the most-watched Super Bowl performance in history with 133.5 million viewers, dethroning Michael Jackson's 1993 performance, whose record was 133.4 million viewers. — AFP





# theSun Classified

THURSDAY | FEB 13, 2025

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( Closing Date: 28th February 2025 )

THURSDAY | FEB 13, 2025

SPORTS 27

## SHORTS

### PGA Tour deal will send sport to moon and back: O'Neil

LIV GOLF'S new chief Scott O'Neil said yesterday that Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) was "likely" to do a deal with the PGA Tour which would send the sport "to the moon and back".

Talks between PIF, which owns LIV Golf, and the PGA Tour have been under way since a "framework agreement" was unveiled in June 2023.

But they blew past a deadline of last December and have continued with little progress since, leaving top talent divided between the two circuits rather than under one banner.

PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan met US President Donald Trump last week to try and get a deal done.

"They (PIF) are likely to make an investment into PGA Tour Enterprises. For us at LIV, we are hoping that unlocks opportunity."

Over the last week, both the US Open and British Open announced they would offer a direct pathway for LIV Golf players to qualify for the majors in another sign of a thawing of tensions.

Adam Scott.  
- REUTERS/PIC



"So I'm excited about the agreement," said O'Neil. "I think that right now we are going to the moon and back, and I hope that'll help as an accelerant, but I'm very confident in where we are in this business and the interest we have currently."

### Scott says Trump meeting 'positive'

ADAM SCOTT says his meeting with PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan and President Donald Trump last week was "positive" for getting a PGA-LIV deal to reunite men's golf stars.

"It's just a positive thing that the President of the United States is such a lover of the game of golf and

understands some of the challenges facing the professional game at the moment," Scott said.

"Given how things are sitting with the Department of Justice among the professional game, this is all crazy stuff," Scott said.

"The president is passionate about (golf), owns several golf properties, fabulous destinations around the world," Scott said.

"He has a relationship with Saudi Arabia and the Public Investment Fund. I genuinely think he's a fan of the PGA Tour as well... given this has been tied up, he can be very helpful."

"Hopefully this can be helped by the President and things can move forward at a faster pace."

302 Jobs



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322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND  
IN THE MATTER OF COUNTRY LODGE SDN. BHD.  
200801015700 (817059-W)  
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

#### NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT pursuant to Section 459 of the Companies Act, 2016 a Final Meeting of the abovementioned Company will be held at 110B-1, Jalan Raja Permaisuri Bainun, 30250 Ipoh, Perak Darul Ridzuan on the 17th day of March, 2025 at 10.00 a.m. for the following purposes:-

1. To receive an account from the Liquidator showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and property of the Company disposed of and to hear any explanation that may be given by the Liquidator.

2. To determine pursuant to Section 510(3)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016 the manner in which the books, accounts and documents of the Company and of the Liquidator thereof, shall be disposed of.

Dated this 13th day of February, 2025

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JOHOR BAHRU  
MS. Anne Lim  
TEL: 013-770 6699  
FAX: 07-355 5549

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH MAJLISRET DI JOHOR BAHRU  
DALAM NEGERI SELANGOR  
DARUL EHSAN  
JOMAR DARUL TAWZIM  
WRIT NO:  
JA-472NCVC-1090-10/2024

MAJLIS PERBARANAN HULU SELANGOR (MPPHS)

DAN ... PLAINTIF

FONG KIM FAH  
(NO K/P: 630701-10-5179) ... DEFENDAN

NOTIS IKLAN

Kepada:  
FONG KIM FAH  
1670, Serdang Bharu,  
43300 Sen Kembangan,  
Selangor Darul Ehsan.

FONG KIM FAH  
30, Jalan P5G/15,  
Bukit Serdang,  
43300 Sen Kembangan,  
Selangor Darul Ehsan.

AMBIK PERHATIAN bahawa satu Writ Saman dan Peringatan Tuntutan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu dalam Mahkamah ini oleh MAJLIS PERBARANAN HULU SELANGOR (MPPHS) yang berlandaskan di Jalan Bukit Koyan, 4000 Kuala Kubu Bharu, Selangor Darul Ehsan dan Mahkamah telah memintakan supaya Writ Saman dan Peringatan Tuntutan tersebut disampaikan kepada kamu dengan menggunakan salinan-salinannya beserta satu salinan yang dimeterai bagi Perintah untuk penyampaian ganti pada setiap Notis Mahkamah Majlisret di Kuala Kubu Bharu, Selangor, memampai satu salinan Writ Saman bersama dengan Perintah tersebut ke alamat terakhir penempatan dan pengiklanan tersebut. Perintah tersebut dalam satu keluaran akhir terapan. The Sun selama satu hari dan bahawa penempatan, pengposan dan pengiklanan sedemikian dianggap sebagai penyampaian yang wajar dan mencukupi akan Writ Saman dan Peringatan Tuntutan ini keatas kamu atau penempatan EMPAT BELAS (14) hari selepas tarikh terakhir penempatan dan pengiklanan tersebut. DAN SELANJUTNYA AMBIK NOTIS bahawa tarikh pengurusan kes Writ Saman dan Peringatan Tuntutan tersebut telah ditetapkan di hadapan Majlisret 14.02.2025 pada 9.00 pagi di dalam Program Kes secara online (dalam talian).

Jika kamu berhasrat untuk menentang dan/atau membela diri, kamu mestilah datang ke Mahkamah Majlisret (14) hari dari tarikh penempatan dan pengiklanan tersebut menjadi sempurna, kemudian kepada Mahkamah untuk memusulkan kehadiran di Mahkamah ini. Jika tidak, suatu Penghakaman boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu. Writ Saman dan Peringatan Tuntutan ini boleh dipertika oleh kamu dengan melalui permohonan kepada Mahkamah ini.

NOTIS IKLAN ini difailkan oleh TETUAN IBRAHIM & FUADAH, Peguambela & Peguambela bagi Plaintiff yang berlandaskan di No.125, Jalan Bidara 8, Sd Mkt, Seksyen 13, 47000, Sungai Buloh, Selangor. No. tel: 03-628 8164 0031 email: info@ibrahimfuadah.my Ruj.fai: F7/1164/18924/MPPHS/11

Pendengar Pendengar Mahkamah Majlisret Kuala Kubu Bharu

NOTIS WRT SAMAN ini dikeluarkan oleh Tetuan Young & Partners, peguambela Plaintiff yang berlandaskan di Suite 22.01 Level 22, Johor Bahru City Square, 108 Jalan Wong Ah Fook, 80000 Johor Bahru [Ruj.NKP/Hd/5906.H]

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH MAJLISRET DI JOHOR BAHRU  
DALAM NEGERI JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM  
WRIT NO:  
JA-472NCVC-1090-10/2024

ANTARA

HORIZON HILLS PROPERTY SERVICES SDN BHD  
(NO. SYARIKAT: 620673-A) ... PLAINTIF

DAN

YEE LEE CHIA  
(NO. KAD PENGENALAN: 801203-04-5250) ... DEFENDAN

NOTIS WRT SAMAN

Kepada:  
YEE LEE CHIA  
No. 6, Jalan Maya 1/5,  
Horizon Hills,  
79100 Iskandar Puteri, Johor

AMBIK PERHATIAN bahawa satu tindakan telah dimulakan terhadap kamu di Mahkamah Majlisret Johor Bahru dalam Writ No. JA-472NCVC-1090-10/2024 oleh HORIZON HILLS PROPERTY SERVICES SDN BHD yang berlandaskan di No.76 Jalan Horizon Perdana 1, Horizon Hills, 79100 Iskandar Puteri, Johor yang mana Plaintiff menuntut dari Defendant saman tertutut sebanyak RM5,520-08 dan faedah ke atas RM5,520-08 dari 26-7-2024 pada kadar 10% setahun sehingga tarikh pengiklanan dan pada kadar 5% dari tarikh penghakaman sehingga penyelesaian penuh dan bahawa telah dipertanyakan yang penyampaian writ saman kepada kamu dalam tindakan tersebut hendaklah dilaksanakan melalui iklan ini dan penempatan dan hanya dikatakan penyampaian yang sempurna dan berkesan selepas tujuh (7) hari tarikh pengiklanan notis ini atau tarikh-tarikh penempatan, yang mana lebih lewat.

Jika kamu berhasrat untuk menentang tindakan tersebut, kamu hendaklah memusulkan kehadiran ke Mahkamah dalam masa empat belas (14) hari selepas penyampaian Writ Saman ini kepada kamu.

Bertarikh pada 28th November 2024  
t.t  
Penolong Pendengar Mahkamah Majlisret Johor Bahru

NOTIS WRT SAMAN ini dikeluarkan oleh Tetuan Young & Partners, peguambela Plaintiff yang berlandaskan di Suite 22.01 Level 22, Johor Bahru City Square, 108 Jalan Wong Ah Fook, 80000 Johor Bahru [Ruj.NKP/Hd/5906.H]

322 Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYSIA AT JOHOR BAHRU  
IN THE STATE OF JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM, MALAYSIA  
COMPANIES (WINDING-UP)  
NO. JA-28NCC-17-01/2025

In the matter of Section 464(1)(b) of the Companies Act 2016.

And

In the matter of Section 465(1)(e) read together with Section 466(1)(a) of the Companies Act 2016.

And

In the Matter of REI HOLDINGS SDN. BHD. (Company No: 199701036109 (451605-A))

BETWEEN

SHARIKAT SUKMA KEMAJUAN DAN PERUSAHAAN SDN. BHD. (Company No: 197201001188 (11708-W))

... PETITIONER

AND

REI HOLDINGS SDN. BHD. (Company No: 199701036109 (451605-A))

... RESPONDENT

ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

NOTICE is hereby given that a Petition for the winding-up of the above-named company by the High Court was, on the 24th day of January, 2025 presented by SHARIKAT SUKMA KEMAJUAN DAN PERUSAHAAN SDN. BHD. (Company No: 197201001188 (11708-W)) of No. 22-01, Jalan Padi Emas 1/4, Uda Business Centre, 81200 Johor Bahru, Johor.

AND that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at the High Court of Malaysia at Johor Bahru at 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday the 26th day of March, 2025; and any creditor or contributory of the said Company desiring to support or oppose the making of an order on the said Petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his counsel for that purpose; and a copy of the Petition will be furnished to any creditor or contributory of the said Company requiring the same by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is No. 22-01, Jalan Padi Emas 1/4, Uda Business Centre, 81200 Johor Bahru, Johor.

The Petitioner's Solicitors are Messrs Tan Vincent & Co., Advocates & Solicitors of No. 181A, Jalan NB 2/22, Taman Nusa Bestari 2, 79150 Iskandar Puteri, Johor.

- Signed -

Messrs Tan Vincent & Co.  
Solicitors for the Petitioner  
Advocates & Solicitors

No. 181A, Jalan NB 2/22  
Taman Nusa Bestari 2  
79150 Iskandar Puteri, Johor

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYSIA DI KUALA LUMPUR  
DALAM WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR  
(BAHAGIAN DAGANG)  
DALAM PERKARA KEBAKRANAN NO.: WA-29NCC-1437-08/2024

BERKENAAN: CHONG KOK HON (No. K/P: 6501-10-16-7383) ...PENUTANG PENGKAMAHAN

EX-PARTE: JOINT MANAGEMENT BODY

CHERAS SENTRAL (No. Pendaftaran: JMB781/2014) berlandaskan di Lot 700, 1st Floor, Cheras Sentral, M10 Jalan Cheras, 56000 Kuala Lumpur

AMBIK PERHATIAN bahawa suatu Petisyon Pemutihan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu di Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia di Kuala Lumpur oleh JOINT MANAGEMENT BODY, CHERAS SENTRAL (No. Pendaftaran: JMB781/2014) berlandaskan di Lot 700, 1st Floor, Cheras Sentral, M10 Jalan Cheras, 56000 Kuala Lumpur dan Mahkamah telah memintakan bahawa Petisyon Pemutihan tersebut diserahkan kepada kamu secara penyampaian ganti dengan menampalkan salinan Perintah Penyampaian ganti ini dan Petisyon Pemutihan ini di papan Notis Mahkamah Tinggi Kuala Lumpur dan menyebarkan secara Po Bertulis di alamat terakhir kamu yang diketahui iaitu No. 18, Persiaran Minang 4, Taman Minang Cheras, 56000 Kuala Lumpur dan dengan mengiklanan satu (1) Notis sekali di dalam akhbar tempatan bernama "The Sun" DAN AKHIRNYA DIPERTUNAKAN bahawa penempatan, pengposan dan pengiklanan tersebut hendaklah dianggap penyampaian sempurna dan cukup ke atas kamu empat belas (14) hari selepas tarikh akhir penempatan, pengposan dan pengiklanan tersebut.

DAN AMBIK PERHATIAN bahawa Petisyon Pemutihan ini akan didengar di hadapan Penolong Kanan Pendengar (Bahagian Dagang) di Aras 3 Tengah di Mahkamah Tinggi Kuala Lumpur pada 5 Mac 2025, pada jam 9.00 pagi dan kamu dikehendaki hadir pada hari tersebut dan sekiranya kamu gagal hadir, Mahkamah boleh memusulkan Perintah Kebakrakan ke atas kamu.

Petisyon Pemutihan ini boleh dipertika oleh kamu atau pemohonan kamu di Mahkamah ini.

Bertarikh 7 Januari 2025  
T.T  
Penolong Kanan Pendengar  
Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia  
Kuala Lumpur

Notis Iklan ini difailkan oleh Tetuan Mastura Partnership bagi pihak Pemutihan. Penghakaman yang dimajukan di atas yang mempunyai alamat penyampaian di K-5-3, Solaria Mont Kiara, Jalan Solaria Mont Kiara, 50480 Kuala Lumpur. Tel No: 03-6201 5566 & 03-6201 6655; Fax No: 03-6201 5500 Email: info@masturapartnership.com.my [Ruj: 18.09.1244.17 Cheras Sentral-Chong]

**MOHAMMED BEN SULAYEM** has doubled down on his war against swearing despite the vocal protests of Max Verstappen and other F1 drivers, demanding they "respect" the FIA and its wishes.

The 63-year-old launched a plan to stop drivers from swearing on the team radio during races last season, explaining that the stars of the sport had a duty as role models to young viewers and drawing a comparison between swearing racers and "rappers" – a comment that seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton slammed.

In line with the FIA's new stance, reigning champion Max Verstappen was hit with a community service punishment at the Singapore Grand Prix after swearing during the Thursday press conference. This verdict caused uproar in the

## Unpopular F1 rule set to stay

paddock and led to protests from the Dutchman.

"They are our ambassadors and must send clear messages, avoid such behaviours, and set an example," Mohammed stated.

"We cannot allow them to use 'swear words' as they must respect the FIA."

The FIA president also touched on the tweaks to the international sporting code. This year, Mohammed is looking to crack down on driver language, introducing significant new punishments.

The section addresses the following: "Any

words, deeds or writings that have caused moral injury or loss to the FIA, its bodies, its members or its executive officers, and more generally on the interest of motorsport and on the values defended by the FIA."

Following the regulation changes, drivers can be fined between £34,000 (RM187,000) for their first offence and £101,000 (RM555,000) for their third offence. Alongside the financial penalty, there is also a potential sporting cost.

Repeat offenders could be hit with a one-month suspension from racing and a deduction of

championship points.

This would have disastrous consequences on a title challenge should an F1 driver suffer such a fate.

"I experienced that and also wanted to succeed, but discipline is very important," Mohammed continued. "We are not here to punish anyone; we are here to promote good sport and set an example."

"If athletes use 'swear words', children will not want to follow that sport, and their parents will advise them to stop watching it, and this must be avoided."

"If they want to say those words, let them, it's not our business, but they should not use the FIA platform." – Express Newspapers

### SHORTS

#### Jasprit blow for India

**INDIA'S** pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been ruled out of the Champions Trophy after failing to recover from a lower back injury in time for the tournament, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) announced yesterday.

Jasprit, the highest wicket-taker in the recent Test series with Australia which India lost 3-1, had back spasms during the final Test in Sydney last month, which also ruled him out of a five-match T20 international series with England.

His absence will be a major blow to India, with the 31-year-old widely considered one of the best all-format fast bowlers in the sport.

"Fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah has been ruled out of the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy due to a lower back injury. The men's selection committee has named Harshit Rana as Jasprit's replacement," the BCCI said in a statement.

Harshit has played two ODIs, both of which came against England this month, picking up four wickets.

The BCCI added that spinner Varun Chakravarthy, who took 14 wickets in a five-match Twenty20 series against England in January and February, would replace batter Yashasvi Jaiswal.

India are in Group A in the Champions Trophy and meet Bangladesh in Dubai on Feb 20, before taking on defending champions and rivals Pakistan and ending their group campaign against New Zealand.

#### Defeat won't hurt if we win Champions Trophy: Duckett

**ENGLAND** opener Ben Duckett said yesterday even a 3-0 one-day series loss in India will not affect the team's morale because they are focused on winning the Champions Trophy title.

The tourists will clash with India in the final one-day international in Ahmedabad overnight after the hosts took an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The ODIs come ahead of the 50-over Champions Trophy starting Feb 19 in Pakistan and Dubai.

"We have come here for one thing and that is to win the Champions Trophy," said Duckett.

"We still believe we can do that. It'll be completely different conditions, all different teams we are playing against."

England, led by Jos Buttler, begin their Champions Trophy campaign against Ashes rivals Australia in Lahore on Feb 22.

They are in Group B of the eight-team tournament with Afghanistan and South Africa as the other two sides.

"If we lose 3-0 to India, I don't care as long as we beat them in the final of the Champions Trophy," said Duckett, a left-hand batsman.

"If we do that, we probably won't look back on this if we do the business in that competition."

## Sabalenka shocked in Qatar

Belarusian world No. 1 joins Gauff on early flight home

**WORLD NO. 1** Aryna Sabalenka suffered a shock defeat in the second round of the Qatar Open yesterday.

The Belarusian was thwarted by Russian Ekaterina Alexandrova 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7-5) in a tense encounter lasting over two and a half hours.

This was Sabalenka's first match since losing the Australian Open final in three sets to Madison Keys in January.

Alexandrova has turned up in Doha in good form after claiming her fifth WTA title in Linz last week.

The 26th-ranked Alexandrova picked herself up after going one set down to level in the second – but not before an unscheduled appearance by an inquisitive four-legged feline spectator.

With the score at 2-2, 40-30 to Sabalenka, a cat

nonchalantly took centre stage, inspecting proceedings courtside before sauntering off via the player's entrance.

Alexandrova shrugged off the interruption to level the match, then held her nerve to force the deciding set to a tie-break which she took 7-5.

Sabalenka was back competing at the Qatar Open for the first time since 2022, having won the 2020 title in what is the first WTA 1000 event of the season.



Ekaterina Alexandrova celebrates after defeating Aryna Sabalenka (not pictured). – AFP/PIC

## Cummins, Starc, Hazlewood out of Champions Trophy

**AUSTRALIA'S** bid to win the Champions Trophy was dealt a major setback yesterday with their formidable pace attack of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood all ruled out.

Cummins (ankle) and Hazlewood (side and calf) were always unlikely to play, but Starc has also withdrawn for personal reasons.

Steve Smith will captain the team after standing in for Cummins during their two-Test thrashing of Sri Lanka this month.

The 15-man squad is also without all-rounder Marcus Stoinis, who retired from the 50-over game last week, and Mitchell Marsh who was previously omitted with a back issue.

"The squad has changed significantly over the past month on the back of some untimely

injuries and the retirement of Marcus Stoinis," said chief selector George Bailey.

"The upside of that is that we have been able to call on players who have had international exposure and success over the past 12 months."

"A strong core of some of our most experienced players will provide a strong foundation in our attempt to win this edition of the Champions Trophy," he added.

"We have a range of options to shape the playing XI within the tournament depending on the opposition and conditions we face."

Starc was the only member of the "Big Three" fast bowling attack to play all seven Tests against India and Sri Lanka across the current Australian summer.

Alexandrova's reward was a last-16 date with Belgian Elise Mertens.

Also dumped out was Coco Gauff who lost in straight sets to Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk.

Former US Open champion Gauff blew a healthy advantage in the second set as Kostyuk sealed a 6-2, 7-5 victory and a third-round meeting with Poland's Magda Linette.

"Coco is an incredible fighter," Kostyuk said. "We always have incredible matches. I tried to stick to what I had to do."

Former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina eased into the last 16.

Rybakina, who lost to eventual winner Belinda Bencic in the Abu Dhabi semifinals last week, saw off Peyton Stearns in her opening match.

The fifth seed cruised to a 6-2, 6-4 win despite a late wobble to set up a third-round tie against Slovakia's Rebecca Sramkova who beat Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva 3-6, 6-3, 7-5.

Rybakina led 5-0 in the second set but missed three match points to take it 6-0 and then briefly fell apart as Stearns dragged the set back on serve.

She belatedly got over the line on her fifth match point.

Chinese seventh seed Zheng Qinwen joined Gauff in crashing out, though, beaten 6-4, 6-2 by Ons Jabeur.

Three-time Grand Slam finalist Jabeur claimed her first win against a top-10 opponent since last year's Madrid Open after struggling with injury.

The Tunisian will next face 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin.

Jasmine Paolini, last year's French Open and Wimbledon runner-up, also made a winning start to her campaign with a 6-3, 6-4 victory against Caroline Garcia in the second round.

American sixth seed Jessica Pegula negotiated a tricky second-round match, battling past Elina Svitolina 6-3, 7-6 (7-3), but ninth seed Badosa lost in straight sets to Amanda Anisimova.

Czech youngster Linda Noskova earned a last-16 tie against three-time defending champion Iga Swiatek with a 6-2, 6-3 win over Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva. – AFP

Bailey said he respected Starc's decision, with the reasons for his withdrawal to remain private.

"Mitch is deeply respected for his commitment to international cricket and the priority he places on performing for Australia," he said.

"His loss is of course a blow for the Champions Trophy campaign but does provide an opportunity to someone else to make a mark on the tournament."

The loss of Australia's long-time pace attack has opened the door for the likes of Spencer Johnson, Nathan Ellis and Ben Dwarshuis.

The eight-nation Champions Trophy, between Feb 19 and March 9, will be played in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates. – AFP



## Roma searching for solace in Europe

**ROMA** head to Porto in the Europa League tomorrow (4am Malaysian time) still looking to salvage a poor season after a disappointing January transfer window.

The capital city club sit ninth in the Serie A table despite a recent eight-game unbeaten run in the league and were dumped out of the Italian Cup last week by AC Milan.

They needed a 2-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt in their final league-phase match just to secure a top-24 finish in the Europa League and a knockout playoff round tie against Porto.

An irritated Claudio Ranieri, back for a third spell in charge as Roma's third coach of the campaign, pointed to financial fair-play rules when repeatedly asked by reporters why the club did not spend more in January in an attempt to revive their fortunes.

"I will tell the president to spend more money, take three or four years of suspension, that way we won't go to Europe, we won't go to the Champions League, and we'll all be happy," the 73-year-old told *Radio Rai* after Roma's 1-0 win at Venezia on Sunday, before cutting the interview short.

Roma fans were angered by the decision early in the season to sack popular coach Daniele De Rossi, who helped the team finish sixth in Serie A last term after a similarly bad start.

Ivan Juric did not last long as his successor and was dismissed with the club just four points above the relegation zone.

Roma have not finished in the top four of the Italian top flight since the 2017/18 season, but have enjoyed recent success in Europe.

They have reached at least the semifinals of the Europa League in three of the past four seasons, with the exception when Jose Mourinho took them to their maiden European title in the 2021/22 Conference League.

Porto have been in even worse form going into the first leg and are on a five-match winless streak in the Portuguese Primeira Liga after a 1-1 draw with leaders Sporting Lisbon on Friday.

But Porto have won their last two European ties against Roma, in the 2018/19 Champions League last 16 and in 2016/17 Champions League qualifying. — AFP

## Dembale stars again as PSG beat Brest

**OUSMANE DEMBELE** (pic) kept up his remarkable form in front of goal with a double as Paris Saint-Germain took a big step towards qualifying for the last 16 of the Champions League with a 3-0 win over French rivals Brest in the first leg of their playoff tie yesterday.

PSG were overwhelming favourites coming into this tie against opponents who had never taken part in European competition before this season, and there seems little prospect of Brest recovering from this loss in next week's second leg.

Vitinha opened the scoring for PSG at the Stade de Roudourou in Guingamp with a penalty just before the midway point in the first half, and Dembele swept in a second on the stroke of halftime before netting again on 66 minutes.

The French international forward now has 23 goals for the season, including 18 in 11 appearances over the last two months.

Indeed he has 10 goals in just the last four games, a run which includes a hattrick against Brest in Ligue 1 only 11 days ago.

He is irresistible just now, and Luis Enrique's side are unbeatable at the moment against French opponents,

against whom they have not lost since last May.

"Ousmane is full of confidence just now. He was good in 2024 and he is even better in 2025," said Luis Enrique.

The teams will meet again in the return leg of this knockout phase playoff tie next Thursday in Paris, with the winners advancing to a last-16 showdown with either Liverpool or Barcelona.

Assuming they make it through, PSG will feel they are capable of beating either of those sides on current form, although Enrique is taking nothing for granted.

"There is no chance we will treat the second leg like a training game," said the Spaniard. "Our objective is to qualify for the last 16 by winning the return."

Brest had not defeated the Parisians in any competition in 40 years, since January 1985, and have now lost 18 of the last 19 meetings between the teams.

They will have to try again next week to end that miserable run.

"It is disappointing and frustrating. I think 3-0 is harsh on us but PSG deserved to win," said Brest coach Eric Roy.

"Not many people will imagine us winning 4-0 at the Parc des Princes." — AFP



# Juve leave it late

*Unhappy Mbangula gives Italian giants advantage over PSV*

**SAMUEL MBANGULA** blasted his own performance in Juventus' 2-1 win over PSV Eindhoven in the Champions League even though it was his late winner yesterday which boosted the Italians' chances of reaching the last 16 of the last 16.

Winger Mbangula forced home his first goal in Europe's elite club competition eight minutes from the end at the Allianz Stadium to give Juve a lead to take to next week's second leg of their playoff tie with PSV.

The 21-year-old saved Juve from being stung by Ivan Perisic, who was a fan favourite at the Turin giants' fiercest rivals Inter Milan and cancelled out Weston McKennie's cracking first-half opener with a thunderous strike of his own 10 minutes after halftime.

However he was far from happy despite netting such an important goal, annoyed at himself and the passive way Juve reacted to Perisic's equaliser.

"Sure, I scored the winning goal, but I'm not happy with my performance. I know that I can do much better," said Mbangula to Sky in Italy.

"When we conceded we needed to keep playing the way we were beforehand because we were in control... With the quality we have in this

team if we had kept playing as we had done we could have scored a lot more goals.

"It's difficult to be happy when you know you weren't good enough."

Juve travel to the Philips Stadion next week with a good chance of setting up a last-16 showdown with Inter, who they face in Turin on Monday after a third win in as many matches in all competitions.

Either Inter or Arsenal await whichever of these two teams makes it through the playoffs.

Juve were the better team in the early stages and McKennie's thumping 34th-minute strike came in a first half in which the hosts were the better team but struggled to make the most of their supremacy.

And it was Perisic who levelled the scores in the 56th minute with a brilliant strike, the 36-year-old cutting inside new Juve arrival Lloyd Kelly before lashing a low strike in at Di Gregorio's near post.

Perisic was key to Inter winning the Serie A title in 2021 and ending Juve's dominance of Italian football, and he was clearly delighted at pegging back his old rivals.

But just as PSV looked to be escaping Turin with a draw Mbangula struck, confidently stroking home after Benitez pushed out Francisco Conceicao's low cross to give Juve a lead to defend in the Netherlands.

"Many things have changed, including the importance of the match, that it's over 180 minutes rather than one-off," Juve head coach Thiago Motta told Sky Sport Italia.

"It is a victory, a step in the right direction, but we need to be at the maximum level in the second leg too in order to face an attacking side that presses and plays really good football."

"We will be ready to achieve our objective, which is to carry on in the Champions League." — AFP/Agencies



Juventus' Samuel Mbangula (right) celebrates scoring their second goal with Dusan Vlahovic. — REUTERS/PIC

## Guirassy puts Dortmund in driving seat



Borussia Dortmund's Serhou Guirassy (front) eyes the ball during their Champions League playoff match against Sporting CP. — AFP/PIC

**SERHOU GUIRASSY** inspired Borussia Dortmund to a 3-0 win at Sporting Lisbon yesterday to help the German side take control of the Champions League playoff round tie.

Guinea international Guirassy became the competition's outright top scorer with his 10th goal after an hour before turning provider with a fine cross for Pascal Gross to net the second for last season's runners-up.

Karim Adeyemi struck the third as Dortmund's rapid counterattack sliced open the hosts at the Jose Alvalade Stadium.

Sporting controlled the first half but Dortmund stepped up several gears in the second to claim their first win under new coach Niko Kovac, in his second match at the helm.

Dortmund kept their first clean sheet in 14 matches across all competitions as they showed flashes of the quality which saw them stun Europe's giants last season.

"I am satisfied with our performance, especially when looking at the second half – it was a fully deserved victory," Dortmund head coach Kovac told uefa.com.

"The first half was tense, but in

the second half, we increased our pace, which allowed us to control the ball well, create good spells of play, and the goals we scored were fantastic.

"Although in the first half, it seemed we forgot that we needed to play faster – our football was too slow, and the opponents were always quick to respond to our actions.

"However, after the break, when we added speed, we soon created several good opportunities. So, as a coach, I am very satisfied with this, but there are still a few aspects we need to improve, and we can definitely do that."

Goalscorer Gross added: "That (win) was important. You could tell in the first half that we weren't brimming with confidence, but after the break, we played a very decent game."

Yesterday's defeat leaves Sporting facing an uphill challenge in the second leg in Dortmund next week.

"In Dortmund, we will go with the mentality of trying to win, we know it will be difficult, but we are Sporting and we will fight until the end," said Sporting defender Matheus Reis. — AFP/Agencies

## SHORTS

## Leeds stretch Championship lead

**DAN JAMES** scored twice as Leeds crushed Watford 4-0 to move five points clear at the top of the English Championship yesterday, taking their unbeaten run to 14 league matches.

Manor Solomon and Joel Piroe were also on target for Daniel Farke's men, who have now scored 13 goals without reply in their past three matches.

Watford's fifth straight home defeat increases the pressure on head coach Tom Cleverley.

The visitors took the lead in the 20th minute

when James seized on a misplaced pass from Edo Kayembe, sprinting into the box and slotting past Egil Selvik.

James smashed home again eight minutes later when Watford were caught by a rapid counterattack and Solomon made it 3-0 before halftime. Piroe added another just after the hour mark.

Leeds have 69 points after 32 matches, five more than second-placed Sheffield United, who have a game in hand.

"We started on the front foot with good chances but I have to say that Watford also had good situations in the first 10 minutes.

"They are a good side who are dangerous on the counterattack so it was important for us to score the first goal," Leeds manager Farke

told *BBC Radio Leeds*.

"I'm not sure the 4-0 reflects how difficult this game was. I predict not many teams will leave here with three points so I am pretty happy with the win and the scoreline and clean sheet."

## Gerrard backed for Rangers return

**LIVERPOOL** icon Steven Gerrard has been tipped for a dramatic comeback as manager at Rangers, with Philippe Clement's future under threat following the team's astonishing Scottish Cup exit.

Gerrard, 44, has recently become available after parting ways with Saudi Pro League club Al-Ettifaq.

A last-gasp penalty sealed Rangers' cup dismissal courtesy of second-division Queen's Park, sparking rumours Gerrard might reoccupy the managerial position he vacated in November 2021.

Rangers' predicament sees them lagging 13 points behind Scottish Premiership pace-setters and arch-foes Celtic, thus escalating the pressure on Clement.

Rangers legend Ally McCoist recently claimed he could see Gerrard returning: "It wouldn't surprise me if Steven Gerrard came back to Ibrox."

"He's obviously held in really high regard by the supporters because of the league title he won, and his next job is going to be vitally important for him."

"Things haven't gone according to plan for him after he left Rangers. A little bit like Frank Lampard going to Coventry - his next appointment was really important to him as well, so we'll see what Steven ends up choosing to do with his career."



Nottingham Forest's Chris Wood (centre) jumps over Exeter City's Ilmari Niskanen (right) during their FA Cup fourth round match. - AFP/PIIC

## Forest deny 10-man Exeter

**NOTTINGHAM FOREST** survived a huge scare to beat 10-man Exeter on penalties after a 2-2 draw yesterday, setting up an all-Premier League FA Cup fifth-round clash against Ipswich.

Chris Wood, Morgan Gibbs-White and Elliot Anderson all scored from the spot before fellow substitute Neco Williams wrapped up a marathon tie with the final kick of the contest.

Josh Magennis and Tony Yogane were on target for third-tier Exeter, but substitute goalkeeper Matz Sels saved Reece Cole's poor penalty and Angus MacDonald struck the crossbar as Forest prevailed 4-2.

Magennis scored twice for Exeter during normal time, giving the League one side an early lead, and then equalising at the start of the second period.

Ramon Sosa and Taiwo Awoniyi, who left the action in stoppage time on a stretcher after being attended to by medics for a long period, scored for Forest, third in the Premier League.

Exeter debutant Ed Turns was handed a red card for a high-high challenge on Gibbs-White three minutes from time, but Forest had to settle for an extra 30 minutes after Jota Silva thundered a shot against the crossbar.

Forest boss Nuno Espirito Santo took the opportunity to rest almost his entire regular starting XI after his squad had spent the week away at a warm-weather training camp in Dubai.

Brazilian midfielder Danilo was the sole survivor from the side that had demolished Brighton 7-0 at the beginning of the match.

Magennis gave Exeter a dream start in the fifth minute when Carlos Miguel

*Premier League high-flyers need penalties to down League One side*

spilled Demetri Mitchell's effort at his feet.

Ten minutes later Ibrahim Sangare spied Sosa, and the Paraguayan found the net, with Awoniyi putting Forest in front in the 37th minute.

Exeter equalised five minutes after the restart when Magennis rose highest at a corner to force Miguel into a point-blank save.

Magennis was on the rebound in a flash and Willy Boly turned it into his own net off a post.

It was one-way traffic in extra-time and Wood was twice denied by Exeter goalkeeper Joe Whitworth as Forest were taken all the way.

"We knew before the game it would be difficult. We didn't start the game well so I think after we came back well, we finished the game. It was just about ourselves and we made it difficult," Forest goalkeeper Sels told *ITV* via *BBC Sport*.

"You always need to be ready. I was ready and was helping the team in the right moments. It is a positive to go to the next round."

"Step by step - we have some important games in the league and then full focus on the cup. We try to continue as long as possible and we will see how far we can go."

Forest boss Nuno added: "It was a hard game. We started in a bad way but the response was good. We had another setback after half-time and it became so hard. Credit to Exeter."

"I am happy in the end that we are going through." - AFP/Agencies

### WINNING NUMBERS damacai

Draw Date: 12/02/25 (Wed) Draw No: 5873/25 Venue: WISMA GENTING, KL

#### 1+3D SUPER1+3D

1st Prize	6234
2nd Prize	3633
3rd Prize	1220

Starters	Consolation
5183 2422	9639 6111
7349 8275	9609 6529
8253 5054	3000 1296
6815 6779	7682 6147
1396 4774	7325 6684

#### 1+3D

Jackpot 1 RM17,905,160.50

6234 + 3633	3633 + 6234
6234 + 1220	1220 + 6234
3633 + 1220	1220 + 3633

Jackpot 2 RM625,319.70

Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

#### 3+3D

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
516 234 + MONKEY		RM230,000.00
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
063 633 + RABBIT		RM1,225,904.60
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
421 220 + HORSE		RM1,721,506.00

Starters	Consolation
325 183 542 422	179 639 186 111
957 349 718 275	909 609 576 529
698 253 525 054	743 000 331 296
446 815 516 779	557 682 086 147
181 396 244 774	577 325 296 684

#### 3D

1st Prize	234
2nd Prize	633
3rd Prize	220

#### 3D

Jackpot RM754,153.60

234 + 633 + 220	633 + 220 + 234
234 + 220 + 633	220 + 234 + 633
633 + 234 + 220	220 + 633 + 234

Winning combination matches the Top 3 Prizes in any order.

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### TOTO SPORTS TOTO RESULTS

DRAW NO: 5926/2025 DATE: 12/02/2025 (WED)  
STM LOTTERY SDN. BHD.  
19690100090 (84203)

#### TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

1st Prize	8415
2nd Prize	4516
3rd Prize	1773

Special	Consolation
5108 2506	3344 7291
4397 4304	4644 8333
4054 2646	2760 3948
4621 9634	7709 1950
3520 5960	2310 5538

#### 4D JACKPOT

Jackpot 1 RM 3,645,517.73

8415 4516	4516 8415
8415 1773	1773 8415
4516 1773	1773 4516

Jackpot 2 RM 297,030.59  
Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

#### 4D Zodiac

1st Prize	8415	+	GOAT
2nd Prize	4516	+	
3rd Prize	1773	+	
4th Prize	Special Prize	+	
5th Prize	Consolation Prize	+	
6th Prize	Any 4D drawn number		

#### TOTO 5D & 6D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

5D	1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH	6TH
	6 9 7 2 1	9 7 5 8 6	5 6 4 2 9	9 7 2 1	7 2 1	2 1

6D	1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
	1 5 4 8 3 9	1 5 4 8 3	1 5 4 8	1 5 4	1 5

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SUPREME 7	10 22 27 41 47 58
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Jackpot RM 19,133,417.70

POWER 6	7 18 23 32 34 54
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Jackpot RM 8,528,582.41

STAR 6	2 11 13 14 16 22 + 34
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Jackpot 1 RM 3,580,273.92

Jackpot 2 RM 450,164.82

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## RESULTS &amp; STANDINGS

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE** (Knockout phase playoffs, 1st leg): **Brest 0 Paris Saint-Germain 3** (Vitinha 21-pen, Dembele 45, 66), **Juventus 2** (McKennie 34, Mbongula 82) **PSV Eindhoven 1** (Perisic 56), **Manchester City 2** (Haaland 19, 80-pen) **Real Madrid 3** (Mbappe 60, Diaz 86, Bellingham 90+2), **Sporting 0 Borussia Dortmund 3** (Guirassy 60, Gross 68, Adeyemi 82).

**ENGLISH FA CUP** (4th round): **Exeter 2** (Magennis 5, 50) **Nottingham Forest 2** (Sosa 15, Awoniyi 37) – Forest win 4-2 on pen.

**CHAMPIONSHIP**: Coventry 1 QPR 0, Derby 0 Oxford 0, Portsmouth 2 Cardiff 1, Watford 0 Leeds 4, Norwich 0 Preston 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	32	20	9	3	66	19	69
Sheff Utd	31	20	6	5	43	22	64
Burnley	31	16	13	2	37	9	61
Sunderland	31	16	11	4	47	28	59
West Brom	31	11	14	6	41	28	47
Blackburn	31	13	6	12	35	41	45

## Shah Firdaus set to compete in keirin, sprint events despite injury

**NATIONAL** track cycling ace Shah Firdaus Sahrn (below) is set to compete in the keirin and sprint events at the Asian Cycling Championships (ACC) 2025 at the National Velodrome in Nilai from Feb 21-27 despite injuring his knee in an accident during training recently.

National track cycling head coach Harnizam

Basri said that based on the injuries sustained, the 29-year-old Shah Firdaus should be able to compete in both events.

However, Shah Firdaus' fitness level will be reassessed by the coaches after the keirin event, which is scheduled to be held on Feb 22, before deciding whether or not he will compete in the

sprint event.

"Shah suffered injuries to the patella and below his knee. So far, we have listed him for the two events," he told *Bernama* when contacted.

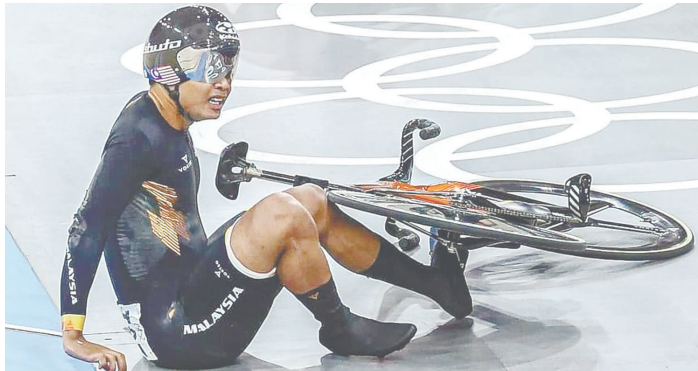
The local media had previously reported that the national Olympian is still undecided about competing in the championships.

Harnizam also said that several new faces who shone in the President's Cup earlier will also be competing in the ACC 2025.

"For this edition, we have listed Mohd Akmal Nazimi Jusena for the team sprint, replacing Umar Hasbullah, who has been placed as a reserve.

"Meanwhile, in the women's category, we are fielding Nurul Alyssa Farid in three events - sprint individual and team as well as keirin," he said.

In the 2024 edition, which was held in New Delhi, India, Malaysia bagged two golds, two silvers and a bronze to finish third overall behind Japan and China. – *Bernama*



## Malaysia lose opening tie

National mixed team fall to Hong Kong in BAMTC 2025

**MALAYSIA** got off to a losing start in the 2025 Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championship (BAMTC) after going down 3-2 to Hong Kong in a Group B match at the Qingdao Conson Sports Centre in Qingdao, China yesterday.

Mixed doubles pair Hoo Pang Ron-Cheng Su Yin failed to get the ball rolling for Malaysia when they went down 21-17, 17-21, 11-21 to Hong Kong's Tang Chun Man-Ng Tsz Yau in 49 minutes.

Women's singles shuttler K. Letshanaa levelled the tie at 1-1 when she fought to a 21-18, 21-18 win over Saloni Samirbhai Mehta.

Hopes of men's singles player Justin Hoh putting Malaysia ahead were dashed when he lost 19-21, 16-21 to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu. All eyes were on women's doubles pair Go Pei Kee-Teoh Mei Xing to stop the rot but to no avail, as they lost 17-21, 14-21 to Yeung Nga Ting-Yeung Pui Lam.

With Hong Kong having already sewn up the tie at 3-1, Man Wei Chong-Tee Kai Wun defeated Hung Kuei Chun-Lui Chun Wai 21-13, 21-11 to

make the scoreline more respectable.

With the defeat, Malaysia find themselves rooted at the bottom of Group B with no points as Indonesia (one point) top the group while Hong Kong (one point) are second.

Indonesia defeated Hong Kong 5-0 on Tuesday.

Only the top two teams from each group will advance to the quarterfinals.

Malaysia will wrap up their Group B fixtures with a must-win game against Indonesia today.

In yesterday's other match, India launched its BAMTC campaign in style, thrashing Macau 5-0 yesterday and sealed its place in the quarterfinals.

The mixed doubles pairing of Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadya Variath – the recently crowned

National Games gold medallist – set the tone for India with a commanding 21-10, 21-9 victory over Leong Lok Chong and Weng Chi Ng, giving India a 1-0 lead in the Group D tie.

World No. 10 Lakshya Sen then took to the court in the men's singles match and comfortably defeated Pang Fong Pui 21-16, 21-12, extending India's lead to 2-0.

In the crucial third match, Malvika Bansod secured the tie for India with a straight-game (21-15, 21-9) win over Hao Wai Chan in 33 minutes.

As all five matches must be played at the group stage, MR Arjun and Chirag Shetty formed a scratch men's doubles pair and comfortably defeated Vong Kok Weng and Pui Chi Chon 21-15, 21-9.

In the fifth and final match, India's premier women's doubles duo of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand delivered a dominant 21-10, 21-5 victory over Weng Chi Ng and Pui Chi Wa, sealing a comprehensive 5-0 win. – *Bernama*/Agencies

## JDT close in on ACLE knockouts

**JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM'S** (JDT) new defensive signing Alvaro Gonzalez scored two goals to give them a 2-1 victory over Australian side Central Coast Mariners and put the Southern Tigers one step closer to the knockout stage of the 2024/25 Asian Champions League Elite (ACLE).

In the match held at Industree Group Stadium in Gosford, Australia, Hector Bidoglio's men displayed an energetic performance from the start, creating more chances than the home team.

Relentless attacking pressure forced Central Coast Mariners goalkeeper Dylan Peraic Cullen into a crucial mistake at the end of the first half when he fouled Malaysia's prolific forward, Arif Aiman Mohd Hanapi, who was through on goal.

Following a VAR (Video Assistant Referee) review, the referee decided to send Dylan Peraic off for denying Arif Aiman a clear goalscoring opportunity, leaving the hosts a

man down.

JDT were awarded a free kick from the incident, and Bergson Da Silva found the net after reacting quickly to Hebert's shot, which had struck the post. However, the goal was disallowed after a VAR review confirmed Bergson was offside.

Early in the second half, Bergson came close again in the 50th minute, but his shot was denied by Central Coast Mariners' substitute goalkeeper



Adam Pavlesic.

JDT's breakthrough finally came in the 64th minute, when Alvaro calmly slotted home Arif Aiman's cross, marking his first goal for the club.

However, their lead was short-lived as Central Coast Mariners substitute Alou Kuol equalised just six minutes later.

JDT's winner came in the 79th minute, with Alvaro once again scoring, this time connecting a powerful header from Hebert's cross to give the Malaysian champions a 2-1 win.

The win earned JDT three points to climb to fifth place in the East Zone group, which has 12 teams.

The Southern Tigers will next host South Korean club Pohang Steelers at Stadium Sultan Ibrahim on Feb 19 for their final group match.

Only the top eight teams after eight league-stage matches will progress to the Round of 16. – *Bernama*

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Draw No: 163/25 Date: 12/02/2025

### 4D Classic

1st Prize	<b>6911</b>
2nd Prize	<b>2273</b>
3rd Prize	<b>5401</b>

SPECIAL	CONSOLATION
<b>6701 0236</b>	<b>9049 1171</b>
<b>8202 4194</b>	<b>5920 7576</b>
<b>9263 7143</b>	<b>7331 2627</b>
<b>2398 7723</b>	<b>8507 6692</b>
<b>5282 0892</b>	<b>6084 6057</b>

### 4D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 **RM10,965,668.53**  
**PARTIALLY WON**

<b>6911 + 2273</b>	<b>6911 + 5401</b>
<b>2273 + 6911</b>	<b>2273 + 5401</b>
<b>5401 + 6911</b>	<b>5401 + 2273</b>

Jackpot 2 **RM184,830.97**  
**PARTIALLY WON**

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RM1,000 EVERY DAY for 20 years

**2nd Prize**  
RM1,000 EVERY DAY for 100 days

### Jackpot Gold

Jackpot 1 **RM11,831,277.44**  
Jackpot 1 - Group 1 + Golden Number

Jackpot 2 **RM100,000.00**  
Jackpot 2 - Group 2 + Golden Number

GROUP 1	<b>1 1 7 3 0 1</b>
GROUP 2	<b>1 1 7 3 0</b> OR <b>1 7 3 0 1</b>
GROUP 3	<b>1 1 7 3</b> OR <b>7 3 0 1</b>
GROUP 4	<b>1 1 7</b> OR <b>3 0 1</b>
GROUP 5	<b>1 1</b> OR <b>0 1</b>

OR **7 3**

**GOLDEN NUMBER** **1 9**

All jackpot amounts stated above are for this Draw. Subject to T&Cs of the Scheme. Please visit to [www.magnum4d.my](http://www.magnum4d.my) for more info. THE BIGGER PLAY IS TO PLAY RESPONSIBLY.





# the Sun Sports

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**Forest deny 10-man Exeter**

Story on page 30

# City implode again

*Stones reveals Guardiola's 'take accountability' message after latest collapse*

**M**ANCHESTER CITY'S John Stones admitted that he was "angry and frustrated" after his side's late defeat to Real Madrid, revealing that Pep Guardiola had told his players to "take accountability" after the latest collapse.

The 3-2 defeat in the first leg of a mighty Champions League playoff tie had a familiar feel as the holders came from behind to snatch a late victory and the hosts imploded again.

Guardiola's side have squandered winning positions repeatedly across a campaign that has seen them in stuttering form both domestically and in Europe, and they led 2-1 here after Erling Haaland struck for a second time from the penalty spot 10 minutes from time.

But Brahim Diaz, once of the Manchester club, equalised soon after before Jude Bellingham snatched a one-goal advantage in the tie in stoppage time after another defensive error.

And Stones admitted that he and the rest of the squad needed to look at themselves to solve the recurrent failings.

"I don't know how to put it into words straight away," Stones told *Amazon Prime*, citing the 5-1 defeat to Arsenal as another recent performance in which Manchester City had shown complacency.

"It's so raw and frustrating for everyone. We were right in the game until so late on, and then two situations happen and we end up conceding."

"It's frustrating as a defender to come away with that result. Angry and frustrated is what I can say."

"Honestly, I haven't got the answer. We need to see games out better, that's for sure."

"The manager has said to us that we need to take accountability for what we do on the pitch, and I think we do. These bad moments happen in games."

Manchester City only narrowly avoided a group stage exit from the competition, requiring a win over Club Brugge in their final fixture in the revamped league phase to set up this two-legged tie.

They will head to the Spanish capital next week

Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe (right) in action with Manchester City's Josko Gvardiol during the Champions League knockout phase, first leg playoff match yesterday. - REUTERS/PIC



needing to overturn the deficit to set up a Round of 16 clash against either Atletico Madrid or Bayer Leverkusen.

"Such a situation will have come as a real disappointment after a performance that was improved in parts."

"We had a great opportunity to go to the Bernabeu 2-1 up, and we go now needing a goal to level when we get there," Stones added.

"We need to stay positives and, as the manager says, hold ourselves accountable."

"I think how we started the game, we were right on top. We know the quality that Madrid have got. What happened is avoidable from us as the XI on the pitch."

"We've got to do better, it's as simple as that. We

have to keep a positive mentality and look forward. We've got another 90 minutes to put things right."

Real Madrid boss Carlo Ancelotti put his side's success, one of many they have pulled off in this competition in recent years, down to "character and personality".

"I think it was a complete game in all aspects, beyond criticism from my part," Ancelotti told *Movistar Plus*.

"Everyone worked hard. We had a lot of chances. We didn't give up when we were behind. It was a well-rounded, unblemished performance. I think we deserved the win."

"We defended well, with a compact block... they took the lead with a penalty but up front our

players were very effective.

"They could have been a bit more accurate, but they generated a lot of chances with mobility, teamwork and individual quality."

Ancelotti was not surprised his side were able to deliver such a performance but played down their advantage, urging them to keep focused and not be overconfident in the second leg.

"The result is a trick result. You've won, it can make you lower your arms, believe that you don't have to come back and we can't fall into that trap," the Italian added.

"You have to prepare well, as we did today, with the same focus, quality and sacrifice, just like tonight, which was a great performance." - The Independent/Reuters