



## Concern over abuse of magic mushrooms

Drug researcher warns of potential harm as hallucinogenic fungi gain popularity among young users and vapers.

Report on  
page 5

## Two Chinese schools surviving on support from other races

SJK (C) Kong Min in Kedah and SJK (C) Kong Aik in Perlis receive total of 33 new Malay and Indian pupils.

Report on  
page 3

## Seven support groups launch childhood cancer coalition

Initiative dedicated to improving care and outcomes for young patients battling disease.

Report on  
page 4



**FIRST-DAY BLUES ...** A tearful Year One pupil being consoled by his teacher at Sekolah Kebangsaan Sultan Ismail 1 in Kota Bharu at the start of the new academic year yesterday. – **BERNAMAPIC**

# Affordable homes for estate workers

Project made possible with RM40m from federal govt, RM35m from Selangor govt, 20ha land provided free by Berjaya Corp Bhd and PR1MA acting as implementing agency.

Report on  
page 2

# RM75m housing project for estate workers launched

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**BESTARI JAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on Saturday officiated at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Harmoni Madani People's Residency Bestari Jaya project, a RM75 million housing initiative aimed at providing affordable houses for estate workers in Selangor.

The project, a collaboration among federal and state governments, PR1MA and Berjaya Corporation Berhad, will see 245 single-storey terrace houses built for estate workers from Ladang Mary, Ladang Nigel Gardner, Ladang Bukit Tagar, Ladang Sungai Tinggi and Ladang Minyak.

Anwar said the project has been designated as a model for housing in estates in the country as its development reflects strong cooperation between federal and state governments and the private sector.

"The initiative will ensure the welfare of estate workers by providing them with comfortable and secure housing," he said, emphasising his commitment to ensuring proper housing for estate workers.

"The estate workers here are 90% from the Indian community and have waited for decades for proper housing. This project is meant to uplift their standard of living. They don't need large houses but affordable ones that are comfortable and provide a conducive environment for their children to study."

He said the government would look after all communities whether Malay, Chinese, Indian or others, without being swayed by divisive political rhetoric.

He added that helping one community does not mean sidelining another.

The houses, priced at RM45,000 per unit, are heavily subsidised from their estimated market value of RM300,000 each.

Of the total RM75 million development cost, the federal government has subsidised RM40 million and the state government RM35 million, while Berjaya Corporation provided the 20ha plot of land for free. PR1MA has been appointed as the implementing agency for the project, which is expected to be completed by 2027.

Anwar said the successful launch is the result of negotiations, discussions and mutual respect among all parties.

He praised the public-private partnership, particularly the collaboration with Berjaya Corporation founder and adviser Tan Sri Vincent Tan who donated the land.

"Tan's donation has helped reduce the cost, and this is a good example of successful

► Collaboration among federal and state govts, PR1MA and Berjaya Corporation Berhad to feature construction of 245 single-storey terrace houses



Anwar, accompanied by Tan (third from left) and Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming (second from left) viewing a model of houses during the launch of the Harmoni Madani People's Residency Bestari Jaya project in Selangor yesterday. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

cooperation between the private sector, federal and state governments. With proper management and firm commitment, we can make our country better for all her people."

Tan said the 20ha donation would ensure there is ample space to build the houses and necessary facilities.

"The federal and state governments have confirmed that the land will be used for residential purpose and developed complete with gardens and other amenities. We are happy to contribute because some of the residents were once our plantation workers."

"Although we had sold the plantation, we remain committed to supporting the workers by providing this land."

Tan said the project is in line with the mission of his foundation Yayasan My First

Home, which aims to support more people to become house owners.

He said it is essential that low-income groups in the country have the opportunity to purchase a house.

"For those receiving these homes, it is truly a dream come true. If more plantation owners take the initiative to build proper housing for estate workers, it would greatly improve their quality of life, allowing them to stay in their homes even after retirement."

"This project serves as a strong example, and we are proud to have provided the land. As for future developments, we have plans to undertake similar projects and collaborate with the Selangor government to build more affordable houses to meet the needs of the community."

## 15 M'sian job scam victims to be given consular help

**BANGKOK:** The Malaysian embassy in Bangkok will provide consular assistance for 15 Malaysians rescued from job scam syndicates in Myanmar, who are currently housed at the Fort Vachiraprakan military camp in northern Thailand.

Charge d'Affaires ad interim of Malaysia to Thailand Bong Yik Jui said the Malaysians, aged between 21 and 68, including three women, were among 261 individuals rescued and deported to Thailand last Wednesday.

He said all the Malaysians are safe. Bong said a consular officer, Marwan Mustafa Kamal, has been tasked with visiting and providing the necessary assistance to them.

"Marwan is scheduled to meet Kingkan Choopitakpaopong from the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Division under the Social Development and Human Security Ministry to discuss the repatriation of the Malaysians."

"We have received approval from Thai authorities to visit the victims in Mae Sot."

"We will verify their identities, contact their next of kin and facilitate their repatriation to Malaysia."

He said the Malaysian embassy would continue to work closely with the Thai authorities.

It was reported last Wednesday that 15 Malaysians were among foreign victims of job scam syndicates in Myawaddy, Myanmar, rescued by Myanmar authorities and sent to Thailand for further processing and eventual repatriation to their home countries.

They were rescued from KK Park and Shwe Kokko, two border towns notorious for human trafficking activities. — Bernama

## 'Acts threatening harmony unacceptable'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Any act or statement that could threaten racial and religious harmony in the country is unacceptable, said National Unity Minister Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang.

He said as a multiracial country, all Malaysians must nurture peace by avoiding any statement or act that could offend the sensitivities of others.

"We must put an end to such acts," he said in a post on X, in response to a widely circulated post on social media about a maize seller making a sales announcement with racial undertones.

He urged Malaysians to uphold the *Rukun Negara* as a daily practice.

"We should instil a spirit of mutual respect and understanding among us all" — Bernama

## Malaysian economy on solid footing, says DPM

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Malaysian economy is on solid footing and the Madani government remains committed to driving sustainable and competitive economic growth to ensure the well-being of the people, particularly in rural areas, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

He said this was reflected in Bank Negara Malaysia's quarterly bulletin for the fourth quarter of 2024, which showed that the economy grew by 5% in the final quarter of 2024 and recorded an overall annual growth of 5.1%, compared with 3.6% in 2023.

He said the figures reflect the resilience of the national economy and the effectiveness of government policies in fostering sustainable and competitive growth.

"This success must translate into direct benefits for the people, including greater job opportunities, the expansion of new

businesses, improved infrastructure and an overall better standard of living, especially for rural communities and *Bumiputera*, which are the backbone of the nation," he said in a post on his Facebook page.

He said with more than eight million Malaysians residing in rural areas, the Madani government is committed to enhancing basic infrastructure, clean water supply, electricity and internet access.

To strengthen the economic position of *Bumiputera*, Ahmad Zahid, who is also rural and regional development minister, said the government would improve access to strategic financing through agencies such as Mara.

He added that through the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Council, the government is committed to producing a highly skilled workforce to meet the demands of rapidly expanding industries in automation,

artificial intelligence, renewable energy and smart engineering.

He highlighted the vast potential of the *halal* industry as a key driver of Malaysia's economy, underscoring the need to strengthen the nation's position as a global *halal* hub by enhancing the *halal* ecosystem, expanding export markets and increasing the participation of *Bumiputera* entrepreneurs in international trade.

"This is a strategic move to boost Malaysia's competitiveness in a global sector valued at an estimated US\$3 trillion (RM13.3 trillion)."

He also expressed hope that the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign would serve as a catalyst to strengthen the tourism industry, with a focus on ecotourism, agro-tourism, Islamic tourism and cultural tourism to attract investments and increase the number of high-value tourists.

Ahmad Zahid said the government's ongoing efforts to support the people are reflected in a sharp rise in job opportunities, with private sector labour demand exceeding 9.01 million for the first time since 2018.

"This shows a strong economic recovery after a period of political uncertainty and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic."

"It also reflects renewed investor confidence and the strengthening of Malaysia's economy. I am confident that the country is now on a solid path towards sustainable and inclusive growth."

"Achieving this success requires strong collaboration between the government, the private sector and the people so that the benefits of economic growth can be shared by all. Together, we will drive Malaysia towards a brighter and more prosperous future, *Insha-Allah*." — Bernama



# Chinese schools rely on pupils of other races to stay open

➤ Low enrolment due to families leaving rural areas for better opportunities renders some classes with only Malay, Indian attendance

■ BY HARITH KAMAL  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** As the new school year begins, two Chinese primary schools in Malaysia are facing a shortage of Chinese students and are relying on enrolling pupils from other ethnic groups to remain open.

Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina (SJK (C)) Kong Min in Tawar, Kuala Ketil, Kedah and SJK (C) Kong Aik in Mata Ayer, Perlis, have welcomed a combined total of 33 new pupils this year, none of whom are Chinese.

SJK (C) Kong Min school committee chairman Xu Weizheng added that last year, the school had one Chinese student and another of mixed Chinese-Malay parentage, with the rest being Indian and Malay pupils.

"This year, we have 13 new pupils, but none are Chinese."

Xu attributed the decline to younger Chinese families leaving

Tawar for better opportunities elsewhere.

"Most of the young and able Chinese have moved away, leaving only the elderly behind."

"Our survival now hinges on the support of non-Chinese families in their respective districts."

Kedah Dong Lian Hui (Association of Chinese School Committees) president Zhuang Jun Long said parents from other ethnic groups choose Chinese schools as they value the culture and quality of education.

"It is becoming increasingly common for under-enrolled Chinese schools to depend on non-Chinese communities."

"As long as school committees maintain their characteristics, teach in Mandarin and promote Chinese cultural values, their progress will not be affected."

The situation is similar at SJK (C) Kong Aik.

Its principal Liang Yong Xiang

reported a steady decline in Chinese enrolment over the years, which has now dropped to zero.

School committee chairman Lin Hui Chu linked the trend to the demographic makeup of Mata Ayer, where the local Chinese population is much smaller than other ethnic groups.

"Chinese pupils have gradually become the minority in our school, but we remain committed to our mission of providing quality education. Mandarin is still our medium of instruction and we require all pupils to speak it in school."

Lin stressed that as long as parents are willing to enrol their children, the school will continue to promote and preserve Chinese education.

Athirah Ab Razak, 37, from Kajang in Selangor, who enrolled her daughter at SJK (C) Bandar Kajang II, is convinced it is the best choice for her child's development.

"I chose the school because I believe it instils strong discipline in students."

"I also want my child to master multiple languages. One day, I'd like her to learn Tamil as well."

"I think a lot of the negative perceptions are from people who have never experienced a Chinese

education system firsthand. In my daughter's school, there is so much respect for other races and religions."

What impressed Athirah the most was the quality of education and the cultural values taught.

"The school is very particular about education and holds regular reading sessions to help students improve their Mandarin."

"The discipline is strict but effective, and the facilities, such as the classrooms and toilets, are well-maintained. It's wonderful to see my daughter thrive in such a positive environment."

She added that attending a Chinese school has not diminished her daughter's Malay identity.

"My daughter speaks Malay very well, so I don't see any issue."

"We need to break the stigma that Chinese schools are unsuitable for non-Chinese students."

"They are excellent institutions that treat all children well and provide high-quality education."

"I'm confident it will benefit her greatly in the future. Everything we're doing is for her future, her personal growth, academic development and even her discipline, which I believe is a result of the school's nurturing environment"

## Licence conversion via MyJPJ app now available

**PUTRAJAYA:** The public can now convert their probationary driving licence (PDL) to a competent driving licence (CDL) through the MyJPJ app starting today, according to Road Transport Department (RTD) director-general Datuk Aedy Fadly Ramli.

In a statement, he announced that the feature is expected to benefit 2.38 million eligible PDL holders.

"The introduction of this new feature aims to facilitate the public's application for a CDL online without the need to visit an RTD counter."

"PDL holders can apply for a CDL through the MyJPJ app anytime and anywhere using their smartphones."

Aedy Fadly explained that applicants need to download or update the app before logging in.

After selecting the relevant menus and completing the payment, they will receive a notification regarding their application status.

"The new CDL application feature through the MyJPJ app is easy, quick, time-saving, flexible and user-friendly." - Bernama

## RM13.5m allocated for housing projects

**JOHOR BAHRU:** The Malaysian Islamic Economic Development Foundation (Yapeim) has allocated RM13.5 million to build and repair 293 homes across Malaysia through its Sinar Lestari programme since 2020.

As of January, 199 projects have been completed, with 94 more ongoing.

In a statement, the foundation reported that from 1985 to 2024, it distributed RM710 million to 10 million recipients, focusing on economic development, entrepreneurship, education and community programmes.

At the Santuni Madani Yapeim event in Labis, Segamat on Saturday, the foundation also distributed RM316,000 in aid to the needy in Johor through its Community Development Project and Sinar Lestari programme.

This included RM150,000 for various community development initiatives, RM20,000 in financial aid to 200 schoolchildren, RM10,000 in food baskets for 100 families, RM500 each in disaster relief cash aid for 10 families and a RM5,000 donation to the Bandar Labis Mosque. - Bernama

## School session begins in Kedah, Terengganu and Kelantan

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Students in Kedah, Terengganu and Kelantan returned to school yesterday for the 2025/2026 academic year.

In Kedah, 349,966 students from 752 schools began the school year, including 200,574 primary and 149,392 secondary school students.

State education director Ismail Othman reported that the figure included 29,934 Year One pupils and 30,194 Form One students.

A check at Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Bukit Genting near Pendang found students happy to reunite with friends after the long holiday.

In Terengganu, 256,869 students, including 149,314 in primary schools and 107,555 in secondary schools, resumed classes.

Terengganu Education Department director Jelani Sulong said Year One enrolment had risen to 23,254, compared with 22,126 in the 2024/2025 academic session.

"Alhamdulillah, all students could begin their learning sessions at 506 schools, which are fully equipped with facilities."

"For the first week, no teaching activities will take place, only

orientation and introduction sessions to help students adjust to the school environment."

During a visit to Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina Chong Hwa Wakaf Tapai, he also said early schooling aid totalling RM36,224,100 had been distributed to 241,494 students from Year One to Form Five across the state during the school holidays.

Distribution for Form Six and Sijil Tinggi Agama Malaysia students will follow this month.

Meanwhile, Kelantan Education Department (Planning and Management Sector) Deputy Director Mat Lazim Mohamad confirmed 259,048 students from 595 schools have begun the 2025/2026 school session.

The total includes 22 schools affected by last year's floods, now operating smoothly.

Zulfakri Ismail, 45, who accompanied his seven-year-old son to SK Sultan Ismail 1 in Kota Bharu, said they arrived at 6.30am for the boy's first day of school.

"My son has been excited since last night and even reminded me to

wake up early."

"This morning, he was the first Year One student to arrive and received a token from the school."

Meanwhile, schools across the state have been advised to ensure students take precautions during

the upcoming monsoon transition next month to prevent health complications.

Mat Lazim stressed that this includes encouraging students to wear face masks and stay hydrated. - Bernama



**MEET AND GREET ...** Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Minister Datuk Armean Mohd Ali engaging with the public while attending the Madani Rahmah sales programme and consumer advocacy event at a parking area in Bandar Ramai Ramai, Sabah yesterday. - **BERNAMPIC**

## Do not treat emergency lanes as exclusive routes, says MHA

**KUALA PILAH:** The Malaysian Highway Authority (MHA) has reminded all road users not to treat emergency lanes as exclusive routes.

Its director-general Datuk Sazali Harun stressed that motorists, especially motorcyclists, must exercise caution when using emergency lanes to prevent crashes.

"It is crucial to understand that

emergency lanes are not designated for any specific group. The lanes are meant for all types of vehicles to stop in case of breakdowns, so extra caution is necessary."

He revealed that reports of fatal crashes involving motorcycles colliding with stationary vehicles are received almost daily.

"We are actively seeking solutions to

address this issue," he said.

Speaking at the Mini Karnaval Satu Pemimpin Satu Kampung (Santuni Madani) event in Kampung Terusan Seberang, Sazali said the introduction of smart lanes has improved awareness among motorcyclists.

"In the past, motorcyclists would react aggressively, sometimes even kicking other vehicles using the

emergency lane. Now, they understand that it is to be shared with everyone."

He said smart lanes, introduced in 2023, are only activated at specific times in areas prone to congestion. They are designated for light vehicles only, with heavy trucks prohibited.

Sazali also highlighted that the Santuni Madani event is part of MHA's community outreach initiative,

involving 160 personnel and strategic highway partners in activities such as painting buildings and clearing a cemetery in Kampung Terusan Seberang.

The village was selected and approved by the Implementation Coordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department through the Works Ministry. - Bernama



# Enhancing **healthcare** for children battling cancer

➤ New coalition aims to merge resources, raise awareness, advocate better policies and provide better support system for families, says group president

BY DEEPAKASHMI MANICKAM  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**KUALA LUMPUR:** In conjunction with International Childhood Cancer Day (ICCD 25), which fell on Saturday, seven Malaysian childhood cancer support groups launched Childhood Cancer Malaysia (CCM), a new coalition dedicated to improving care and outcomes for children battling the disease.

It comprises Childhood Cancer Support Association (Cakne), Sarawak Children's Cancer Society, Friend of Childhood Cancer Northern, Persatuan Kebajikan Pesakit Kanak-Kanak Hospital USM, Persatuan Sokongan Kanser Kanak-Kanak Terengganu, National Cancer Society Malaysia, and Childhood Cancer Association Malaysia.

CCM president Mohd Shah Awaluddin said the initiative merges resources, raises awareness, and advocates better healthcare policies for young cancer patients and survivors.

"Through CCM, we aim to bring together key players in childhood cancer care and amplify awareness, enhance resources, and improve outcomes for children battling cancer," he said, adding that it will promote awareness, advocate better healthcare policies, and enhance training for healthcare professionals and support groups.

Mohd Shah said CCM seeks to expand access to quality care nationwide and tackle the long-term challenges of childhood cancer survivors, including health, education and financial assistance.

He said childhood cancer remains a significant health concern in Malaysia, with some 1,000 new cancer-affected children diagnosed each year. Leukaemia, brain tumours and lymphoma are among the most common types affecting them.

While survival rates have improved due to advancements in treatment, Mohd Shah said there are challenges such as late diagnosis, limited access to specialised care, and financial burdens on families, with many children in rural and underserved areas facing obstacles in



Mohd Shah with Health and Environment Department director Dr Umi Ahmad (standing centre) and participants at the CCM launch at Perdana Botanical Garden yesterday. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN

obtaining timely treatment.

Mohd Shah said through the collective effort, CCM aims to bridge gaps in treatment access, and strengthen nationwide support systems for families affected by childhood cancer.

"Our vision is to have a future where every cancer-stricken child thrives with access to quality care and support. By working collectively, we can provide a more sustainable network that ensures no child fights alone."

Mohd Shah, who is also the father of a childhood cancer survivor, emphasised the challenges faced by families during and after treatment.

"The journey doesn't end after beating cancer. There are complications, and proper treatment and medication can take up to two or three years. Family plays an important role, but some families are left without support. That's where NGOs like us step in to provide a strong support system," he said.

Childhood Cancer International (CCI) president Rodney Wong praised CCM's establishment as a crucial multi-stakeholder initiative to support the childhood cancer community.

He called for global participation in sharing impactful initiatives, celebrating successes, breaking treatment barriers and supporting

ICCD 2025.

Wong said CCI is committed to uniting healthcare professionals, caregivers, and stakeholders to advocate greater awareness, facilitate capacity development, and promote the sharing of best practices in childhood cancer care.

Alongside the coalition's launch, Cakne launched Cakne Outdoors, an initiative to promote a healthy lifestyle among childhood cancer survivors.

Mohd Shah said Cakne Outdoors is more than just an activity-based programme.

"It's about rebuilding confidence, strength, and well-being for survivors who have fought through cancer. We want to encourage them to stay active and embrace a healthier lifestyle."

The organisation runs several initiatives to support childhood cancer patients, survivors, and their families, including "Kem Gaya Hidup Sihat", a programme promoting a healthy lifestyle post-treatment.

It also organises the "Program Literasi Digital", which equips survivors with digital skills, and "Program Bantuan Ekonomi", which offers financial assistance to individuals who have become disabled due to cancer.

Cakne also manages "Sajian Harapan Cakne", a TikTok channel that shares valuable nutritional tips and recipes for cancer patients.

## Centre aims to become gold, craft hub

**KOTA BHARU:** Taman Emas Malaysia (TEM) and the Malaysian Gold Academy were launched as a gold industry ecosystem centre, offering skills training, business space, and jewellery marketing for both local and international markets.

TEM chairman Zulkifli Idris said the initiative provides business space featuring 22 shop units, a traditional jewellery gallery, and a certified craft arts centre under the Malaysian Gold Academy.

"This academy is the first centre in Malaysia to receive recognition from the Skills Development Department under the COPTA (TVET Accreditation) Standard, further strengthening its status as the country's first jewellery craft education and tourism hub."

"The opening of TEM goes hand in hand with the Kelantanese culture, which is quite synonymous with buying and storing gold as an investment, with demand exceeding 500kg per month," he said after the TEM and Sadaqah Wall launch ceremony here on Saturday.

The Sadaqah Wall, established in collaboration with MBSB Bank and PayNet, provides visitors with a convenient way to give alms for charity.

Zulkifli said many skilled goldsmiths in Kelantan had passed down their craft and expertise for generations but lacked formal certification.

"Through this academy, we are providing an opportunity for those interested in gold craftsmanship to gain recognition, enabling them to work with larger companies or explore job opportunities abroad, including in Dubai."

He said the training programme was sponsored by MBSB Bank, the first financial institution to channel *zakat* assistance for underprivileged students enrolled in the academy's short-term training programme.

"Gold entrepreneurs in Kelantan are welcome to rent business space at TEM, where we offer reasonable rates."

"To date, eight of the 22 business spaces in the building have begun operating, with monthly sales surpassing RM200,000," he said. — Bernama

## Red onion project sprouts success

**ARAU:** The Perlis state government aims to cultivate 10ha of red onions over the next five years to reduce reliance on imports and strengthen food security in the state.

State Agriculture, Plantation, and Consumer Affairs Committee chairman Razali Saad said the pilot 2.27ha onion farming project, launched last year in Kampung Rambai, Padang Siding, Hutan Temiang, Oran, and Titi Tinggi, has shown promising progress.

He noted that the first harvest from the Titi Tinggi project produced 300kg of onions from 0.3ha of the total 0.4ha cultivation area.

"It is now in its second season with a target harvest of 500kg. The first batch of onions from Titi Tinggi was also showcased at the Malaysia Agriculture, Horticulture, and Agrotourism Exhibition," he said.

"The project has expanded to Kampung Rambai with 1ha, Hutan Temiang 0.58ha, and Oran 0.29ha," he said after visiting the Kampung Rambai project on Saturday.

"The state government, through the relevant departments, will continue providing incentives such as seeds, agricultural inputs, and infrastructure to support farmers and ensure the success of this project," he said. — Bernama

## 'Vanilla growing has income potential for farmers'

**ARAU:** Vanilla farming has the potential to become a new source of income for farmers in Perlis due to its high commercial value and suitability for small-scale cultivation, thus opening up opportunities for the public to venture into agriculture.

Perlis Agriculture, Plantation, and Consumerism Committee chairman Razali Saad said the state government will explore the best cultivation methods to support both the farming community and individuals interested in the agricultural sector.

"The state government is committed to strengthening the farming community. We also provide guidance to individuals interested in

vanilla cultivation, helping them turn it into a viable source of household income," he said after visiting the Vanilla Cultivation Project in Kampung Kubang Gajah recently.

He added that the vanilla planting project was the first in the state, and the state government would offer the necessary support to ensure its success.

Meanwhile, project operator Nurul Aimi Syazana Baba, 32, shared that she and her husband Zainudin Zainul Abidin, 38, developed an interest in vanilla cultivation after attending a seminar organised by the state government last year.

"At the seminar, a farmer named Jaafar

Mohamad was invited as a speaker. After the seminar, my husband and I reached out to Jaafar for advice.

"We later met with him, and following our discussion, we built a greenhouse and planted 100 vanilla saplings. The total cost of the greenhouse and saplings was about RM5,000, with each vanilla sapling priced at RM15."

Nurul Aimi Syazana said maintaining optimal humidity and temperature is crucial for vanilla plants to thrive.

She added that the first harvest is expected in about three years after the plants begin to flower, and once mature, they can be harvested annually. — Bernama



## Four cops injured in *parang* attack

**SUNGAI PETANI:** Four policemen suffered injuries to multiple parts of their bodies on Friday after being slashed with a *parang* while trying to restrain a man who ran amok in Taman Seri Astana.

Kuala Muda district police chief ACP Wan Azharuddin Wan Ismail said two of the injured personnel, both in their 20s, were allowed to go home after receiving treatment while the other two, in their 40s and 50s, are still in the hospital.

"I confirm that we have received a report on the incident."

He said the 32-year-old male suspect, who was shot during the incident, was pronounced dead while being treated at the Sultan Abdul Halim Hospital.

"As police were about to arrest him, he swung a *parang*, prompting the officers to open fire in self-defence."

He added that the case is being investigated under Section 307 of the Penal Code for attempted murder. — Bernama

## Woman found dead in house bathroom

**IPOH:** A woman has been found dead in the locked bathroom of a house in Taman Yuk Kwan near Batu Gajah.

Perak Fire and Rescue Department Operations Division assistant director Sabarodzi Nor Ahmad said his team received an emergency call from the victim's husband at 9.33am on Saturday.

He said a unit despatched by the department arrived at the scene three minutes later.

"They used special equipment to cut the lock to open the bolted door. They found the 44-year-old victim lying motionless. She was confirmed dead by medical personnel."

He added that the body was handed over to police for further action. — Bernama

## Couple held over burglary cases

**ARAU:** A husband and wife have been arrested by police under *Op Pintu* for suspected involvement in five housebreaking cases and one criminal intimidation case in Arau, and seven housebreaking cases in Kangar.

Arau district police chief Supt Ahmad Mohsin Md Rodi said the couple, aged 23 and 26, was detained on Feb 8, which led to the arrest of two men, aged 23 and 28.

Police also seized various items, including two gas cylinders, one lawnmower, two water pumps, one knife, one set of spanners, six ceiling fans, a long-sleeve black shirt, a pair of black trousers and a car.

"Checks found that the three male suspects had records related to drugs and crime while the urine test of the 26-year-old woman's husband was positive for methamphetamine." — Bernama

# Concerns over unregulated presence of magic mushrooms

► Purchase transactions done through social media and delivered via courier, allowing users to evade detection

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** The rise of magic mushrooms, also known by their scientific name *Psilocybe cubensis*, is

emerging as a serious concern in Malaysia's illicit drug landscape, said Universiti Sains Malaysia Centre for Drug Research senior lecturer and researcher Assoc Prof Dr Darshan Singh Mahinder.



**DAMAGE CONTROL ...** Firefighters preventing flames from spreading during a blaze that destroyed a house in Kampung Jalan Perak, Penang yesterday. — PIC COURTESY OF PENANG FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT

He said while traditionally used in spiritual practices, the hallucinogenic fungi has gained popularity among young users and vapers, raising concerns about their potential harm.

"While some countries, such as the US and Thailand, have legalised psilocybin, which is an active compound in the mushroom, for medical use, Malaysia has not. An unregulated magic mushroom market has serious consequences since the compound is a drug and could be trafficked and distributed within the country."

He said while there have not been official seizures of psilocybin, it could be because authorities are unclear about its prevalence.

"In addition to magic mushrooms, new psychoactive substances (NPS) are gaining traction among organised crime groups that exploit legal loopholes to distribute them."

"NPS, including liquid psilocybin used in vapes, are difficult to detect using standard drug tests, making them an attractive alternative for users seeking to avoid legal consequences."

He said unlike traditional drugs sold in alleys, magic mushrooms are often trafficked through social media and purchased via e-cash transactions, allowing users to evade detection.

He also said drug consumption impairs social functioning, distorts cognition and often leads users into criminal activities.

"At a societal level, drug abuse induces extreme fear as users may engage in violent and non-violent crimes," he said, noting that media reports frequently link violent crimes to individuals who test positive for drug use.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Public Health Medicine lecturer Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh said detecting psilocybin in the body requires specialised testing.

"Unlike amphetamines or opioids, magic mushrooms are not included in routine drug screenings, meaning individuals may pass standard tests despite consuming it," she said, adding that common symptoms of its consumption include hallucinations, agitation,

restlessness and delirium.

Repeated or high doses of psilocybin have been linked to cardiotoxic effects, including subendocardial fibrosis and coronary artery thickening.

"Even individuals without pre-existing heart conditions have reported dangerously high heart rates, reaching 150-160 bpm after consuming magic mushrooms."

She said the risks intensify when psilocybin is mixed with stimulants such as cocaine, ecstasy or amphetamines.

"Individuals with high blood pressure, heart disease or seizure disorders are particularly vulnerable. In rare cases, prolonged psychosis and fatal outcomes have been reported."

She emphasised that doctors should report cases of magic mushroom consumption to authorities, although confirming abuse remains challenging.

"Reporting is often based on clinical symptoms rather than direct test confirmation."

Darshan said drug addiction leads to marginalisation and discrimination, so those convicted of drug offences struggle with reintegration into society, often facing social stigma.

"Their families bear the burden as well, with many experiencing physical, psychological or even sexual abuse due to a loved one's drug dependency."

"We cannot rely solely on law enforcement to curb drug abuse. A collective effort is essential."

He urged authorities to shift from outdated, fear-based campaigns featuring prison doors and nooses to providing accurate and timely information about emerging drug trends through accessible outreach programmes instead.

He said the possession or sale of psilocybin is a serious offence under the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952.

He also said although its classification remains a topic of confusion, it took years for authorities to fully understand the dangers of certain stimulants.

"The same pattern could repeat with magic mushrooms if we do not act now."

## Kelantan records highest rate of drug abuse

**PADANG SERAI:** Kelantan has the highest rate of drug abuse in the country based on the ratio of every 100,000 residents, said Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

Terengganu is second, Perlis is third and Kedah is fourth, he added.

"These states share two major similarities. They are border areas, which could easily have smuggling routes, and have Malay Muslim majorities. But analyses were conducted based on data, not ethnicity."

"Pendang district in Kedah is the district with the highest cases, followed by Kuala Krai and Bachok in Kelantan," he said after officiating at

the National Anti-Drug Agency (Nada) community programme and the launch of the Anti-Drug Day Calendar at the Kulim Form Six College on Saturday.

He said drug abuse in the country is concerning and has been growing yearly, with statistics showing 137,176 individuals involved in drug abuse in 2022, 145,526 in 2023, and 192,857 in 2024.

"A total of 61% of drug addicts are aged between 15 and 39. This data was gathered from police, the Health Ministry, Nada and 55 private rehabilitation centres."

He added that methamphetamine and amphetamine-type stimulants were the drugs of choice, with

their use rising to 34.4% while *ganja* use rose to 63.4%, with 7,121 cases recorded.

Saifuddin also said enforcement measures have been taken, including strengthening border controls.

"This involves tightening border areas in Sungai Golok, Kelantan with the presence of special teams from Perak. Illegal entry points are being monitored to curb the smuggling of drugs."

The Kelantan government said it would hold an engagement session with stakeholders or related agencies to formulate an integrated plan to address the issue of drug abuse in the state.

State Youth, Sports, NGO and Community Unity Committee chairman Zamakhshari Muhammad said the state government is working with Nada, police and rehabilitation centres to overcome the issue.

"We are coordinating with the Drug Prevention Association to organise activities related to drug prevention and rehabilitation in Kelantan."

"We will continue to increase recreational activities to encourage young people to fill their time with useful things, in addition to continuing education and prevention efforts at all levels." — Bernama



# Immortalising heritage house

➤ Artists gather to paint 200-year-old structure before demolition to make way for development

**GEORGE TOWN:** A group of 23 artists of all ages have seized the opportunity to immortalise a more than 200-year-old Siamese heritage house in Pulau Tikus before it is demolished to make way for a commercial development project.

One of the artists, Owen Ow, 60, who frequently visited the house to create his

artworks, said yesterday was his last time painting the structure.

He said the two-storey house, located at Siamese Village, has unique features and sentimental value, with various flowering plants and Thai historical heritage.

"I always come here to paint. This is my last opportunity before the house is completely vacated. It's truly a shame, but that's the reality of development."

The Siamese Village, established 200 years ago, is the only heritage settlement of the minority community on Penang Island. This village is expected to disappear as developers transform it into a commercial area that includes hotels, Bernama reported.

Another artist, Koay Sheng Tat, 42, said it was

his first time painting the house, adding that he did not want to miss out on the chance to capture a memory of it on canvas.

He also said for the art community, the loss of such a historical site is deeply felt because it holds significant memories for the owners and the community.

"It's sad to see this old building being demolished and as a native of Penang, there's a sense of sorrow because it is part of our history. But we must realise that for urban development, some things have to be sacrificed. If we want the city to be more modern and beautiful, there's a price to be paid," he said.

Meanwhile, the second-generation heir to the house, Nai Ninn Sararaksh, 85, said the

premises had functioned as a community museum for the past five years, and his family had made various efforts to save it.

"It's not just a house, but also part of the identity and history of the local Siamese community. Why demolish history that has existed for nearly two centuries just to build another commercial building? Let this house be preserved as a heritage site so that people can learn about our culture and history," he said.

His son, Nai Boon Phrom Sararaksh, 49, said he and his family are appealing to the state government to intervene and save the historical house from being demolished.

He added that the house had been occupied by his family for five generations.



Mohd Khairudin with the vintage Jack Sparrow telescope from England that he said is extremely rare. — **BERNAMAPIC**

## Timeless treasures at vintage Sunday flea market in Seremban

**SEREMBAN:** Visiting the over 40-year-old Sunday flea market at Jalan Utam Singh feels like stepping back in time – it is filled with a variety of antique and vintage items rich in history, including brassware, home decor and watches.

Mohd Khairudin Darus, 65, who has been trading at the market for eight years, said the items on sale captivate antique lovers as they not only evoke memories but are also aesthetically pleasing.

He said items such as classic picture frames, vintage tableware, old sewing machines and classic clocks are among the "treasures" visitors can find.

"Most of the wares I have at my stall are from friends or relatives, who sell them to me because they know I deal in vintage goods."

"Such items have their own fans and collectors. Some enjoy just looking at them while others love to collect antiques to use as decorations," Mohd Khairudin said.

He added that the flea market receives many visitors, even from outside the state. Items in high demand include vintage tableware and home decor collections such as classic picture frames and antique vases, with prices ranging from RM10 and RM1,200.

"I even have an antique telescope like the one used by Jack Sparrow priced at RM1,200. The telescope is made of brass in England. It has high aesthetic value and is rare," he said, adding that

he obtained the telescope from a friend.

Veteran trader Cheah Ah Seng, 70, who has been selling at the market for over 30 years, said although the atmosphere is not as vibrant as it used to be, many traders have kept their businesses open due to their passion for antiques and loyal customers.

"We used to get more visitors, now there are fewer maybe because times have changed," said Cheah, who sells various vintage sewing machines and home decorations.

Visitor Nazira Ismail, 38, said the market is not just a trading place but a nostalgic location for the older generation and a place where the young can get to know more about items that were once in use.

"It's exciting to see old items such as antique brass irons that use charcoal for pressing clothes. Nowadays, you rarely see such things."

"My children are also thrilled to see the old items that were probably used by our ancestors. But we just look at them as these items are quite costly," said the mother of three.

She expressed hope that more young people would visit the market to enjoy the experience and appreciate the rich history the items represent.

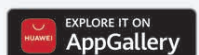
The flea market, which hosts over 20 traders, operates every Sunday from 7am to 1pm. Despite its short operating hours, it remains a key weekend attraction. — Bernama

## ENJOY A SEAMLESS READING EXPERIENCE.

Read our iPaper at <https://www.thesun.my/>



Or download **theSun** app  
on the AppStore or Google Play





# 18 dead in stampede to catch Kumbh Mela trains

➤ India railways minister orders 'high-level inquiry'

**NEW DELHI:** At least 18 people died during a stampede at a railway station here on Saturday night when surging crowds scrambled to catch trains to the world's largest religious gathering.

The Kumbh Mela attracts tens of millions of Hindus every 12 years to the northern city of Prayagraj.

The rush at the train station in New Delhi appeared to break out as crowds struggled to board trains for the event, which will end on Feb 26.

"I can confirm 15 deaths at the hospital. They don't have any open injury. Most (likely died from) hypoxia or maybe some blunt injury but that would only be confirmed after an autopsy," said Lok Nayak Hospital deputy medical superintendent Dr Ritu Saxena.

"There are 11 others who are injured. Most of them are stable and have orthopaedic injuries," Broadcaster NDTV reported three more dead from the stampede quoting an official of another hospital in the city.

Those dead were mostly women and children.

"I have been working as a coolie since 1981, but I have never seen a crowd like this," the *Times of India* newspaper quoted a porter at the railway station as saying.

"People started colliding and fell on the escalator and stairs" when a platform for a special train departing for Prayagraj was suddenly shifted, the porter said.

Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said a "high-level inquiry" had been ordered to find the causes of the accident.

Vaishnaw said additional special trains were being run from New Delhi to clear the rush of devotees.

Undeterred by the accident, crowds of devotees continued to throng the railway



Passengers eager to reach the gathering pack New Delhi Railway Station on Saturday. — REUTERS/SPIC

station yesterday with more police and railway protection forces deployed to control the flow of passengers.

"We are operating an unprecedented and record number of special trains for the ease of passengers. We are doing our best," said railways official Himanshu Shekhar Upadhyay.

Opposition parties, however, criticised travel arrangements for the festival and blamed the government for attempting a coverup, after they denied for hours that a stampede had occurred.

"They are worried about their image at the cost of the faith of crores of people who are visiting Maha Kumbh," Congress party leader Pawan Khera told ANI news agency.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "distressed" by the stampede.

"My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured have

a speedy recovery," Modi wrote on X.

Delhi governor Vinai Kumar Saxena said disaster management personnel had been told to deploy and hospitals are ready to deal with emergencies.

The six-week Kumbh Mela is the single biggest event on the Hindu religious calendar, and officials said around 500 million devotees have already visited the festival since it began last month.

More than 400 people died after they were trampled or drowned on a single day of the festival in 1954, one of the largest tolls in a crowd-related disaster globally.

Another 36 people were crushed to death in 2013 and last month at least 30 people died in another stampede at the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers. — AFP

## Marcos puts China at centre of polls campaign

**MANILA:** President Ferdinand Marcos put Beijing firmly centre stage on the campaign trail, saying his predecessor's administration was all too happy for the Philippines "to be a province of China".

Speaking in the heart of Rodrigo Duterte's stronghold Mindanao ahead of May mid-term elections, Marcos blasted the former president, without mentioning him by name, for everything from his deadly drug war to alleged fraud.

But it was his country's increasingly fraught relationship with China that represented a fresh line of attack.

"You will choose if we will go back to the time when our leaders wanted the Philippines to be a province of China," he told a rally in Davao del Norte province.

"None of (our candidates) are Chinese lackeys who cheered while our Coast Guard was being water-cannoned by big Chinese ships," he said.

Chinese vessels have engaged in high-profile confrontations with Philippine ships in disputed waters of the South China Sea claimed by Beijing despite an international ruling that their assertion has no legal basis.

"I hope we won't go back to the past, when our leaders were pimping our country as a gambling centre for foreigners," Marcos said in a reference to now-banned offshore gambling sites often run as scam centres by Chinese nationals.

Dennis Coronacion, head of the political science department at Manila's University of Santo Tomas, said making China a talking point was a potentially winning formula.

"In the past, foreign policy and the talk about China was never an election issue, so if it's going to be ... I think he can get the support of many Filipinos," he said, adding surveys showed citizens felt strongly about it.

"They don't like what China is doing to us."

University of the Philippines political science professor Jean Franco said Marcos was underscoring a very clear difference in how the two administrations had approached the China issue.

"It should be an election issue given that it's an issue that has to do with our sovereignty," she said.

Marcos could be "banking on the fact" that clashes in the South China Sea are widely covered by the media, Franco said.

Marcos is widely seen as having aggressively pushed back against Chinese claims, a change from Duterte's cosier relationship with Beijing.

The battle between the two political dynasties is at the heart of the mid-term race, which could determine the political future of impeached Vice-President Sara Duterte, who has fallen out spectacularly with Marcos.

Rodrigo Duterte's eldest daughter now faces a Senate trial on charges of "violation of the constitution, betrayal of public trust, graft and corruption, and other high crimes" that could bar her from public office. — AFP

## Asean travel hub move gathers pace

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra is confident that the proposed "Six Countries, One Destination" initiative will solidify Asean's status as a travel hub by streamlining access for international visitors and stimulating intra-regional tourism.

She said the proposed initiative focuses on making it easier to cross borders, streamlining promotional efforts and expanding travel connectivity across six participating nations — Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand — with plans to invite Singapore to join.

"I am certain there are significant opportunities to enhance collaboration in

tourism, which is a key driver of economic and cultural connectivity for the region.

"We have proposed cooperation under the 'Six Countries, One Destination' scheme to position our region as a single travel destination.

"I am confident the scheme will attract more visitors, boost travel within the region, and encourage stops across the six countries," she said.

Paetongtarn, 38, said this in a written interview with Bernama International News Service on measures to boost tourism between the two countries and enhance regional tourism.

As key gateways to the region, Paetongtarn

said Thailand and Malaysia are uniquely positioned to lead the way in implementing the initiative.

"Through good travel infrastructure, including cross-border highways, rail and air connectivity and visa-free arrangements, we have solid foundations to foster seamless travel.

"This scheme focuses mainly on ease of border crossings, coordinated promotional campaigns and enhanced travel connectivity.

"Representatives from relevant Thai agencies are working with counterparts in Malaysia, Cambodia, and Vietnam to advance discussions in these areas." — Bernama

## Cook Islands signs deal for closer ties with Beijing

**WELLINGTON:** The Cook Islands says it has signed a deal to expand relations with China, stressing that the accord does not impinge on ties with former colonial power New Zealand.

Prime Minister Mark Brown said he signed an "action plan for the comprehensive strategic partnership" with Chinese Premier Li Qiang in the northern city of Harbin during a five-day state visit to China.

He promised to publish the accord, after New Zealand expressed concern about a lack of transparency over the trip and complained it had not been properly consulted.

The self-governing Cook Islands, a country of 17,000 people, has a "free association"

relationship with New Zealand, which provides budgetary assistance as well as helping on foreign affairs and defence.

In a statement released on Saturday, the last day of his China visit, Brown said the accord set a framework for engagement in areas including trade, investment, ocean science, infrastructure and transport.

"This provides opportunities for our government, our private sector and our people to benefit from enhanced partnership opportunities with China in areas aligned with our national interests and long-term development goals," he said.

Cook Islands officials say they also discussed

seabed minerals research with Chinese institutes during the visit, as the Pacific island mulls deep-sea mining of nodules rich in metals such as nickel and cobalt.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters' spokesperson has complained of a lack of transparency and consultation over the trip, describing it as "a matter of significant concern".

The foreign minister is reserving comment until details of the agreement are released, the spokesperson said.

China is vying for diplomatic, economic and military influence in the strategically important Pacific, challenging the historic regional sway of the United States, New Zealand and Australia.

But Brown said his country's relations with New Zealand and other partners were not affected by the new accord.

"The Cook Islands will continue to make strategic decisions in the best long-term interests of our people," the prime minister said.

"Our relationship and engagement with China complements, not replaces, our longstanding relationships with New Zealand and our other partners."

The agreement would be released online "in the coming days," Brown said.

Xinhua news agency quoted Li as saying the agreement would "deepen political mutual trust and expand practical cooperation." — AFP

## Utah public unions banned from collective bargaining

**ATLANTA:** After two weeks of protests at the Utah state capitol, the state has banned collective bargaining for teachers, police officers, firefighters and other public employees.

Utah's Governor Spencer Cox, a Republican, signed the ban even as protests continued outside the state capitol in Salt Lake City demanded he veto the controversial Bill.

Federal law protects the collective bargaining rights of workers in the private sector, but determining labour law for public employees is up to the states.

Supporters of the law argued that trade unions were inherently political and that allowing them to engage in collective bargaining on behalf of public employees presented a conflict of interest and could burden the taxpayer.

Scores of members of the Utah Education Association, which represents 18,000 public school educators, held a silent protest outside Cox's office as he signed the Bill.

The association said Cox and state lawmakers had "ignored the voices of thousands".

Opposition groups promised to fight on with a possible ballot measure to overturn the law. The law goes into effect on July 1.

Professional Firefighters of Utah president Jack Tidrow said: "Looks like Utah will become the most anti-labour state in America. Pathetic"

The Bill's sponsor, Representative Jordan Teuscher, a Republican, said in a statement on Saturday that Republican lawmakers were pleased to see the governor sign the Bill.

"This Bill upholds democratic principles and expands individual freedoms for Utah's dedicated public employees," he wrote, adding that the law does not eliminate unions. – Reuters

## Australia restricts sales of homes

**SYDNEY:** Australia will ban foreign investors from buying existing homes in the country for two years, its government said yesterday, in an effort to boost under-pressure housing supply.

"We're banning foreign purchases of established dwellings from April 1 until March 31 2027," Treasurer Jim Chalmers said in a statement with Housing Minister Clare O'Neil.

It said a review would be undertaken on whether the ban would be extended.

Dissatisfaction with housing in Australia reached an all-time high last year and it is an issue that is expected to dominate a general election due by May.

O'Neil said in comments televised by the Australian Broadcasting Corp that the ban would likely free up around 1,800 properties per year for local buyers.

"These initiatives are a small but important part of our already big and broad housing agenda which is focused on boosting supply and helping more people into homes," it said. – Reuters

## Pope has peaceful night in hospital

**ROME:** Pope Francis, who is receiving treatment for a respiratory tract infection, had a peaceful night in Rome's Gemelli hospital, Italy's ANSA news agency reported yesterday.

Francis, 88, was not scheduled to appear in public yesterday to lead his usual weekly prayer with pilgrims, the Vatican said on Saturday, because he has been told to rest.

The pontiff has been suffering from bronchitis for more than a week and was admitted to hospital on Friday.

A Vatican statement released late on Saturday said that the pope had been "prescribed complete rest" to help his recovery.

The pope's treatment on Saturday was "slightly modified based on microbiological findings", the statement said. – Reuters



FOLLOW theSun ON INSTAGRAM

@thesundaily



SCAN ME



**BLAST FROM THE DEEP ...** Artists performing during the parade of the 152th edition of the Nice Carnival in the French Riviera City of Nice on Saturday. This year's edition of the carnival themed 'King of Oceans' takes place until March 2. – AFP/PICT

# Former Mauritius prime minister arrested

## Jugnauth denies money laundering charges

**PORT LOUIS:** Police in Mauritius arrested the island's former prime minister Pravind Jugnauth (pic) in a money-laundering investigation and seized stacks of cash from a business linked to him.

Officers arrested the 63-year-old along with his wife Kobita Jugnauth early yesterday and questioned him for several hours, said police sources, who asked not to be named. Kobita Jugnauth was later released.

Pravind Jugnauth was due to appear before a judge later in the morning, the sources said.

A police report seen by AFP detailed a search at the home of another suspect, in which documents were found bearing the names of the Jugnauths, as well as luxury watches and stacks of various currencies.

Jugnauth "is under arrest", FCC spokesperson Ibrahim Rossaye told reporters, adding that he will be detained in Moka detention centre in Moka district in central Mauritius.

The arrest followed searches by FCC detectives of different locations, including Jugnauth's residence, during which they found and seized US\$2.4 million (RM10.6 million), the FCC said.

Jugnauth's lawyer, Raouf Gulbul, said his client has been provisionally charged in an alleged case of money laundering. Gulbul said his client denied the charges.

In November, Mauritius' new Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam announced an audit of the public finances days after questioning the accuracy of some government data compiled by the previous administration.

The country's former central bank governor was detained last month and released on bail after he was charged with fraud.



Prime minister from 2017 to 2024, Jugnauth comes from a family that has dominated the leadership of Mauritius since it became independent from Britain in 1968.

He oversaw a historic deal with Britain for Mauritius to regain sovereignty over the Chagos Islands following a long-running dispute.

Jugnauth and his Militant Socialist Movement suffered a crushing defeat in tense elections in November.

During the campaign, both camps promised to improve the lives of ordinary Mauritians who face cost-of-living difficulties despite strong economic growth.

Under the Chagos deal, Britain will retain a lease for a joint US military base on the island of Diego Garcia.

Both Mauritius and Britain have said US President Donald Trump's administration will have a say on the final terms of the agreement. – AFP/Reuters

## Argentina president linked to crypto scam

**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentina President Javier Milei was criticised for promoting a cryptocurrency whose value soared, then quickly tanked, sparking accusations of fraud and calls for an investigation.

Milei had posted a message on Friday, praising a "private project" aimed at "stimulating the growth of the Argentine economy, by financing small businesses and entrepreneurs".

"The world wants to invest in Argentina. \$LIBRA," the post on X said, naming the cryptocurrency and a website for the project.

Hours later, Milei deleted the message, explaining: "I did not know the details of the project and after learning about it, I decided not to continue spreading it."

He said he had "obviously no connection" with the "alleged private company".

But industry observers called the operation a "rug pull" – a scam where developers unveil a crypto token, attract investors, then quickly cash out.

"Within minutes of the launch, large holders began liquidating millions of USD worth of \$LIBRA," said *The Kobeissi Letter*, which provides analysis on global capital markets.

"This included gains of +\$4 million or more as \$LIBRA rose to \$4.6 billion in market cap. After the top was set at 5.40pm ET, the coin fell in a literal straight line."

Javier Smaldone, a computer scientist and digital influencer known for his denunciation of

pyramid schemes, called the short-lived operation a "global scam", in a post on X.

"So far, it has been discovered that the profit made is around US\$107 million (RM474.7 million). Maybe more," he said.

On Saturday, former president and opposition figure Cristina Kirchner called Milei a "crypto-scammer".

Maximiliano Ferraro, of the centre-right Civic Coalition, said parliament must set up an inquiry to "clarify facts and determine responsibility".

Francisco Onato, Milei's personal lawyer, said the president merely highlighted a company to boost Argentina's economy.

His behaviour "does not constitute any crime, due to the lack of intention," he said. – AFP



# Israel missed two chances for truce, says ex-negotiator

## Netanyahu's office dismisses remarks

**TEL AVIV:** A former Israeli negotiator has said Israel missed two opportunities last year to secure a Gaza truce and hasten hostage releases, prompting a swift rebuttal from the premier's office.

"We missed two opportunities to sign an agreement ... in March and July" last year, said Oren Setter, who resigned from the Israeli negotiating team in October, in remarks broadcast on Channel 12 on Saturday.

"We did not do everything we could to bring them back as quickly as possible."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been accused by opposition figures and some families of hostages of not doing enough to secure their release and torpedoing talks, mediated by the US, Qatar and Egypt, for his own political gain.

On Saturday, his office dismissed Setter's remarks, stating that "his claims that an agreement could have been reached earlier are entirely baseless".

"Had the prime minister not stood firm, at least half of the

living hostages would not have been freed in the first phase," of the truce, the statement said.

"As repeatedly testified by senior US officials, Hamas refused to engage in negotiations for months and was the sole obstacle to a deal.

"Prime Minister Netanyahu's steadfast stance, along with President Trump's threats, led to Hamas' capitulation, the release of our hostages and the safeguarding of Israel's security interests," the statement said.

Hamas and Israel are implementing the first 42-day phase of a ceasefire that has largely halted fighting in Gaza.

Setter clarified that he wanted to "speak about facts" and argued that the deaths of hostages in captivity and "unnecessary suffering" could have been avoided, while still placing primary responsibility for last year's negotiation deadlock on Hamas.

Since the truce between Israel and the group came into effect, 19 Israeli hostages kidnapped on Oct 7, 2023 have been released

in exchange for more than a thousand Palestinian prisoners.

A total of 33 Israeli hostages, at least eight of whom have died, are to be released during the first 42-day phase of the ceasefire, which began on Jan 19.

The second phase is expected to cover the release of remaining hostages and include discussions on a more permanent end to the war.

Hamas said an Israeli strike yesterday killed two police officers and wounded another near the southern Gaza city of Rafah, a day after Israel and the group carried out a hostage-prisoner swap.

"Two police officers have been martyred, and a third has been critically injured as a result of an airstrike that targeted them while they were deployed to secure aid in the Al-Shouka area, east of Rafah," Hamas said.

The Israeli military said its air force had conducted an airstrike in Gaza.

"Earlier today, several armed individuals moving towards troops in the southern Gaza Strip were struck by an (Israeli Air Force) aircraft," it said in a statement. - AFP



A freed Palestinian prisoner kisses a child on Saturday in Khan Younis. - REUTERS/SPIC

## Banned riot control agent found in Ukraine

**THE HAGUE:** The international chemical weapons watchdog said it had found the banned riot control agent CS in nine samples handed to it by Ukraine from the front line in its war against Russia.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) said it had identified the toxic agent in samples from four grenade shells, three soil samples, and two vegetation samples next to a dugout.

The OPCW did not point fingers at either Ukraine or Russia for the use of the CS, which is banned as a weapon of war.

CS gas is not lethal but causes sensory irritation including to the lungs, skin and eyes.

Both Russia and Ukraine have accused each other of using chemical weapons. Kyiv's Western allies have also claimed Moscow has employed banned weapons.

Ukraine asked the OPCW to investigate three incidents of alleged chemical weapons use: Oct 2, 2024 near the village of Mariivka, and Oct 12 and 14 near Illinka.

"All the grenades collected from dugouts ... contained the riot control agent CS, CS-related compounds and/or their degradation products," the OPCW found.

The chemical was also found in the soil and vegetation samples provided by Ukraine.

"This report marks the second confirmed instance of riot-control agent grenades being found on the confrontation lines in the Dnipropetrovsk region," said OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias.

The findings underscored "the urgency of maintaining and enforcing the principles of the Chemical Weapons Convention", he said.

In November, the OPCW said that CS had

been found in three shell and soil samples provided by Ukraine.

That was the first time the use of a riot control gas had been confirmed in areas where active fighting is taking place in Ukraine, the OPCW said.

OPCW's Chemical Weapons Convention strictly bans the use of riot control agents including CS, a type of tear gas, outside riot control situations when it is used as "a method of warfare".

Britain and the United States have accused Russia of using the toxic agent chloropicrin as well as riot control agents since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine in violation of the treaty.

Russia has said it no longer has a military chemical arsenal but the country faces pressure for more transparency over the alleged use of toxic weapons. - AFP

## 'EU out of touch and facing crisis'

**MOSCOW:** A speaker of the Russian parliament said yesterday that events at the Munich Security Conference showed that the European Union was incompetent, did not understand what was happening in the world and faced crisis.

The United States shocked European leaders by saying that Ukraine's place was not in Nato, that a return to Ukraine's pre-2014 borders was unrealistic and that Europe would not be at the table of peace negotiations with Russia and Ukraine.

In a post labelled "Hysteria in Munich", Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said on Telegram that the European political elites only had themselves to blame for the predicament.

"The collective institutions of the European Union, represented by their leaders, do not understand what is happening in the world, have shown their incompetence and inadequacy," he said.

Volodin said that European leaders had reacted with irritation to US Vice-President JD Vance, who took a swipe at European governments for what he described as their censorship of free speech and their political opponents.

Europe, he said, faced a crisis but that change was inevitable.

"We can talk about conflicts and crisis phenomena that will accompany this process," Volodin said.

In Munich, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy called on Saturday for the creation of a European army, saying the continent could no longer be sure of protection from the United States and would only get respect from Washington with a strong military.

He also said Kyiv would never accept any deal to end the Russia-Ukraine war made behind its back, and predicted Russian President Vladimir Putin would try to get President Donald Trump to Moscow's May 9 World War II victory anniversary parade "not as a respected leader but as a prop in his own performance".

In an impassioned speech to the annual Munich Security Conference of global policymakers, Zelenskiy said an address by Vance the previous day had made clear the relationship between Europe and the United States was changing.

"Let's be honest ... now we can't rule out the possibility that America might say no to Europe on issues that threaten it," Zelenskiy said. - Reuters

## BRIEFS

### SHIPMENT OF U.S. 'HEAVY' BOMBS ARRIVES IN TEL AVIV

**TEL AVIV:** A shipment of "heavy" US-made bombs arrived in Israel, as Secretary of State Marco Rubio began his first visit to the country as Washington's top diplomat. "A shipment of heavy aerial bombs released by the US government was unloaded in Israel," the ministry said in a statement, referring to MK-84 munitions authorised by President Donald Trump's administration. "The munitions shipment that arrived in Israel, released by the Trump administration, represents a significant asset for the air force and the IDF (military) and serves as further evidence of the strong alliance between Israel and the United States," Defence Minister Israel Katz said. - AFP

### KYIV OFFICIALS DISCUSS PEACE VISION WITH CHINA MINISTER

**MUNICH:** Ukraine Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha and President Volodymyr Zelenskiy's chief of staff, Andriy Yermak, said they had discussed Kyiv's vision of a path to peace with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Peace talks on ending the war in Ukraine are to start between Kyiv and Moscow negotiators and senior officials from President Donald Trump's administration. "We met Foreign Minister Wang Yi together with Yermak to reaffirm mutual respect for territorial integrity," Sybiha said about the meeting that took place on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. - Reuters

**COMMENT** by Latha Arweena Shoffieah and Dr Mohd Istajib Mokhtar

# Can the rule of law save our planet?

**T**HE world is facing an unprecedented convergence of crises. Climate change is threatening the very fabric of our existence, inequality is dividing communities and health crises are exposing the fragility of our systems.

At the centre of this chaos are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – a global roadmap designed to tackle these challenges by 2030. However, with less than a decade to go, the progress is alarmingly slow.

What is holding us back? According to legal scholar Ernst-Ulrich Petersmann, the issue lies in the systems meant to deliver these goals.

Institutions like the United Nations and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) were established to promote international cooperation, yet they are often tied up in geopolitical rivalries and outdated frameworks that prioritise economic gains over collective well-being.

Imagine trying to fix a modern car with tools from the 1950s. This is essentially what we are doing with global governance. The question Petersmann poses is simple, yet powerful: Can the rule of law be reimagined to meet today's challenges? Can we create a system that not only facilitates international trade but also safeguards human rights and the planet?

The urgency of these questions cannot be overstated. Every day that passes without action brings us closer to irreversible damage. However, as Petersmann points out, solutions exist – they just require the will to implement them.

## Is SDG falling short?

The SDG was born out of hope and necessity. From eradicating poverty to combatting climate change, the 17 goals represent humanity's collective aspiration for a better future.

Yet, as inspiring as it is, it remains as aspirations for many countries rather than actionable priorities. A major stumbling block is the inconsistency in global governance frameworks.

Take the WTO, for instance. It was designed to promote free trade, which has undoubtedly driven economic growth. However, growth often comes at a cost – rampant deforestation, exploitative labour practices and increasing inequality.

The WTO's structure prioritises state sovereignty, allowing countries to sideline environmental and human rights obligations

in favour of economic interests.

Consider the ongoing struggle to regulate carbon emissions. While countries debate and delay, the planet warms. The problem is not just lack of action; it is a lack of accountability.

Global governance systems lack the teeth to enforce meaningful change because they are built on outdated notions of embedded liberalism – an economic model that prioritises market efficiency over societal well-being. What is missing is a unified framework that integrates trade, human rights and environmental protections. Without this, progress on the SDG will remain fragmented and uneven.

However, this is not a lost cause. There are models and examples of success we can draw from, which brings us to the next point.

## Rule of law

Imagine a world where trade agreements explicitly address climate change, social equity and human rights, and where governments and corporations are held accountable for their actions by international law and their citizens. This is the vision of a world where the rule of law becomes a tool for sustainability, not just a mechanism for order.

One compelling example is citizen-driven environmental litigation in Europe, where ordinary people, armed with legal tools, have forced governments and corporations to act on climate change. These successes demonstrate the power of the rule of law when it is accessible and enforceable.

However, accessibility alone is not enough. Structural reforms at the highest levels of governance are crucial. International trade law, for instance, should no longer treat sustainability as optional but embed it into every agreement and policy.

Imagine a WTO that prioritises renewable energy trade or penalises countries for deforestation. These are not far-fetched ideas but necessary shifts.

For the general public, the takeaway is clear: the rule of law is not just for lawyers and politicians – it is for everyone. Supporting judicial reforms and participating in local governance can amplify this change.

The rule of law can be a powerful ally in the fight for a sustainable future but only if we make it work for us. Why cling to governance systems that no longer serve us? The concept of embedded liberalism – a post-World War II framework prioritising economic cooperation



The SDG is a shared responsibility, and everyone has a part to play. – **ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN**

and state sovereignty – made sense in an era focused on rebuilding economies.

However, it is ill-equipped to handle today's interconnected crises. Take trade agreements, for example. They are often negotiated behind closed doors, with little regard for their impact on the environment or marginalised communities.

This approach undermines the SDG and erodes public trust in governance. Without public confidence in global systems, collective action on pressing global issues becomes increasingly difficult.

A "network governance" model can offer a solution – a collaborative approach integrating local, national and international efforts. Imagine a system where cities, countries and international bodies work together to tackle climate change, sharing resources, knowledge and responsibilities. This is not a utopian ideal but a practical necessity.

Breaking free from outdated governance is challenging but possible. The key lies in recognising that the world has changed and governance systems must adapt. Transparency, inclusivity and adaptability must become core principles.

At this point, you may wonder, "What can I do?" The answer lies in understanding your role in this ecosystem. As citizens, we have more power than we often realise. Supporting sustainable policies, voting for leaders who prioritise global welfare and participating in local initiatives can drive meaningful change.

For businesses, sustainability is no longer a

luxury – it is a necessity. Companies aligning with the SDG are not just doing the right thing but future-proofing themselves.

Consumers are increasingly drawn to brands that demonstrate environmental and social responsibility. In this new landscape, doing good is good business. Parents, educators and community leaders can also foster awareness and advocacy among the next generation. The SDG is a shared responsibility, and everyone has a part to play.

## Wake-up call

The SDG is not just about having lofty goals; it involves urgent imperatives. Achieving these goals requires more than good intentions – it demands a complete overhaul of how we think about governance, trade and the rule of law.

The path forward is clear: integrate human rights and environmental protections into every level of governance. Create systems that are transparent, accountable and inclusive.

Most importantly, recognise that sustainability is not a destination – it is a journey that requires all of us to participate.

The question is not whether we can achieve the SDG. It is whether we have the courage to do what is necessary to get there. The time to act is now, and the rule of law can lead the way.

**Latha Arweena Shoffieah and Dr Mohd Istajib Mokhtar** are from the Department of Science and Technology Studies, Faculty of Science, Universiti Malaya.

Comments: [letters@thesundaily.com](mailto:letters@thesundaily.com)

## EDUCATION

### FOCUS 2025

Education matters remain an important component of Malaysian society. Today the landscape is fast paced with new exciting developments in technology such as AI, coding, virtual reality, and cybersecurity, leading the way for changes in curriculum development. To showcase the latest and most updated content, we invite you join us in 2025, and be part of our Education Focus!

**theSun**  
Malaysian Paper  
[www.thesun.my](http://www.thesun.my)

Contact us now for special deals on digital, video and print advertising.

☎ 03-7784 6688

✉ [advertise@thesundaily.com](mailto:advertise@thesundaily.com)





# Shelter in the storm

## COMMENT

By Dr Noralina Omar

**I**t was raining that afternoon. The kind of rain that makes you want to retreat into yourself, hands buried in pockets, head down, rushing to wherever you need to be.

I was waiting at a crosswalk when I saw a stranger holding out an umbrella for another. They did not know each other, but at that moment, it did not matter. One had shelter, the other did not. Without hesitation, the umbrella was shared.

It was a small, fleeting act, but one that stuck with me. Because isn't this what shelter is supposed to be? Not just four walls and a roof but something we hold out for others when they have none. A way to say: "You are safe here. I see you. You are not alone."

Maslow's hierarchy of needs tells us that shelter is one of the most basic human necessities. It is the foundation upon which all other aspects of life – stability, dignity, self-worth – are built.

And yet, for many, this foundation is missing. Some have lost their homes to hardship, some were never given one to begin with.

What happens when this fundamental need goes unmet? It is easy to look away, to assume that homelessness is a consequence of bad choices, but the truth is more complex. Poverty, illness, abuse and circumstances beyond control

all weave into the fabric of displacement. And in a society that moves too fast, these individuals often become invisible.

### Building a shelter beyond walls

Years ago, I founded an NGO focusing on the homeless in Chow Kit, the part of Kuala Lumpur many prefer to ignore.

A place where lives unfold on sidewalks, where hope flickers and dims under the weight of survival. We built a shelter home – not a grand institution, just a small space where people could reclaim the simple dignity of having a place to rest.

I bring my students here, not just to teach them about homelessness, but to let them see – to truly see – the lives behind the statistics.

To understand that the people who sleep on park benches and under bridges are not problems to be solved, but human beings in need of something as basic as warmth, care and a door that opens.

The idea of giving shelter may seem daunting. Not everyone can build a home for others, but perhaps, shelter is not just a physical space. It is a hand stretched out, a conversation shared and an opportunity given.

*"Maslow's hierarchy of needs tells us that shelter is one of the most basic human necessities. It is the foundation upon which all other aspects of life – stability, dignity, self-worth – are built."*

If something as small as an umbrella can make a difference in the rain, why do we hesitate when the storms are heavier? Why do we assume that someone else – governments, charities, activists – will be the ones to provide shelter when we all have the capacity to hold it out in some way?

A meal. A job. A second chance. These, too, are forms of shelter, and they do not require wealth, only willingness.

I have seen this firsthand in our shelter home. A simple offer – a warm meal, a listening ear, a shared story – has the power to change a person's day, sometimes even their life.

A young man once came to our shelter ashamed, shoulders hunched and eyes avoiding contact. He had lost everything – his job, his home and his dignity.

However, one conversation and one moment of genuine care shifted his perspective. He began to believe in himself again and to rebuild. Today, he mentors others who come through our doors, proving that even the smallest gesture of shelter can create ripples of change.

Shelter can also be systemic. Employers who hire former homeless individuals, educators who see potential in struggling students,

landlords who offer fair housing – all of them hold umbrellas in different ways. The question is, what is yours?

It does not have to be big – it can be offering a ride, helping someone navigate job applications or simply acknowledging the presence of those often ignored.

Small actions matter, and they can compound over time. They remind us that we are all part of a larger human family, responsible for holding each other up in the rain.

### The home you build is also for you

People often ask me why I do this work. They assume it is out of charity or obligation. But the truth is simpler: giving shelter has shaped me as much as it has helped others.

When you offer a home – whether through kindness, opportunity or simply by seeing someone as human – you are not just giving, you are growing. You are becoming the hands that give, the heart that opens and the soul that understands that shelter is not just something we build for others but something we create within ourselves.

So, I leave you with this thought: If I can do it, why can't you? If a stranger can share an umbrella in the rain, what small act of shelter can you hold out today?

**Dr Noralina Omar** is a senior lecturer at the Department of Social Administration and Justice, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaysia. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

## Bringing Malaysian kuih to the coffee table

## LETTERS

letters@thesundaily.com

**AS** a coffee lover, I have visited many cafes in Malaysia, always looking for the perfect cup of coffee.

From small hidden gems to stylish hipster cafes, each place has its own unique way of serving coffee.

However, one thing I have noticed is that most of these cafes offer the same type of food to go with coffee. Almost every menu features croissants, muffins or cakes but rarely do I see traditional Malaysian delicacies. This made me wonder. Why are our local snacks not given the same attention as Western pastries?

Malaysia has many delicious traditional delicacies, from *kuih* to fried snacks and steamed desserts. These have been enjoyed for generations, yet many modern cafes do not include them on their menus. Instead, they mostly serve Western-style pastries. While croissants and cakes are delicious, they do not represent the flavours of Malaysia.

Imagine walking into a cafe and seeing options like *apam balik* with its crispy edges and sweet peanut filling or a warm banana fritter that pairs beautifully with a hot cup of coffee.

Sarawak layer cake with its vibrant colours and rich flavours, would make an eye-catching and tasty addition to any cafe menu. Even *cakoi*, the local version of fried dough sticks, could be served with a cup of coffee for a simple yet satisfying snack.

By offering more local options, cafes can create a unique identity and give customers something special to enjoy with their coffee.

Some people may wonder if *kuih* and coffee make a good pair. The answer is yes. Just like croissants go well with cappuccino, many types of Malaysian *kuih* can match perfectly with different coffees.

For example, a strong Americano can balance the sweetness of *kuih ketayap*, a *pandan* crepe filled with coconut and palm sugar. A smooth and creamy cappuccino can pair well with *seri muka* as both have a rich texture. *Kuih bahulu*, with its soft and airy texture can be a perfect match for a hazelnut *latte*, adding a light sweetness to the nutty flavour of the coffee.



By offering more local options, cafes can create a unique identity and give customers something special to enjoy with their coffee. – BERNAMAPIC

For those who enjoy flavoured coffees, a salted caramel *latte* would be a great companion to *apam balik*. The sweet and salty notes of the coffee complement the crispy peanut-filled pancake.

A mocha, with its chocolatey taste, can go well with Sarawak layer cake, enhancing its rich and buttery flavours. Even a simple *caffe latte* can be a great match for banana fritters or *cakoi* as the mild coffee taste allows the crispy fried treats to shine.

By trying different delicacies with different coffees, cafes can create exciting new flavours and experiences for their customers.

Some cafes in Malaysia have started using local ingredients like *pandan*, *gula Melaka* and coconut in their drinks and desserts. This is a good step, but why not go further and serve traditional *kuih*?

If more cafes introduce Malaysian delicacies, it

will not only make their menus more unique but also help small *kuih* businesses survive.

Many traditional *kuih* makers are finding it hard to compete with modern bakeries. By including *kuih* in cafes, more people, especially young customers can enjoy and appreciate these local treats.

This is also a great opportunity to introduce Malaysian flavours to visitors from other countries. Many travellers who love coffee visit cafes when they come to Malaysia.

If cafes offer local delicacies instead of only Western pastries, tourists will have a chance to experience our traditional desserts along with their coffees.

Treats like *lepat pisang*, a steamed banana leaf-wrapped dessert or a beautifully layered Sarawak

cake can give visitors a unique taste of Malaysia's diverse food culture.

Pairing coffee with Malaysian delicacies is a simple idea but can make a big difference. It will allow Malaysians to enjoy their coffee while celebrating their own food culture, creating a cafe experience that truly represents Malaysia.

Next time you visit a cafe, ask yourself: Wouldn't a delicious *apam balik* taste just as good with coffee as a *croissant*? Maybe, it is time for our traditional treats to get the attention they deserve.

**Syed Azman Syed Ismail**  
Postgraduate Student  
Faculty of Education  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

## Allianz Malaysia provides financial support to 15 social partners

**PETALING JAYA:** Allianz Malaysia Bhd, via its corporate social responsibility arm Allianz4Good, has provided financial aid benefiting 15 social partners to support their daily essentials and operational costs.

The company's year-end giving initiative – spanning various locations across Malaysia from December 2024 through January 2025 – demonstrates its unwavering commitment to

communities in need and to lend a helping hand where it matters the most.

The contributions will help provide essential items such as food, hygiene products, and medical supplies, while also helping to cover operational expenses to ensure the sustainability of these critical programmes.

Allianz4Good head Ng Siew Gek said, "Through our year-end giving initiative, we

hope to lighten the load for these organisations so they can continue their work of providing care and support to the communities they serve."

Branch managers from Allianz Malaysia offices in Penang, Perak, Kuala Lumpur, and Kelantan visited the respective homes and social partners within their regions to witness the handover of the funding.

# Fintech innovations to shape future of Islamic banking

➤ Advanced technology will transform way players in the sector operate and interact with customers: Expert

BY AIMIE SHAZRIE  
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Islamic banks are increasingly turning to financial technology (fintech) solutions to modernise their offerings and better serve the evolving needs of their customers.

Silverlake Axis CEO and Islamic banking head Othman Abdullah (*pic*) expressed optimism that the strategic integration of cutting-edge fintech will be pivotal in shaping the future of Islamic finance.

"Definitely, we will see more digital services emerging and transforming the way Islamic banks operate and interact with customers," he said in an exclusive interview with *SunBiz*.

Othman highlighted use cases where some Islamic banks, such as those in Saudi Arabia, have already launched their own digital banking capabilities.

He noted that a key area of focus for Islamic banks now is open banking, which enables the sharing of customer data with third-party service providers. "We will see much better user experience, good digital experience, leveraging all the latest technology."

Othman emphasised the importance of

artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning in the banking sector.

"Generative AI is set to revolutionise various aspects of the banking industry, from personalised product recommendations to customer support solutions. We will likely see these advancements implemented very soon, and I believe they will significantly enhance user experiences and efficiency," he said.

However, he noted that Islamic banks face unique challenges in their digital transformation journeys, which are technology, syariah compliance, talent acquisition and funding.

"When discussing technology challenges, one of the most common issues raised in the banking sector is legacy infrastructure," Othman said, adding that keeping pace with the rapid advancements in technology remains a significant hurdle.

He noted that syariah compliance is a critical consideration for Islamic banks as they adopt new digital solutions. "They have to make sure that whatever products and services are syariah compliant, continue to be compliant," he stressed.

To navigate these obstacles, Othman



suggested that Islamic banks need to combine strong syariah governance with robust technology governance.

Additionally, he said the growing popularity of blockchain technology is a game changer for Islamic banking, mentioning how blockchain could be used to ensure transparency in financial transactions, especially for areas such as *zakat* (almsgiving) and *uqaf* (charitable endowments).

"With blockchain, every transaction can be recorded in a secure, immutable way, providing greater trust and confidence in Islamic financial products," he said, adding that this could not only enhance operational efficiency but also attract younger, tech-savvy customers seeking ethical and transparent banking solutions.

Othman predicted a rise in fintech partnerships within the Islamic banking ecosystem. By collaborating with fintech startups, Islamic banks can leverage innovative platforms to develop syariah-compliant investment products and micro-financing tools tailored for underserved communities.

"These collaborations will bridge the gap between tradition and modernity, enabling Islamic banks to remain relevant in a competitive digital landscape."

The future of Islamic banking lies in its ability to seamlessly integrate ethical values with technological advancements, Othman said.

## Alliance Bank steps up to help customers affected by floods in Sabah, Sarawak

**PETALING JAYA:** Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd recently announced a flood relief assistance programme to help ease financial burdens faced by customers impacted by floods in Sabah and Sarawak.

The programme includes option for a loan moratorium of up to six months, loan repayment modifications and waivers of fees and charges for customers and businesses that have been affected by floods.

"Our primary concern is the well-being of our affected customers as we understand the emotional and financial strain on the families and businesses impacted by the floods. As 'The Bank For Life', Alliance Bank stands by our customers, especially during these challenging times. We hope that the flood relief assistance programme will encourage them to come forward to discuss how we can help ease some of their financial burdens," said group CEO Kellee Kam.

The bank is also assisting its employees affected by the floods to help them through this difficult time.

The flood relief assistance programme is open for application until March 3. It offers payment relief on all conventional loans and Islamic financing facilities. The bank will also waive fees and charges for selected services such as replacement of debit cards, ATM cards, cheque books and passbooks lost or damaged during the flood.

Alliance Bank also announced that an initiative to support communities affected by floods in Kelantan, Kedah and Terengganu through a flood relief fund-raising campaign on its SocioBiz crowd-funding platform under Alliance Islamic Bank is now extended to those affected by floods in Sabah and Sarawak. To maximise the aid impact, the bank will match every RM1 donated with RM2, effectively tripling the contributions to help flood victims.

The campaign, which runs until Feb 28, invites all Malaysians to participate and support those in need. Funds raised will be directed to the Malaysian Relief Agency.

## RHB launches Malaysia's first debit card-linked buy now, pay later solution

**PETALING JAYA:** RHB Banking Group has set a new benchmark by introducing RHB PayLater, Malaysia's first buy now, pay later (BNPL) solution directly linked to debit cards.

The groundbreaking offering provides customers with seamless access to interest-free instalment plans, promoting financial flexibility while encouraging thoughtful spending habits.

Leveraging customer transaction behaviour as the eligibility criterion, RHB PayLater sets a new standard for inclusive and ethical payment solutions. The initiative addresses the rising demand for convenient and transparent payment options tailored to modern lifestyles.

RHB Banking Group managing director/group CEO Datuk Mohd Rashid Mohamad said, "RHB PayLater reflects our commitment to reshaping the financial landscape through responsible innovation. By introducing this seamless and accessible solution, we empower customers to make smarter financial decisions while enjoying greater convenience and flexibility."

"This initiative is not just about providing a payment option – it's about fostering financial resilience, rewarding loyalty, and contributing to sustainable growth for individuals and communities. With RHB PayLater, we are delivering on our promise to offer value-driven

solutions that adapt to our customers' evolving needs."

Key features of RHB PayLater include:

➤ **Innovative eligibility assessment for seamless access to RHB PayLater.**

RHB introduces an innovative approach to eligibility assessment, leveraging customer behaviour analysis to prequalify over 500,000 existing RHB CASA customers for RHB PayLater. This unique methodology evaluates account activities such as deposits, transactions and savings behaviour to offer seamless access without requiring additional applications. By actively using their RHB accounts, customers can unlock higher eligibility and enjoy exclusive rewards, making financial flexibility more accessible and rewarding.

➤ **Tailored payment flexibility.**

RHB PayLater provides a revolving limit based on customers' savings behaviour and account activities, offering personalised instalment plans to suit individual cash flow needs. Customers can easily convert their purchases into three-month or six-month instalments, providing a practical alternative to traditional credit cards.

➤ **Affordable access to wide range of goods and services.**

With RHB PayLater, customers can afford higher-value items and services by breaking payments



From left: RHB Banking group CMO Abdul Sani Abdul Murad, Mohd Rashid, group community banking managing director Jeffrey Ng Eow Oo and consumer finance head Sien Vee Loc at the launch of RHB PayLater.

into manageable instalments, reducing the burden of large upfront costs. Through partnership with nearly 30 merchants across diverse industries, customers can gain access to over 1,000 outlets nationwide.

Designed as a modern alternative to credit cards, RHB PayLater empowers individuals including those without access to traditional credit cards to achieve financial flexibility and mindful spending habits. By providing practical

tools and user-friendly solutions, RHB simplifies financial management, enabling customers to better manage their cash flow while enjoying greater convenience.

The launch of RHB PayLater, developed in collaboration with a key technology partner, positions RHB as a trailblazer in debit card-linked BNPL solutions, setting a new standard for ethical and inclusive banking practices.





## Urgent need to protect, restore water sources: SPAN

► Studies by commission find 36 treatment plants in Malaysia have seen significant decline in yield

■ BY JOHN GILBERT  
[sunbiz@thesundaily.com](mailto:sunbiz@thesundaily.com)

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Thirty-six water treatment plants across Malaysia, particularly in Johor and near Singapore, have seen a significant drop in yield, National Water Services Commission (SPAN) studies on 150 such facilities showed.

SPAN chairman Charles Santiago (pic) said this decline can be traced back to the increasing challenges faced by the country's rivers, which have worsened, and their ability to support water treatment operations has diminished due to deforestation and pollution.

"This is particularly concerning, as 81% of Malaysia's drinking water comes from rivers, with only 18% sourced from dams and a small percentage from underground reservoirs.

"The strain on our river systems highlights the urgent need for action to protect and restore these vital water sources," he told delegates at the Siemens Data Centre Conference entitled "Shaping the Future of Data Centres in Malaysia" on Thursday.

Santiago said Malaysia could experience up to 200 heatwave

days annually by 2050, which would pose significant challenges to water security, agriculture and public health.

He said Malaysia is already feeling the impacts of rising temperatures, erratic weather patterns and an increasing frequency of environmental disasters.

"Malaysia is no stranger to the escalating climate emergency, a crisis that continues to intensify with each passing year. According to the latest report from the World Meteorological Organisation, Asia is heating up faster than the global average, making it the most disaster-prone region due to extreme weather and climate hazards. There is an urgent need for adaptive measures to safeguard the country's vital resources and infrastructure."

Santiago said water scarcity, in particular, is becoming a critical challenge. Rising temperatures are leading to faster evaporation, depleting reservoirs and reducing freshwater availability.

"This threatens daily water consumption and impacts industries such as farming and energy production, which rely heavily on stable water resources.



Without urgent action, Malaysia could face severe disruptions, forcing communities and businesses to rethink how they use and manage water in an increasingly unpredictable climate," he added.

Santiago questioned the necessity of using potable water for the liquid cooling process for data centres.

"What are we using in the data centres? We are using potable water. Now, this is a disaster in the making. And it is highly unsustainable.

"So, in the next three to five years, there must be a transition towards sustainable water management. This includes reclaiming water, rainwater harvesting, and, if feasible, desalination. Additionally, stormwater presents a viable option, especially in Malaysia, where frequent flooding is a reality," he said.

Malaysia must urgently transition to sustainable water solutions,

particularly for data centres, Santiago said.

"The use of stormwater, for instance, can be scaled up to meet the growing demand. With the possibility of prolonged droughts lasting up to five months, it is essential to adapt to such challenges.

"Much of the country's water, including rainwater and river water, comes from rainfall. What flows into the catchment areas and rivers constitutes 81% of the water we rely on for consumption. Therefore, managing this water effectively is crucial for the future."

Santiago said that given the uncertainty of weather projections in Malaysia, including the possibility of droughts lasting three to four months, using potable water for data centres is not a sustainable long-term solution.

"As the digital economy grows, it is essential to transition to alternative water sources, and this shift must be mandatory. To encourage this transition, a timeline should be set – perhaps three years – with a requirement that a certain percentage of water used by data centres must come from sustainable sources," according to him.

Santiago said companies such as Microsoft and Amazon Web Services in California, the United States, are already committed to using 50% rainwater harvesting and 50% reclaimed water, setting a clear standard.

"Malaysia, however, is currently relying entirely on potable water, and this must change," he stressed.

## Asean economic growth must be inclusive, says Nik Nazmi

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Asean is on track to become the world's fourth-largest economy by 2030, but growth must be inclusive to ensure that all communities benefit, said Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad.

He noted that while major urban centres such as Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Jakarta have high gross domestic product (GDP) levels, many areas across Asean still face significant challenges, including limited access to electricity, education, and economic opportunities.

"We are currently the fifth-largest economy, but the forecast is that by 2030, Asean could rise to fourth place.

"The challenge is not just achieving this milestone but also harnessing our economic strength to drive sustainable and equitable development for all," he told reporters after attending the Asean Youth Economic Forum 2025 (AYEF 2025) here on Friday.

Nik Nazmi stressed that economic progress should not be measured solely by overall GDP growth but by how well it improves the lives of people across Asean, particularly those in rural and underdeveloped regions.

"It is not enough to say we are the fourth-biggest economy if many still lack access to basic necessities, such as education, electricity, and equal opportunities for women. These issues must also be addressed," he said.

In his address earlier, Nik Nazmi said if Asean were to act independently rather than as a unified bloc, the region would have a limited impact on global affairs.

"We are trying, for example, to come together as an Asean bloc at the 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference to adopt a unified position on climate change." – Bernama

## Starbucks Malaysia committed to supporting local enterprises

■ BY HAYATUN RAZAK  
[sunbiz@thesundaily.com](mailto:sunbiz@thesundaily.com)

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Starbucks Malaysia's participation in the Pemas International Franchise Festival 2025 (PIFF 2025), held recently, underscores its ongoing efforts to support local entrepreneurship, foster talent development and contribute to community growth.

As a co-sponsor of the event organised by Perbadanan Nasional Bhd (Pernas), Starbucks Malaysia is aligned with the organisation's mission to promote and support local businesses.

Starbucks Malaysia's regional operations manager, Rahida Ab Rashid, highlighted the company's commitment to creating a positive community impact.

"By participating in PIFF 2025, we aim to celebrate Malaysia's entrepreneurs. Starbucks believes in empowering local communities through initiatives that provide growth opportunities and support for small

businesses," she said.

Built specifically for PIFF 2025, Starbucks Malaysia's booth was designed to resemble its premium store format, Starbucks Reserve.

"Our booth showcased our latest beverage lineup, focusing on Starbucks Reserve stores and their unique manual brewing techniques," Rahida shared with *SunBiz*.

Explaining the distinctive offerings of Starbucks Reserve, she said, "Our Reserve stores provide premium coffee and experiences available only at select locations. Customers can expect a different ambience, tailored service standards, and baristas certified as Coffee Masters, ensuring a premium experience."

In a global first, Malaysia became the pioneering market for the "Extract Chilling Technology" brewing, an innovative brewing technique yet to be introduced in other Starbucks markets worldwide. "You cannot get this in any other Starbucks abroad," Rahida emphasised.

The festival also provided an



The Starbucks Malaysia booth at PIFF 2025 showcased the chain's latest beverage lineup, focusing on Starbucks Reserve stores and their unique manual brewing techniques. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN

exclusive sneak peek at Starbucks Malaysia's latest innovation, a new cold brew tonic beverage that blends sparkling water with a special coffee blend and strawberry flavour.

Visitors at PIFF 2025 enjoyed an exclusive first taste of the new offering before the official launch in Starbucks Reserve outlets.

Rahida revealed new additions to

Starbucks Malaysia's beverage lineup, including cold brew malt, chocolate malt, classic affogato and duo scoop ice cream, all set to debut at select locations.

The booth also showcased life-sized Bearista and mini-Bearista collectibles, which were launched in celebration of Starbucks Malaysia's 25th anniversary in December 2023.

A year-long campaign titled "Brewing Art for Good: The Bearista Project" was introduced as part of the brand's commitment to innovation and community empowerment. The project collaborates with local artists, including deaf and autistic individuals, to design 25 Bearista.

"Operating through the lens of humanity, part of the proceeds collected from the campaign will be contributed back to the artists as well as Mercy Malaysia's Palestine Relief Fund," said Alia Emira Ismail, head of public relations and communications, Berjaya Food Bhd.

"We will announce the funds during our campaign grand finale ceremony later this month," she added.



## Master Tec secures RM107.75m supply contract from TNB

**PETALING JAYA:** Master Tec Group Bhd, a premier player in the manufacturing and distribution of power, control and instrumentation cables, through wholly owned subsidiary Master Tec Wire & Cable Sdn Bhd, has secured a letter of award from Tenaga Nasional Bhd (TNB) for the supply and delivery of underground cables and conductors for TNB's Distribution Network Division.

The contract, valued at RM107.75 million, is for one year, with an option to extend for another year.

Master Tec Group CEO Tee Kok Hwa said, "We are honoured to be entrusted by TNB for this significant contract, reinforcing our role as a key partner in Malaysia's power infrastructure sector. This award not only validates our technical expertise but also highlights our commitment to delivering quality and reliability in power cable solutions. As the nation progresses toward its energy transition goals, we remain focused on expanding our capabilities to support Malaysia's evolving electricity needs while driving long-term sustainable growth for our shareholders."

Looking ahead, Master Tec is well-positioned to leverage Malaysia's infrastructure-focused Budget 2025, which has allocated RM16 billion for upgrading the national grid and RM300 million for the National Energy Transition Facility to drive energy efficiency and sustainability.

As outlined in Master Tec's prospectus dated Dec 28, 2023, Malaysia's ex-factory sales of wires and cables are projected to increase from RM9.61 billion in 2022 to RM11.21 billion by 2025, representing a compound annual growth rate of 5.25%.

This positive industry outlook, combined with supportive government initiatives, aligns with Master Tec's commitment to strengthening its position in the low- and medium-voltage cable market. Additionally, the strategic acquisition of Sediacom Sdn Bhd is set to enhance the group's capabilities, allowing it to capture emerging opportunities in the power infrastructure sector and drive long-term growth.

On Friday, Master Tec's share price closed at RM1.03, reflecting a market capitalisation of RM1.05 billion.

## 'Leadership a responsibility, not a privilege'

➤ A true leader does not seek personal gain but focuses on creating value for others, says The Haven Ipoh founder

BY JOHN GILBERT  
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Leadership is not a privilege but a responsibility that demands selflessness and commitment to a greater purpose.

Sharing his views on leadership, The Haven Ipoh founder and CEO Peter Chan (*pic*) said a true leader does not seek personal gain but focuses on creating value for others.

However, he said genuine selflessness is often met with scepticism, as it is a rare trait in a world driven by individual ambition.

"It takes time, perseverance and consistency for such leadership to be recognised and trusted. Only through unwavering dedication can a leader prove that their intentions are rooted in service rather than self-interest," he told *SunBiz*.

Having worked in senior positions across Singapore, New York, London, Australia, Hong Kong, and China, Chan said he has gathered vast and diverse knowledge and experiences.

All these experiences converge on just one word - truth!

"Truth is a guiding force that ensures integrity, clarity and consistency. Without deception, there is no misdirection; without misdirection, there is a clear and unwavering path forward.

"For a leader, truth is not just an ideal but a necessity. It serves as the foundation for

strong organisations and lasting success. A leader must uphold truth in every decision and action, fostering trust, stability, and long-term growth. Only by anchoring leadership in truth can one inspire confidence, create a resilient organisation, and lead with unwavering purpose," Chan said.

"At The Haven, the focus has always been on delivering exceptional quality and being more than fair to our clients."

Following its completion, he said, the resort continues to provide exceptional service and follow up with its clients selflessly without any benefit motive.

"Unknown by the world at large and even doubted by some, with true leadership, The Haven has always put others - customers, employees and community - at the heart of every decision. "When businesses operate with the intent to give rather than take, success has to follow. These companies will be on solid ground and will stand the test of time," Chan said.

He also shared that The Haven was initiated with the intention of delivering great value to clients.

"Our objective is to give as much as we can based on the product's price. In other words, we give 'the most'.

"Based on this, we have set a new benchmark for luxury, quality, value and sustainability. Instead of rushing into multiple projects, The Haven concentrates on one



project at a time," Chan said.

He said The Haven is now recognised in the industry, having been accorded 64 accolades, including the Minister's Award, FIABCI High Rise Property Award, Global Winner of Luxury Family All Inclusive Hotel and Best Resort Development Award.

Chan said the values and talents that the company's successors should nurture are exactly the same as those needed from its contributing leader. He added that frequent talks and seminars are used to inculcate such values to the entire team.

Chan is scheduled to present his leadership views at the ProfitMAX Entrepreneurs Network (PEN) BizCon25, on Wednesday, which brings together Malaysia's top thought leaders to discuss solutions that empower businesses to adapt and thrive in an ever-evolving economic landscape.

With the theme "Malaysia Rising: Entrepreneurs as the Driving Force of Malaysia's Growth" PENBizCon25 will guide critical discussions on driving SME innovation, scaling Malaysian businesses globally and building sustainable ecosystems for long-term growth.

## Sarawak Energy commissions Malaysia's first utility-scale battery storage system

**KUCHING:** Sarawak Energy Bhd (SEB) has commissioned Malaysia's first utility-scale battery energy storage system (BESS) at the Sejingkat Power Plant.

SEB said in a statement that the 60MW BESS, which was energised in December 2024, provides essential grid services, including primary spinning reserve (emergency reserve), voltage and frequency regulation, as well as peak demand management.

It said these services support the overall optimisation of power generation and grid systems. "This investment also enables the trial of BESS's ability to integrate intermittent renewable energy sources, such as solar.

"This aligns with Sarawak's ambition to achieve high-income status by 2030 under the Sarawak Post Covid-19 Development Strategy 2030, which identifies renewable energy as a key enabler of the state's sustainable economic progress," it said.

The Sejingkat Power Plant, Borneo's first and Malaysia's second coal-fired power station, was commissioned in 1998 and is being gradually phased out.

SEB said this transition reflects its commitment to environmental responsibility and reducing carbon emissions.

Meanwhile, Sarawak Premier Tan Sri Abang Johari Tun Openg said the state government plans to expand BESS initiatives across Sarawak, particularly in rural areas.

"Because it is mobile, it can be charged and relocated. SEB currently stores the batteries in 22 containers, making them deployable to rural areas to boost energy supply where needed. If this proves successful, we can expand the initiative further. BESS can also be used at hydroelectric dam sites and serve as a hybrid energy solution for our power plants," he told reporters after visiting the Sejingkat facility on Friday. - Bernama

## Setia Awan Group adds 7-Eleven to Astrum Ampang's retail offerings

**PETALING JAYA:** Setia Awan Group has announced another milestone for Astrum Ampang's retail and lifestyle offerings with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with leading convenience store chain 7-Eleven Holdings Malaysia Bhd (SEM).

The MoU marks a significant step for the 6.85-acre mixed development project, as the developer intensifies preparations for earlier completion of its first phase - comprising two residential towers and retail lots - by early 2026.

At the recent signing ceremony held at Astrum Ampang Gallery, representatives from Setia Awan Group and SEM expressed their anticipation and enthusiasm for the strategic collaboration.

"Our focus is to cultivate a high standard of retail offering that caters to the evolving lifestyle needs and wants of our residential community at Astrum Ampang. As a transit-

oriented development in the heart of the now-vibrant Jelatek area, it is our goal to seamlessly integrate convenience, accessibility and connectivity into urban living," says Kelvin Tan, general manager, sales and marketing and corporate communication, for Setia Awan Group.

"The addition of 7-Eleven is the right fit in enhancing the overall Astrum Ampang retail and community experience."

Last year, Setia Awan Group secured several key partnerships through MoUs with major food and beverage and retail brands such as McDonald's and Bilabla Mart, along with property management service Maple home and essential lifestyle services such as laundromats, education centres and more.

As the development continues to take shape, the addition of leading retail brands reflects Astrum Ampang's potential as a strategically located, well-connected urban hub in the heart of Kuala Lumpur.



Tan (left) and 7-Eleven Malaysia general manager of store development Syed Redza Al-Gadrie Syed Hassan signing the MoU.



## LEGALLY SPEAKING

**IN RESPONSE** to rising concerns over harmful online behaviours, the Malaysian government has intensified efforts to regulate digital content. Tragic incidents, such as the suicide of cyberbullying victim Esha, have underscored the urgency for legal reforms.

Among the proposed measures are amendments to the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA), the Penal Code (PC), and the introduction of new legal frameworks such as the Online Safety Bill (OSB) and the Code of Conduct for Internet Messaging and Social Media Service Providers.

Posting online demands serious thought. A single reckless comment can result in significant legal consequences.

To help you navigate this evolving landscape, here are some key legal considerations to note:

**(a) Is your post “seditious”?**

Section 4 of the Sedition Act 1948 prohibits content with “seditious tendencies”, including statements that incite hatred, contempt or disaffection against the government or rulers; or promote ill will and hostility between different races.

First-time offenders face fines of up to RM5,000, imprisonment of up to three years, or both.

**(b) Is your post obscene, indecent, false, menacing or offensive?**

Sections 211 and 233 of the CMA criminalise sharing such content with the intent to annoy, abuse, threaten or harass, whereas Section 292 of the PC penalises those who produce, possess or distribute obscene materials with penalties of a fine, imprisonment of up to three years, or both.

**(c) Does your post incite public disorder, fear, alarm, breach of peace, etc?**

# Navigating online content regulations in Malaysia

Posts disrupting public order, instilling fear or encouraging unlawful acts (on grounds of religion or otherwise) or posts that spread false reports or misstatements may violate Sections 124H, 124I, 124G, 298A, 504, or 505 of the PC. Convictions carry fines, imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

**(d) Is your post blasphemous?**

Section 298 of the PC criminalises actions intended to wound religious feelings. Those convicted may be fined, imprisoned for up to one year, or both.

**(e) Does your post defame someone?**

In addition to potential civil liability, Section 499 of the PC criminalises defamatory statements intended to, or are likely to, harm another's reputation. This may lead to fines, imprisonment of up to two years, or both.

**Other Legal Considerations**

While the laws above provide a foundational understanding, other applicable frameworks may apply, such as:

- ☞ Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017: protects children from exploitation;
- ☞ Official Secrets Act 1972: safeguards confidential government information;
- ☞ Section 130J of the Penal Code: prohibits support for terrorist activities;
- ☞ Personal Data Protection Act 2010: regulates

the use of personal data;

- ☞ Consumer Protection Act 1999: ensures fair advertising and trade in consumer transactions;
- ☞ Malaysian Code of Advertising Practice: promotes ethical advertising standards;
- ☞ Content Code (Part 3): sets advertising standards for influencers, advertisers and online marketplace operators; and
- ☞ Intellectual property laws: protect copyrights, trademarks, and patents.

**Anticipated Regulatory Changes**

As Malaysia's content regulation evolves, stricter controls are on the horizon.

**(a) Proposed Penal Code Amendments:** Sections 507B to 507G aim to address threatening, abusive, or insulting communications; and sharing another's identifiable information (e.g. intimate photos or location details, with malicious intent).

Convictions may result in fines, imprisonment of up to 10 years, or both.

**(b) Increased CMA penalties:** The proposed Communications and Multimedia (Amendment) Bill seeks to raise fines to RM500,000 and imprisonment to two years (from RM50,000 and one year, respectively).

**(c) Expansion of the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA).**

There is speculation about extending the PPPA to digital media. Currently, the PPPA prohibits importing, publishing, selling, circulating or distributing newspapers without a permit; prohibits maliciously publishing fake news; and empowers the Home Affairs Minister to prohibit the printing, importation, etc, of publications he deems prejudicial to public order.

**Conclusion**

The shift in Malaysia's regulatory landscape is a concerted effort to promote online safety and digital accountability.

Although critics caution that these changes could be misused for political purposes, there is nevertheless a critical need for thoughtful and responsible online engagement. In particular, the OSB and the CoC, once enacted, will impose obligations on service providers (including social media platforms) to implement systems and tools that safeguard users from harmful content.

By understanding content regulation and exercising caution, one can reduce their exposure to legal risks and create a safer, more respectful online community for everyone.

*This article is contributed by Brian Chua of Christopher & Lee Ong.*

## AME Elite receives shareholders' approval for industrial park joint venture with KLK Land

**PETALING JAYA:** AME Elite Consortium Bhd's shareholders have approved all resolutions at the company's extraordinary general meeting (EGM) held on Friday, paving the way for a joint venture with KLK Land Sdn Bhd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Kuala Lumpur Kepong Bhd (KLK), to develop a 151.2-acre premier industrial park in Jlok, Selangor.

AME Elite and KLK Land will proceed to undertake the development through their joint venture entity, Central Gateway Development Sdn Bhd, which is 60% owned by AME Elite's subsidiary AME Industrial Park Sdn Bhd (AMEIP) and 40% by KLK Land.

Central Gateway Development will acquire two parcels of freehold agricultural land with industrial potential in Mukim Jlok, Selangor, from KLK, for a total purchase consideration of RM230.5 million, to be satisfied fully in cash. Additionally, AME Elite and its subsidiaries will provide financial assistance to Central Gateway Development through AMEIP for the development of the land.

AME Elite Consortium executive director and group CEO Dylan Tan Teck Eng said, “Securing shareholder support for this expansion into Selangor marks a significant milestone in AME Elite's growth trajectory. This joint venture allows us to leverage our core



The joint venture allows AME Elite to leverage its core strengths in developing sustainable industrial parks.

strengths in developing sustainable industrial parks while capitalising on the significant opportunities in this key industrial state. With our presence in Johor, Penang, and now Selangor, we have truly become a national player in the Malaysia's industrial space

sector.”

The industrial park is strategically located within the Greater Klang Valley, providing convenient access to major transportation networks and a skilled workforce poised to attract a diverse range of industries.

## AirTrunk plans second cloud and AI-ready data centre in Johor

**PETALING JAYA:** Asia Pacific and Japan hyperscale data centre specialist AirTrunk plans to develop its second cloud and artificial intelligence-ready data centre in Malaysia, named AirTrunk JHB2 in Iskandar Puteri, Johor.

Scalable to over 270 megawatts, JHB2 will support demand from global public cloud and technology companies in the region.

The announcement was made jointly by AirTrunk founder and CEO Robin Khuda and Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi. This follows the opening of AirTrunk's first data centre in Johor, the 150+MW AirTrunk JHB1, in

July 2024.

Combined, AirTrunk is investing over RM9.7 billion in Malaysia, providing more than 420MW of IT load.

JHB2, strategically located in a major availability zone, provides an end-to-end cross border connectivity strategy for customers and the ability to scale their operations to match demand. The additional capacity will support Malaysia's fast-growing digital economy and follows the establishment of the landmark Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone p15.

Like JHB1, the new data centre will feature

AirTrunk's state-of-the-art liquid cooling technology for managing the high-density demands of AI and will ensure significant energy savings. JHB2 is designed to meet the highest standards of efficiency and security, with a low-design power usage effectiveness of 1.25 and multiple renewable energy options available to customers.

To support the Johor state government's aim to diversify water sources, AirTrunk is scoping treated greywater as a recycled sustainable water supply for its campuses' operations.

## smart Malaysia widens reach with new dealerships in Kuantan, Kuching

**PETALING JAYA:** smart Malaysia has opened two new dealerships, HK Electra smart Kuantan in Pahang and Ghee Hua smart Kuching in Sarawak – to provide greater accessibility to premium electric vehicles.

Both dealerships will offer the Proton e.MAS lineup, strengthening Malaysia's transition towards new energy vehicles (NEV).

“Our expansion into Kuantan and Kuching reflects the growing demand for premium EVs in Malaysia. smart Malaysia is committed to making EV ownership more accessible through an expanded dealer network and enhanced customer experiences,” said CEO Zhang Qiang.

The launch of the two new dealerships strengthens its commitment to EV adoption, offering both smart and Proton e.MAS models to support Malaysia's transition to new energy vehicles.

“As a long-standing player in the automotive industry, we are proud to expand our portfolio with the smart brand and be at the forefront of Malaysia's EV revolution. smart's innovative technology and customer-centric approach align perfectly with our vision of delivering exceptional automotive experiences. We look forward to welcoming customers to explore the future of mobility at smart Kuantan,” said HK Electra Sdn Bhd dealer owner Susan Leong.

Meanwhile, Ghee Hua Co Sdn Bhd dealer owner Kevin Law said the opening of smart Kuching represents a new era of electric mobility for Sarawak. He added they are excited to introduce smart's innovative EV solutions to East Malaysia, empowering customers with cutting-edge technology and sustainability-driven choices.



# Exsim Hospitality reports sixfold surge in revenue

➤ Positive financial results driven by diversification strategy in design and fit-out business

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Exsim Hospitality Berhad (formerly known as Pan Malaysia Holdings Berhad) (EHB) has delivered a stellar financial performance in the second half of the financial year 2025 (2HFY25), recording a more than sixfold increase in revenue to RM21.7 million, compared to RM3.0 million in the same period last year (2HFY24).

The sharp rise in revenue was driven by the group's successful expansion into Design and Fit-out services and the steady growth of its hospitality operator business.

The group, in a statement also reported a strong turnaround in net profitability, recording a profit after taxation (PAT) of approximately RM2.0 million, compared to a net loss of RM1.6 million in 2HFY24, marking a positive swing of RM3.6 million.

For the latest quarter (Q2FY25), EHB saw an increase in revenue to RM19.4 million from RM2.3 million in the immediate preceding quarter as its Design and Fit-Out segment began recognising income from its

contracts in hand registering approximately RM16.3 million in revenue.

This resulted in the company being able to report a profit before taxation of RM3.2 million compared to the loss before taxation of RM0.2 million in the immediate preceding quarter.

The recent positive financial results which have been driven by EHB's diversification strategy in its Design and Fit-Out business is set to further bolster the company's financial results for the next one to two years, with its wholly owned subsidiary, Exsim Concepto Sdn Bhd, securing three fit-out contracts worth approximately RM128.35 million with an existing orderbook of approximately RM112.08 million as of Dec 31, 2024.

The group said it is also expanding its footprint in the hospitality operator segment, having secured 437 managed property contracts in first half of the financial year (1HFY25), a significant increase from 195 in Q1FY25. These properties span key locations, including Penang, Terengganu, Kuantan and Klang Valley.

Additionally, it added that the refurbishment works for Corus Paradise Resort in Port Dickson will commence in 2025, positioning EHB to enhance occupancy rates and introduce new revenue streams, including food and beverage services.

EHB managing director Tan Hai Liang said: "Our latest results reflect the strength of our strategy in expanding our Design and

Fit-Out business which has already begun delivering positive contributions to our performance this quarter.

"At the same time, our Hospitality Operator segment is proving to be a key growth driver, with strong demand leading to a strong increase in managed property contracts within six months."

In 1HFY25, he added this segment generated RM1.4 million in revenue from just over 100 fully service-ready units, with these units reflecting strong occupancy rate thus far.

With ongoing expansion efforts, he said revenue from this segment is expected to grow further as more properties are onboarded.

"We anticipate sustained growth in this segment as more units under management progressively become ready for occupancy, alongside our continued efforts to expand our customer base.

"With these strategic initiatives in motion, we are also focused on cementing our profit growth for Q3 and Q4 2025, supported by the steady expansion of our portfolio and operational improvements.

"Our long-term growth strategy remains firmly in place, with the planned revamp of our existing Corus Hotel and the acquisition of new assets under our Own-and-Operate model," said Tan.

With a solid growth trajectory and strategic expansion in place, EHB remains optimistic about its outlook and is committed to scaling new heights in the hospitality industry.



## Johan Idris appointed chairman of Maxis

**PETALING JAYA:** The Board of Maxis Bhd has appointed Datuk Johan Idris (pic) as chairman of Maxis, effective March 1.

Johan was previously the managing partner of KPMG in Malaysia, member of KPMG Asia Pacific Board, member of KPMG International Global Council and president of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants.

Johan currently serves as non-executive chairman of KPMG in Malaysia, board member of the Capital Market Compensation Fund Corporation of Securities Commission Malaysia, board member of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Senate member and Board of Trustees of International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance, as set-up by Bank Negara Malaysia and council member of Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

He has over 35 years of working experience, a proven leadership track record and extensive experience across various industries and sectors, both local and global.

The board extends its gratitude to Datuk Hamidah Naziadin as the Company has greatly benefited from her leadership as Interim Chairman since July 1, 2024. She will continue her role as independent non-executive director.

"I am privileged to take on this role as chairman of Maxis and look forward to leading the board's role in advancing Maxis' core businesses in Mobile, Home and Enterprise as the leading integrated telco in Malaysia. Maxis' values are aligned with the nation's digital aspirations, with the rakyat's interest at heart," said Johan.

## 17th Malaysia Property Summit to provide market insights

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Association of Valuers, Property Managers, Estate Agents and Property Consultants in the Private Sector Malaysia (PEPS) will be organising their flagship event, the 17th Malaysian Property Summit, on Thursday at The Vertical @ Connexion Conference & Event Centre in Bangsar South.

About 300 attendees are expected at the summit.

Property market transactions continued its growth momentum in 2024 with higher year-on-year increases for the first 9 months of 2024 compared to the previous year.

Coupled with healthy GDP growth, an accommodative monetary policy and

improving FDIs, interest in the property market has been on the uptrend.

Nevertheless, expectations among buyers are mixed between those who are upbeat about the current course and those who expect the market to remain challenging.

At the same time, and adding to the mix, industry players and investors are reassessing their strategies for what is to come over the next couple of years.

In unravelling the Property Market Outlook for 2025 with the theme "Numbers Tell, Sentiment Sells: Decoding the Real Estate Market", this year's summit aspires to decode the underlying drivers and the various traits

of the market, and explore its trajectory in 2025.

Amidst PEPS's various events that have focussed on the impact and relationship of technological advancements to the property market, the upcoming summit will focus on the trends and prospects of the core property sectors that significantly shape the market.

The country's top experts will share their comprehensive and valuable insights at the one day summit.

Abdul Razak Yusak, the director-general of the Valuation and Property Services Department under the Ministry of Finance, is expected to officiate the summit.

## Turnover in warrants over Malaysian stocks down 14% on the week

**TOTAL** warrants turnover last week came in at RM450.6 million, which represented just a marginal week-on-week (w-o-w) decrease despite the shortened trading week in conjunction with the Thaipusam holiday on Tuesday.

The bulk of turnover came from trading in the Hang Seng Index (HSI) warrants, which came in at 76% of the total turnover. On a weekly basis, turnover from HSI warrants came in 6% higher than the previous week.

Turnover for warrants over the Hang Seng TECH Index (HSTECH) however, notched in more than four times the turnover from the previous week. Additionally, Hong Kong stock warrants which garnered decent trading activity last week include Alibaba Group (9988.HK), BYD (1211.HK) and Xiaomi Corporation (1810.HK).

For the week, the HSI extended its weekly gain to a fifth consecutive week, closing at 22,620, a level not seen since early October 2024 during the stimulus package rally. The HSI and HSTECH February futures both closed the week approximately 7% higher, further boosted by gains on Friday on the back of news that Chinese President Xi Jinping plans to chair a symposium that will be attended by the country's business leaders to boost private sector sentiment (Reuters, Feb 14).

On Friday alone, the HSI and HSTECH futures surged 3.7% and 5.8%, respectively.

As the Hong Kong markets rallied, calls HSI-CWCC and HSI-CWAW and puts HSI-PWB9 and HSI-PWDK took centre stage. Notably, call HSI-CWAW saw a 120% w-o-w increase in its

### Top ALIBABA warrants by value traded

Warrant name	Value (RM)	Issuer	Exercise price	Expiry date
ALIBABA-C42	1,530,091	Macquarie	HKD108.00	2 July 2025
ALIBABA-C41	1,208,394	Kenanga	HKD108.00	29 Sept 2025
ALIBABA-C40	247,501	Maybank	HKD118.00	25 Jun 2025
ALIBABA-C36	65,610	Kenanga	HKD88.00	7 Apr 2025
ALIBABA-C39	36,200	Macquarie	HKD128.00	6 May 2025

bid price as of Friday's close.

Meanwhile, with Alibaba surging 24% in price for the week, investors were seen trading ALIBABA-C42 and ALIBABA-C41, which recorded over 7 million and 5 million units in volume traded, respectively.

Back home, turnover in warrants over local underlyings was rather light, recording a 14% w-o-w

decrease. Warrants over Gamuda Berhad (GAMUDA) continued to see traction, alongside warrants over YTL Power International (YTLPOWR). For warrants over GAMUDA, investors were seen trading GAMUDA-C2R and GAMUDA-C3B.

Meanwhile, warrants over Dialog Group (DIALOG) also saw a surge in trading activity on Friday, with active

trading seen in DIALOG-C1W and DIALOG-C1V as the company on Thursday reported its first ever loss at RM129.5 million for the quarter ended Dec 31, 2024 (TheEdge, Feb 14). Shares of DIALOG closed over 13% lower on Friday, its lowest close in 8 years.

To view the full list of structured warrants available on Bursa Malaysia, kindly visit [malaysiawarrants.com.my](https://malaysiawarrants.com.my).

Provided for Malaysian residents information only. This commentary has not been reviewed by the Securities Commission Malaysia. It is not an offer or recommendation to trade and is not research material. Past performance is not indicative of future performance. You should make your own assessment and seek professional advice. The Warrants will not be offered to any US persons.





VinFast electric vehicles are parked before delivery to their customers at a store in Los Angeles. — REUTERSPIC

# VinFast struggles to sell EVs outside Vietnam

➤ Only 10,000 out of 97,000 units delivered last year were sold abroad

**HANOI:** Vietnamese electric vehicle maker VinFast said it delivered about 97,000 cars last year, nearly three times as many as in 2023, but sales were almost exclusively in its domestic market.

The company said it planned to at least double global sales this year, buoyed by a large increase in deliveries in the last quarter of 2024, when it sold more than 53,000 cars, more than half its total annual sales.

The 2024 deliveries exceeded a revised-down sales target of 80,000 units.

VinFast had initially planned to sell 100,000 cars last year.

"VinFast's 2024 results exceeded expectations, demonstrating resilience in

the face of market fluctuations and macroeconomic volatility," VinFast chairman Thuy Le said.

The startup is pursuing an aggressive but costly expansion strategy in Vietnam, where it can rely on a growing market of nearly 100 million people.

In the last quarter, sales were also boosted by the introduction of a much cheaper and smaller model.

However, the company lost nearly US\$2 billion (RM8.9 billion) in the first three quarters of last year, according to the latest available data, after posting US\$2.4 billion in losses in 2023.

That is putting pressure on its parent company, Vietnamese conglomerate Vingroup.

The carmaker also wants to expand abroad but has so far struggled to attract foreign buyers.

In a previous statement in January, VinFast said it had sold more than 87,000 units in Vietnam last year.

Barring a revision of its own figures, that

would mean only about 10,000 cars were sold abroad, around 10% of total sales.

Last year the company postponed plans for a factory in the United States, in what appeared as a shift to Asian markets, and in particular to India and Indonesia, where it plans to establish two assembly factories.

VinFast did not provide a breakdown of sales by market.

Most of its sales in Vietnam in 2023 were to companies linked to its owner Pham Nhat Vuong, including electric taxi operator Green SM, or GSM, which in the last quarter of 2024 overtook Southeast Asian ride-hailing giant Grab as the top taxi company in Vietnam, according to research firm Mordor Intelligence.

A full breakdown of domestic buyers for last year is not available, but in the third quarter about 20% of total deliveries went to VinFast's related parties, according to its quarterly earnings.

The company is expected to release full-year results on April 24. — Reuters

## China's fuel demand may have passed its peak: IEA

**LONDON:** China's demand for road and air transport fuels may have passed its peak, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said, citing data showing that the country's consumption of gasoline, gasoil and jet fuel declined marginally in 2024.

Combined consumption of the three fuels in China last year was at 8.1 million barrels per day (bpd), which was 200,000 bpd lower than in 2021 and only narrowly above 2019 levels, the IEA said in a monthly report.

"This strongly suggests that fuel use in the country has already reached a plateau and

may even have passed its peak," the agency said.

After decades of leading global oil demand growth, China's contribution is sputtering as it faces economic challenges as well as making a shift to electric vehicles (EVs).

The decline in China's fuel demand is likely to accelerate over the medium term, which would be enough to generate a plateau in total China oil demand this decade, according to the Paris-based IEA.

"This remarkable slowdown in consumption growth has been achieved by a combination of

structural changes in China's economy and the rapid deployment of alternative transportation technologies," the IEA said.

A slump in China's construction sector and weaker consumer spending reduced fuel demand in the country, it said, adding that uptake of EVs also weighed.

New EVs currently account for half of car sales and undercut around 250,000-300,000 bpd of oil demand growth in 2024, while use of compressed and liquefied natural gas in road freight displaced around 150,000 bpd, it said. — Reuters

## UAE firm to explore clean energy projects in Indonesia

**JAKARTA:** Emirates Global Aluminium plans to explore alternative clean energy development in Indonesia, Jakarta said, amending a statement denied by the company that EGA planned to build a nuclear power plant in the country.

Indonesia's Economic Affairs Ministry issued a statement late on Saturday, replacing one that had said EGA planned to build a nuclear plant of up to 5 gigawatts in an attempt to remedy a shortage of low-carbon power bedeviling efforts to boost capacity at an aluminium smelter in North Sumatra.

An EGA spokesman said the company "is not in the nuclear power business so, with all respect, the account of this aspect ... is inaccurate".

EGA reiterated it was "interested in Indonesia". Indonesia has no nuclear power capacity.

The company agreed in 2022 to help expand production capacity by up to 400,000 tonnes a year at the smelter owned by state-owned Indonesia Asahan Aluminium.

Indonesia has been trying to develop its mineral processing industry by attracting investment on the basis of its rich reserves of minerals such as nickel, copper and bauxite.

Senior Economic Minister Airlangga Hartarto and EGA CEO Abdulnasser Ibrahim Saif Bin Kalban met in Dubai last week to discuss development of the aluminium industry.

Airlangga, in Dubai to attend the World Government Summit, also met Mohamed Jameel Al Ramahi, the chief executive of UAE state-owned renewable energy firm Masdar.

The two discussed their projects in Indonesia. — Reuters

## Pepsi India bottler misses profit view

**MUMBAI:** Pepsi India bottler Varun Beverages reported fourth-quarter profit below analysts' estimates, as higher raw material costs overshadowed volumes growth driven by its expansion in Africa.

The company is one of PepsiCo's largest franchisees outside the United States.

Net profit rose more than 40% from a year earlier to 1.85 billion rupees (RM94 million) in the quarter ended Dec 31. However, that missed analysts' average estimate of 2.11 billion rupees, according to data compiled by LSEG.

Revenue from operations rose 39.8% to nearly 38.18 billion rupees, while expenses jumped 41.3% due to an increase in the costs of raw materials such as sugar, flavourings, glass bottles, and packaging, and higher value-added taxes.

Varun Beverages, which packages and distributes beverages under Pepsi, Mirinda and Tropicana labels, is expanding its presence in several African countries, including South Africa, Ghana and Tanzania. — Reuters

## S'pore mulls steps to boost stock market

**SINGAPORE:** Singapore announced its first set of measures to strengthen the country's equities market development, including proposals to introduce tax incentives to spur more listings and investments in the city state's equities market.

The equities market review group said in a statement that it has submitted the proposals to the prime minister and Finance Ministry.

The Monetary Authority of Singapore set up the review group in August last year to recommend measures to strengthen equities market development in the country.

The review group said the first set of measures also included proposals to encourage the launch and growth of funds with substantial investment in domestic equities.

The group said it will provide a fuller update on its first set of measures on Feb 21, and will continue to work on the next set of measures. — Reuters

BLISSFUL  
ESCAPE AMIDST NATURE  
berjahotel.comBERJAYA  
LANGKAWI RESORT  
MALAYSIA

# Broadcom, TSMC eye possible deals that will split Intel

➤ Trump administration may oppose foreign takeover of chipmaker's American plants, says source

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Intel's rivals Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co and Broadcom are each eyeing potential deals that would break the US chipmaking icon in two, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on Saturday, citing people familiar with the matter.

Broadcom has been closely examining Intel's chip design and marketing business, the *Journal* reported, adding that the company had discussed a potential bid with its advisers but would likely only proceed if it found a partner for Intel's manufacturing business.

TSMC, the world's biggest contract chipmaker, has separately studied controlling some or all of Intel's chip plants, potentially as part of an investor consortium or other structure, the report said.

Broadcom and TSMC are not working together, and all of the talks so far are preliminary and largely informal, the *Journal* added.

Intel's interim executive chairman, Frank Yeary, has been leading the discussions with

possible suitors and Donald Trump administration officials, who are concerned about the fate of a company seen as critical to national security, the report said.

Yeary has been telling individuals close to him that he is most focused on maximising value for Intel shareholders, the report added.

Intel, Broadcom, TSMC and the White House did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment.

A White House official told Reuters on Friday that Trump's administration might not support Intel's US chip factories being operated by a foreign entity after Bloomberg reported that TSMC was considering taking a controlling stake in Intel's factories at Trump's request.

The White House official said the Trump administration supported foreign companies investing and building in the US but was "unlikely" to support a foreign firm operating Intel's factories.

Bloomberg reported that Trump's team raised the idea of a deal between the two firms

in recent meetings with officials from TSMC who were receptive, citing a person familiar with the matter.

Intel was among the largest beneficiaries of the US push to onshore critical chip manufacturing led by former president Joe Biden's administration.

The US Commerce Department said in November it was finalising a US\$7.86 billion government subsidy for Intel.

The company is one of a few chipmakers that design and manufacture semiconductors. TSMC boasts a market valuation about eight times larger than that of Intel.

The Taiwanese company's customers include AI chip leader Nvidia and AMD, which is Intel's fierce rival in PC and server markets.

Former Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger, who was ousted last year, set sky-high expectations for Intel's manufacturing and AI capabilities among major clients but fell short, leading to the chipmaker losing or canceling contracts, Reuters reported previously.

Intel's shares lost about 60% of their value last year as its capital-intensive bid to bolster manufacturing – a strategy championed by Gelsinger – strained the company's cash flow and ultimately led to it cutting about 15% of its workforce. – Reuters

## Nestle sales beat forecast after price hikes

**ZURICH:** Swiss food giant Nestle reported better-than-expected annual sales, boosting its shares after the maker of Nescafe coffee and KitKat chocolate hiked prices to offset inflation.

Shares in the group, whose myriad products also include Maggi bouillon cubes, Gerber baby food and Nesquik chocolate-flavoured drink, soared in Zurich after its published its 2024 results.

"In a challenging macroeconomic context and soft consumer environment, we achieved a solid performance in 2024 in line with our latest guidance," CEO Laurent Freixe said in a statement.

Freixe took over in September in a surprise change at the top of the Swiss group, which had faced flagging sales and scandals surrounding its bottled waters.

A company veteran who headed the Latin America division before his promotion, Freixe has made it a priority to boost growth at a company whose products range from frozen foods to sweets to health care nutrition.

Consumers turned to cheaper products as Nestle raised prices to cope with inflation.

The group has also faced scandals in Switzerland and France over the use of banned filtering systems for its mineral waters, and the deaths of two children who had consumed Buitoni pizzas suspected of being contaminated with E.coli.

Nestle said its real internal growth (RIG) – a measure of sales volume excluding the impact of price hikes and acquisitions or divestitures – reached 0.8% in 2024 after picking up steam at 1.4% in the second half of the year.

It had fallen 0.3% in 2023.

"Although the environment remains very challenging, we believe that the FY24 (fiscal year 2024) results mark a new beginning," Jean-Philippe Bertschy, analyst at investment firm Vontobel, said in a note.

Nestle said sales revenue fell 1.8% to 91.3 billion Swiss francs (RM444 billion) – higher than the 91 billion francs forecast by analysts surveyed by Swiss financial news agency AWP.

Its profit after tax was down 2.9% to 10.9 billion francs, lower than the 11 billion francs estimated by analysts.

Nestle said organic growth – a closely-watched sales metric that excludes currency fluctuations and acquisitions – reached 2.2%, better than the % forecast by the group.

Last year, Freixe unveiled cost-saving measures, an increase in advertising spending focused on popular products and a reorganisation of the water business.

"The plans that we laid out at our capital market day are materialising.

"You will see Nestle moving in the right direction," he said. – AFP

## Chevron to cut 15%-20% of workforce by end of 2026

**NEW YORK:** Chevron will cut 15% to 20% of its workforce as part of a reorganisation to save money and to position the oil giant for the long-term, the company said.

The job cuts will begin in 2025 and mostly completed by the end of 2026, Chevron said in a statement to AFP.

The moves are in line with a previous company pledge to remove US\$2 to US\$3 billion in "targeted structural costs" by the end of next year.

The move is expected to reduce headcount by thousands.

Chevron employed 39,800 at the end of 2024, not counting service-station employees.

"Chevron is taking action to simplify our organisational structure, execute faster and more effectively, and position the company for stronger long-term competitiveness," said a statement from Chevron vice-chairman Mark Nelson.

"We do not take these actions lightly and will support our employees through the transition.

"But responsible leadership requires taking these steps to improve the long-term competitiveness of our company for our people, our shareholders and our communities."

The announcement comes after Chevron last month reported annual profits of US\$17.7 billion, down 17% from 2023.

The company returned a record US\$27 billion last year to shareholders in share repurchases and dividends. – AFP



A customer pumping gasoline into a BMW at a Chevron gas station in Santa Monica, California. – AFP/IC

## Canada to compel diversity disclosures for banks, insurance firms

**OTTAWA:** Canada said it would compel banks, insurance companies and other financial firms to disclose the number of women and minorities on their boards and in senior management positions.

The move, announced in the government newspaper *Canada Gazette*, contrasts with a retreat from diversity, equity and inclusion

(DEI) programmes – aimed at combatting racism, sexism and other discrimination in the workplace – in the United States pushed by President Donald Trump.

The Canadian regulations aim to promote hiring of women, visible minorities, indigenous people, and the disabled in senior ranks.

"Diversity is fundamental to creating a

thriving and successful financial sector that reflects Canadian values and achieves its potential," the government said in the *Canada Gazette*.

The new rules, which will affect 16 financial institutions, are similar to those already implemented for other federally regulated companies such as telecommunications

providers, airlines and railways.

According to government data, 59% of corporate boards in Canada had at least one woman member while 27% had a member of a visible minority in 2023.

Women also held 29% of all senior management positions and visible minorities held 13%. – AFP



# MARKET ROUND-UP: FEBRUARY 14

## Bursa Trade Statistic

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

14 Feb 2025

Participation					
Retail (22.44%)		Institution (44.99%)		Foreign (32.57%)	
Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)	
<b>+38.90</b>		<b>+70.83</b>		<b>-109.73</b>	
Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
558.71	519.81	1116.61	1045.78	727.75	837.48

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

**Need Some Ideas?**  
Our Monthly Trader's Talk will be held  
Every 1st Monday of the Month  
Live webinar with Q&A

**iPacOnline**  
@ipaconline1972

Inter-Pacific Securities  
@iPac\_TV

**SUNBIZ** presents a summary of the day's trading activity on Bursa Malaysia and other markets in an easy to digest format.

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

**DISCLAIMER:** The data and reports are provided as a service to investors. Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd shall not be liable or responsible for any consequences resulting from usage of the information.

## Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	12,106.60 -20.50
FBMKLCI	1,591.60 -0.68
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	529.76 +2.68
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	163.99 -0.18
CONSTRUCTION	284.40 +0.26
FINANCIAL SERVICES	19,342.60 +97.40
ENERGY	798.55 -19.80
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	517.93 -7.82
HEALTH CARE	2,213.65 -6.15
TRANSPORTATION	1,058.22 -7.31
PROPERTY	1,071.17 -4.10
PLANTATION	7,454.92 -26.70
FBMSHA	11,847.50 -85.50
FBMACE	5,134.78 -84.40
TECHNOLOGY	58.56 -0.37

**TURNOVER: 3.274 bil** **VALUE: RM2.402 bil**

## Cautious trading to persist until clearer US trade policy emerges

**BURSA** Malaysia is expected to remain in a consolidation phase this week until greater clarity on the US trade policy emerges.

Amid the ongoing uncertainties, Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd equity research vice-president Thong Pak Leng anticipates Bursa Malaysia's main index to trend within the 1,580-1,600 range this week, representing the support and the resistance levels.

"We believe cautious sentiment surrounding the US tariff war and its potential impact on the market will persist," he told Bernama.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors Sdn Bhd head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan said trade pressures are expected to peak in the second quarter of the year.

"Furthermore, concerns about inflation could dampen investor sentiment, potentially delaying a stronger market rebound in the second half of the year. As global investors navigate these uncertainties, Malaysian markets may continue to experience volatility, with sentiment closely tied to external developments," he said.

On the home front, the market will closely monitor Malaysia's consumer price index (CPI) to be released this week, alongside earnings announcements by Hartalega, Kossan Rubber Industries, Genting Malaysia, and Sunway Construction, among others.

On Thursday, US President Donald Trump directed the US Trade Representative and Commerce secretary to investigate proposed reciprocal tariffs, with implementation likely in April. The announcement of reciprocal tariffs has provided some relief as markets had feared more immediate action, helping Bursa Malaysia to end the week on a slightly bearish note.

Last week, on a Friday-to-Friday basis, the FBM KLCI posted a modest gain of 0.69 point to 1,591.60 compared with 1,590.91 a week earlier.

## Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-PWB9	0.060	-0.050	-45.46	2,590,207
DIALOG	1.570	-0.240	-13.26	2,083,706
HSI-CWCC	0.305	0.095	45.24	1,681,618
HSI-PWCC	0.040	-0.030	-42.86	930,534
DIALOG-CIW	0.040	-0.040	-50.00	758,408
VELESTO	0.185	-	-	679,059
DIALOG-CIV	0.015	-0.030	-66.67	659,924
HM	0.150	0.005	3.45	635,922
NOTION	0.920	-0.230	-20.00	516,205
HSI-PWDK	0.035	-0.040	-53.33	504,328
EAH	0.005	-	-	485,912
HSI-CWCA	0.215	0.080	59.26	426,754
YBS	0.595	-0.175	-22.73	383,015
GENM	2.410	0.140	6.17	298,112
ARMADA	0.630	-0.015	-2.33	285,678
MYEG	1.030	-	-	261,510
AUMAS	0.865	-0.070	-7.49	255,077
TANCO	1.740	-0.140	-7.45	250,818
MPIRE	0.120	0.015	14.29	240,565
99SMART-CQ	0.020	-0.005	-20.00	222,791



## Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
HEIM	27.600	1.620	8,429
NESTLE	91.040	0.400	91
LPI	13.900	0.300	957
TOPGLOV-WA	0.305	0.300	38,457
HSI-CWAW	0.845	0.285	10,695
HSI-CWCJ	1.310	0.280	551
HSI-CWA7	0.995	0.265	9,959
PETDAG	19.780	0.260	1,293
HSI-CWAR	0.585	0.225	10,498
HSI-CWCV	0.935	0.215	12,792
HSI-CWCI	0.685	0.195	28,481
ALLIANZ	19.160	0.180	397
GENTING	3.850	0.170	158,834
HSI-CWA6	0.490	0.155	41,205
HSTECH-C18	0.385	0.150	16,288
CHINAETF-MYR	5.200	0.150	326
UMS	2.250	0.150	90
HSI-CWCN	0.665	0.145	17,580
GENM	2.410	0.140	298,112
NPC	2.700	0.14	23

## Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
TOPGLOV-WA	0.305	6000.00	38,457
MINOX-WA	0.060	1100.00	221,666
HSI-CWCO	0.130	188.89	10,677
ITMAX-CO	0.085	142.86	1,000
HSI-CWCM	0.225	136.84	24,717
ANEKA-WA	0.010	100.00	131,791
GENM-C2J	0.010	100.00	7,199
HONGSENG	0.010	100.00	1,978
HSI-CWAZ	0.030	100.00	8,186
HSI-CWAY	0.170	88.89	16,448
HSI-CWA2	0.100	81.82	1,390
GENM-C3A	0.035	75.00	95,781
SGFCAP-WC	0.035	75.00	1
HSTECH-C18	0.385	63.83	16,288
HSI-CWAR	0.585	62.50	10,498
GENM-C3B	0.080	60.00	52,466
HSI-CWCA	0.215	59.26	426,754
HSI-CWA1	0.335	55.81	5,367
HSI-CWA5	0.335	52.27	31,662
HSI-CWAW	0.845	50.89	10,695

## World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA [US]	44,546.08	-165.35	-0.37
S&P 500 [US]	6,114.63	-0.44	-0.01
NASDAQ [US]	20,026.77	+81.13	+0.41
NYSE [US]	20,130.48	-50.81	-0.25
EURO STOXX 50 [EUR]	5,493.40	-7.10	-0.13
FTSE 100 [UK]	8,732.46	-32.26	-0.37
DAX [GER]	22,513.42	-98.60	-0.44
NIKKEI 225 [JPN]	39,149.43	-312.04	-0.79
TOPIX [JPN]	2,759.21	-6.38	-0.23
HANG SENG INDEX [HK]	22,620.33	+805.96	+3.69
CSI 300 [CHN]	9,939.01	+33.87	+0.87
SH SE COM [CHN]	3,346.72	+14.24	+0.43
KOSPI INDEX [SK]	2,591.05	+7.88	+0.31
ASX 200 [AUS]	8,555.81	+15.85	+0.19
ALL ORDINARIES INDX [AUS]	8,825.09	+20.84	+0.24
SENSEX INDEX [IND]	75,939.21	-199.76	-0.26
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	188.05	+1.68	+0.90
FBM KLCI	1,591.60	-0.68	-0.04
STRAITS TIMES INDEX [S'PORE]	3,877.50	-5.08	-0.13
WTI [US\$/BBL]	70.74	-0.55	-0.77
BRENT [US\$/BBL]	74.74	-0.28	-0.37
GOLD [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	2,900.70	-44.70	-1.52
SILVER [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	32.85	+0.13	+0.39
PLATINUM [US\$/T OZ]	983.95	-16.43	-1.64
COPPER [COMEX] [US CENTS/LB.]	471.30	-11.25	-2.33
COPPER 3MO [LME] [US\$/MT]	9,485.00	+30.50	+0.32
CORN [US CENTS/BU.]	508.75	+2.75	+0.54
WHEAT [US CENTS/BU.]	613.50	+21.50	+3.63
SOYBEAN OIL [CBOT] [US CENTS/LB.]	46.52	-0.16	-0.34
COCOA [ICE] [US\$/MT]	10,325.00	-213.00	-2.02
RUBBER [S'PORE] [US CENTS/KG]	204.60	+6.00	+3.02

Closing, Feb 14

## Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
BLDPINT	11.400	-0.600	10
MPI	20.720	-0.520	1337
F&N	26.220	-0.480	148
ALLIANZ-PA	19.400	-0.420	50
CDB	3.540	-0.330	75458
CARLSBG	19.760	-0.320	1784
DIALOG	1.570	-0.240	2,083,706
NOTION	0.920	-0.230	516,205
UTDPLT	31.480	-0.200	1755
PETGAS	17.740	-0.180	2921
YBS	0.595	-0.175	383,015
KLK	20.400	-0.160	1294
YINSON	2.160	-0.160	97124
NIKKEI-CN	0.540	-0.150	68
NOTION-WD	0.620	-0.145	37764
HSI-PWB5	0.180	-0.140	9927
PPB	11.560	-0.140	2499
TANCO	1.740	-0.140	250,818
HSI-PWBS	0.085	-0.135	22260
MASTER	3.240	-0.130	439

## Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
DIALOG-CIU	0.005	-80.00	2,300
AEON-C37	0.050	-66.67	500
DIALOG-CIT	0.005	-66.67	51,554
DIALOG-CIV	0.015	-66.67	659,924
HSI-PWBX	0.050	-62.96	157,250
HSI-PWBS	0.085	-61.36	22,260
AEON-C29	0.020	-55.56	2,000
HSI-PWDK	0.035	-53.33	504,328
99SMART-CE	0.005	-50.00	1,423
BURSA-C84	0.005	-50.00	716
DIALOG-CIR	0.005	-50.00	3,000
DIALOG-CIW	0.040	-50.00	758,408
DIALOG-CIX	0.025	-50.00	167,076
ERDASAN-WC	0.005	-50.00	1
HSI-PWB8	0.020	-50.00	29,189
HSI-PWB0	0.005	-50.00	2,000
HSI-PWBW	0.005	-50.00	37,151
HSI-PWBZ	0.005	-50.00	30,260
HSI-PWDI	0.010	-50.00	1,000
HSI-PWDM	0.020	-50.00	806

## 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**

**DISCLAIMER:** The information is extracted from stockbrokers' commentaries and research reports and do not represent the views or opinions of Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd. It is not a solicitation, recommendation or an offer to buy or sell the equities featured. Sun Media Corporation shall not be liable or responsible for any consequences resulting from usage of the information.

### CPE Technology's net profit for Q2'25 soars 601%

**JOHOR BAHRU:** CPE Technology Bhd, an engineering supporting services provider primarily involved in the manufacturing of precision-machined parts and components and provision of computer numerical control machining services, recorded a growth of RM9 million or 601.3% in profit after tax (PAT) to RM10.4 million for its second quarter ended Dec 31, 2024 (Q2'25).

The group's profit before tax (PBT) surged 515.3% year-on-year to RM13.3 million in Q2'25, compared to RM2.2 million in the previous corresponding quarter.

At the same time, the group registered a growth in revenue of RM11.4 million or 52.4% to RM33.2 million.

Concurrently, the group registered a total revenue of RM62.5 million for the cumulative six-month period ended Dec 31, 2024, reflecting an increase of RM18 million or 40.5% in comparison to the same reporting period last year.

The group's cumulative PBT stood at RM16.3 million, marking a substantial 203.9% increase from RM5.4 million recorded in the same period last year, while PAT surged 214.1% to RM12.8 million.

The strong revenue performance in Q2'25 was primarily driven by the semiconductor industry, which contributed RM23.2 million or 69.7% of total revenue, reflecting an increase of RM12.7 million or 120.8% as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

The group's overall financial performance improvement is largely due to higher demand from the semiconductor industry.

Increased production volumes and enhanced capacity utilisation contributed to the overall growth in revenue and profitability.

The sharp increase in PBT was also partly driven by a one-off unrealised foreign exchange gain of RM3.6 million.

### Ringgit to trade cautiously ahead of US FOMC minutes

**THE** ringgit is expected to trade cautiously against the US dollar this week ahead of the release of the US Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting minutes on Feb 20.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said traders and market participants would assess the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) stance on easing monetary policy this year.

"We opined that the Fed is not in a hurry to reduce the Fed Fund Rate (FFR) in the near future. This is because the prevailing FFR is still restrictive, and the Fed would like to see the inflation trajectory steer towards its 2% target, especially after US inflation data came in higher than expected."

US headline inflation and the core consumer price index rose 3% and 3.3%, respectively, in January.

Mohd Afzanizam said the local note could test the immediate support level of RM4.43 this week.

For the week just ended, the ringgit fluctuated between gains and losses on concerns over policy uncertainties under US President Donald Trump. However, it rebounded from oversold levels and ended the week higher, supported by Malaysia's strong 2024 gross domestic product performance.

On a Friday-to-Friday basis, the ringgit appreciated to 4.4310/4385 from 4.4375/4420 the previous week.

The local weakened against the British pound to 5.5769/5863 from 5.5278/5334 and slipped against the euro to 4.6437/6515 from 4.6101/6148. However, it strengthened against the Japanese yen to 2.9048/9099 from 2.9217/9249.

The ringgit declined against the Indonesian rupiah to 272.6/273.2 from 272.4/272.9. — Bernama

### Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5010	4.3660	4.3560
1 Australian Dollar	2.8590	2.7430	2.7270
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3500	3.2510	3.2430
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1670	3.0820	3.0700
1 Euro	4.7160	4.5620	4.5420
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5660	2.4710	2.4550
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3500	3.2510	3.2430
1 Sterling Pound	5.6610	5.4810	5.4610
1 Swiss Franc	5.0190	4.8050	4.7900
100 UAE Dirham	123.9700	117.5300	117.3300
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7810	3.5210	3.3210
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.1600	59.5200	N/A
100 Danish Krone	64.8000	59.6200	59.4200
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.4100	55.4900	55.2900
100 Indian Rupee	5.2700	4.9500	4.7500
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0285	0.0258	0.0208
100 Japanese Yen	2.9520	2.8560	2.8460
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.4600	38.0900	37.8900
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6400	1.5400	1.3400
100 Philippine Peso	7.8900	7.4400	7.2400
100 Qatar Riyal	124.8100	118.4800	118.2800
100 Saudi Riyal	121.3200	115.1700	114.9700
100 South Africa Rand	25.2300	22.7800	22.5800
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5600	1.4400	1.2400
100 Swedish Krona	43.2800	39.3700	39.1700
100 Thai Baht	13.9700	12.3800	11.9800

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

### Sunway Bhd Buy. Target price: RM5.77



Source: Bloomberg, RHB Research

**WE** are upbeat on Sunway's new integrated mixed-use development in Bukit Chagar, Johor Bahru, worth a GDV of RM2.6 billion. With this sizeable presence at the Johor Bahru-Singapore Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link Station, Sunway is cementing its strategic foothold at the first (causeway) and second (via the ongoing Sunway City Iskandar Puteri project) link to Singapore. It also has two parcels of land for development at Tengah Plantation Close in Singapore near the second link, well positioned to capture the benefits arising from the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ).

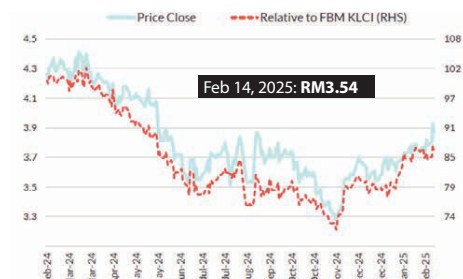
Sunway announced that it entered into a master agreement with MRT Corp comprising the development rights awarded by MRT Corp on a 4.23-acre land (for four residential/commercial towers), right to construct a multi-storey structure consisting of a retail mall, carparks and park and ride facility, as well as other necessary constructions connected to the Immigration, Customs and Quarantine Complex (ICQC). MRT Corp shall be entitled to a total development rights value (DRV) of RM450.8 million.

The 4.23-acre land is right next to the upcoming Bukit Chagar RTS station. Apart from residential and retail, the mixed-use development may also comprise some wellness/healthcare and hospitality components.

Growth prospects in Iskandar Malaysia remain strong. Sunway is one of the proxies for Iskandar Malaysia property play. The recent share price weakness represents a good entry for investors. While market sentiment has been hit by America's AI chip restriction, the growth prospects for Iskandar Malaysia remain promising.

Maintain BUY, with new RM5.77 TP. — **RHB Research, Feb 14**

### CelcomDigi Bhd Buy. Target price: RM4.30



Source: Bloomberg

**CELCOMDIGI'S** FY24 results were broadly in line with greater realisation of merger synergies alongside a stabilisation of the prepaid base. We see greater opex synergies in FY25F with the network integration at the tail-end. 5G developments remain fluid but likely priced-in, in our view.

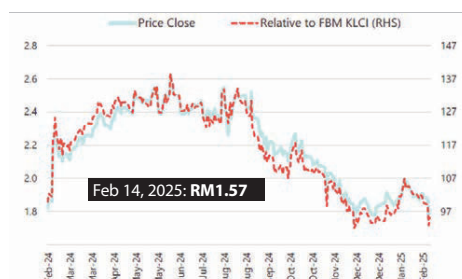
4Q24 reported earnings slipped 64% QoQ from lumpy non-cash network impairment (RM217m) and accelerated depreciation charges (RM113m) - now classified as a recurring expense. Stripping out the impairment charge, core earnings fell 7.3% QoQ (-7% YoY) from higher 5G/traffic and fibre cost and opex which offset lower staff cost and tax reversals. FY24 core earnings were in line, at 97% and 102% of our and consensus estimates. 4Q24 DPS of 3.7 sen puts FY24 DPS at 14.3sen (DPR: 103%).

Service revenue ticked-up 1.2% QoQ, reflecting some seasonal effects, with growth in postpaid and home fibre partially masked by prepaid contraction. Positively, prepaid subs base has stabilised (+23k QoQ) after four consecutive quarters of decline on steady ARPU. FY24 home fibre revenue growth of 34% was driven by a 68% jump in subs with aggressive upselling of fibre bundles to customers (80% fibre penetration on mobile). The competition has nonetheless diluted ARPU.

Over 75% of CDB's network has been integrated/modernised as at end-4Q24, on track for full completion by mid-2025. Management is guiding for capex/sales of 14-16% for FY25F (FY24: 18.7%) with investments on new IT platforms to support the new operating model. We learnt that depreciation charges may still be elevated in the medium term from the new IT stacks, albeit those from legacy network assets should taper off.

Keep BUY, with DCF-derived RM4.30 TP. — **RHB Research, Feb 14**

### Dialog Bhd Neutral. Target price: RM1.95



Source: Bloomberg, RHB Research

**AT** 24% of our and Street's full-year estimates, Dialog's 1HFY25 core earnings of RM149 million (-47% YoY) missed expectations due to unexpected additional cost provisions for its ongoing EPCC projects and operational losses from its JV food grade recycled polyethylene terephthalate pellets (rPET) plant.

Dialog slipped into RM11 million core losses after stripping off items which included a RM15 million FX gain, a RM44 million JV impairment (rPET plant), and a RM91 million impairment on malic acid plant. This is mainly dragged by additional cost provisions to account for cost overruns and EPCC project losses upon the commissioning stage as well as further worsened by weaker JV (-60% QoQ; -34% YoY) - no thanks to operational losses arising from the rPET plant and unrealised FX losses.

Following the RM91 million impairment, Dialog has announced to discontinue its malic acid project in Gebeng due to unfavourable operating environment. The company has also fully impaired its JV investment on rPET plant and hence, no further operational losses is expected going forward. Dialog has guided improvement in its EPCC segment subsequent to the recognition of additional cost provisions. We turn more cautious as the unstable and persistent weakness in the EPCC division could drag overall growth trajectory. Occupancy levels and monthly storage rates for independent terminals are still well sustained, at above 90% and above SGD6/cu m.

We cut our FY25/26/27F earnings by 32%/13%/8% to account for the above-mentioned losses and weaker contribution from the downstream segment.

Downgrade to NEUTRAL with a lower TP of RM1.95. — **RHB Research, Feb 14**





# Governing **AI** in Malaysia

*How country can manage risks,  
avoid being left behind - 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**

New wave of  
smartphones

**p24**

Robot pets give  
companionship

**p25**

Elijah Woods  
returns to KL

**p26**

Luqman Podolski  
releases debut EP

**T**HE use of artificial intelligence (AI) brings promises of benefits and concerns of harms to society. Governments are building policies and regulatory frameworks at an urgent pace to direct AI technologies towards positive outcomes and to mitigate risks as they arise.

Malaysia is not to be left behind. Multiple stakeholders are diving into the fray, spearheading initiatives to drive AI development, adoption and use such as the release of national-level guidelines and the establishment of a National AI Office. The government has also indicated strong political will to advocate for AI safety in Southeast Asia and drive the participation of the region in international rules-setting for AI.

#### Key questions

Khazanah Research Institute's (KRI) latest report *AI Governance in Malaysia: Risks, Challenges and Pathways Forward* answered key questions on AI risks, governance challenges and feasible pathways forward. It offers a snapshot of the current landscape, conceptual framework of AI risks and an indication of present gaps and challenges in technology governance. The report also laid out a set of policy recommendations in line with the government's direction at the national level while recognising international pressures and trends.

KRI offers a localised typology of AI risks, based on extensive stakeholder consultations. Drawing on in-depth interviews and a roundtable with stakeholders and subject matter experts, KRI found three main types of AI risks that are of specific concern in Malaysia.

The first is the risk of being left behind in technology adoption. The second is the risk of unsafe AI and unintended consequences. The third

# Regulation required

➤ KRI calls for better understanding of AI impacts to establish agile, fit-for-purpose AI governance framework

is the risk of malicious use of AI.

The debate on balancing technology regulation with unrestrained innovation stems from the tension in mitigating these different types of risks.

#### Lack of readiness

KRI distinguished between risks directly linked to AI and risks linked to a lack of AI readiness, which will exacerbate the risks. Improving AI readiness is one way to implement policy that addresses existing gaps in governance, capacity, education and resources, instead of speculating about uncertain risks in the future, such as artificial superintelligence.

Therefore, five key AI governance challenges, based on KRI's research, should be prioritised and addressed.

First, there is a lack of collaboration and coordination among agencies, with fragmented efforts limiting cross-sector collaboration and alignment.

Second, insufficient government

capacity hampers effective governance. It is important to address any shortages of skilled professionals and a lack of frameworks that integrate technical, legal and ethical dimensions.

Third, traditional regulatory mechanisms struggle to address AI's unique complexities and to effectively translate policies into enforceable legislation.

Fourth, it is difficult to balance regulation while facilitating innovation. Excessive regulation may stifle growth, while insufficient oversight risks the unethical use of AI.

The fifth challenge involves issues beyond Malaysia's control, as AI is a global and networked technology. There is a need for a supply chain approach to governance and robust shared definitions of what AI is and what it can do. Malaysia is in a good position to strengthen its own AI governance and influence the global conversation.

#### Global governance

In strengthening its own AI governance frameworks and mechanisms, Malaysia can play a role in the global governance of AI. KRI makes the following six policy recommendations.

➤ First, focus on national coordination of existing initiatives and actors. Ensuring efficient information flow within the AI governance ecosystem enables joint

action to be coordinated.

➤ Second, participate in international collaboration and global governance processes. Establish Malaysia's position on global governance debates and engage strategically in international rules-setting as well as other global discussions.

➤ Third, establish an agile and fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for AI by considering a whole spectrum of regulatory mechanisms alongside legislation. This may include using softer approaches, emphasising flexibility.

➤ Fourth, strengthen data governance frameworks that build trust and safeguards. Malaysia's existing data governance frameworks need to be fortified for AI-related risk scenarios. Strong and trustworthy common principles for data sharing are needed to build better technology for the local context.

➤ Fifth, cultivate understanding of AI impacts and how to manage them among experts and laypeople. There is a need to connect experts across different disciplines and localities to strengthen expertise on AI

governance. Consumer and civic education is the next step after AI literacy campaigns. Including non-experts in AI governance discussions can promote critical thinking and collect diverse perspectives on technology adoption.

➤ Sixth, support research and oversight on AI impacts by having independent oversight on AI use, especially adverse effects. Collecting data on AI-related harms and high-risk use of AI by the government and large corporations can help hold AI deployers accountable. Systematic tracking of AI adoption by small and medium enterprises can also help inform industrial development.

The recommendations presented in this report point towards the necessity of funding to implement effective policies and initiatives. Without adequate financial support, the ambitious goals set forth for AI governance may remain unfulfilled.

Securing funding that aligns with the nation's strategic vision for AI might pave the way not only to managing risks but also to capitalising on the opportunities presented by the technology.



KRI identifies the main types of AI risks that are of specific concern in Malaysia. – ALL PICS FROM PEXELS



Malaysia can play a role in the global governance of AI.



The report recommends participating in international collaboration and global governance processes.



The report states consumer and civic education is the next step after AI literacy campaigns.



BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

**I**N a new wave of smartphone launches for early 2025, three leading manufacturers have unveiled their latest devices, each pushing the boundaries of mobile technology with impressive camera capabilities, enhanced processing power and innovative features designed for today's digital lifestyle.

These new releases showcase remarkable advancements in battery technology, gaming optimisation and photographic capabilities, signalling a competitive push to capture the attention of tech-savvy consumers seeking premium experiences at various price points.

#### Infinix

Crafted for young consumers, Infinix has unveiled the Infinix Hot 50 in Malaysia, a powerful smartphone designed to deliver exceptional performance in a sleek, compact design.

Powered by the Helio G100 processor, built on a 6nm process with 2x 2.2 GHz Cortex-A76 cores and 6x 2.0 GHz Cortex-A55 cores, the Infinix Hot 50 offers powerful performance while maintaining efficiency.

The device offers seamless connectivity with Super WiFi, with up to 200% faster and more stable network performance. Meanwhile, the Darwin Engine and Xboost technology dynamically optimise power modes and multitasking capabilities.

Further enhancing the Hot 50's efficiency is its fast-charging technology by offering three modes: Hyper, Smart and Low-Temp Mode. Each provides optimal charging speeds and temperature management with a single tap.

The Hot 50 is also equipped with intelligent overnight charging, ensuring the device charges according to the user's sleep schedule, preventing overcharging and maintaining battery health. The device also automatically halts charging if it detects liquid at the charging port, providing an extra layer of safety and preventing potential damage from spills or humidity.

The smartphone's Esports Pro Game Network Engine 1.0 optimises network performance, reduces latency and ensures a lag-free online experience, while dynamically adjusting frame rates in real time to maintain fluid visuals and eliminate stuttering during intense usage. Super WiFi technology also enhances WiFi connectivity, ensuring stable and fast connections for uninterrupted gameplay.

Equipped with a high-density 5,000mAh battery, the Hot 50 ensures extended use throughout the day, whether gaming, streaming or working. Additionally, the battery withstands four years of use, with battery health remaining above 80%.

#### iQOO

Through a powerful combination of advanced engineering and collaboration with Qualcomm, iQOO's new iQOO 13 is designed for users that seek exceptional speed, stability and immersive experiences.

By leveraging the Snapdragon 8 Elite processor, tasks from



The Infinix Hot 50.

## Next-gen smartphones push boundaries

► Infinix, iQOO, Xiaomi pack new models with powerful upgrades



The iQOO 13.

multitasking to photography are said to provide a seamless experience for users due to the GPU's new slice architecture that improves all the above while optimising battery life. The Snapdragon 8 Elite also delivers advanced AI capabilities that increase NPU inference speed and reduce power.

In terms of eye protection, the iQOO 13 is one of the first to feature Oled Circular Polarisation Technology, backed by certifications from TÜV Rheinland and vivo Visual Health Labs. This advanced screen employs 2592 Hz PWM Dimming to minimise flicker and reduce eye fatigue, making it easier on the eyes during

extended use.

The iQOO 13 delivers a premium imaging experience by utilising the same camera from Vivo's flagship devices and incorporating the same advanced sensor, algorithms and features to bring users to a new level of mobile photography. Equipped to capture sharp, high-definition quality across all focal lengths, the iQOO 13 supports 0.6x, 1x, 2x and 4x optical positions with up to 30x zoom.

While the flagship-grade VCS technology and Nice 2.0 algorithm support clear images at multiple focal lengths, along with clearer and more dynamic night photos in dark scenes, the Street

Photography mode and Multifocal Portrait excel in textured photography.

The combination of these features allows the iQOO 13 to redefine mobile imaging with an impressive range of focal lengths and fine-tuned performance, enabling users to capture the world with clarity, style and ease.

#### Xiaomi

Launched earlier last month, Xiaomi's Redmi Note 14 Series includes four devices that take the previous Redmi Note to the next level with the Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G, the Redmi Note 14 Pro 5G, the Redmi Note 14 5G and the Redmi Note 14.

With a high-resolution artificial intelligence (AI) camera system, all-star durability and impressive experience, the Redmi Note 14 Series comes with all-round upgrades to bring flagship-level features to a wider audience.

The camera system at the heart of the Redmi Note 14 Series is crafted for flagship photography. Leading the way, the Pro variants feature a powerful 200MP pro-grade AI camera system with optical image stabilisation to help capture incredible detail.

The advanced zoom options provide versatility, from capturing the smallest details with 2x and 4x optical-grade lossless zoom to reaching distant subjects with up to 30x digital zoom on the Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G and the Redmi Note 14 Pro 5G.

Meanwhile, the Redmi Note 14 and the Redmi Note 14 5G are equipped with a 108MP AI camera system that delivers vibrant colours and sharp detail, making high-quality photography accessible at every price point across the series.

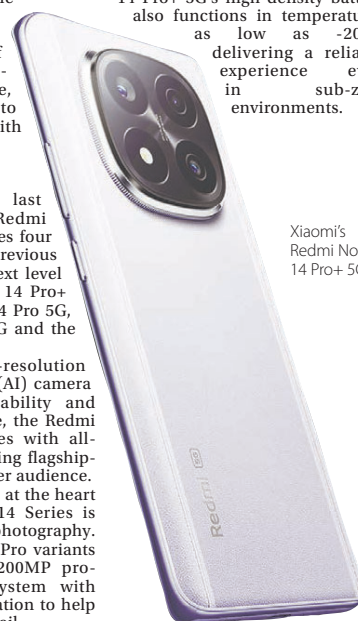
To further elevate the photography experience, the front cameras of the Redmi Note 14 Series have been upgraded to at least 20MP. Thoughtfully designed with 0.8x wide-angle zoom across the entire series, the front cameras make it easier than ever to include everyone in a group selfie, capturing and preserving shared moments effortlessly.

The Redmi Note 14 Pro Series is also designed to offer a complete photography experience, blending cutting-edge performance with intuitive versatility.

The Redmi Note 14 Series is built to meet the demands of everyday life with robust drop, splash and scratch resistance. This begins with an All-Star Armour Structure consisting of helpful additions such as a high-strength aluminum composite frame, energy-absorbing foam and polymer buffering material present in Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G and Redmi Note 14 Pro 5G for enhanced drop resistance.

The Redmi Note 14 Series additionally offers robust performance and long-lasting battery life. Thanks to the advanced chipsets inside, these devices effortlessly handle multitasking, from video calls to gaming and everything in between. The highest-tier model, the Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G, is equipped with the advanced 4nm Snapdragon 7s Gen 3 processor.

Meanwhile, its 5110mAh battery with 120W HyperCharge provides lasting power from start to finish. Designed to handle extreme conditions, Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G's high-density battery also functions in temperatures as low as -20°C, delivering a reliable experience even in sub-zero environments.



Xiaomi's Redmi Note 14 Pro+ 5G



**A**T a shopping mall in Beijing, Zhang Yachun murmured quietly to her closest confidant, a fluffy AI (artificial intelligence)-powered robot whose soothing chirps reminded her that she is not alone.

Zhang, 19, has long battled anxiety over school and work, and has struggled to form deep friendships with other people.

But since buying a BooBoo, a "smart pet" that uses artificial intelligence to interact with humans, she said life has become easier.

"I feel like I now have someone to share the happy times with," said Zhang in the apartment she shares with her parents and a real pet duck.

Across China, a growing number of people are turning to AI to overcome social isolation as the technology becomes more mature and widely accepted.

Wriggly, furry and resembling a guinea pig, BooBoo is produced by Hangzhou Genmoor Technology and retails for up to 1,400 yuan (RM856).

Developed with children's social needs in mind, it has sold about 1,000 units since May, according to the company's product manager Adam Duan.

On an outing this month, Zhang ferried her companion, which she named Aluo, in a crossbody carrier, whispering to the rugby ball-sized creature as it nodded and squeaked.

At a pet shop, she pressed the beige bundle up against the window to admire a ginger cat before buying Aluo a tiny winter coat designed for a dog. She said the robot plays the same role as human friends.

"(It) makes you feel you are someone who is needed," she added.

#### Robot boom

The global market for "social robots" such as BooBoo is expected to grow by a factor of seven to US\$42.5 billion by 2033, with Asia already dominating the sector, according to consulting firm IMarc Group.

For Guo Zichen, 33, a smart pet could help when he is unable to play with his child.

"Right now, family members are spending less time with the children. Buying one for my kid can help them with studying and other things," Guo said as he examined a robotic dog on sale at the flagship store of tech company Weilan in the eastern city of Nanjing.

Weilan's AI dog, called BabyAlpha, sells for between 8,000 and 26,000 yuan, and the company said 70% of buyers are families with



People are turning to AI to overcome social isolation.  
— AFPPIC

## AI pets surge in popularity

### Young lonely Chinese embrace robotic companions

young children.

But, Guo said he was sceptical the electronic pup could bring as much joy as an actual canine.

"The biggest difference is that dogs have souls, while (BabyAlpha) looks different in an indescribable way. On the whole, you feel like it is not the same as the real thing," he said.

#### Shifting society

While the 1990s introduced electronic pets to the world such as Japan's digital Tamagotchis and American-made Furbies that could mimic speech, computerised

companions are becoming more functional with AI.

A growing number of AI products in China cater to people's emotional needs, from conversational chatbots to lifelike avatars of the deceased.

Social shifts such as the impact of the government's decades-long one-child policy are helping drive market growth, according to experts.

People born in the policy's early years are now in their 40s and facing an economy burdened with soaring home prices, higher living costs and increased work stress, stretching their ability to focus on their own children.

That, in turn, leaves little room for personal interactions, prompting people to seek alternative ways to meet their emotional needs, said University of Macau professor Wu Haiyan, who specialises in AI and psychology.

She added that AI companions provide cognitive stimulation, enhancing the well-being of individuals who may otherwise feel isolated. Wu said in some cases, people show more trust in AI than humans.

#### Same on inside

Zhang's father Peng said he understood his daughter's bond with Aluo.

"When we were young, we did not lack friends. We had loads as soon as we stepped out of the door.

"Now, children in cities seem to be under a lot more pressure, so they may lack friends," explained the 51-year-old.

Zhang, an only child, said she has become more willing to share her worries with her parents since she bought Aluo.

Opening up about her troubles at school meant there are not as many things piled up in her heart, she said.



A growing number of AI products in China cater to people's emotional needs.



AI pets are believed to be able to help school-going kids be more social.

— PICS FROM PEXELS

Zhang said people of her generation often struggle to communicate face-to-face, adding that they might be afraid to express

who they are.

"But, what they feel inside has not changed," she added, cradling Aluo in her lap. — AFP



# Singer **Elijah Woods** returns to Malaysia on Aug 9

➤ Canadian pop artiste will perform one night only at Zepp KL

**C**ANADIAN singer Elijah Woods will make his return to KL on Aug 9, taking over Zepp KL with his Give Me the Sunlight tour, bringing his hits and new tracks to the stage for one night only.

Fans can expect a performance that combines electrifying live music and intimate acoustic moments. The tour promises to be an exploration of light, love and life, weaving together a compelling narrative through each song.

Mastercard cardholders in KL have special access to presale tickets on Wednesday until the following day. Live Nation members can secure tickets during the exclusive website presale on Thursday. Tickets for the general public will be available on Friday.

Hailing from Toronto and now based in Los Angeles, Woods is a multifaceted pop artiste, singer-songwriter, producer and recording engineer.

Renowned for his melodic alternative-pop sound, heartfelt lyrics and crisp production, his music has made its way into everyone's playlists.

Woods has four Juno Award nominations and he has released five EPs as well as numerous singles over the past three years, including *Elijah Would!*, *Hey There Elijah* and *Silver Lining* in 2024.

The tour promises to be an exploration of light, love and life.



MaryGrace beams with joy after defeating three other contestants in the grand finale.

## MaryGrace wins Calpis Soda One in a Million contest

**AFTER** eight weeks of performances, over 2,500 auditions and countless spectacular moments, Calpis Soda One in a Million (CSOIAM) has officially crowned its newest champion — MaryGrace Jane Penserger. In the grand finale watched live by millions across Malaysia, MaryGrace captivated audiences with a powerful performance and claimed the RM1 million prize.

The final four contestants — Kai Deva, MaryGrace, Jimi and Zazleen — battled it out in a high-stakes showdown, each debuting an original song tailored to showcase their artistry and vocal prowess, along with a cover of a classic.

With family, friends and fans in the audience cheering them on, the stage was set for an unforgettable night. In the end, MaryGrace emerged victorious, walking away with a prize package worth RM1 million, including a Peugeot 408 GT worth RM195,000, RM500,000 in cash and a recording contract.

The show opened with a performance by Datuk Seri Siti Nurhaliza and featured the Queen of Malaysian Rock Ella. Indonesian heartthrob film producer and actor Nicholas Saputra along with renowned Malaysian singer Faizal Tahir joined resident judges Datuk Yusry Abdul Halim, Ziana Zain and Cakra Khan to pick the champion.

The show also engaged the audience through the giveaway of cash prizes worth RM100,000 to 100 winners during the three-hour programme.

Reflecting on her victory, MaryGrace beamed with excitement and said: "This is more than a dream come true. The journey, unwavering support and the love from my fans have made this experience truly unforgettable."

"CSOIAM has given me an incredible opportunity and I am ready to take the next big step in my music career. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who believed in me — especially, Etika Sdn Bhd and Media Prima. This is only the beginning!"

## New *Captain America* film flies into Trumpian headwinds

**THE** latest entry in the *Captain America* film franchise, which premiered in Hollywood last week, presents a vision of the US out of step with the Trump era, with a diverse cast, core message about unity and an endorsement of international diplomacy.

Written and filmed before Donald Trump's return as president, the latest offering from Marvel Studios has already faced an online backlash from some right-wingers over comments by lead actor Anthony Mackie that was deemed as unpatriotic.

Mackie, the first Black actor to play the superhero, became a target last month after attempting to make a point about the universal message of Captain America as an ideal of good conscience and incorruptibility.

"Captain America represents a lot of different things and I do not think the term 'America' should be one of those representations."

"It is about a man who keeps his word... who has honour, dignity and integrity," he said at a promotional event.

In *Captain America: Brave New World*, Mackie flies, fights and flings his famous shield in pursuit of world

peace alongside flawed and mercurial president Thaddeus Ross, played by Harrison Ford.

Ross is attempting to negotiate an international treaty with America's allies to share a precious new metal discovered on an island in the Indian Ocean, but he is being thwarted by his past associations and an international crime gang.

"I would not taint any movie with the reality of the world we are living in right now."

"I prefer the reality of the Marvel universe to the morning's news," said Ford, making his first foray into the superhero stable at the age of 82.

Mackie has taken over from long-serving fan favourite Chris Evans in the lead role of Captain America and his character's self-doubt as well as impostor syndrome are a theme in the plot.

He said the new film is building a second phase of the franchise with a different Captain America and storyline, but with the same quality of films.

Directed by Nigerian-born Julius Onah, *Brave New World* features a diverse cast including Danny Ramirez and Xosha Roquemore.

Onah said he insisted on inserting

a line at the end, in which Captain America tells Ross "if we cannot see the good in each other, we have already lost the fight."

"I think it speaks to the moral obligation that we all have to each other in a shared society, even when we might see things differently."

Such sentiments are out of fashion in Trump's Republican party, with its hostile stance toward diversity and aggressive "America First" foreign policy.

In his first three weeks in office, Trump has pursued a "war on woke" by cancelling federal diversity programmes, pulled the US out of international treaties and threatened America's allies.

It remains to be seen whether the latest Marvel offering can appeal across political lines in such a polarised environment.

Onah said telling a story like this, there is always going to be things that touch on the world we live in, but he said his priority was to make an escape for audiences to have a good time.

The Disney-owned Hollywood studio is seen by industry observers as needing a box-office triumph after a string of recent television and



Mackie (left) and Ford at the world premiere of *Captain America: Brave New World* in Los Angeles. — AFP/PC

cinema disappointments including *The Marvels*, which flopped in 2023.

Fans of the original 1940s *Captain America* assert the messages in the latest film and from its lead actor as well as director are true to those of the Nazi-bashing comic strip, which

was created in response to European fascism and America's isolationism during World War II.

The film was released internationally last week before hitting cinemas in the US two days later. — AFP



## Luqman Podolski drops debut EP *Kau Apa Sebenarnya?*

► Tracks include *Tiba-tiba*, *Tak Sedar Diri*, *Aku Dah Tak Percaya*

**A**FTER years of refining his ideas, Malaysian singer Luqman Podolski finally released his debut EP *Kau Apa Sebenarnya?* last month.

Describing it as a milestone in his musical journey, the 27-year-old singer explored new elements to satisfy fans eagerly awaiting his latest work.

"I have been collecting a lot of song materials since my early days. Some have already been released, while others were kept until the right time to share with listeners (arrives). After working tirelessly on these songs and discussing with Warner Music Malaysia, we finally selected the tracks that made it into *Kau Apa Sebenarnya?*" he said.

With the EP launched, the track *Tiba-tiba* is set to be released as a single. Other songs in the EP include *Tak Sedar Diri*, *Salahkah Aku?*, *Rahsia* and *M\*\*\**.

One notable track is *Aku Dah Tak Percaya*, marking Podolski's first collaboration with Zynakal.

Podolski revealed recording *Aku Dah Tak Percaya* was an interesting experience because he had previously sent the demo to several other singers, but none responded.

"I had given them the demo, but I did not receive any response."

"Maybe they felt the song was not suitable for them or they were late in making a decision."

"I am grateful to Zynakal for agreeing to collaborate,

as we both felt this song was a right fit for us," said Podolski, who is signed under Warner Music Malaysia.

He also fulfilled the hopes of many fans as he completed the song *M\*\*\** in this EP. In production since 2016, it was originally just a song meant for social media.

One-minute in length at the time, many fans liked it and expected a full version of the song to be produced.

"To fulfil my listeners' dream, I finally completed *M\*\*\**."

"I hope they enjoy the full version and support this entire EP," he said at the listening party for EP *Kau Apa Sebenarnya?* recently.

At the exclusive event, over 100 lucky fans watched him perform several tracks from the EP.



Podolski describes his debut EP *Kau Apa Sebenarnya?* as a milestone in his musical journey.

## Films with Malaysian talents shortlisted for Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum

**THE** Hong Kong International Film Festival (HKIFF) Society has shortlisted 15 work-in-progress (WIP) feature projects for the 23rd Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF23), including films of Malaysian director Chong Keat Aun and actor Jack Tan.

*Mother Bhumi*, directed by Chong, features a widowed farmer who lives peacefully with her children, but when a land dispute occurs, the mystery of her husband's death begins to resurface.

Chong previously won HKIFF's Firebird Award for Best Film for his 2023 movie *Snow in Midsummer* and the Golden Horse award for Best New Director for 2020's *The Story of Southern Islet*.

Meanwhile, Malaysian actor Jack Tan stars in *Say My Name*, another film that has been shortlisted for HAF23. Tan has shown his prowess as an actor in recent Malaysian films, particularly 2023's tearjerker *Abang Adik*.

Directed by Liu Xing for her first feature, the Chinese-Hong Kong film *Say My Name* will revolve around a girl who impersonates an exchange student to start a fling with a rich boy, but quickly loses herself in her new identity.

The shortlisted projects will



The 15 shortlisted WIP projects will join the 25 In-Development projects for HAF23.

participate in two open pitch sessions at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on March 17 and 18, where the WIP teams will be given an opportunity to take centre stage and present their projects, including a five-minute first look, to a key industry

audience searching for original content.

Previously, two other Malaysian films were shortlisted for HAF23's in-development project category. These are Edmund Yeo's *The Age of Goodbyes* and Kethsvin Chee's *Dead Tide*. — by **MARK MATHEN VICTOR**



Johnny23 is a Kuala Lumpur-based punk rock band.

## Johnny23 wins Green Day battle

**THE** Green Day Battle of the Bands event, organised by Warner Music Malaysia, concluded in an intense competition showcasing the talent of local bands. Held at Drum Asia Live in Hartamas, over 80 Green Day fans came together to support local artistes and relive the songs of the legendary band.

Johnny23 emerged as the champion of the night, delivering a thrilling performance of *American Idiot*, a track that transported the crowd back to the heart of Green Day's revolutionary music. The band's expert execution earned its first place, securing tickets to see Green Day live in concert at the National Hockey Stadium in KL tomorrow.

The winning band said it had participated in Warner Music Malaysia's Green Day Battle of the

Bands twice.

"We (were) placed third in 2004 and 21 years later, we are the champions in 2025. This journey has been incredible. This sweet victory is more than just a trophy, it is a testament to never giving up on what you love," the band said.

Taking second place was The Other Cousin, who gave a creative rendition of classic hit *21 Guns*. Brain Stew claimed third place with its heartfelt cover of the same song. The band's powerful performance left a lasting impression on the judges and the crowd.

Among the competition's judges were notable industry professionals such as Kyoto Protocol bassist Shakeil Bashir and Insomniack's bassist and vocalist Wan Arif Iskandar. — by **MARK MATHEN VICTOR**









# Sinner accepts doping ban

Italian reach agreement with Wada, suspension to end May 4



Jannik Sinner. – AFP/ICC

**W**ORLD NO. 1 Jannik Sinner has accepted an immediate three-month doping ban after the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) said they had reached a settlement on his period of ineligibility, allowing him to return before the French Open in May.

Wada had appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) against an independent tribunal's decision in August to clear Sinner of wrongdoing after the three-times major winner failed drug tests.

Sinner, who successfully defended his Australian Open crown last month, had tested positive for anabolic agent clostebol, which the 23-year-old said had entered his system from a member of his support team through massages and sports therapy.

Sinner's ban began on Feb 9 and will end on May 4 while he can return to training on April 13. The French Open is scheduled to begin on May 25.

"Wada confirms that it has entered into a case resolution agreement in the case of Italian tennis player Jannik Sinner, with the player accepting a three-month period of ineligibility for an anti-doping rule violation," Wada said in a statement on Saturday.

"Wada accepts that Mr Sinner did not intend to cheat and that his exposure to clostebol did not provide any performance-enhancing benefit and took place without his knowledge as the result of negligence of members of his entourage."

"However, under the Code and by virtue of CAS precedent, an athlete bears responsibility for the entourage's negligence."

The case was set to be heard by CAS in April and Sinner was in danger of being banned for up to two years.

Sinner will miss Masters tournaments at Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo and Madrid.

Wada has formally withdrawn its appeal to CAS after they reached a settlement while they did not seek disqualification of his results.

"This case had been hanging over me now for nearly a year and the process still had a long time to run with a decision maybe only at the end of the year," Sinner said in a statement.

"I have always accepted that I am responsible for my team and realise Wada's strict rules are an important protection for the sport I love."

"On that basis I have accepted Wada's offer to resolve these proceedings on the basis of a 3 month sanction."

The ATP said it acknowledged the resolution of Sinner's case following his agreement with Wada.

"This case is an important reminder of players' responsibility to carefully manage the products and treatments they or their entourage use," it said.

Sinner's lawyer Jamie Singer said Wada had confirmed the facts determined by the independent tribunal.

However, the decision did not go down well with the Professional Tennis Players Association (PTPA), an organisation established by Novak Djokovic.

"The 'system' is not a system. It's a club. Supposed case-by-case discretion is, in fact, merely cover for tailored deals, unfair treatment, and inconsistent rulings," the PTPA said.

"It's not just the different results for different players. It's the lack of transparency. The lack of process. The lack of consistency..."

"This bias is unacceptable for all athletes and shows a deep disrespect for every sport and its fans." – Reuters

# Leonard leads Chubb Classic

**JUSTIN LEONARD** matched the low round of the day yesterday to take a one-shot lead through 36 holes of the Chubb Classic as he seeks his first win on the PGA Tour Champions.

Leonard, in his 45th start on the senior tour, shot a 7-under 65 at Tiburon Golf Club in Naples, Fla. He is at 11-under to lead South Africa's Ernie Els, who shot 67, by one stroke heading into Sunday's final round.

"It's been a very long time," Leonard said. "So to have the opportunity is something that I – that's why we're all out here playing."

"So to be able to have the opportunity tomorrow and be in a good position, you know, I'm going to sleep well tonight and wake up tomorrow and, you know, it's not going to change how I feel about myself, whatever happens tomorrow."

Leonard carded eight birdies, including three par-5 holes. A bogey on the par-4 No. 17 was his only blemish.

"You know, it was a fun day," he said. "It was solid. I think the wind was up enough to where it had my full attention all day long, and that's a good thing."

Leonard, 52, is 0-for-1 when either leading or co-leading with 18 holes to play on this tour. He finished tied for sixth in 2023 and tied for 61st last year at the Chubb Classic.

Els, 55, is seeking his eighth win on tour in 107 starts. He captured the Mitsubishi Electric Championship at Hualalai on Jan 18 to open the season. A victory Sunday would make Els the first player since Miguel Angel Jimenez in 2022 to win two of the first three tournaments of the season on this tour.

"Keys to tomorrow is just go out and play, play solid golf," Els said. "The wind picked up today. Just tough scoring. But Justin is a tough competitor. There is a bunch of guys behind us, so we just got to put the foot on the gas."

First-round co-leader Paul Stankowski is in third place at 8-under after a 1-under 71. Stankowski is looking for his first win on tour in 80 starts. – Field Level Media

## SHORTS

### Anisimova claims Doha title

**AMANDA ANISIMOVA** claimed her first WTA 1000 title when she beat Jelena Ostapenko 6-4, 6-3 in the final of the Qatar Open on Saturday which will see the American break into the top 20 for the first time in her career.

Ranked 41 in the world, Anisimova also became the lowest-ranked player to win the tournament as she beat six top-40 opponents en route to her third singles title.

The American was ranked as low as 359 in 2023 when she took a break from the game due to burnout as it took a toll on her mental health but the 23-year-old has been on the rise since her comeback and is set to move up to 18th in the rankings.

Anisimova is only the second American to win the title, following in the footsteps of Monica Seles in 2002, while Ostapenko has now finished runner-up in Doha for a second time having also lost in the 2016 final.

"There's been a lot of hard work, a lot of tears and a lot of good moments," Anisimova said.

"With tennis you kind of experience it all but that's also why I love it. There have been a lot of challenges the last few weeks. I'm very proud of myself and happy with how I've dealt with them."

### Teenager Fonseca into Argentina Open final

**BRAZILIAN** teenager Joao Fonseca yesterday became the youngest clay-court finalist since Carlos Alcaraz in 2021

when he reached the championship match at the Argentina Open.

The 18-year-old overcame Laslo Djere of Serbia 7-6 (7-3), 5-7, 6-1 in a dramatic semifinal where he held his nerve having seen a match point saved by his experienced opponent in the ninth

game of the second set.

"Really special. Today was really difficult, against a really good player. He went through qualifying, so he's playing amazing tennis," said Fonseca.

"We already knew how Laslo can play. So, I played my best. Today was with my heart. Today was with pain. And we got through. There is one match to go, so let's go for it."

Amanda Anisimova (right) celebrates with the trophy and coach Rick Vleeshouwers after winning the final.  
– REUTERS/SPIC



## 322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF  
THE COMPANIES ACT 2016  
AND IN THE MATTER OF  
DARA SHEFFIELD  
SOL. BHD.  
2010101035921 (919845-U)  
(In Members' Voluntary  
Winding Up)  
(Incorporated in Malaysia)

### NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act 2016, the FINAL MEETING of the Company will be held at Suite 15, 6th Floor, IOI Business Park, Bandar Puchong Jaya, 47170 Puchong, Selangor on 20-03-2025 at 10.00 a.m. for the following purposes:-

1. To receive the Liquidators' Statement of Account showing the manner in which the winding up has been conducted and the property of the Company has been disposed of, and of hearing any explanation that may be given by the Liquidators.
2. To destroy all the books and records of the Company and of the liquidators, in digital, printed and any format that are relevant to the affairs of the Company at the expiry of two years from the date of dissolution of the Company and in accordance to the provisions of the Companies Act 2016.

LAI CHUNG EN  
CHAN BEE LEE  
Liquidators

Dated this 17-02-2025

Notes:  
A member entitled to attend and vote at the meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and, on a poll, to vote in his stead. A proxy may but need not be a member of the Company. The proxy form must be deposited to the Liquidators' address at Suite 15, 6th Floor, IOI Business Park, Bandar Puchong Jaya, 47170 Puchong, Selangor at least 48 hours before the date and time of the meeting.

## 322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF  
THE COMPANIES ACT 2016  
AND IN THE MATTER OF  
JOKKIM GREATER ABUNDANCE  
SOL. BHD.  
202101022993 (1423293-V)  
(In Members' Voluntary  
Winding Up)  
(Incorporated in Malaysia)

### NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act 2016, the FINAL MEETING of the Company will be held at Suite 15, 6th Floor, IOI Business Park, Bandar Puchong Jaya, 47170 Puchong, Selangor on 20-03-2025 at 11.00 a.m. for the following purposes:-

1. To receive the Liquidators' Statement of Account showing the manner in which the winding up has been conducted and the property of the Company has been disposed of, and of hearing any explanation that may be given by the Liquidators.
2. To destroy all the books and records of the Company and of the liquidators, in digital, printed and any format that are relevant to the affairs of the Company at the expiry of two years from the date of dissolution of the Company and in accordance to the provisions of the Companies Act 2016.

LAI CHUNG EN  
CHAN BEE LEE  
Liquidators

Dated this 17-02-2025

Notes:  
A member entitled to attend and vote at the meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and, on a poll, to vote in his stead. A proxy may but need not be a member of the Company. The proxy form must be deposited to the Liquidators' address at Suite 15, 6th Floor, IOI Business Park, Bandar Puchong Jaya, 47170 Puchong, Selangor at least 48 hours before the date and time of the meeting.



## PSG edge out Toulouse as Marseille, Monaco win big

**FABIAN RUIZ** scored the only goal of the game as Paris Saint-Germain edged out Toulouse 1-0 in Ligue 1 yesterday to stay 10 points clear at the top of the table from Marseille, who thrashed Saint-Etienne 5-1 earlier.

Spain midfielder Ruiz was on hand to net the rebound after a Willian Pacheco header struck the bar seven minutes into the second half in the south-west of France.

That gave PSG the victory on an awkward evening as coach Luis Enrique made six changes to his side with the game coming in between the two legs of their Champions League knockout phase playoff tie against Brest.

PSG remain unbeaten domestically since losing at home to Toulouse last May and now go into Thursday's return match against Brest leading 3-0 from the first leg, the last 16 of the Champions League in clear sight.

"I am very satisfied. This is a round of league games in between two Champions League matches in which you can easily slip up," said Luis Enrique.

"We always play with the same intentions. We always go out to compete and to win. You can't put a price on that."

Roberto De Zerbi's Marseille cruised to 5-1 victory against a struggling Saint-Etienne side who occupy the relegation playoff position.

Marseille are 10 points behind PSG and also six points better off than third-placed Monaco, who showed no mercy for struggling Nantes as they claimed a huge 7-1 win at the Stade Louis II. – AFP

## Leverkusen title race 'not over yet' after draw with Bayern

**BAYER LEVERKUSEN** coach Xabi Alonso was not willing to concede the title despite Saturday's 0-0 home draw with Bayern Munich, which leaves them eight points behind the league leaders.

Defending champions Leverkusen were dominant but could not break through a Bayern side who sat back, safe in the knowledge a draw would maintain their lead with 12 games left in the season.

It was just the second time since 1992 that Bayern failed to register a shot on goal in a league game.

"We played very well. We did everything we could do to win, other than score a goal," Alonso told reporters.

The coach said he was surprised with his side's dominance against the league leaders.

"To be honest, and I've seen many Bayern games this season and they're very dominant, we were dominant."

"You can see from the stats today how dominant we were. We just missed some precision."

Alonso said his side could still make up the gap on the league leaders.

"For the table it wasn't enough (to make a difference). But the season is not over yet."

"As I said last year (with Leverkusen on the way to the title), we can speak in April. There's still many points to play for," the Spaniard said.

"Without a doubt we'll keep fighting in each competition and we want to keep winning."

Borussia Dortmund's Bundesliga slide continued on Saturday with a 2-0 loss at lowly Bochum, while Stuttgart missed a chance to climb to fourth, losing 2-1 at home to Wolfsburg.

Elsewhere, Freiburg overcame a poor first half penalty miss from Vincenzo Grifo to win 1-0 at St Pauli. – AFP



Real Madrid players remonstrate with referee Munuera Montero about the red card presented to Jude Bellingham (right) during their La Liga match against Osasuna. – AFP/PIC

## Real stay top

### Madrid's Bellingham swears red card a 'misunderstanding'

**REAL MADRID** midfielder Jude Bellingham said his red card for dissent on Saturday against Osasuna was a "misunderstanding" and he had not insulted the referee.

The England international was dismissed after 39 minutes of Madrid's 1-1 draw at El Sadar when he exchanged words with referee Jose Munuera Montero, who then reached for his red card.

Bellingham said he was expressing his frustration in general rather than directing an insult at the official.

"I think you can see clearly in the video, I remember the incident very well, it was an expression (I was saying) to myself," said the 21-year-old.

"I'm not even directing myself towards the referee, but obviously there was a misunderstanding. He's believed that I've said (something insulting) to him..."



"There was no intent to insult him, there was no insult, and for that reason I think you can see there was a misunderstanding."

Real Madrid have heavily criticised refereeing in Spain in recent weeks, sending a letter to the Spanish football federation calling it "rigged".

Bellingham said he hoped video evidence of what he said could be used to help him avoid a significant suspension.

In his report, Munuera Montero indicated Bellingham appeared to be insulting him.

"It's difficult when a referee isn't sure, to determine that I've said

something that I haven't, and as a result it kind of hinders the team," said Bellingham.

"I only want to make sure that the team know that I wasn't irresponsible enough to put them in a situation where I intentionally wanted them to be left with 10, but of course being involved means that's the case."

"I hope that the footage will be reviewed and see that it's not the same as the report, and that going forward the federation can keep that into consideration because it's huge evidence."

Bellingham said his conscience was clear after the incident.

Atletico Madrid's draw with Celta was conditioned by Barrios' seventh minute red card for a reckless high tackle on Pablo Duran.

Iago Aspas fired Celta ahead in the second half from the penalty spot but Atletico target man Alexander Sorloth rescued a point for the *Rojiblancos*.

"The team had gladiators again, playing 90 minutes with one fewer player is very tough," said Atletico coach Diego Simeone, who did not disagree with the decision to dismiss Barrios.

"It was a red card, it was clear," he added.

Atletico dug deep in the first half and frustrated Celta, who had more of the ball, before biting back to level after Aspas' penalty.

"When we were left with 10 men it's very difficult... the team tried everything," Atletico midfielder Koke told DAZN.

"We defended well, we suffered when we had to. Obviously we're still in the fight for the title."

Valencia, 17th and battling relegation, fought back to draw 1-1 at fifth-place Villarreal in an east coast derby. – AFP



Osasuna's Lucas Torro Marset (left) and Real Madrid's Aurelien Tchouameni vie for a header during their La Liga match. – AFP/PIC

## Leaders Napoli held late at Lazio

**NAPOLI** were held to a 2-2 draw at Lazio on Saturday after Boulaye Dia rolled home a smart low finish in the 87th minute to deny Napoli victory as the Italian Serie A leaders thought they were set to move four points clear ahead of Inter Milan's overnight match against Juventus.

"Lazio are our bogey team... we should be proud of what we're doing and make sure that we always come off the field with our jerseys soaked in sweat," said Napoli coach Antonio Conte.

Conte had to deal with the absence of three left-sided players with David Neres, Leonardo Spinazzola and Mathias Olivera all injured, and switched Napoli to a three-man defence with Pasquale Mazzocchi coming in as a makeshift wing-back.

And his injury problems got worse when Alessandro Buongiorno, who played for the first

time in 2025 after recovering from a back injury, had to be replaced by Matteo Politano near the hour mark and Mazzocchi asked to substituted with five minutes remaining.

"When Mazzocchi asked to be taken off it caused us a big problem because I had to put (central defender) Rafa Marin at fullback," added Conte.

"But I can't ask any more from these boys because what they are doing is extraordinary."

Napoli looked to be collecting a big three points when Adam Marusic scored a bizarre own goal in the 64th minute, the defender sticking out his left foot to block Giacomo Raspadori's deflected drive only to somehow chip it past goalkeeper Ivan Provedel and into his own net.

It was Raspadori who drilled Napoli level in the 13th minute following a neat exchange of passes with Romelu Lukaku, cancelling out

Gustav Isaksen's thumping early opener for Lazio.

Hosts Lazio briefly thought they had levelled the scores moments later through a sensational Mattia Zaccani bicycle kick before the Italy international was ruled offside as he flashed in his exceptional finish.

But Dia made sure Lazio got something from a keenly-contested match at the Stadio Olimpico.

"It was a great match and we played really well... Honestly I think we were a bit unlucky and probably should have won today," said Isaksen.

Atalanta stay five points behind Napoli after their bid for a first league title was dented by a goalless draw with Cagliari.

Elsewhere, Santiago Gimenez marked his full Serie A debut with the decisive goal in AC Milan's 1-0 win over struggling Verona. – AFP

# Gunners shoot down Foxes

Super-sub Merino scores brace as belated Valentine's gift for wife

**A**RSENAL ignored their injury woes to close the gap on Premier League leaders Liverpool as Mikel Merino came off the bench to clinch a 2-0 win against Leicester on Saturday.

Mikel Arteta's side were in danger of wasting a chance to put pressure on Liverpool in the title race as they laboured to make the breakthrough at the King Power Stadium.

But, with his attacking options limited by a host of injuries, Arteta sent on Spain midfielder Merino to act as a makeshift striker in the closing stages.

It proved an inspired move as Merino netted twice in the last nine minutes to extend Arsenal's unbeaten run in the league to 15 games.

"We knew it was going to be tough. The first 20 minutes, we were too sloppy. We didn't have a real threat and we weren't playing with enough urgency," Arteta said.

"We were much sharper in the second half. Mikel could give us something. He has a sense of danger and great timing in the box.

"We were on the verge of a different level of anxiety. But we were composed, scored two brilliant goals and could have scored one or two more."

Having lost 2-0 at Newcastle in the League Cup semifinal second leg before an extended break due to their early FA Cup exit, the Gunners returned to action with a vital victory that keeps them hot on the heels of Liverpool.

"Let's go day by day and take a lot of positives from the second half, but also know the first half wasn't good enough to win games," Arteta said.

With Kai Havertz ruled out for the season after suffering a hamstring injury while blocking a shot during

Arsenal's recent training trip to Dubai, Arteta was left with a threadbare attack.

Havertz's injury blow came just weeks after Arsenal failed to sign Aston Villa striker Ollie Watkins during the January transfer window.

Gabriel Jesus, Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli were already sidelined, so Arteta was forced to use Belgian winger Leandro Trossard as his central striker.

Underling the paucity of Arteta's forward options, 17-year-old Ethan Nwaneri and the out-of-form Raheem Sterling filled in on the flanks either side of Trossard.

Merino said his vital double in Arsenal's win at Leicester was a belated Valentine's Day present for his wife after he forgot to buy her a proper gift.

Serenaded by Arsenal fans in one corner of the King Power Stadium after his headed opener, Merino was quick to dedicate the goals to partner Lola Liberal, who he married in January 2024.

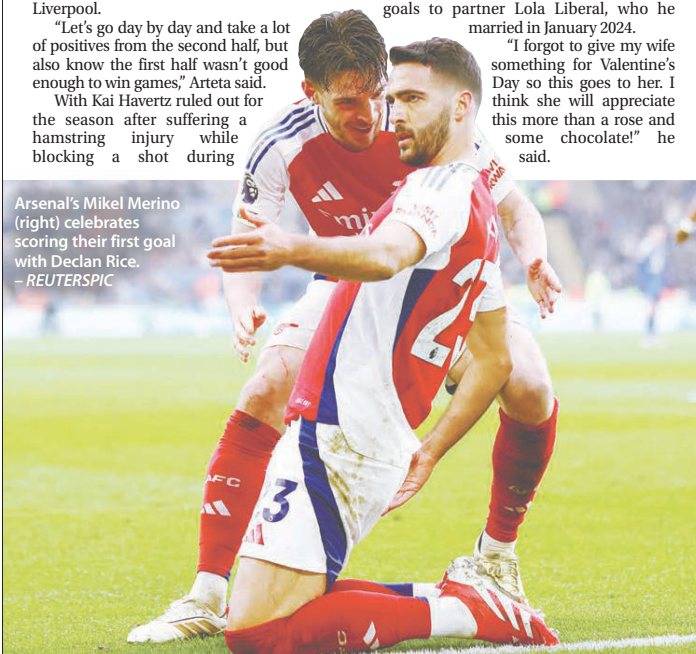
"I forgot to give my wife something for Valentine's Day so this goes to her. I think she will appreciate this more than a rose and some chocolate!" he said.

It was the first time Merino had scored twice in a game since playing for Osasuna against Gimnastic Tarragona in the Segunda Division playoffs in 2016.

"Mikel told me to come in as a striker this morning. We were talking about it a little bit with one of the assistants. It is the first time in my career that I've played that position," Merino said.

"He told me to go with my strengths and luckily I could help the team with two goals today."

Asked if he would consider converting to a striker on a regular basis, Merino said: "I don't think so to be honest. It is the first time I have scored a brace coming off the bench as a striker." - AFP



Arsenal's Mikel Merino (right) celebrates scoring their first goal with Declan Rice. - REUTERS/PIC

## Blades go top in Championship

**ANEL AHMEDHODZIC'S** 79th-minute goal was enough to give Sheffield United a 1-0 win at lowly Luton on Saturday to take them to the top of English football's second-tier Championship.

A match between two teams relegated from the Premier League last season was heading for a goalless draw until Ahmedhodzic struck 11 minutes from time following a long throw.

Victory left the Blades a point ahead of Yorkshire rivals Leeds, who are at home to Sunderland on tomorrow, and meant Luton remained bottom of the table.

Third-placed Burnley's bid for automatic promotion was hampered on Saturday by a goalless draw at Lancashire rivals Preston.

But the result was overshadowed by a heated on-field exchange lead Burnley's Hannibal Mejbri to accuse Preston's Milutin Osmajic of racism.

Blackburn made light of former boss John Eustace's departure to Derby with a 2-0 win over FA Cup giant-killers Plymouth.

Adam Forshaw broke the deadlock in the 55th-minute before Tyrhys Dolan made the game safe 12 minutes from time.

Defeat left Plymouth, fresh from knocking Premier League leaders Liverpool out of the FA Cup, firmly in the relegation zone.

West Brom were left in sixth place following a 1-1 draw at Millwall where unlucky home defender Joe Bryan scored a second consecutive own-goal.

Ellis Simms struck twice as Coventry won 2-1 away to Sheffield Wednesday, a result that left Frank Lampard's side just a point behind West Brom.

Portsmouth, now seven points clear of the bottom three, continued their climb away from danger with a 2-0 win at Oxford after second half goals by Andre Dozzell and Mark O'Mahony earned Pompey just their second away win of the season in the league.

Moussa Sissoko eased the pressure on Watford boss Tom Cleverley with the only goal in a 1-0 victory at Middlesbrough to end a run of five winless games.

Elsewhere, Stoke come from behind to win 3-1 at home to Swansea. Hull earned a 1-1 draw with Norwich, while Cardiff drew with Bristol City. - AFP

### SPORTS TOTO RESULTS

**DRAW NO:** 5928/2025 **DATE:** 16/02/2025 (SUN)  
**STM LOTTERY SDN. BHD.**  
 196901000090 (84293)

#### TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

**1st Prize** **0149**  
**2nd Prize** **7172**  
**3rd Prize** **0177**

Special	Consolation
2032 2577	8442 6508
2062 9562	2180 7802
7111 7400	8469 7261
4088 4621	9078 9801
0627 6119	5605 8427

#### 4D JACKPOT

**Jackpot 1** **RM 5,389,389.10**

0149 7172	7172 0149
0149 0177	0177 0149
7172 0177	0177 7172

**Jackpot 2** **RM 159,746.07**  
 Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

#### 4D ZODIAC

1st Prize	0149	+	DOG
2nd Prize	7172	+	
3rd Prize	0177	+	
4th Prize	Special Prize	+	
5th Prize	Consolation Prize	+	
6th Prize	Any 4D drawn number	+	

#### TOTO 5D & 6D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

**5D**

1ST	9 8 4 0 7
2ND	5 8 4 6 0
3RD	4 9 4 0 5
4TH	8 4 0 7
5TH	4 0 7
6TH	0 7

**6D**

1ST	4 7 9 4 7 4		
2ND	4 7 9 4 7	or	7 9 4 7 4
3RD	4 7 9 4	or	9 4 7 4
4TH	4 7 9	or	4 7 4
5TH	4 7	or	7 4

#### TOTO GAMES GIVES YOU MORE WINNING CHANCES!

**SUPREME 7/38** 9 16 21 28 38 53  
**Jackpot** **RM 20,249,158.05**

**POWER 7/35** 3 5 9 23 31 54  
**Jackpot** **RM 8,758,822.78**

**STAR 7/30** 19 20 31 33 38 43 + 10  
**Jackpot 1** **RM 3,696,167.06**  
**Jackpot 2** **RM 479,138.11**

**Toto 4D Jackpot 2**  
**RM 417,947**

**Toto 4D Jackpot 2 (i-System)**  
**RM 36,405**  
 won on 15/02/2025!

Visit [www.sportstoto.com.my](http://www.sportstoto.com.my) for e-Results and more info.

### WINNING NUMBERS

PAYMENT GUARANTEED IN FULL

**Draw Date:** 16/02/25 (Sun) **Draw No:** 5875/25 **Venue:** PERAK TURF CLUB

#### 1+3D SUPER 1+3D

1st Prize	8811
2nd Prize	2726
3rd Prize	5883

Starters	Consolation
4890 2964	1477 9438
5187 1745	0705 2958
2469 8922	3776 1242
3769 1819	4823 0594
3865 1793	7746 2172

#### 1+3D Jackpot

**Jackpot 1** **RM3,225,982.90**

8811 + 2726	2726 + 8811
8811 + 5883	5883 + 8811
2726 + 5883	5883 + 2726

**Jackpot 2** **RM169,029.60**  
 Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

#### 3+3D Bonus

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
538 811 +	HORSE	RM260,000.00
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
282 726 +	MONKEY	RM1,255,904.60
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
475 883 +	OX	RM1,751,506.00

Starters	Consolation
214 890 452 964	931 477 069 438
735 187 701 745	200 705 822 958
472 469 388 922	033 776 321 242
793 769 731 819	254 823 880 594
543 865 531 793	587 746 752 172

#### 3D

1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
811	726	883

#### 3D Jackpot

**Jackpot** **RM776,929.10**

811 + 726 + 883	726 + 883 + 811
811 + 883 + 726	883 + 811 + 726
726 + 811 + 883	883 + 726 + 811

Winning combination matches the Top 3 Prizes in any order.

**Signup dmcGO at Da Ma Cai to get Fortune Lion. T&C apply.**

The Community Chest is an independent, not-for-profit, non-governmental charitable organisation which supports education for the sole benefit of the Malaysian community and is primarily funded by the profits of Da Ma Cai.

Pan Malaysian Pools Sdn. Bhd. (171688-05) [www.damacai.com.my](http://www.damacai.com.my)  
 dmcGO play anywhere: [www.dmcGO.com.my](http://www.dmcGO.com.my) or call 03-2333-2000



## RESULTS &amp; STANDINGS

**ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE:** Aston Villa 1 (Watkins 69) Ipswich 1 (Delap 56), Crystal Palace 1 (Mateta 47) Everton 2 (Beto 42, Alcaraz 80), Fulham 2 (Smith Rowe 15, Bassey 62) Nottingham Forest 1 (Wood 37), Leicester 0 Arsenal 2 (Merino 81, 87), Manchester City 4 (Marmoush 19, 24, 33, McAtee 84) Newcastle 0, Southampton 1 (Sulemana 72) Bournemouth 3 (Quattara 14, Christie 16, Tavernier 83), West Ham 0 Brentford 1 (Schade 4), Brighton 3 (Mitoma 27, Minter 38, 63) Chelsea 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	24	17	6	1	58	23	57
Arsenal	25	15	8	2	51	22	53
Nottingham Forest	25	14	5	6	41	29	47
Man City	25	13	5	7	52	35	44
Bournemouth	25	12	7	6	44	29	43
Chelsea	25	12	7	6	47	34	43
Newcastle	25	12	5	8	42	33	41
Fulham	25	10	9	6	38	33	39
Aston Villa	25	10	8	7	35	38	38
Brighton	25	9	10	6	38	38	37
Brentford	25	10	4	11	43	42	34
Crystal Palace	25	7	9	9	29	32	30
Everton	25	7	9	9	27	31	30
Man Utd	24	8	5	11	28	24	29
Tottenham	24	8	3	13	48	37	27
West Ham	25	7	6	12	29	47	27
Wolves	24	5	4	15	34	52	19
Ipswich	25	3	8	14	23	50	17
Leicester	25	4	5	16	25	55	17
Southampton	25	2	3	20	19	57	9

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** Blackburn 2 Plymouth 0, Cardiff 1 Bristol City 1, Hull 1 Norwich 1, Luton 0 Sheffield United 1, Middlesbrough 0 Watford 1, Millwall 1 West Brom 1, Oxford United 0 Portsmouth 2, Preston 0 Burnley 0, Sheffield Wednesday 1 Coventry 2, Stoke 3 Swansea 1, Queens Park Rangers 4 Derby 0.

**LA LIGA:** Leganes 3 Alaves 3, Osasuna 1 Real Madrid 1, Atletico Madrid 1 Celta Vigo 1, Villarreal 1 Valencia 1, Girona 1 Getafe 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	24	15	6	3	52	23	51
Atletico	24	14	8	2	39	16	50
Barcelona	23	15	3	5	64	25	48
Bilbao	23	12	8	3	36	20	44
Villarreal	24	11	8	5	47	35	41
Vallecano	23	9	8	6	27	24	35

**SERIE A:** Atalanta 0 Cagliari 0, Lazio 2 (Isaksen 6, Dia 87) Napoli 2 (Raspadori 13, Marusic 64-og), AC Milan 1 (Gimenez 75) Verona 0, Bologna 3 (Ndayo 20, 70-pen, Biraghi 90-og) Torino 2 (Vasic 37, Elmas 65).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli	25	17	5	3	41	19	56
Inter Milan	24	16	6	2	58	23	54
Atalanta	25	15	6	4	54	26	51
Lazio	25	14	4	7	47	34	46
Juventus	24	10	13	1	41	21	43
Florentina	24	12	6	6	41	25	42

**BUNDESLIGA:** Bayer Leverkusen 0 Bayern Munich 0, Stuttgart 1 Wolfsburg 2, Union Berlin 1 Borussia Moenchengladbach 2, Bochum 2 Borussia Dortmund 0, St Pauli 0 Freiburg 1, Augsburg 0 RB Leipzig 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B. Munich	22	17	4	1	65	19	55
B. Leverkusen	22	13	8	1	49	27	47
E. Frankfurt	21	11	6	4	46	28	39
RB Leipzig	22	10	7	5	36	29	37
Freiburg	22	11	3	8	29	36	36
Stuttgart	22	10	5	7	40	33	35

**FRENCH LIGUE 1:** Marseille 5 Saint-Etienne 1, Monaco 7 Nantes 1, Toulouse 0 Paris Saint-Germain 1, Brest 2 Auxerre 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	22	17	5	0	59	20	56
Marseille	22	14	4	4	50	26	46
Monaco	22	12	4	6	44	29	40
Nice	21	10	7	4	41	26	37
Lille	21	9	8	4	34	22	35
Lyons	21	9	6	6	36	26	33

# Resilient Selangor edge PDRM

... as 10 men Red Giants' fighting spirit made all the difference

**D**ESPITE having a numerical advantage, PDRM FC head coach P. Maniam admitted that Selangor FC's determination with 10 men gave the Red Giants the upper hand in the 2024/25 Challenge Cup Final 1 at the Majlis Bandaraya Petaling Jaya (MBPJ) Stadium on Saturday.

Maniam also credited the Red Giants' resilience and intensity after receiving a red card while emphasising the need for his team to improve their transition play and work harder for the next match.

"In football when you play with 10 players, they will be giving more than 100 per cent but us

with 11 players, we were a little bit more comfortable. This is what psychology sometimes do but anyway, congratulations to Selangor.

"I don't want to give excuses, I take blame because I am the coach. We have another opportunity (the Final 2), so the players must understand, we are going to play another 90 minutes, it will not be easy, but it's not impossible (for us to win)," he said this during the post-match press conference.

Meanwhile, Selangor FC head coach Katsuhito Kinoshi described his team's 3-2 victory over the Cops as a "big win," praising their resilience after being reduced to 10 men just 10

minutes into the match.

Kinoshi viewed the challenge as a test of character for his players and praised them for rising to the occasion.

"For me, it's a big win. Playing with 10 players for 80 minutes is never easy, but at halftime, we reminded the players to stay united and be on the same page," he said, eager to lift the cup with his team.

The two teams will face off again in Final 2 on Feb 22 at the same venue.

PDRM FC clinched last season's title after defeating Kuching City with a 4-1 aggregate score in the final. - Bernama

## Azeem Fahmi hungry for another national record

**FRESH** off his national record-breaking men's indoor 60 metre (m) feat at the Tiger Paw Invitational in California, national sprint sensation Muhammad Azeem Mohd Fahmi is riding a wave of confidence and positivity as he sets his sights on even greater achievements this season.

Muhammad Azeem, who clocked 6.60 seconds in the semifinals, to erase his previous mark of 6.62s, at the Tiger Paw meet in 2023, is hoping to keep his form and continue pushing boundaries by breaking his own men's 100m national record next.

"It (new national record in men's indoor 60m) makes me so happy right now. I am also confident and positive going through towards the

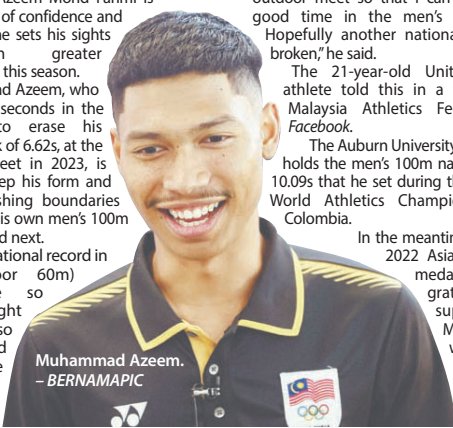
season this year.

"The goal is I just want to stay healthy and keep the momentum going until the next outdoor meet so that I can produce another good time in the men's 100m (outdoor). Hopefully another national record can be broken," he said.

The 21-year-old United States-based athlete told this in a video shared by Malaysia Athletics Federation on its Facebook.

The Auburn University student currently holds the men's 100m national record with 10.09s that he set during the 2022 Under-20 World Athletics Championships in Cali, Colombia.

In the meantime, the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games bronze medallist said he was grateful for the support from Malaysian fans which inspired him to do his best and make the country proud of him. - Bernama



## Heartbreak for Malaysia at Asian Junior finals

**MALAYSIA'S** bid for dual titles at the 2025 Asian Junior Squash Team Championships ended in heartbreak yesterday as both the boys' and girls' teams stumbled in the finals in Hong Kong.

The 22nd edition of the tournament, held at the Hong Kong Squash Centre, saw the Malaysian girls' team - who had been unstoppable since 2015 with four consecutive titles - have their reign come to an end as they fell short against a determined home side, losing 0-2.

Ena Kwong struck the first blow for Hong Kong by overpowering Anrie Goh 11-3, 11-7, 11-6.

In the second game, national junior player

Harleem Tan squandered a commanding first-set win of 11-3 before eventually losing to Tsz Ching Cheung 7-11, 8-11, 5-11, handing Hong Kong their fifth title in the Asian team event.

Meanwhile, Malaysia missed the chance to end their 10-year title drought in the boys' team event after falling 0-2 to South Korea.

Reigning World Junior Squash Championships runner-up Joo Young Na got his team off to a strong start by prevailing against Harith Daniel Jefri 11-6, 8-11, 9-11, 11-7, 11-2.

Jeong Uk Ryu then came from behind to defeat M. Nickhileswar 6-11, 13-11, 5-11, 11-9, 11-7, securing South Korea's historic maiden title in the tournament. - Bernama

## Fitri first referee sacked by FAM

**THE** Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) has ended the services of referee Fitri Maskon from all refereeing duties following a below par performance in a 2024/25 MFL League match between Negeri Sembilan FC and Selangor FC, on Thursday.

FAM deputy president Datuk S. Sivasundaram said the decision was taken after in-depth discussions with the top leadership of the governing body.

"Although this firm decision was made with a heavy heart, it should serve as a lesson to all referees. The decision to sack a referee is the first such action taken because previously, referees were only suspended. The decision is a clear signal that referees need to be more serious

when carrying out their responsibilities on the field," he said in a statement to the media yesterday.

Sivasundaram said based on the match commissioner's report, Fitri had shown a very poor performance, thus affecting the result of the match which took place at the Tuanku Abdul Rahman Stadium in Paroi.

"The results of the analysis by FAM Referee Unit also showed that the extra time given at the end of the match of 15 minutes was excessive, resulting in a match that should have ended in a draw, ending in a different result.

"This clearly proves that the referee's decision had influenced and had a clear impact on the final result of the match," he said. - Bernama

Magnum Corporation Sdn Bhd (8272-D)

**Winning Results**

Full payment guaranteed

magnum

Draw No: 165/25 Date: 16/02/2025

**4D Classic**

1st Prize **8844**

2nd Prize **7414**

3rd Prize **8376**

SPECIAL	CONSOLATION
9393 2774	4349 5437
6916 5820	2281 5037
8609 9773	3528 7775
0092 3861	0244 1985
0172 9203	5746 0945

**4D Jackpot**

Jackpot 1 **RM12,574,728.97**

**PARTIALLY WON**

8844 + 7414	8844 + 8376
7414 + 8844	7414 + 8376
8376 + 8844	8376 + 7414

Jackpot 2 **RM209,666.82**

**PARTIALLY WON**

Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

Play smarter. Get rewarded with MyMagnum 4D app!

**Magnum Life**

7 9 13 16 22 29 32 35

+

20 21

**Grand Prize**

RM1,000 EVERY DAY for 20 years

**2nd Prize**

RM1,000 EVERY DAY for 100 days

**Jackpot Gold**

Jackpot 1 **RM12,021,860.36**

Jackpot 1 - Group 1 + Golden Number

Jackpot 2 **RM135,394.77**

Jackpot 2 - Group 2 + Golden Number

**PARTIALLY WON**

GROUP 1	4 4 1 4 7 6
GROUP 2	4 4 1 4 7 OR 4 1 4 7 6
GROUP 3	4 4 1 4 OR 1 4 7 6
GROUP 4	4 4 1 OR 4 7 6
GROUP 5	4 4 OR 7 6
	OR 1 4
<b>GOLDEN NUMBER</b>	1 8

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.



# Scintillating Egyptian



Manchester City's Omar Marmoush (right) celebrates scoring their second goal. - REUTERS/PIC

## Marmoush hattrick lifts City back into top four

**OMAR MARMOUSH** scored his first Manchester City goals with a first half hattrick to beat Newcastle 4-0 and fire Pep Guardiola's men back into the Premier League's top four on Saturday.

The Egypt forward was in scintillating form as City recovered from their late Champions League collapse to lose to Real Madrid 3-2 at home in midweek.

The English champions have a mountain to climb when they visit Madrid on Thursday if they are to reach the last 16 of Europe's elite competition for the 12th consecutive season.

But Marmoush's explosion gives some cause for optimism as Newcastle were blown away inside the opening 33 minutes.

"We knew sooner or later he would score goals, he is a good finisher," said Guardiola.

"We (will) see how he handles the compliments."

The match had been billed as a clash between the Premier League's two top strikers as Golden Boot rivals Erling Haaland and Alexander Isak went head-to-head.

However, they were both overshadowed as Marmoush announced his arrival to the English game.

The 26-year-old scored 20 goals for Eintracht Frankfurt this season before making a £59 million (RM329m) move to Manchester in January.

Guardiola believes Nico Gonzalez can step into the void left by Rodri after making an impressive Premier League debut for City on Saturday.

City have struggled badly without *Ballon d'Or* winner Rodri, who suffered a serious knee injury in September.

Gonzalez arrived on the final day of the mid-season transfer window from Porto for a £50 million fee (\$62 million) and took little time to find his feet in arguably City's best performance of the season to date against the Magpies.

"I think the presence from Nico helped us a lot," said Guardiola. "The feeling is that the club sign an incredible player for the future in terms

of mentality.

"He was in the Barcelona academy and Barcelona's academy is the best in the world in how they teach you the concepts, the body shapes, how to pass the ball, the technique."

"I think in Porto, (coach) Sergio Conceicao helped us a lot to bring into his football the part of being aggressive and be smart and play different type of games. He is so young, 23, like a mini-Rodri."

"How he talks, the personality. There was a moment he was correcting Erling (Haaland), to do this, do that. When that happens, it's nice because you think, 'ok, in the next six or seven years we'll have Rodri, we'll have him'. That will give us more presence and more stability which this season, of course, we missed."

But there was a worrying scene for City as Haaland, who captained his side for the first time in the Premier League, had to be replaced in the closing stages after receiving treatment on a knee injury.

Either side of reaching next month's League Cup final, Eddie Howe's Newcastle have lost three of their last four Premier League games to slip to seventh.

"From the off we were lacking in duels, the physical side," said Howe. "Man City are so good in the build-up, to disrupt that you have to be exceptional physically and we weren't."

Third-placed Nottingham Forest slumped to a 2-1 defeat Fulham. Bournemouth are up to fifth as their unlikely bid to qualify for the Champions League gathered pace with a 3-1 win at bottom of the table Southampton.

Ten-man Ipswich held on for a 1-1 draw at Aston Villa. Ipswich defender Axel Tuanzebe was sent off just before halftime after earning a second yellow card for a foul on Jacob Ramsey.

Liam Delap put Ipswich ahead from Omari Hutchinson's 56th minute cross, but Ollie Watkins tapped in the equaliser after Marcus Rashford's freekick hit the bar in the 69th minute.

Kevin Schade's fourth-minute goal clinched Brentford's 1-0 win at West Ham. - AFP



**Sinner accepts doping ban**

Story on page 28



**Real stay top**

Story on page 29



**Gunners shoot down Foxes**

Story on page 30