



U Mobile to roll out second 5G network with Huawei, ZTE

Chinese tech giants to support Malaysian target of achieving 80% coverage in populated areas within first year of service launch.

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Analysts heap praises on Tun Abdullah

The late prime minister, described as approachable, composed and gentle, is remembered for his inclusive and accommodating leadership style.

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China president Xi Jinping arrives for three-day state visit

Discussions with PM Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim expected to cover bilateral cooperation, regional and international issues.

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Military officials carry the casket of Tun Abdullah, draped in the *Jalur Gemilang*, during his funeral at the National Mosque where royalty, national leaders past and present, and the public paid their last respects yesterday. — AFP/PPIC

Stately send-off for Pak Lah

Tens of thousands of mourners gather at National Mosque to bid final farewell to Malaysia's fifth prime minister before he was laid to rest at Heroes' Mausoleum.

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King, Queen express condolences

KUALA LUMPUR: His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim and Her Majesty Raja Zarith Sofiah, King and Queen of Malaysia, expressed their condolences to the entire family of Tun Abdullah on his passing.

"Our condolences to the wife of the statesman, Tun Jeanne Abdullah, and the entire family.

"We are truly grateful for all his deeds and contributions to the country. May his soul be blessed and placed among the righteous." Their Majesties said in a post on Sultan Ibrahim's official Facebook page.

Tun Abdullah, 85, breathed his last at the National Heart Institute at 7.10pm on Monday.

Born on Nov 26, 1939, in Bayan Lepas, Penang, Abdullah helmed the country's premiership from Oct 31, 2003 to April 3, 2009, following the resignation of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. — Bernama

Legacy of Islam Hadhari lives on in governance

KUALA LUMPUR: In the words of the Malay proverb, *Harimau mati meninggalkan belang, manusia mati meninggalkan nama* (A tiger leaves its stripes in death, a man leaves behind his name), Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's legacy through Islam Hadhari continues to leave its mark on Malaysia's development.

Introduced in 2004, just a year into his tenure as Malaysia's fifth prime minister, Islam Hadhari laid the foundation for developing the *ummah* and the nation through the lens of Islamic civilisation.

As one of the key pillars of Abdullah's leadership, the concept emphasised the importance of uplifting quality of life through knowledge, human capital development and physical infrastructure.

It aimed to position Malaysia as an advanced Islamic nation based on its own cultural and religious reference points.

Hailing from a distinguished religious family and holding a bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies from Universiti Malaya, Abdullah's upbringing shaped his leadership towards an Islam-centric model, while balancing national development within the framework of *Manhaj Hadhari*.

Abdullah outlined 10 core principles to achieve Islam Hadhari: faith and devotion to Allah, a just and trustworthy government, an independent and progressive population, mastery of knowledge, balanced and comprehensive economic development, quality of life, protection of minority and women's rights, cultural and moral integrity, environmental conservation and strong defence capabilities.

Commenting on the concept, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi Legacy Organisation chairman Datuk Jefridin Atan said Islam Hadhari positioned Malaysia as a model civilised Islamic nation.

"Malaysia is globally recognised for implementing pragmatic and impactful economic development programmes for the *ummah*. The government also embraced Islamic values without sidelining sentiments of non-Muslim communities," he told Bernama.

Jefridin, who is also the Kukup assemblyman in Johor, said the legacy of Islam Hadhari can still be seen today in the country's governance, including in the Islamic banking and finance sector and the expanding halal economy.

Several Islamic-based institutions were established during Abdullah's tenure, including the Department of Waqf, Zakat and Haj, the Waqaf Foundation of Malaysia and the j-QAF programme for the teaching of Jawi, the Quran, Arabic language and *Fardu Ain*.

Jefridin added that the continuity of Islam Hadhari's values is reflected in the current *Malaysia Madani* concept introduced by the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"The continuation of Islam-based policies became evident after Pak Lah introduced Islam Hadhari. Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak's *Wasatyyiah* (moderation) approach and the Anwar-led Madani government have both maintained strong emphasis on religion."



Eight army personnel getting ready to carry the casket to the mausoleum following completion of the funeral prayers. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN

Nation mourns passing of Tun Abdullah

➤ Thousands pay tribute to Malaysia's fifth prime minister, known for his calm leadership and legacy of moderation

■ BY IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE
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KUALA LUMPUR: Tens of thousands gathered at the National Mosque yesterday to mourn the passing of Malaysia's fifth prime minister, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

A solemn atmosphere filled the mosque as Malaysians from all walks of life came together to pay their final respects to the elder statesman, who passed away peacefully on Monday at the age of 85.

Affectionately known as Pak Lah, Abdullah was admitted to the National Heart Institute on Sunday morning due to breathing difficulties. He died the following day.

The main prayer hall of the National Mosque, which accommodates up to 15,000 people, was filled to capacity as mourners performed the *solat jenazah* (funeral prayer).

His remains were laid to rest at the Heroes' Mausoleum near the mosque at 1.53pm, following *Zohor* prayers.

Members of the public began arriving as early as 8am.

Those waiting outside the mosque were promptly ushered into the prayer hall to offer prayers and condolences.

The Sultan of Terengganu Sultan Mizan

KUALA LUMPUR: Abdullah was more than just a national leader — he was a statesman with a generous spirit who introduced a new narrative to Malaysian politics, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

In a Facebook post, Anwar shared the news of Abdullah's passing, describing him as a friend and a leader of great character.

"I still remember the last time I visited him, frail and broken in spirit. Yet, when our hands met, his eyes still radiated warmth, love and an enduring

calm," Anwar said.

Amid the often intense political turmoil, Pak Lah was always the one who provided calm. Despite our differing political paths, he welcomed me with immense courtesy and kindness. That was the mark of a true statesman's great soul."

Anwar also acknowledged Abdullah's role in promoting Islam Hadhari — a progressive interpretation of Islam that integrates development with fundamental values and principles.

Zainal Abidin, who served as the 13th Yang di-Pertuan Agong during Abdullah's premiership, arrived at 11.39am, accompanied by his son Tengku Setia Mahkota Raja Tengku Muhammad Mud'az.

Former prime ministers, including Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, also attended the funeral.

Mahathir was accompanied by his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and their son Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir.

"He took over as prime minister after I resigned. And when he became prime minister, he led the 2004 general election with one of the most remarkable victories in history, securing 90% of the vote for the government. That was the greatest success," Mahathir said.

Najib, currently incarcerated, was granted permission by the court to attend the funeral.

He arrived at the mosque at about 10.30am under heavy police escort.

Among the other notable attendees were former premiers Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari, Works Deputy Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Maslan, former Selangor menteri besar Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, former Perak menteri besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Faizal Azumu, former

cabinet minister Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar, Malacca Governor Tun Mohd Ali Rustam and Sabah Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tan Sri Musa Aman.

Singapore former prime minister Lee Hsien Loong, now senior minister, was also present to bid farewell.

Lee had served as premier during Abdullah's tenure between 2003 and 2009.

Guests were received at the mosque entrance by Abdullah's son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin, who appeared sombre throughout the proceedings.

Known for his calm demeanour and moderate leadership style, Abdullah succeeded Mahathir in 2003 and led Barisan Nasional (BN) to its most resounding electoral victory in 2004, securing 198 out of 219 parliamentary seats.

His administration's strong anti-corruption stance was seen as a key factor in restoring public trust in BN.

However, in the 2008 general election, the Opposition denied BN its long-held two-thirds majority in Parliament for the first time in history.

Abdullah stepped down in 2009, paving the way for Najib to take over as prime minister.

Born in Penang, Abdullah withdrew from public life following the 2008-2013 parliamentary term to spend more time with his family.

He returned to the public eye in 2023 when it was revealed that he had been diagnosed with dementia.

He said under Abdullah's leadership, Malaysia experienced significant reforms in the judiciary, greater transparency in administration and stronger institutional frameworks.

"He was a leader who opened the doors for the people to speak, creating space for media freedom and public participation. His administration aligned with the Ninth Malaysia Plan, driving economic growth while focusing on human and rural development," Anwar said. — Bernama

'Gracious statesman who redefined political narrative'

Remembering Pak Lah's legacy of harmony, integrity, reform

➤ His composed, gentle leadership helped preserve political stability and fostered sense of harmony, says political analyst

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA
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PETALING JAYA: The passing of Malaysia's fifth prime minister, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Monday marks the end of an era defined by moderate leadership and reformist aspirations.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research political analyst Prof Dr Azmi Hassan said Abdullah's most enduring legacy was his ability to maintain peace and calm amid immense political pressures during his tenure.

"Abdullah was approachable and open to dialogue. His composed and gentle leadership style helped preserve political stability and fostered a sense of harmony in the country. In today's political climate, leaders with such qualities are increasingly rare," he told *theSun*.

Affectionately known as Pak Lah, Abdullah took office in 2003 and quickly distinguished himself through sincerity and compassion – traits that left a lasting impression on those who experienced his leadership.

Azmi said a cornerstone of his administration was Islam Hadhari, a progressive interpretation of Islam that sought to build a balanced, ethical and modern society rooted in *Quranic* principles. The philosophy emphasised moral excellence and integrity not only at the individual level but within institutions.

"Pak Lah's anti-corruption efforts were strongly tied to this philosophy. In addition to initiating the establishment of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), he

made integrity a national priority."

On the economic front, one of Abdullah's significant contributions was the creation of regional economic corridors, said Azmi.

"He envisioned the corridors as means to bridge development gaps, especially between the East and West coasts of Peninsular Malaysia, as well as between the peninsula and East Malaysia. Today, we see tangible growth in these regions as a result of his vision."

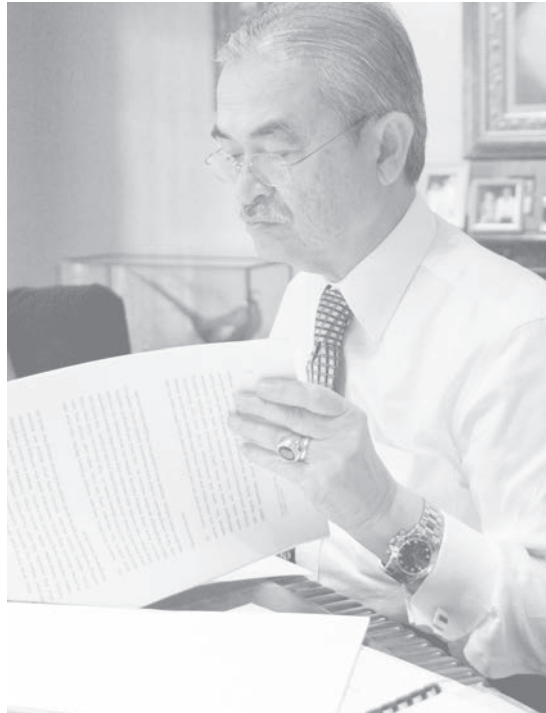
Although he maintained a low profile after stepping down, Pak Lah is remembered not just as a political figure, but as a true statesman whose values are deeply missed.

"Pak Lah was known as 'Mr Clean' due to his firm stance on eradicating corruption and promoting efficient governance. He was also a strong advocate for human capital development. He believed that good governance must begin at the grassroots, and that public servants should be competent, ethical and dedicated to national progress," Azmi said.

He also said Abdullah made a profound personal sacrifice when he stepped down as prime minister and handed over power to Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

"He recognised the importance of a peaceful and orderly transition. More importantly, he never interfered with the government after his resignation. That is a legacy in itself, and a testament to the kind of leader he was."

Political analyst Prof Datuk Dr Sivamurugan Pandian described Abdullah as a leader who encouraged public participation and adopted an inclusive and



Azmi said Pak Lah, as he was affectionately known, was 'Mr Clean' due to his firm stance on eradicating corruption and promoting efficient governance. – *SUNPIC*

accommodating leadership style.

"His approach – a 'change in continuity' – balanced reform with stability. His openness was evident in many of his decisions."

He said Abdullah faced inevitable comparisons after taking over from Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had served for 22 years, but yet he led Barisan Nasional to a resounding victory in the 2004 General Election, winning 198 out of the then 219

parliamentary seats.

"He applies soft diplomacy to approach any issue – prioritising consensus, negotiation and dialogue – rather than being autocratic."

Sivamurugan said while some perceive Pak Lah's gentle approach as a weakness, it actually led towards the betterment of the nation which had nurtured a values-driven society rooted in integrity that was paramount during his tenure as PM.

Najib, Ismail Sabri pay tributes to Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR: Two former prime ministers paid tribute to the late Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, reflecting on their time serving under his administration, and sharing personal memories of his leadership.

Describing the late Abdullah as a friend and mentor, Datuk Seri Najib Razak recalled him as a guiding figure, whose advice and leadership deeply influenced his own journey.

Najib, who succeeded Abdullah as Malaysia's sixth prime minister, admired his predecessor's governance style, which was anchored in accountability, and a commitment to excellence in both politics and public administration.

"His spirit and principles were among the key inspirations behind the formulation of the 1Malaysia concept – People First, Performance Now – which guided my administration."

"On a personal level, Pak Lah was very close to our family, like an elder brother and loyal friend through all of life's ups and downs."

"Pak Lah will always be remembered for his immense contributions to religion, race and country. He was a noble soul. My heartfelt condolences to all members of Pak Lah's family and friends," Najib wrote in a Facebook post.

Najib served as the deputy prime minister under Abdullah's leadership from Jan 7, 2004, to April 3, 2009.

Meanwhile, the country's ninth prime minister, Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, described Abdullah as a father figure, who nurtured and guided him in both politics and governance throughout his rise in public service.

"I am deeply indebted to Pak Lah, who gave me the opportunity to contest the Bera parliamentary seat in 2004, and later entrusted me with the responsibility as minister of youth and sports in 2008."

"The nation mourns this great loss. He was a statesman who dedicated his life to the service of religion, race and the country. His contributions are deeply appreciated, especially by me," Ismail Sabri said in a tribute on Facebook. – *Bernama*

Second Penang Bridge was biggest gift to state

GEORGE TOWN: Malaysia benefitted significantly from the contributions of Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, especially his home state Penang.

One of the biggest gifts Pak Lah gave to the people of Penang is the Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah Bridge, also known as the Second Penang Bridge. It is undoubtedly Pak Lah's biggest gift to the people of Penang, and he announced the project in Parliament in 2003 as part of the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

The 24km bridge, costing RM4.5 billion, went on to not only reduce congestion at the Penang Bridge, but also spur economic growth in the industrial zone of Batu Kawan since its opening.

Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow described Abdullah's passing as a great loss to the country, and Penang especially, and noted that his contributions to the development of Malaysia would never be forgotten.

"On behalf of the Penang government, I convey my condolences to the family of Malaysia's fifth prime minister, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi over his passing today," he posted on Facebook. – *Bernama*

Tributes pour in for 'Mr Nice Guy' of Malaysian politics

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA
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PETALING JAYA: Remembered as a humble and soft-spoken leader, Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, as the country's fifth prime minister, led the country with integrity and conviction.

As news of his passing broke, theSun spoke to members of the public who expressed deep sorrow, fondly recalling his calm demeanour and people-centric leadership.

Ipo City Council (MBI) Ipoeh Doughtnut Economy Secretariat CEO Dr Zulqarnain Mohamad, 61, described his passing as "a great loss to the nation".

Reflecting on Pak Lah's legacy, he highlighted the improvements in day-to-day Malaysian life, especially within the civil service.

"Pak Lah's most significant contribution was improving the

working environment, particularly by introducing the five-day working week in 2004, allowing families to spend more time together.

"He also contributed to raising the salaries of lower-ranked civil servants, helping to uplift many from poverty. Pak Lah was truly a gentleman," he said.

MBI Works & Buildings director Arif Mohd Zainudin, 46, described Pak Lah as a man of peace who brought a gentler approach to leadership when he replaced Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's strong-handed governance.

"Being a former civil servant himself, Pak Lah always prioritised the wellbeing of government officers. One of his most critical decisions was introducing time-based promotions for government doctors. This helped slow the exodus of medical professionals from the public sector," said Arif.

He also praised Pak Lah's

diplomatic prowess, cultivated during his long tenure as the country's foreign minister, which earned him international respect.

"Pak Lah was the ultimate 'Mr Nice Guy'. He was genuinely kind and humble. I remember him saying, 'if things can be resolved with a whisper, why shout?'"

"I am deeply saddened by his passing. I consider him a great statesman. Thank you, Pak Lah for all your service to this country. May Allah grant you Jannah (heaven)."

Abdullah joined Umno in 1964 and became the MP for Kepala Batas in 1978. Over the years, he held various key ministerial portfolios, including education, foreign affairs and defence, before being appointed deputy prime minister in 1999.

On October 31, 2003, he was sworn in as Malaysia's fifth prime minister.

Known as the "Father of Human Capital Development," Pak Lah's

administration from 2003 to 2009 focused on uplifting underdeveloped regions and rural communities, emphasising education, skill development, and public service reform.

His most iconic motto when he first took office – "Don't work for me, work with me" – reflected his collaborative leadership style and desire to unite Malaysians in nation-building.

Under the banner *Cemerlang, Gemilang dan Terbilang* (Excellent, Glorious, Distinguished), he championed good governance, efficient public administration and national unity.

On September 11, 2022, his son-in-law and then health minister Khairy Jamaluddin publicly revealed that Abdullah had dementia, and was showing signs of cognitive decline, no longer recognising his own name or those of family members.

China president arrives for three-day state visit

➤ Xi Jinping and delegation welcomed by Anwar and Cabinet ministers at Bunga Raya Complex in KLIA

SEPANG: China President Xi Jinping arrived yesterday in Malaysia for a three-day state visit at the invitation of His Majesty the King of Malaysia Sultan Ibrahim.

The visit marks Xi's second official trip to Malaysia in 12 years, after his last visit in 2013.

The Air China flight carrying the president landed at the Bunga Raya Complex of the KL International Airport at 6.30pm.

In a statement, Xi said he expects the visit to open a new historic chapter of good-neighbourly friendship and mutual benefit between the two countries.

He called on both sides to promote cooperation in modernisation endeavours, jointly enhance exchanges and learning between civilisations, and continuously elevate the building of a China-Malaysia community with a shared future.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, along with Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, Transport Minister Anthony Loke and Chinese Ambassador to Malaysia Ouyang Yujing, were present to greet Xi and his delegation.

Xi then proceeded to inspect a guard of honour comprising 28 officers and personnel from the First Battalion Royal Ranger Regiment (Ceremonial) under the command of Lt Mohamad Nafis Norshid.

A cultural performance featuring a medley of traditional Malay, Chinese and Indian drum rhythms by the Arjunasukma Academy in Gombak was also presented as part of the welcoming ceremony, in addition to a 32-member marching band from Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan Yu Hua in Kajang performing the songs "Lenggang Kangkung" and "Sejahtera Malaysia".

Wisma Putra said during his visit, Xi will be accorded a state welcoming ceremony, followed by an audience at Istana Negara with Sultan Ibrahim, who will also host a state banquet in honour of Xi and his delegation.

Xi is scheduled to hold a meeting with Anwar to discuss bilateral cooperation, as well as exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Anwar will also host an official dinner at the Seri Perdana Complex in Putrajaya in honour of Xi.

The visit is part of Xi's first tour of state visits in 2025, which also includes stops in Vietnam and Cambodia.

During his last visit to Malaysia, both countries elevated diplomatic relations to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership level.

Malaysia and China established diplomatic relations on May 31, 1974, and celebrated



Anwar greeting Xi upon the latter's arrival at KLIA yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

the 50th anniversary of strong bilateral ties last year.

For 16 years since 2009, China has remained Malaysia's largest trading partner, with total trade between the two countries valued at RM484.12 billion in 2024, representing 16.8% of Malaysia's total global trade of RM2.88 trillion.

As chair of Asean and the country

coordinator for Asean-China Dialogue Relations, Malaysia remains committed to advancing the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between Asean and China.

The Foreign Ministry said this would be pursued through dialogue, mutual trust and initiatives that deliver tangible benefits to the peoples of Asean and China. — Agencies

Poverty eradication in Sabah on right track

KOTA KINABALU: The number of hardcore poor heads of household in Sabah has recorded a significant decrease of 89.9%, according to the eKasih database as of Feb 28 compared with the same month last year, the Sabah State Legislative Assembly was told yesterday.

Assistant Minister to the Chief Minister Datuk Abidin Madingkir said the number of such households decreased to 1,464, compared with 14,553 recorded as of Feb 29 last year.

He said efforts to eradicate hardcore poverty in Sabah would continue to be monitored based on the Poverty Line Income, which is income below RM1,218, taking into account the average household size of 4.3 with a per capita income of RM288 per household member, Bernama reported.

"This data is (subject to) status changes influenced by various factors, including changes in the number of household members, income, assistance received or terminated as well as changes in information such as death or relocation to another state.

"The Sabah government commenced the provision of the Sentuhan Kasih Rakyat (Syukur) assistance on Feb 17 and this measure is expected to continue to contribute to the reduction in the number of poor and hardcore poor in the eKasih system."

He was replying to an oral question from Jannie Lasimbang (PH-Kapayan), who asked for the number of recipients of the first phase of Syukur and what other initiatives were available to help the poor and hardcore poor who were dropped from the eKasih list so that they could also receive the same assistance.

Abidin said the first phase of Syukur involved 72,060 poor and hardcore poor households listed in the eKasih system as of Dec 2024, and as of April 1, 95% have received the assistance while the rest are in the process of having their data updated.

"For those who are left out or not listed in the eKasih system, the state government has developed the Sabah State Database System so that they can apply online.

"In addition, the Sabah Maju Jaya secretariat is also working with grassroots leaders such as the Community Development Leader Unit and district offices in identifying households in their districts left out and eligible."

He said as of March 31, a total of 270,272 applications have been received from registration through the database system, leader unit and district offices, as well as engagement sessions with non-government state assemblymen.

Abidin added that the state government continues to strive to implement appropriate interventions to assist the poor and the hardcore poor based on five main thrusts, namely housing, education, employment, welfare or finance, entrepreneurship and training assistance intervention.

RM5 million for Ipoh housing, maintenance works

IPOH: The Housing and Local Government Ministry has allocated RM5.29 million since 2023 for housing repair and maintenance works in Ipoh to enhance the well-being of residents.

In a statement, Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming said of the total, RM1.19 million was allocated this year under the Housing Maintenance Programme.

"The ministry will channel RM993,000 through the programme for projects such as the refurbishment of the community hall and waste

disposal area at the Jalan Hospital flats (RM98,000), road resurfacing at Dewan Greentown (RM50,000), roof replacement at Seri Kepayang flats (RM500,000), road resurfacing within the Seri Kepayang flats compound (RM295,000) and installation of solar lights (RM50,000)," he said.

Nga, who officiated at the repainting of buildings and installation of new lifts at the Jalan Hospital and Seri Kepayang flats, also attended the Kepayang state constituency Hari Raya

gathering yesterday.

Additionally, in his capacity as the Kepayang assemblyman, he contributed RM200,000 for the upgrading of the Seri Kepayang food court.

He added that during his visit to the Jalan Hospital flats on March 10 last year, he noted the poor condition of its infrastructure, with rusted handrails and faded paint.

"As a result, the ministry allocated RM500,000 through the programme for repainting and replacing the handrails at the apartment

complex, in addition to a supplementary contribution of RM100,000 from the Perak Housing and Property Board.

"The maintenance work was completed on schedule within 12 months, achieving a cost saving of 16%."

Nga said the government initially allocated RM500,000 for repainting the Seri Kepayang flats but upon discovering frequent elevator breakdowns, the ministry then allocated RM3 million for the replacement of lifts. — Bernama

Al-Fatihah

Our deepest sympathies & heartfelt condolences to
family and friends on the demise of



Allahyarham Tun Dato' Seri Utama Haji Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi

Former Prime Minister of Malaysia
Passed away peacefully on 14 April 2025

From
Chairman
Founder and Advisor
Joint Chief Executive Officers
Board of Directors
Management and Staff



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U Mobile partners Huawei, ZTE for second 5G network rollout

► Next-Gen 5G aims for 80% coverage as telco leads dual-network push with support from Chinese tech giants

■ BY HARITH KAMAL AND KIRTINEE RAMESH
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PUTRAJAYA: U Mobile Sdn Bhd, Malaysia's second 5G network operator, has signed memoranda of understanding with Chinese technology giants Huawei Technologies Co Ltd and ZTE Corporation to support the rollout of the country's second 5G network, officially known as Next-Gen 5G.

Under the agreements, Huawei will lead the 5G rollout across Peninsular Malaysia while ZTE will oversee deployment efforts in Sabah and Sarawak.

U Mobile chairman Tan Sri Vincent Tan said the partner selection process was rigorous and transparent, aimed at identifying the most capable and reliable technology providers.

"We're pleased to formalise our partnerships with Huawei and ZTE – two of the world's leading 5G technology providers. These partnerships were selected through a meticulous, transparent evaluation process to ensure we work with the best to support our goals," he said at the signing ceremony.

Tan said both companies would support U Mobile's target of achieving 80% coverage in populated areas within the first 12 months of rollout, with plans to reach 90% in the following year.

He also expressed appreciation to the government for entrusting U Mobile with the responsibility of spearheading the initiative.

"I would like to thank the Malaysian government, particularly the Communications Ministry and the Malaysian



From left: Tan, Fahmi (third from left), U Mobile CEO Wong Heang Tuck (fourth from left), ZTE Malaysia managing director Steven Ge (fifth from left) and Li (sixth from left) during the signing. Also present at the event was Huawei CEO Simon Sun. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) for their trust and confidence in U Mobile to lead this next phase of Malaysia's technological advancement."

Tan added that the government's introduction of the 5G dual network model had created a more dynamic ecosystem that encourages greater industry participation, healthy competition and service innovation.

He noted U Mobile's continued commitment to expanding digital infrastructure, highlighting that the company has already invested more than RM8 billion in its network and technology.

"U Mobile has consistently demonstrated our dedication to delivering accessible, reliable connectivity and innovative services that Malaysians want and need. With over 10,000 network sites and 95% population coverage nationwide, we are proud to be a key driver in advancing the national digital agenda," he said.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi

Fadzil, Tan and party secretary of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, Li Lecheng.

Also present were Huawei Asia Pacific president Terry He, and ZTE Asia and CIS Region vice-president of marketing and solutions Bai Yang.

Meanwhile, U Mobile chief technology officer Woon Ooi Yuen said the procurement process began last year with an international tender issued to several network equipment and software providers.

Ultimately, Huawei and ZTE were the only respondents.

"Beyond their global technology expertise, both companies aligned with our vision for a fast and efficient rollout," he said.

Malaysia first announced the transition to a dual 5G network model in May 2023, as part of efforts to dismantle monopolies and improve digital inclusivity.

On March 29, U Mobile received the official letter of award from MCMC to lead the rollout of the country's second 5G network.

STM Lottery lights up orphanage with solar panels

KUALA LUMPUR: A children's home in Kuala Lumpur is now brighter and greener, thanks to a solar energy initiative by STM Lottery Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Berjaya Corporation Berhad.

As part of its corporate social responsibility efforts, STM Lottery has installed a new solar panel system at Yayasan Sunbeams Home, providing 91 underprivileged children with more than just shelter – a step towards a clean-energy future.

The solar panels, installed at the boys' dormitory on Jan 20, were officially launched on April 14 in a ceremony attended by STM Lottery general manager (communications and sustainability) Giam Say Khoon and Yayasan Sunbeams Home founder Pastor Alvin Tan Ooi Seng.

Dubbed the "Sports Toto Rays of Hope Solar Energy Project", the initiative is part of STM Lottery's Helping Hands community programme.

"We are thrilled to partner with Yayasan Sunbeams Home on this important effort. By investing in solar energy, we are not only helping the home reduce its carbon footprint but also supporting a more cost-effective and sustainable future for the children."

"This project reflects our broader commitment to environmental responsibility and empowering communities through impactful CSR initiatives. We aim to benefit more charitable homes and organisations through this project," said Giam.

The solar setup is expected to save the home about RM340 per month, freeing up funds for essential needs such as meals, school supplies and day-to-day expenses.

In addition to lowering operating costs, the solar system is projected to eliminate around 140,000kg of carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions over the next 25 years, contributing to a cleaner and more sustainable environment.

Calling the solar initiative a game-changer, Alvin expressed gratitude for the support.

"We are incredibly grateful to STM Lottery. This solar panel installation will make a real difference in our ability to provide a comfortable, efficient and environmentally conscious environment for our children," he said.

STM Lottery reaffirmed its commitment to supporting initiatives that benefit both people and the planet, and looks forward to building more partnerships that deliver long-term, sustainable impact in local communities.

RM228m needed for transit-oriented projects at rail stations

KUALA TERENGGANU: A total of RM228 million is needed for the construction of the first phase of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) at six East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) stations in Terengganu.

State Infrastructure, Utilities and Rural Development committee chairman Hanafiah Mat said the TOD, involving stations in Kuala Terengganu, Jerleh, Dungun, Chukai, Kemasik and Bandar Permaisuri, is scheduled to take between one and three years for the first phase.

"The allocation includes, among others, the provision of infrastructure, land acquisition and the development of transit terminals to support the ECRL project."

"Each ECRL station area already has a master plan and land use planning that will be developed in phases, according to the set

schedule," he said during an oral question and answer session at the Terengganu State Legislative Assembly at Wisma Darul Iman yesterday.

He was replying to Sulaiman Sulong (PAS-Pengkalan Berangan) on the latest status of TOD for all ECRL stations in Terengganu.

Hanafiah added that funding sources for the TOD would come from various channels, including allocations from the federal and state governments, as well as private investments from local and foreign property developers.

In other developments, Hanafiah said RM36 million is required for the construction of a new bridge and slope repairs on Jalan Aring 8-Kenyir-Kuala Jeneris near Tasik Kenyir in Hulu Terengganu, which remains closed due to landslides following heavy rain late last year.

He said the allocation for the total cost has been requested by the Public Works Department (PWD) from the Economy Ministry.

"The Slope Engineering Branch (CKC) of PWD conducted a follow-up visit to the incident location on Dec 4, 2024."

"Based on the visit, CKC proposed the construction of a new section to replace the collapsed road," he said, in reply to Dr Mamad Puteh (PAS-Kuala Berang) on when the repair work would be carried out.

Hanafiah said the proposed scope of work for the construction of a new bridge on the road connecting Tasik Kenyir and Gua Musang, Kelantan, includes the building of a new 150m road section, road drainage systems, utility relocation works and the construction of temporary roads and access paths. – Bernama

Yapeim disburses RM725 million in aid nationwide

PUTATAN: The Malaysian Islamic Economic Development Foundation (Yapeim) has disbursed a total of RM725 million to 14 million beneficiaries across the country from 1985 until the end of last year.

In a statement, Yapeim said the disbursement covered its three core pillars: economic and entrepreneurial development, educational aid, and community assistance.

The foundation also provides micro-financing through its Ar-Rahnu Yapeim initiative.

With 204 branches nationwide, Ar-Rahnu Yapeim offers short-term financing to support small traders and entrepreneurs, particularly in addressing working capital needs.

"For Sabah, as of February, Yapeim has served 40,544 pawners with total financing of

RM512.5 million, involving pledged item value (marhun) of RM770.8 million through 11 Ar-Rahnu Yapeim branches," the statement said.

It was issued in conjunction with the Yapeim Madani Aidilfitri programme held in Sabah.

The event, held at the Dhuyufur Rahman Mosque, was attended by Yapeim director-general Zabidi Nasan. – Bernama

Upsi records 97% graduate marketability

IPOH: Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (Upsi) has reaffirmed its position as the country's leading education-focused institution by recording a 97% graduate employability rate last year.

Upsi vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Md Amin Md Taff said the figure marks a 1.7% increase from the 95.3% recorded in 2023, making it one of the university's top achievements in the past five years.

He said the improvement reflects a positive trend and the university's continued commitment to enhancing graduate quality.

Citing data from the Higher Education Ministry's graduate tracking study system, Md Amin added that Upsi's graduate employment rate had reached 97.4%, demonstrating the effectiveness of the university's approach in producing graduates who are competitive and aligned with current industry demands.

"This increase not only surpasses the national average but also reflects Upsi's commitment to strengthening industry-based learning and ensuring a balance between theory and practice in all academic programmes," he said in a statement. – Bernama

Chinese president pays respects to Ho Chi Minh

► Visit aims to 'hurt' United States: Trump

HANOI: China President Xi Jinping paid tribute to Vietnam's late revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh yesterday on his last day in Hanoi.

Xi is in Vietnam as part of a Southeast Asia tour that will include Malaysia and Cambodia, with Beijing trying to position itself as a stable alternative to US President Donald Trump as leaders confront US tariffs.

On Monday, Xi called on China and Vietnam to "oppose unilateral bullying and uphold the stability of the global free trade system", according to Beijing's state media.

Hours later, Trump told reporters at the White House that their meeting was aimed at hurting the United States.

"I do not blame China. I do not blame Vietnam. I see they are meeting today and that is wonderful. That is a lovely meeting, like trying to figure out 'how do we screw the United States?'"

China and Vietnam signed 45 cooperation agreements on Monday, including on supply chains, artificial intelligence, joint maritime patrols and railway development.

During a meeting with Vietnam's top leader To Lam on Monday, Xi said their countries are "standing at the turning point of history and should move forward with joint hands".

Lam said they "reached many important and comprehensive common perceptions", according to the Vietnam News Agency.



Xi participating in a wreath-laying ceremony yesterday at the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum during his visit to Vietnam. — REUTERS/SPIC

On the final day of his visit, Xi laid a red wreath emblazoned with his name and the words "Long live Vietnam's great leader President Ho Chi Minh" at the late leader's mausoleum in central Hanoi.

He is also due to attend the launch of the Vietnam-China Railway Cooperation, which will help manage a US\$8 billion (RM35 billion) rail project to link Vietnam's largest northern port city to the border with China.

Xi's trip comes almost two weeks after the United States, which was the biggest export market for Vietnam in the first three months of the year,

imposed a 46% levy on Vietnamese goods as part of a global tariff blitz.

Although the US tariffs on Vietnam and most other countries have been paused, China still faces enormous levies and is seeking to tighten regional trade ties and offset their impact during Xi's first overseas trip of the year.

Xi earlier urged Vietnam and China to "resolutely safeguard the multilateral trading system, stable global industrial and supply chains, and an open and cooperative international environment".

He reiterated that a "trade war and tariff war will produce no winner, and

protectionism will lead nowhere" in an article published on Monday in Vietnam's major state-run *Nhan Dan* newspaper.

China and Vietnam, both ruled by communist parties, share a "comprehensive strategic partnership", Hanoi's highest diplomatic status.

Vietnam has long pursued a "bamboo diplomacy" approach, striving to stay on good terms with both China and the United States.

The two countries have close economic ties but Hanoi shares US concerns about Beijing's increasing assertiveness in the contested South China Sea. — AFP

BRIEFS

SINGAPORE TO HOLD NATIONAL ELECTION ON MAY 3

SINGAPORE: A government gazette said Singapore's parliament was dissolved yesterday ahead of a general election to be held on May 3. The vote will be the first electoral test for Prime Minister Lawrence Wong, who took over from long-time premier Lee Hsien Loong as leader of the People's Action Party in May last year. "The world is becoming more uncertain, unsettled and even unstable. At this critical juncture, Singaporeans should decide on the team to lead our nation and chart our way forward together," said Wong. — Reuters

700 HELD FOR DRUG OFFENCES IN BRUNEI LAST YEAR

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: A total of 777 individuals were arrested in Brunei in 2024 for drug-related offences compared with 711 individuals in 2023, Brunei's Narcotic Control Bureau statistics revealed, reported Xinhua. Over 40kg of methamphetamine was confiscated in 2024. Other drugs confiscated were Erimin-5, ecstasy, ganja and ketamine. Unemployed people were the largest group of those arrested, with 393 in 2024, followed by 186 private sector employees, 166 self-employed individuals, 25 public servants and seven students. — Bernama-Xinhua

GUIDE ON AI GOVERNANCE, ETHICS DEVELOPED

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Brunei has developed a guide on Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance and Ethics to shape a digitally inclusive future, reported Xinhua. Brunei's Authority for Infocommunication Technology said principles within the guide align with regional standards, such as the Southeast Asian Guide on AI Governance and Ethics. It is also providing opportunities to enable responsible inter-operability of AI systems regionally, as well as enhancing credibility of organisations and improving consumer confidence in the use of AI systems and tools. The guideline provides advice on practices and safeguards to be considered by organisations that design, develop, deploy or use AI technologies in Brunei, it said. — Bernama-Xinhua

Cambodian genocide denial law could be abused: Critics

PHNOM PENH: Survivors of the Khmer Rouge's genocidal regime have welcomed a beefed-up Cambodian law that forbids denying the movement's atrocities but rights advocates and academics have warned that it could stifle legitimate dissent.

Enacted last month ahead of this week's 50th anniversary of the Khmer Rouge seizing the capital Phnom Penh, the law threatens hefty jail sentences and fines for anyone who denies the genocide that killed around 75 million people between 1975 and 1979.

The headline Maoist group led by "Brother Number One" Pol Pot reset the

calendar to "Year Zero" on April 17, 1975 and emptied cities in a bid to create a pure agrarian society free of class, politics or capital.

About a quarter of the population died of disease, starvation, overwork or by execution in the disastrous social engineering experiment memorably chronicled by the 1984 Oscar-winning movie "The Killing Fields".

Some activists said former prime minister Hun Sen is using the law to burnish his legacy and stifle opposition to his son and successor Hun Manet.

The government is trying to "reinforce state narratives rather than genuinely encourage historical

accountability", said Arizona State University associate professor Sophal Ear.

"In practice, it could be another tool to silence dissent."

Political analyst Ou Virak called the law a "mistake" and said: "A population that is afraid to have discussions will be even more afraid to ask questions."

Hun Sen, 72, was a commander under Pol Pot before he fled to Vietnam in 1977, joining other Cambodian defectors to lead the Vietnamese army assault that drove the Khmer Rouge out of Phnom Penh.

In the more than 30 years that Hun Sen ruled Cambodia, critics say he stifled dissent, equating

opposition to his leadership as support for those he replaced.

One form of genocide denial downplays Vietnam's role in ousting the Khmer Rouge while another stems from the fact that some "people still cannot believe that Khmers could have killed other Khmers", said Adriana Escobar Rodriguez of the French National Centre for Scientific Research.

Hun Sen has defended the stricter law, comparing it to similar legislation against Holocaust denial in Europe.

The 2013 law it replaced stemmed from a case involving one of Hun Sen's main opponents that took place just before national elections. — AFP

China accuses US 'spies' of cyberattacks during Winter Games

BEIJING: Chinese security officials yesterday said they have implicated three US "secret agents" in cyberattacks during February's Asian Winter Games in the northeastern city of Harbin.

District police released a statement on Weibo accusing three US National Security Agency (NSA) agents of attacks on "key information infrastructure".

It named the individuals as "Katheryn A. Wilson, Robert J. Snelling and Stephen W. Johnson", working in the NSA Office of Tailored Access Operations, an intelligence-gathering unit on cyberwarfare.

China's computer virus watchdog said it recorded more than 270,000 foreign cyberattacks this month on information systems related to the 9th Asian Winter Games in Harbin,

the capital of Heilongjiang province, held from Feb 7 to 14.

Attacks targeted the event's information release and entry-exit management systems, as well as card payments and local infrastructure between Jan 26 and Feb 14, it said.

Two-thirds of those attacks came from the United States, it said.

The statement accused the NSA

agents of targeting Chinese companies, including Huawei, which has faced US sanctions since 2019 over national security concerns.

State news agency Xinhua reported that teams "uncovered evidence" implicating the University of California and Virginia Tech in the "coordinated campaign" on the Asian Winter Games.

Officials said they would reward

any individual that could provide clues about the three suspects and "cooperate with public security organs in arresting" them.

They vowed to "seriously crack down on cyberattacks and the theft of state secrets against China by foreign forces".

Those found guilty of espionage could face life in prison or execution under Chinese law. — AFP



Man charged for Molotov cocktail attack on Democrat

➤ Jewish politician says he will not be intimidated in observing his faith

NEW YORK: US prosecutors charged a man on Monday with the attempted murder of Democratic heavyweight and Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro, 51, after a weekend arson attack at his official residence, court filings showed.

Cody Balmer, 38, is charged with attempted criminal homicide and seven other offences, including terrorism affecting the government and prowling at nighttime. He was denied bail.

He told police that he harboured "hatred towards Shapiro", who is Jewish and earlier had marked the first night of the Passover holiday with friends and family.

Shapiro said he would not be intimidated in observing his faith following what prosecutors have called a "homemade Molotov cocktail" attack.

Shapiro, widely viewed as a potential 2028

presidential contender, was inside with his family when the fire broke out in a different part of the Georgian-style mansion in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on Sunday, state police said.

"While the fire was successfully extinguished, it caused a significant amount of damage to a portion of the residence."

Shapiro said he and his sleeping family were woken up by a police trooper at 2am local time (0600 GMT) and they were evacuated from the building.

"This kind of violence is becoming far too common in our society and I do not give a damn if it is coming from one particular side or the other. It is not okay and it has to stop."

In charging documents released on Monday, police said Balmer was captured on surveillance cameras climbing a perimeter fence, breaking a window and throwing a gasoline-filled Heineken beer bottle, before breaking another window, entering the residence and igniting another bottle.

He then fled the property.

An ex-lover of Balmer called police and reported that the alleged arsonist wanted to hand himself in, the criminal complaint alleged.

Balmer then walked up to the state police headquarters and told an officer that he was responsible for the blaze.

During a hearing, Balmer was arraigned before judge Dale Klein, a court official said. He is next due in court on April 23.

Top Republican officials reacted to the attack on Sunday, with US Attorney-General Pam Bondi saying she was "deeply relieved that Shapiro and his family are safe".

Vice-President J. D. Vance called the attack "really disgusting violence" and expressed hope that "whoever did it is brought swiftly to justice".

President Donald Trump, who survived an assassination attempt in Pennsylvania last year, called Shapiro's assailant a "whack job", adding that "certainly a thing like that cannot be allowed to happen".

Shapiro was in the race to be Democrat Kamala Harris's running mate in her ultimately unsuccessful US presidential bid but the position instead went to Minnesota Governor Tim Walz.

Shapiro, an assertive political centrist, was elected governor of Pennsylvania in 2022 when he faced off against a far-right candidate backed by Trump. - AFP

BRIEFS

PERU MOURNS LITERARY ICON MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

LIMA: The Peruvian flag flew at half-staff on Monday as the country marked the passing of literary great Mario Vargas Llosa with a day of national mourning. President Dina Boluarte attended a private wake at the Vargas Llosa family home for the novelist and Nobel laureate who died there on Sunday, aged 89. The Nobel Prize committee hailed Vargas Llosa as "a significant figure in Latin American literature and culture", recalling that he was awarded the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature "for his cartography of structures of power and his trenchant images of the individual's resistance, revolt and defeat". The family has not specified the cause of death but his health had been deteriorating in recent months. - AFP

'BABY BONUS' SCHEME TO BOOST BIRTHRATE IN ITALY

ROME: Italy's "baby bonus" initiative was launched on Monday, marking the latest step in the country's efforts to reverse its declining birthrate, Xinhua reported. The Italian National Institute for Social Security unveiled the formal process for families to access a tax-free allowance of EUR\$1,000 (RM\$5,000) for each child born or adopted this year. The bonus would be granted to Italian citizens as well as citizens of other European Union (EU) member states and non-EU nationals who hold legal long-term residency in Italy. The Italian National Statistics Institute reported in March that the country's fertility rate in 2024 fell to a record low of 1.18 children per woman, down from the previous record of 1.19 set in 1995. - Bernama-Xinhua



DARING DISSENT ... Demonstrators rallying in protest of workforce cuts by the Department of Government Efficiency outside the Labour Department headquarters in Washington, DC on Monday. - AFP/PPIC

Judge blocks Trump deportation push

NEW YORK: A federal judge on Monday blocked US President Donald Trump's administration from quickly revoking the legal status of hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua and Haiti.

The ruling by district judge Indira Talwani in Boston is the latest order against Trump's rapid push to carry out mass deportations, particularly targeting Latin Americans.

In March, the administration said it was moving to revoke the legal status of some 532,000 Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans who came to the United States under a "parole" programme launched by former president Joe Biden in October 2022.

"The court grants emergency relief staying the Termination of Parole Processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans," Talwani wrote in her order.

The programme allowed entry to the United States for two years for up to 30,000 migrants per month from the four countries, which have grim human rights records.

Talwani said the Trump administration had acted on a flawed interpretation of immigration law, with expedited removal applicable to non-citizens entering the United States illegally but not those authorised to be in the country, such as through the parole programme. - AFP

Suspect prosecuted over arson at Tesla dealership

LOS ANGELES: A man who allegedly torched two vehicles at a Tesla dealership and painted "Die Elon" on the side of the building has been hit with federal charges, the US Justice Department said on Monday.

The charges are the latest to be levied in connection to attacks on the electric vehicle maker, whose boss Elon Musk has become a hate figure for some over his role in slashing government jobs as a top advisor to

President Donald Trump.

Two Tesla vehicles were damaged in the firebomb attack on a showroom in Albuquerque on Feb 9 and slogans likening Musk and his company to Nazis were sprayed on the walls.

Jamison Wagner, 40, who lives in the western state of New Mexico, was also charged over a firebomb attack that hit an office of the state's Republican Party last month.

If convicted on the two counts of

malicious damage or destruction of property by fire or explosives, he could be jailed for up to 20 years on each count, the department said.

"Let this be the final lesson to those taking part in this ongoing wave of political violence," Attorney-General Pam Bondi said in a statement.

"We will arrest you, we will prosecute you and we will not negotiate. Crimes have consequences."

Federal prosecution carries a stiff penalty compared to local law, in which such a crime typically results in a sentence starting from 18 months' jail and a US\$5,000 (RM22,054) fine.

In March, Trump suggested that people who vandalise Tesla property could be deported to prisons in El Salvador.

Musk, the South Africa-born billionaire chief of Tesla and SpaceX, is leading Trump's ruthless

cost-cutting drive at the head of the so-called Department of Government Efficiency.

Lauded by Republicans and hated by Democrats, he has rapidly become one of the most controversial figures in the country.

Several Tesla dealerships and a number of cars in the United States and around the world have been vandalised, and the company's stock price has taken a hammering. - AFP

Soviet court jails soldier for desertion

MOSCOW: A Russian military court yesterday jailed a soldier for 15 years after convicting him of desertion and voluntary surrender to Ukraine, Russia's first such prosecution, the *Kommersant* newspaper reported.

Russia in September 2022 introduced the crime of voluntary surrender, which is punishable by between three and 10 years' jail.

According to *Kommersant*, a court on the far eastern Russian island of Sakhalin found soldier Roman Ivanishin guilty of voluntary surrender, attempting to voluntarily surrender and desertion.

Ivanishin, who was reported to have denied all charges, will serve his sentence in a maximum security facility. His trial was held behind closed doors.

The newspaper reported that Ivanishin, a miner on Sakhalin described by local media as a veteran of Russia's wars in Chechnya, was mobilised in 2022 and fought in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.

He was captured by Ukrainian soldiers in June 2023 and in an online video, was shown denouncing Russia's military campaign in Ukraine and calling on other soldiers to desert.

It was not clear from the report in *Kommersant* whether he had been speaking under duress in the video. His defence team was reported to have sought his acquittal, saying there was no evidence he had committed any crime.

Ivanishin was returned to Russia in a prisoner exchange in January 2024 and was placed under investigation, *Kommersant* said. – Reuters

Bomb kills three police officers in Pakistan

QUETTA: An explosion targeting a police bus in Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province killed at least three officers and wounded 16 others yesterday, authorities said.

The bus was carrying around 40 police officers when it was hit by the blast in Mastung district, around 40km south of the provincial capital Quetta, local administration official Raja Muhammad Akram told AFP.

Pakistan has been battling a separatist insurgency in Balochistan for decades, in which militants target state forces, foreign nationals and non-locals in the mineral-rich southwestern province bordering Afghanistan and Iran.

Provincial government spokesperson Shahid Rind said two officers are in critical condition.

No group has claimed the attack. However, the Baloch Liberation Army is the most active group in the region.

Last month, ethnic Baloch separatists attacked a train with 450 passengers on board, sparking a two-day siege during which dozens were killed, reported AFP.

More than 200 people have been killed in attacks since the start of the year by armed groups fighting the government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, according to an AFP tally.

Last year was the deadliest year in a decade in Pakistan, following a trend of rising militancy since the Taliban took power in Afghanistan in 2021.

Israel offers Gaza ceasefire in return for **hostage release**

➤ Proposal includes disarmament of Hamas and Palestinian armed factions

GAZA: Hamas said on Monday Israel has offered a 45-day ceasefire if it releases half of the remaining hostages held in Gaza, which the United Nations (UN) said is in the grip of its worst humanitarian crisis since the start of the war.

A Hamas official told AFP that Israel also demanded the Palestinian militants disarm to secure an end to the Gaza war, but added that this crossed a "red line".

Egyptian mediators passed on an Israeli proposal that "includes the release of half the hostages in the first week of the agreement, an extension of the truce for at least 45

days and the entry of aid," the official said.

"The proposal includes the disarmament of Hamas and all Palestinian armed factions in the Gaza Strip as a condition for a permanent end to the war."

Hamas leaders are reviewing the ceasefire proposal but the official said: "Hamas and the resistance factions' position is that the resistance's weapons are a red line and non-negotiable."

The official said Hamas negotiators were going to Qatar, where the group has an office.

Israel did not immediately

comment on the Hamas statement.

"Hamas informed the mediators that it is willing to agree to any proposal that includes a permanent ceasefire, a full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the entry of aid," the official said.

Earlier, the UN warned that Gaza's humanitarian crisis was spiralling out of control, with no aid entering the territory for weeks and conditions rapidly deteriorating.

Israel resumed operations in the Palestinian territory in March after the collapse of a two-month-old ceasefire amid differences over the next phase.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, with Israel blocking humanitarian aid since March 2, before the truce disintegrated.

Medical supplies, fuel, water and

other essentials are in short supply.

"The humanitarian situation is likely the worst it has been in the 18 months since the outbreak of hostilities," said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Aid workers have been forced "to ration and reduce deliveries to make the most of the remaining stocks".

At the Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis, doctor Ahmed al-Farah said the medical team was working non-stop despite "a shortage in everything".

Senior Hamas official Taher al-Nunu indicated that the group is willing to release all hostages in exchange for a "serious prisoner swap" and guarantees that Israel would end the war.

"The issue is not the number of captives but rather that the occupation is reneging on its commitments, blocking the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and continuing the war."

Israeli news website Ynet reported that under a new ceasefire proposal, Hamas would release 10 living hostages in exchange for US guarantees that Israel would enter negotiations for a second phase of the ceasefire. – AFP



DRASTIC DAMAGE ... Palestinians standing around a large crater following an Israeli strike on a metalsmith workshop in the Zaytoon neighbourhood in Gaza City. – AFP/PIIC

109 Ukraine drones downed in Russia

KYIV: Russian authorities yesterday said Kyiv forces hit Russia's Kursk region that borders Ukraine with dozens of drones, killing an elderly woman, injuring nine people and sparking fires in several buildings in the region's administrative centre.

The Russian Defence Ministry, which releases data only on how many drones its forces destroy and not how many Ukraine launches, said 109 drones were downed in the Kursk region.

A multistorey apartment building was damaged, with several flats catching fire, said Kursk acting mayor Sergei Kotlyarov

on Telegram.

Residents have been evacuated to a nearby school, he added.

The region's administration posted photos of a multistorey apartment building with blown out windows and fire damage to the facade.

Drones also hit an ambulance garage, damaging 11 cars, it said.

On Monday, three people were killed in the region as a result of a Ukrainian drone attack, officials said.

Reuters could not independently verify the reports. There was no immediate comment from Ukraine.

Kursk and other Russian regions on the border with Ukraine have been subject to frequent air and land attack by Kyiv forces, who say their goal is to undermine Moscow's overall war efforts.

Ukrainian troops last year staged a cross-border incursion into the Kursk region.

The forces remain in parts of the region, although Russian forces have recaptured much lost territory.

The attack follows a Russian missile and bomb attack on the Ukrainian city of Sumy over the weekend that killed 35 people and injured at least 119. – Reuters

Iraq sandstorm sends 1,800 to hospitals

NAJAF: A sandstorm in central and southern Iraq sent more than 1,800 people to hospitals with respiratory problems on Monday, health officials said.

Authorities temporarily shut down airports in the southern provinces of Najaf and Basra as the sandstorm obscured visibility in an orange cloud.

Iraq, which endures blistering summer heat and regular sandstorms, is one of the five countries most impacted by some effects of climate change, said the United Nations.

Hospitals in Muthanna province in southern Iraq received at least "700 cases of suffocation", local health official Mazen al-Egeili said.

More than 250 people were hospitalised in Najaf province, according to its health directorate.

At least 322 patients flocked to hospitals in Diwaniyah province, said provincial Health Department media officer Amer al-Kinani.

In Dhi Qar and Basra provinces, more than 530 people had breathing problems, local health officials said.

The sandstorm drastically reduced visibility to less than 1km but it was expected to gradually dissipate within 24 hours, weather services said.

The Environment Ministry has warned the country could expect to experience a rising number of "dust days" in coming decades. – AFP

COMMENT by BA Hamzah



President Xi pushes for fair trade

THE gloves may be temporarily off between Washington and Beijing following President Donald Trump's decision to exempt selected electronic goods from tariffs. However, while sanity returns to the White House, the damage has already been done.

President Xi Jinping did not blink when Trump levied 145% on Chinese goods entering the US. Dismissing Trump's tariff ploy as a joke, Xi snubbed Trump by imposing a 125% (from 34% and 84%) levy on US goods entering China, valued at US\$144 billion (RM636 billion) in 2024.

By upping the ante, China has signalled its willingness to forego trade with the US to protect its national pride. Xi must have reckoned that he could do without the US market as China expands its market access elsewhere in Europe, Africa, South America, the Middle East and Asia Pacific.

After Beijing refused to buckle under mounting pressure from US unilateral tariff imposition, the world took notice of China that vowed "to fight the US to the finish".

Confident in the support for his leadership at home and downplaying the seriousness of the tariff tiff with Washington, Xi is in Malaysia for a three-day visit as part of his Southeast Asia trip.

After years in office,

he must have realised Trump's gruffness is not merely about sparking a skirmish over trade deficits but rather a challenge to China's sovereignty, dignity, pride and a direct questioning of his leadership.

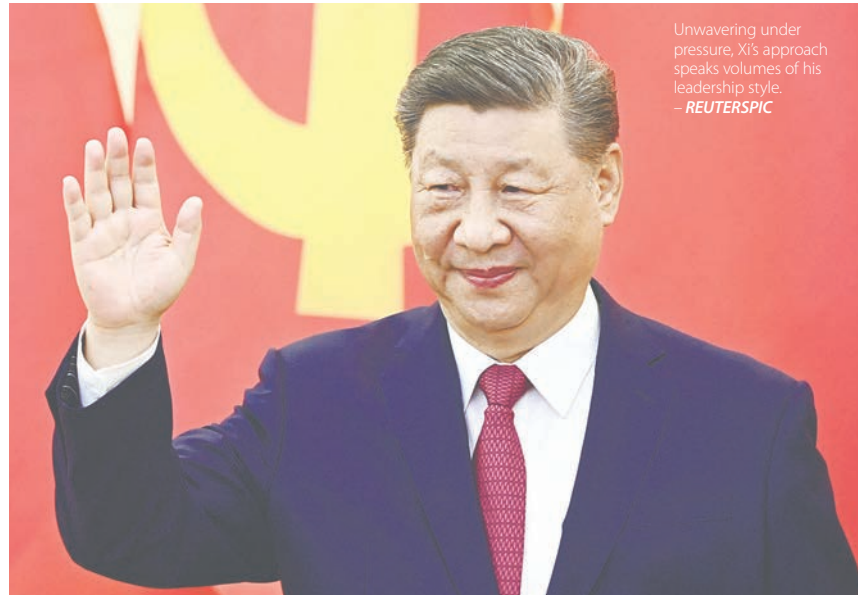
Had he flinched in moments of adversity such as this, more than a billion Chinese citizens may have seen him as weak and dispensable. Instead of capitulating to pressures, Beijing has embraced what looks like a long-term strategy, advocating for multilateralism, fair trade and mutual respect between nations.

By ordering massive dumping of US treasury bonds, Xi has exposed another weakness in the US financial system that China could easily exploit. When push comes to shove, he could dump some of China's US\$759 billion US Treasury holdings overnight – as Japan and Canada did.

Rather than escalate tensions through further rhetoric, Xi chose to handle the situation with calm and clarity. His message was simple: China would not be bullied.

Promising he would no longer engage in a numbers game with the US that would derail global markets, his action has won the respect of many in the global south as many view his calmness as a hallmark of confidence.

His strategic patience in turning a moment of crisis into an opportunity for China to



Unwavering under pressure, Xi's approach speaks volumes of his leadership style.
– REUTERS/SPIC

reinforce its economic independence is appreciated by those felt betrayed by Trump who uses trade as a weapon.

At a time when unpredictability is the hallmark of Washington's trade policy, Xi's leadership offers stability – both to the Chinese people and to the international business community.

Trump framed the trade war to "rebalance" US-China relations but in practice, his approach is rooted in unilateralism.

The tariffs have been abrupt, the demands sweeping and the consequences far-reaching.

For many countries watching from the sidelines, this marks a troubling shift away from international norms that violate the international

trading rules.

Xi's resolve is not just rhetorical. His administration has accelerated efforts to reduce China's dependency on US technology, launched reforms to support domestic consumption and expanded partnerships through initiatives like the Belt and Road. These moves were not just a reaction to the trade war – they reflect a broader strategy of resilience and leadership.

Xi does not view the trade war with Washington as a setback but as an opportunity. His refusal to yield under pressure sends a clear message to the world: China values dialogue but it will never be coerced. Under his leadership, China has doubled down on innovation, investing in advanced

manufacturing, artificial intelligence and green technologies.

Unwavering under pressure, Xi's approach speaks volumes of his leadership style. In the meantime, as geopolitical dynamics continue to unravel, China emerges more self-reliant, assertive and determined to chart its own course in the world economy.

Xi's handling of the trade war with the US is a reaffirmation of China's ability to navigate great-power competition without compromising its principles.

BA Hamzah was formerly a lecturer in geopolitics at the National Defence University Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

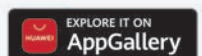
"Xi does not view the trade war with Washington as a setback but as an opportunity. His refusal to yield under pressure sends a clear message to the world: China values dialogue but it will never be coerced."

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Primed for war and not climate action

FOR lack of a peace vision and global leadership, we saw in Part Four that Malaysia scored no points for its failure to offer any solutions to the Gaza and Ukraine wars.

Nearer home is a looming Taiwan-South China Sea War that we shall focus on in this and the next article. Why is the West upset that China may invade Taiwan if it declares independence?

Puerto Rico island in the Caribbean Sea has been an American territory since 1898, following the Spanish-American War. If Puerto Rico declares independence and the US Cavalry charges in, will the European Union send an army to fight these cavalymen?

What if Mindanao declares independence? Does Manila have no right to quash it?

Taiwan has been an integral part of China since ancient times. Historically, Taiwan was officially designated as a province of China during the Qing Dynasty in 1885.

The Columbia History of the World (published in the US in 1972) gives this information: "Japanese terms were harsh" on China which "suffered a disastrous defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 to 1895".

These terms included "cession of Taiwan to Japan". On another page, Columbia History uses the old name for Taiwan: "Japan acquired Formosa" in the "Sino-Japanese War of 1894 to 1895".

After the Chinese government recovered Taiwan from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, Taiwan's status as a province of China was reaffirmed, but the West is pushing a lie that Taiwan has always been independent of China.

Last year, Nato issued a communique revealing that it regards China as the West's long-term global challenge. It plans to establish an Indo-Pacific version of the North Atlantic military alliance called Nato, with the key partners being Japan, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan and the Philippines. This is part of a network of military alliances to put down China.

Last month, it became public knowledge that the US War Department has drawn up contingency plans for military conflict with China. These plans range from the upgrading of the US military command in Japan to a new "war-fighting headquarters" to deployment of a new anti-ship missile system in the Philippines.

Why is the US anxious to crush

China? Its strategic anxiety began in 2001 when China led the formation of a new international relations framework called BRICS – a platform to advance dialogue and cooperation.

The acronym stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, and it has expanded to include Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

BRICS was followed by BRI – the Belt and Road Initiative – in 2013, and the US felt its unipolar control of trade, finance and diplomacy was being undermined by China.

Despite America's strongly competitive presidential elections, it takes a completely opposite stance in geopolitics – it wants zero competition and insists on world acceptance of its hegemonic control.

If Brazil, India and Indonesia put on big boots, they will face the same hostile treatment as China is getting.

America always wants to be number one and its allies collectively number two. The rest of the world may collectively be a distant number three. China, if it had remained poor with a ragtag army, would have served nicely as a supplier of cheap labour for American industries and a voluminous consumer of America's basic products.

Now that China is rich and influential, it is being labelled as Washington's most capable strategic competitor and the top military and cyber threat to the US.

Fuelling this enmity is the long-held American Christian perception of China as a communist autocracy spreading demonic hatred and strife while Christianity spreads love and peace.

Hence, America builds a ring of fire girdling China's coastline from north to south as a show of God-empowered force. A second ring of fire stretches from Guam down to Australia and up to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

America's two rings of fire encircling China include a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier in the East China Sea, guided missile destroyers, guided missile cruisers, submarines, an 18,000 strong marine expeditionary force and another 70,000 uniformed personnel, bomber deployments, F-22 Raptors, F-35s and Triton drones.

America also deployed an aircraft carrier strike group in the South China Sea and it comprises B-1B, B-



The US spent US\$916 billion on military expenditure – more than any other nation – while allocating just US\$37 billion annually to climate initiatives. – AFPIC

52 and B-2 bombers, P-8 Poseidons and RQ-4 Global Hawks as well as Aegis-equipped destroyers.

Australia will have eight nuclear-powered submarines targeted for deployment in the South China Sea in the 2040s. These submarines, being acquired in partnership with Britain and the US, are based on a UK design known as SSN-Aukus. They will also likely patrol the Taiwan Straits.

China's response to these threats is to increase its naval presence in waters near America's military allies – from Japan to the Philippines – and to assert its territorial claims in these waters. This is a public relations gift for America, which now claims that it is China that is behaving aggressively with territorial ambitions against neighbours.

It is a playback to the 1960s and the 1970s when America, in portraying North Vietnam as an expansionist power, carpet-bombed Hanoi. Malaysians cheered whenever a fleet of US B-52 bombers took off from Guam on a bombing mission to devastate Hanoi.

Key in to the buzz and you will hear a familiar tune: "The US is building on our enduring commitment to boost democracy globally," said former President Joe Biden, addressing 120 world leaders in 2022. He called the "battle between democracy and autocracy the defining challenge of our time".

But this is a red herring to distract attention from America's real concern – that there is now a challenger to Western hegemony. This time, will Malaysians cheer should B-1B Lancer bombers take off from Guam to drop missiles on China's frontline defence bases?

However, the Philippines has fallen in step with America, not realising that it is an agent provocateur that will sacrifice Asian lives to retain its world dominance.

In 2020 and 2021, the US spread false propaganda in the Philippines that China's Sinovac vaccine against Covid-19 was totally ineffective.

Thousands of Filipinos who fell for the American lie refused vaccination and died. It was a clear breach of international health protocol which America's allies kept silent over despite their constant raging over alleged human rights abuses by Asian governments.

The Philippines is a vital link in America's offensive island chain of encirclement against China as it is Taiwan's next-door neighbour. But the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* warned in 2022: "US strategists want to trap China into a military confrontation in an arena where the US is still superior. The American chess pieces of 800 overseas military bases, gunboat diplomacy in the air, land and sea, and military technology are more than 20 years ahead of China."

The *Daily Inquirer* advised the Philippine government: "Let us focus on resolving the climate emergency and social inequities, and prevent future pandemics."

However, instead of putting climate change and national disaster preparedness as the top two items in the national agenda, the Philippines is joining its allies to up the ante in war preparations.

The Philippines is already a member of the anti-China Quad military alliance that has the US, Australia and Japan as the other three members. It has earmarked US\$35 billion (RM155 billion) for the buildup to counter China's military might in the region (*the Sun*, Feb 13).

Add this US\$35 billion to America's US\$300 billion worth of military asset deployment in the two rings of fire around China and you have US\$335 billion that could have gone into climate mitigation to reduce the severity of floods and droughts as well as preserve more forests and clean up ocean plastics entering the marine food chain.

Geopolitical conflicts sliced 12.9% off the global GDP last year. The world's military spending rose to an all-time high of US\$2.44

trillion, with expenditure rising in all regions of the world – the Americas, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania. The 32 Nato members accounted for US\$1.3 trillion, equal to 55% of the world's military expenditure.

Among nations individually, the US splurged the most at US\$916 billion while its climate spending is a measly US\$37 billion a year. China's military expenditure was estimated at US\$232 billion and Russia's military spending was an estimated US\$109 billion. India was the fourth largest military spender globally at approximately US\$83.6 billion.

Japan has raised its military spending by 11% more, topping over US\$50 billion. Taiwan's military expenditure also grew by 11%. Malaysia's defence spending allocation under Budget 2025 is RM21.2 billion, up from RM19.7 billion the previous year.

Sales of weapons and military services by the world's 100 largest arms companies are now well in excess of US\$600 billion a year. Of these companies, 41 are American.

As militaries are huge carbon emitters, they are party to the growing threats of megadroughts, failed harvests and massive floods.

Can governments pivot in time and treat the climate emergency with the funding that is currently reserved for war?

Malaysia cannot remain neutral because that is just a synonym for indifference to peace or war. We should take the stand that independence is wrong and so is forced reunification.

The right approach is Taiwanese autonomy in a loose reunification scheme and with US involvement only as mediator.

Next, we shall discuss the Philippine-China naval confrontations in the South China Sea.

Joachim Ng champions interfaith harmony. Comments: letters@thesundaymail.com



"As militaries are huge carbon emitters, they are party to the growing threats of megadroughts, failed harvests and massive floods. Can governments pivot in time and treat the climate emergency with the funding that is currently reserved for war?"

Issuances of SRI sukuk in 2024 rise ninefold to RM11.9 billion

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia saw a significant rise in sustainable and responsible investment (SRI) sukuk issuances last year, reaching RM11.9 billion – an almost ninefold increase since its introduction in 2017 – thanks to a supportive regulatory framework.

In its *Annual Report 2024*, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) said the SRI Sukuk market is poised for further growth, driven by priorities in energy transition, social inclusivity, and sustainability under the Madani economy framework.

It said this agenda is closely aligned with Malaysia's 12th Malaysia Plan (2021–25), particularly Theme 3, which emphasises advancing green growth, enhancing energy sustainability and transforming the water sector.

"These strategic focus areas bolster the ongoing push for sustainable financing, positioning SRI Sukuk as a key instrument in achieving the country's long-term sustainability goals. Within this supportive framework, Malaysia's ecosystem is well-positioned to facilitate SRI sukuk issuances."

"Malaysia is also well-positioned to support the growth of the green sukuk market domestically and globally."

"Various efforts are now being undertaken by BNM and market participants to scale up green sukuk adoption and position the country as a gateway for Islamic finance," said BNM.

Meanwhile, BNM said it will continue to promote the issuance of green and SRI sukuk to meet the expanding financing needs in the renewable energy, biodiversity and public infrastructure projects, in line with the projects identified in the National Energy Transition Road.

Regionally, BNM said Malaysia has been instrumental in establishing the Asean Green Bond Standards, ensuring alignment with international best practices.

Through collaboration with Asean Capital Markets Forum, the country also supports efforts to enhance regional capital markets by focusing on sustainable finance, responsible investment and strengthening environmental, social and governance (ESG) disclosure frameworks. – Bernama

AmBank Group backs Nextgreen Global's growth

► Lender grants up to RM180 million of financing for Green Technology Park

PETALING JAYA: AmBank Group through AmBank Islamic Bhd has granted up to RM180 million of financing facilities to Ultimate Ivory Sdn Bhd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Nextgreen Global Bhd, to finance the land reclamation, infrastructure development, facilities and utilities works for Nextgreen's Green Technology Park (GTP) which spans over 410 acres of land in Kampung Paloh Hinai, Lepar, Pahang.

Known as one of the nation's pioneering leaders in the green technology industry, Nextgreen intends to transform its GTP into a globally recognised industrial park with patented breakthrough technologies in which they adopt a Bio-Integrated Zero Waste efficiency that fully converts the by-products from every production process into green products and renewable energy.

This technology also repurposes a substantial stockpile of oil palm biomass, mainly EFB (Empty Fruit Bunch) from being disposed of as

waste to becoming a primary feedstock for GTP's "green" paper pulp production.

Nextgreen's patented technology reduces the palm oil industry waste problems while minimising negative impact on the environment. It is a hybrid process that preserves the condition of EFB fibres for pulp and paper production, which was commercialised in 2022 and received certification from Sirim Eco Labelling and MyHijau in 2023.

The core technologies of GTP include the processing, manufacturing and generation of pulp and paper products, animal feed, organic fertilisers, renewable energy, and R&D activities. This will contribute towards mitigating climate change by reducing the dependence on

trees as a resource, saving approximately 255 million trees annually through its unique pulp mill technologies, in addition to reducing carbon, energy and water footprint. GTP will also reduce the country's reliance on imports of paper and paperboard, thus providing Malaysia with security towards paper supply source control. This business model, vision and objectives are clearly in tangent with AmBank Group's sustainability framework and ESG aspirations.

AmBank Group business banking managing director, Christopher Yap said: "We are proud to support Nextgreen Global Berhad as they embark on this milestone, cementing their position as one of the nation's pioneering leaders in the sustainable

industrial development.

"As Malaysia's green technology parks continue to emerge as a key driver of sustainable economic growth, we believe that the GTP will contribute towards attracting investments in renewable energy, circular economy practices, and low-carbon manufacturing. On this note, we look forward to the commencement of an ESG-driven banking relationship with Nextgreen Group, and the continuous expansion of our collaboration in both local and global markets."

Nextgreen Global managing director Datuk Lim Thiam Huat said they believe that the future of manufacturing lies in the circular economy, where agricultural waste is transformed into valuable resources to minimise environmental impact and foster innovation in green manufacturing.

With AmBank Group's unwavering partnership, he added, they are confident that their expansion will not only advance their sustainability goals but also propel the nation towards a greener and more resilient future.

Nextgreen Global is a Malaysian-based investment holding company founded in 1982 strategically positioned as a leading organisation in the Green Economy, with Ultimate Ivory specialising in developing the flagship Green Technology Park.

Circularity at Nextgreen is through creating and delivering innovative products and processes designed to minimise waste and improve resource efficiency as part of a truly circular economy, supported by responsible and sustainable business practices and strong collaboration with partners – local and abroad – across the value chain.



AmBank senior vice-president Foo Wen Pok and Nextgreen Global executive director Megan Lim signing the documents while (from left) AmBank commercial banking 2 head Patrick Chin, Yap; AmBank Islamic CEO Eghwan Mokhzanee and Lim look on.

Malaysia aims to close SME sustainability knowledge gap

■ BY **AIMIE SHAZRIE**
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PETALING JAYA: Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia continue to struggle with environmental, social and governance (ESG) adoption due to financial constraints, limited expertise and regulatory complexities.

ESG Malaysia president Steven Lee said the organisation is stepping up efforts to bridge this gap by providing SMEs with the necessary tools, training and resources to integrate sustainability into their business models.

"A key initiative is the development of an affordable online ESG reporting platform in partnership with the government. This platform will also simplify ESG tracking and reporting, making it easier for SMEs to comply with sustainability requirements."

"It reduces costs, time and effort

while ensuring accuracy and completeness for verification and assurance. The platform evaluates and rates ESG submissions, providing businesses with a performance score that enhances their reputation and competitiveness in global markets," he told *SunBiz*.

Beyond digital solutions, he noted that the organisation is also offering structured training on sustainability materiality reporting, carbon accounting, ESG risk management and impact assessments, adding that the sessions will help SMEs to bridge knowledge gaps and stay aligned with evolving sustainability standards.

He highlighted that lack of expertise remains a major roadblock for SMEs, preventing them from fully understanding and implementing ESG strategies.

"To address this, ESG Malaysia is fostering a strong network of sustainability professionals who can

guide businesses in adopting responsible practices.

"By equipping SMEs with ESG knowledge, we are ensuring they can navigate new regulations, access sustainable financing and meet investor expectations," Lee said.

He remarked that ESG adoption is becoming increasingly important as financial institutions and international investors prioritise sustainability compliance, businesses that fail to align with ESG principles risk losing funding opportunities and market access, particularly as global supply chains demand higher transparency and ethical sourcing.

Despite Malaysia's progress in sustainable finance, he said smaller businesses still face hurdles in securing ESG-linked financing.

"Many struggle to meet eligibility criteria for green loans, sustainability-linked bonds and responsible investment funds. SMEs

often view ESG as an additional financial burden rather than a long-term investment.

"High costs associated with ESG assessments, carbon emissions tracking and supply chain audits deter many from pursuing sustainability initiatives."

"Without financial support and capacity-building programmes, SMEs will find it difficult to transition towards ESG compliance," Lee said, adding that greater incentives from policymakers are needed to encourage wider adoption.

Furthermore, he remarked that Malaysia has been proactive in introducing sustainability regulations, like the National ESG Strategic Plan (NESP) and the National Sustainability Reporting Framework (NSRF), but many SMEs remain unfamiliar with these frameworks or lack the expertise to implement them effectively.

In response, he said that ESG Malaysia is advocating for clearer regulatory guidelines and structured roadmaps to help SMEs gradually integrate ESG principles into their operations.

"Market-based incentives could also accelerate adoption, such as rewarding businesses with strong ESG performance through preferential treatment in government procurement contracts and export support," he added.

He noted that public-private partnerships have the potential to drive ESG innovation, with collaboration between the government, businesses that embed sustainability into their operations will gain a competitive edge.

"SMEs are the backbone of the nation's economy and ensuring they are ESG-ready is crucial for the country's long-term sustainability goals," Lee said.



■ BY HAYATUN RAZAK
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KUALA LUMPUR: There is a need to ramp up promotion of Malaysia's halal-certified products, as they still lack global penetration despite having gained recognition worldwide.

Malaysian Technology Development Corporation (MTDC) group CEO Mohammad Hazani Hassan said that despite years of promoting halal products, overseas market penetration remains low, with few local companies expanding abroad.

"One of the key challenges is scaling up production and securing the right international partners," he told reporters at the soft launch of Sirehmas Pharma Sdn Bhd's new products, Dr Kengo's Euglena Royal Algae Drink and Euglena Collagen Shot yesterday.

Mohammad Hazani said MTDC has proposed the expansion of the halal programme under the 13th Malaysia Plan, emphasising the need for stronger government support to help local businesses grow and compete in the global halal market.

The next step, he added, is to promote Malaysian halal products to the global market, adding that more needs to be done to effectively support local companies in

Need to ramp up promotion of Malaysian halal products

► Penetration of global market still low despite gaining recognition internationally: MTDC CEO

expanding internationally.

"Malaysia has an abundance of halal food products, but many of them remain confined to the domestic market."

With proper promotion, support and facilitation, the government and relevant agencies have the potential to help more local companies break into international markets and strengthen Malaysia's presence in the global halal industry, Mohammad Hazani said.

"We already have good technology locally, but if we combine efforts, I believe we can achieve better results."

Mohammad Hazani said that

within MTDC's ecosystem, there are currently more than 200 companies receiving a range of support services, including funding, advisory assistance, and market facilitation to help them grow and scale.

"For halal, we currently have around 16 companies that are part of MTDC's dedicated halal ecosystem," he added.

These companies focus on producing halal-certified products across various sectors – including food, health supplements, pharmaceuticals and cosmetics – and are being actively nurtured with the goal of expanding into inter-

national markets.

"We provide internal support, including marketing and financial advisory. At times, we assess a company's development to identify how we can help them expand into new markets," Mohammad Hazani said.

MTDC is actively connecting its halal-focused businesses with other companies in its ecosystem to complement each other's strengths. "Some have strong processes but no products, while others have products but lack a go-to-market strategy. So, we bridge that gap – that's why collaboration is key," he added.

Mohammad Hazani said MTDC will bring seven companies to an expo in Osaka, Japan, and plans to bring more to another in South Korea later this year. "If we go alone, it's a missed opportunity. But if we go together, we can amplify our presence and show

the world what Malaysian companies are capable of."

Dr Kengo's Euglena Royal Algae Drink and Euglena Collagen Shot were products developed through a strategic partnership between Sirehmas Pharma Sdn Bhd (Malaysia) and Euglena Co Ltd (Japan).

The two new products mark the official entry of Euglena-based nutrition into the Malaysian consumer market.

Euglena – a microalga researched in Japan – is celebrated for its 59 types of essential nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, proteins and the unique compound paramylon, known for its immune-boosting and detoxifying properties.

The launch was attended by representatives from Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation, MTDC and SME Bank.

F&N AgriValley welcomes 2,500 dairy cattle from Chile

PETALING JAYA: Following a successful trial run, Fraser & Neave Holdings Bhd (F&N) has marked a key milestone with the arrival of the first commercial batch of 2,500 dairy heifers from Chile at its integrated dairy farm in Gemas, Negeri Sembilan.

This came shortly after Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun's visit to F&N AgriValley on April 11.

F&N CEO Lim Yew Hoe said the arrival of the batch of heifers represents a historic milestone, marking the country's largest-ever single importation of breeding cattle and paving the way for Malaysia's dairy future.

"This also signifies Malaysia's inaugural cattle import from Chile. These Chilean Holstein cattle have been genomically tested and have a Genomic Total Performance Index that is on par with the performance standards of the heifers we had originally planned to import from the US," Lim said.

The cattle were transported from Santiago, Chile, on a livestock carrier through a meticulously planned voyage.

F&N managing director of agriculture and dairy farming Dr Yap Peng Kang said that, throughout the journey, the cattle were under the care of specialised livestock handlers who ensured the animals' well-being by monitoring their health, nutrition and comfort onboard.

"The vessel was fitted with the recommended levels of ventilation and an ample supply of feed and water to minimise stress and maintain optimal transit conditions for the cattle," he said.

Upon arrival at Pasir Gudang in Johor, the cattle were safely unloaded and transported to their new home in F&N AgriValley within three days.

Dr Yap highlighted the critical support of key agencies in Pasir Gudang.

"We extend our sincere gratitude to the Royal Malaysian Customs Department, the Royal Malaysian Police, Johor Port Bhd and all other relevant authorities who ensured the safe passage and seamless transition of the livestock to F&N AgriValley.

"The Department of Veterinary Services



Some of the dairy heifers from Chile being unloaded from the vessel, bound for F&N's integrated dairy farm in Gemas, Negeri Sembilan.

ensured the imported heifers met Malaysia's strict biosecurity standards through rigorous health certification and disease prevention measures," he said.

Dr Yap also said the Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services facilitated the smooth importation process, ensuring full compliance with import regulations.

Their combined expertise has been instrumental in safeguarding the health of the heifers and the success of this importation effort, he said.

"In upholding our commitment to stringent livestock health and biosecurity standards, the cattle are healthy and will now undergo a mandatory quarantine period. The cattle will be housed at the largest on-site quarantine facilities in the country for a single livestock batch.

"The cattle are housed within F&N AgriValley in state-of-the-art barns equipped with an intelligent environmental control system to provide optimum comfort for our livestock," Dr Yap said.

Cagamas raises RM10.7b in Q1'25, over 3 times that in first-quarter 2024

PETALING JAYA: Cagamas Bhd, the National Mortgage Corporation of Malaysia, raised RM10.74 billion in funding in the first quarter of 2025 (Q1'25), reinforcing its commitment to supporting home ownership and to facilitate the growth of Malaysia's secondary mortgage market.

This marks a significant increase compared to the RM3.1 billion raised in the same quarter in 2024.

The Q1'25 issuances were supported by robust demand from both local and international investors, who continued to demonstrate their confidence in Cagamas' credit profile and its bonds and sukuk.

Notably, Cagamas was the top sukuk issuer in the Q1'25 Malaysian sukuk market, raising RM7.73 billion in sukuk issuance, further highlighting the company's leadership in the Islamic finance space.

The funds raised comprised a diversified mix of instruments, including Islamic and conventional debt securities, of which RM7.85 billion was derived from local currency issuances, RM1.5 billion equivalent from foreign currency issuances, and the remaining RM1.39 billion from other funding sources.

Cagamas president and CEO Kameel Abdul Halim said the agency is extremely pleased with the strong demand for its issuances in Q1'25.

"This achievement demonstrates both the resilience of Cagamas and the sustained investor confidence in our funding activities. It also underscores our ongoing role in providing liquidity to Malaysia's mortgage market.

"While global market volatility has intensified following the recent US tariff announcement, Cagamas remains committed to a prudent and agile funding approach, which allows us to navigate volatile conditions effectively. We will continue to monitor global developments closely while maintaining market resilience in supporting the Malaysian housing finance system," he said.



From left: Ide, Muhammad Azmi, Miyata, Japan's ambassador Malaysia Noriaki Shikata, Modec group chief operating officer Katsuyuki Imaizumi and Toyo Engineering Corporation executive officer Katsumi Hashimoto at the launch of Modec's centre in Kuala Lumpur.

Modec opens regional execution centre in KL

BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
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KUALA LUMPUR: Japanese offshore engineering giant Modec Inc plans to quadruple its Malaysian workforce from nearly 200 to more than 800 in the coming years with the launch of its regional execution centre in Kuala Lumpur.

The move marks a major investment in Malaysia's engineering and energy services sector, reinforcing Modec's long-term commitment to the country as a strategic base for global operations.

The new five-storey facility, located in the heart of the capital will serve as the company's regional hub for engineering, procurement, construction, and installation project management.

Modec Malaysia director and head of floating production solutions Soichi Ide said the goal is to build a strong foundation for sustainable growth in Malaysia and the wider region.

"By establishing our presence here, we are creating high-value jobs, fostering knowledge transfer, and empowering the local workforce," he said at the launch of Modec Kuala Lumpur Execution Centre yesterday.

He said the new centre will oversee detailed engineering, hull construction, offshore installation, and commissioning activities,

► Japanese oil and gas floating production systems and offshore solutions specialist to quadruple Malaysian workforce in coming years

supporting not only Malaysian operations but also projects in India, China, Vietnam, Brazil, Singapore, Japan and the United States.

"It will also drive Modec's efforts in front-end engineering design, research and development, digital development and global project proposals," Ide said.

Modec president and CEO Hirohiko Miyata said the decision reflects confidence in Malaysia's position as a competitive hub for innovation and energy services. "With the FPSO industry poised for growth over the coming decades, this center will drive innovation, enhance our execution capabilities and strengthen our regional presence."

The centre's opening was officiated by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories), Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa, who hailed the investment as a key boost to the Madani Economic Framework.

"Modec's presence is a clear indicator of Malaysia's progress towards becoming an

economic leader in Asia," she said.

The expansion also drew praise from InvestKL CEO Datuk Muhammad Azmi Zulkifli.

He said the centre would support the country's shift towards technology-driven activities and long-term talent upskilling, adding that this is the kind of impactful investment that contributes to our vision of economic transformation.

The Kuala Lumpur hub will kick off operations with the FPSO *Gato do Mato* project for Shell Brasil Petróleo Ltda, which includes a 20-year operations and maintenance contract.

Project manager Raghava Venkateshwara said the launch in Kuala Lumpur represents 'an exciting opportunity' to lead Modec's first major project from Malaysia.

Listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, Modec is a global provider of floating production systems and offshore solutions for the oil and gas industry.

MSB Global unveils plans for EV charger, lubricant manufacturing

KUALA LUMPUR: MSB Global Group Bhd is accelerating its diversification efforts, with plans to launch an in-house electric vehicle (EV) charger brand by the second quarter of 2025, while also preparing to transition from a trading-based business to a lubricant manufacturer.

Executive director Ow Chen Lun said the group's entry into the EV space is a strategic move to future-proof the business and gain early exposure in the growing clean mobility market.

"We want to have a footprint in the EV market early ... If the market shifts from combustion to EV, we will already have our name in the industry," he said during a virtual press conference following the company's debut on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia, here yesterday.

The group is allocating RM830,000, or 3.14% of the RM26.6 million raised from its initial public offering (IPO), to fund the rollout of its in-house EV charger brand.

He said MSB Global is also planning to build its own automotive lubricant blending plant, aiming to capture untapped market opportunities and enhance cost efficiency. "Currently, our market share in automotive lubricants is less than 0.1%, and there is huge potential to grow," he added.

Meanwhile, Ow said that the shift into manufacturing is expected to improve MSB Global's margins and reinforce its branding efforts, paving the way for stronger revenue and profit growth in the medium term.

With these multi-pronged strategies, MSB is confident of significantly strengthening its market position over the next three to five years, he said.

MSB Global is the exclusive distributor of GSP-brand automotive parts and components in Malaysia, supplying a comprehensive range of high-quality aftermarket products, including drivshafts, wheel hub assemblies, suspension parts, steering racks, and more, ensuring durability and reliability for customers.

M&A Securities Sdn Bhd is the principal adviser, sponsor, underwriter and placement agent for the IPO. — Bernama

Maybank IB is underwriter for Eco-Shop Marketing's Main Market IPO

KUALA LUMPUR: Eco-Shop Marketing Bhd has signed an underwriting agreement with Maybank Investment Bank Bhd (IB) for its planned listing on the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia.

Eco-Shop said in a statement yesterday that its initial public offering (IPO) entails up to 862.146 million shares, comprising an institutional offering of up to 675.368 million shares and a retail offering of 186.778 million shares.

CEO and executive director Jessica Ng said the IPO will not only enhance the company's financial position but also strengthen its ability to capture the vast opportunities in Malaysia's thriving value retail market.

"The demand for affordable, high-quality products remains robust, and this listing will raise proceeds to accelerate store expansion, expand distribution capabilities, and invest in information

technology, among other initiatives.

"Positioned to capitalise on the growing dollar store retail sector in Malaysia, Eco-Shop plans to continue its expansion, particularly in suburban and rural areas, aiming to open about 70 new stores per year over the next five years," she said.

The company said Eco-Shop offers a wide range of products at compelling value, including third-party and house-brand products.

"The underpenetrated Malaysian dollar store segment presents robust growth opportunities, with significant potential as consumers increasingly demand affordability and convenience," the company said.

Maybank IB is Eco-Shop's IPO principal adviser, joint global coordinator, joint book-runner and sole underwriter. — Bernama



From left: Eco-Shop Marketing chief human resource officer Ng Siew Yen, chief financial officer Chong Yew Kai and Jessica Ng, Maybank Investment Bank Group CEO and Maybank Investment Bank Bhd CEO Michael Oh-Lau, and Maybank Investment Bank managing director and regional head of equity capital markets Raymond Chooi at the underwriting agreement signing ceremony.

Boost for Malaysian **space** industry

► Pahang state agency, China Great Wall Industry, Lestari Angkasa to explore initiatives

KUALA LUMPUR: The Pahang State Economic Development Corporation (PKNP), China Great Wall Industry Corporation (CGWIC), and Lestari Angkasa Sdn Bhd signed a letter of intent (LoI) to explore strategic cooperation in the development of space initiatives in Malaysia.

This landmark partnership marks a pivotal step forward in positioning Malaysia as a regional hub for space technology and innovation.

Subject to the necessary approvals from relevant authorities, the LoI lays the foundation for a powerful tripartite collaboration focused on building Malaysia's launch capabilities, expanding commercial space services, and driving technology transfer and investment across the aerospace ecosystem.

LBS Bhd group executive chairman Tan Sri Ir (Dr) Lim Hock San said the signing of this LoI is more than just a symbolic gesture.

"It is a shared commitment to advancing the frontiers of science and technology for mutual growth.

"This signing will serve as a platform to embark on a new business venture, reflecting our collective vision to drive innovation, economic development, and cross-border collaboration within the space industry," he said in a statement.

Together with Lim, the signing of the LoI was witnessed by the Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Wan Rosdy Wan Ismail, Pahang Investment, Industries, Science, Technology and Innovation Committee chairman Datuk Mohamad Nizar Mohamad Najib, along with officials from CGWIC.

Their presence underscored the importance and national significance of this strategic collaboration.

Under the LoI, the parties have agreed to work together on the following key areas, namely to explore launch capabilities in the form of "Sea Launch" at this stage, so as to assist Malaysia in achieving launch capabilities in the shortest period of time and other possibilities of mutual interest.

It is also aimed to provide launch services for both domestic and neighbouring countries and enhance Malaysia's aerospace industry chain.

CGWIC is willing to offer technical solutions and related consultancy services to the government, and together with PKNP and Lestari Angkasa, the parties will carry out specific projects under an agreed framework.

This cooperation represents a win-win strategy for all parties involved. Malaysia stands to gain cutting-



Wan Rosdy (third from left), together with Mohamad Nizar (third from right) and Lim (second from right), at the signing ceremony.

edge technology, infrastructure development, job creation, and the upskilling of local talent.

For CGWIC, this partnership enhances its footprint in Southeast Asia, while PKNP and Lestari Angkasa solidify their roles as key enablers in Malaysia's growing space ecosystem.

PKNP, as the representative of the Pahang state government, will give full support and cooperation in coordinating all necessary approvals from the local state authorities to realise the project.

This project reflects the Pahang state government's efforts to support the national agenda in the field of space technology in line with the National Space Policy 2030.

"Today's ceremony is highly meaningful, serving as a strong indicator of the significance and commitment towards the implementation of this development proposal.

"We hope that the project will be successfully carried out and will bring substantial benefits to the state of

Pahang and Malaysia – particularly in the areas of land use development, economic growth, scientific and technological advancement, and the enhancement of the tourism sector – as the first hub of its kind in Southeast Asia," PKNP CEO Datuk Mohd Faizal Jaafar said.

With this collaborative framework now in place, the parties will proceed with detailed discussions to formalize a definitive agreement that outlines the specific terms and timelines for implementation.

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Chinese exporters say US markets are 'frozen'

► Firms race to find new buyers, assemble goods elsewhere

GUANGZHOU: Candice Li says that after Washington raised tariffs on Chinese goods by 145%, US orders for the medical devices her firm is making have vanished.

"It's a matter of life and death because 60-70% of our business is with American clients," said Li, marketing manager of Conmo Electronic Co.

"Goods cannot be exported and money cannot be collected. This is very severe."

Li was at her firm's booth at the Canton Fair, China's biggest trade expo held twice-a-year in the southern city of Guangzhou, where more than 30,000 exhibitors showcase their products over an area larger than 200 football fields.

This was the first such fair China has held since US President Donald Trump slapped tariffs in excess of 100% on China and of at least 10% on the rest of the world earlier this month.

Most exporters Reuters spoke with said US orders, which for firms like Li's are vital, have either been delayed or stopped coming – a bad sign for the

world's second-largest economy, whose growth last year relied heavily on running a trillion-dollar trade surplus.

No other country comes close to matching China's sales of more than US\$400 billion (RM1.7 trillion) in goods to the US each year.

And while Trump's tariffs on the rest of the world are much lower, they are likely to curb global demand in coming months – and implicitly, the appetite for Chinese goods in other countries.

Kobe Huang, sales representative at Shenzhen Landun Environmental Technology, which makes water filters and smart toilets, says that for now, European sales are up, but the US market is "frozen."

US customers and distributors have not cancelled orders, he said. "They have asked us to hold on. We are holding on."

US importer Levy Spence, president of Air Essentials, was browsing for the scented products on offer at the fair, but had no particular plan for purchases, because "every day I wake up, I feel like it's a different tariff."

"Prices are going to go up."

"Even for the stuff that we source in the US, a lot of the raw materials are sourced from around the world. It's not just the China tariffs."

Organisers said about 170,000 overseas buyers had registered as of April 8 for this month's fair, compared with a record final attendance of 253,000 at the previous edition, which concluded in November.

About 10% of those were from the US and Europe, down from roughly 20% last time.

The fair takes place April 15-May 5. Deals at the previous edition totalled US\$25 billion, local media said.

Many exporters said they have been either diversifying their production bases outside China, or the markets they sell to, away from the United States.

Henry Han, sales manager at Apex Electronics Co, which makes SSD and micro SD flash drives, says the US market only accounts for 10% of direct sales, down from 30% before the pandemic.

Many of their customers take shipments of components for final assembly in a third country to avoid the tariffs.

Apexco undertook a study last year to see if it can shift production to Vietnam or the Philippines to avoid direct impact from US tariffs, but Han said these plans were now on ice because these countries may also face high levies.

Trump, on April 2, slapped a 46%

tariff on Vietnam and 17% levy on the Philippines before paring those back to 10% for the next three months as he begins bilateral negotiations on trade with about 75 different countries.

Sales manager David Du, from speaker maker Zealot, said an order from Skechers for 30,000 speakers to be distributed to their US stores was put on hold after Trump's tariffs.

But he said he can rely on other markets.

Zealot got a big and unexpected break in 2015, when an all-in-one speaker, power bank and emergency flashlight became a hit in Nigeria, now a market twice as big as the US, accounting for 40% of total sales and taking in 45 containers monthly.

"We are as big as JBL" in Nigeria, Du said, referring to the Californian audio equipment brand.

Li, from the medical devices maker, said her firm cannot find new markets overnight.

She fears Conmo will soon have to cut working hours, and eventually, staffing levels.

"I worry that if the situation remains deadlocked, and neither side gives in, the ones who will ultimately suffer are the ordinary people."

"How will their salaries be paid? There will be unemployment." – Reuters

Zhipu AI takes initial steps to IPO

BEIJING: Chinese artificial intelligence startup Zhipu AI has initiated preliminary steps toward an initial public offering, aiming to become the first of China's emerging AI companies to go public.

Founded in 2019 as a Tsinghua University spinoff, Zhipu AI has emerged among China's front-runners in the artificial intelligence race, alongside AI-focused startups Moonshot AI, Minimax, 01.AI, Baichuan, and StepFun, while also competing with tech giants such as ByteDance and Alibaba in the sector.

The firm attracted attention earlier this year after securing three rounds of state-backed funding within weeks.

Its latest financing included a 300 million yuan (RM183 million) investment from Chengdu's municipal government.

Zhipu AI, developer of the GLM series of language models, claims its flagship GLM4 model surpasses OpenAI's GPT-4 on several performance benchmarks.

The company announced yesterday it would open-source its GLM series models, namely the 32B and 9B versions. Its GLM-Z1-32B-0414 model matches the performance of rival product DeepSeek-R1 at one-third of the operational cost, according to a company statement.

Zhipu AI is controlled by Tang Jie and Liu Debing, with Tang directly holding a 7.4% equity stake in the company, according to the regulatory filing.

China International Capital Corporation will act as the IPO sponsor, according to a filing posted on the China Securities Regulatory Commission website. – Reuters

South Korea plans extra US\$5b help for chipmakers

SEOUL: South Korea yesterday announced plans to invest almost US\$5 billion (RM22 billion) extra in the country's semiconductor industry, citing "growing uncertainty" over US tariffs.

The country is a major exporter to the United States and its powerhouse chip and auto industries would suffer a hefty hit from President Donald Trump's threatened 25% levies.

Concerns about the sector have hammered the Seoul-listed shares of the world's largest memory chip maker Samsung, and largest memory chip supplier SK Hynix.

Officials have now stepped up to provide more cover for the economically crucial industry by announcing an extra US\$4.9 billion will be pumped into it through 2026.

"An aggressive fiscal investment plan has been devised to help local firms navigate mounting challenges in the global semiconductor race", the Finance Ministry said in a press release.

It warned "growing uncertainty" following rounds of US tariff threats had left the sector damouring for government support.

"To foster a dynamic, private sector-led ecosystem for semiconductor innovation and growth, the government will increase its investment in the sector from 26 trillion won (RM80 billion) to 33 trillion won," the ministry said.

Trump announced on his April 2

"Liberation Day" sweeping tariffs on its global trading partners, including the 25% on South Korean goods, before backtracking and suspending their implementation for 90 days.

Even so, "duties targeting specific sectors such as semiconductors and pharmaceuticals, remain on the horizon", Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok said during a meeting.

"This grace period offers a crucial window to strengthen the competitiveness of South Korean companies amid intensifying global trade tensions."

"The government plans to expand support for the semiconductor industry, allocating 33 trillion won, with over four trillion won in fiscal spending set to be injected through 2026."

The package includes funding for infrastructure development, including underground transmission lines at semiconductor clusters that are currently being built.

"The government will boldly support investment by semiconductor companies," said Choi, adding that the package included securing talent for the industry.

The investment is part of a revised supplementary budget proposal of 12 trillion won, and is required to be passed by the National Assembly.

"Unlike automobiles, which are already subject to tariffs, semiconductors are unique in that the US lacks viable substitutes," said Sejong University professor Kim Dae-jong. – AFP



A CATL sign outside its headquarters in Ningde. – REUTERS/PIIC

EV battery giant CATL posts 33% surge in Q1 profit

BEIJING: The world's leading maker of electric vehicle batteries, Chinese firm CATL, posted a 32.9% jump in first quarter profit, even as demand for electric vehicles slows.

The firm produces more than a third of all electric vehicle (EV) batteries sold worldwide, cooperating with major brands including Tesla, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Volkswagen.

Founded in 2011 in the eastern Chinese city of Ningde, Contemporary Amperex Technology Co Ltd (CATL) was initially propelled to success by rapid growth in the domestic market.

Net profit in the first quarter was up 32.9% year-on-year to 13.96 billion

yuan (RM8.4 billion), according to a statement CATL released on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange on Monday.

During the same period, CATL's sales rose by 6.2% year-on-year to 84.7 billion yuan, the filing showed.

CATL has been aided by strong financial support from Beijing, which has sought in recent years to shore up domestic strength in certain strategic high-tech sectors.

But following years of rapid growth, the world's largest EV market is showing signs of flagging sales in the face of a broader slowdown in consumption.

CATL warned in January that its slide in sales last year was likely due to a "decline in the prices of raw materials such as lithium carbonate", which had forced the firm to adjust prices.

Last year saw lithium prices fall significantly, partly due to market oversupply and weaker consumer demand for EVs.

The trends have fuelled a fierce price war in the country's expansive EV sector, putting smaller firms under huge pressure to compete while remaining financially viable.

CATL is building its second factory in Hungary after launching its first in Germany in January 2023. – AFP

Goldman Sachs profit rises on strong equity trading results

NEW YORK: Goldman Sachs reported on Monday higher first-quarter profit on strength in equity trading, offsetting a hit from losses in investments on public stock markets.

The investment giant reported US\$4.6 billion (RM20 billion) in profit to common shareholders, 16.6% above the year-ago level in results that topped analyst expectations.

Revenue was US\$15.1 billion, up 6%.

Chief executive David Solomon said the Wall Street heavyweight was sticking close to its powerful client base as the Trump administration's constantly changing trade policy reverberates through markets and weakens the near-term US growth outlook.

"I know there is a higher level of uncertainty, but at the same point, clients are active," Solomon said on a conference call with analysts.

"People are shifting positions, and we still see significant activity levels."

The forecasts from Goldman Sachs economists for US growth have "fallen meaningfully," said Solomon, who said the chance of a recession "has increased."

"How policies will evolve is still unknown," Solomon said.

"We're hopeful that feedback from companies, large and small, institutional investors and ultimately, consumers, support an approach that will lead to greater economic certainty and long term growth."

Revenue tied to equity trading soared 27% from the year-ago level, with Goldman benefiting from strong demand for its services to facilitate trading and providing financing to clients trading stocks.

The bank said its advisory revenue was significantly lower than in the year-ago period. - AFP

Nvidia to build supercomputer chips entirely in US for first time

SAN FRANCISCO: Nvidia on Monday announced plans to build top-end artificial intelligence supercomputer chips entirely in the US for the first time.

Supercomputer plants are being built in Texas in partnerships with Foxconn and Wistron, with manufacturing expected to ramp up over the course of the next 12 to 15 months, according to the company.

TSMC plants in Arizona have already started production of Nvidia's most advanced graphics processing unit (GPU), called Blackwell, Nvidia added.

"The engines of the world's AI infrastructure are being built in the US for the first time," Nvidia chief executive Jensen Huang said in the blog post.

"Adding American manufacturing helps us better meet the incredible and growing demand for AI chips and supercomputers, strengthens our supply chain and boosts our resiliency."

Nvidia plans to produce as much as half a trillion dollars worth of AI infrastructure in the US by the end of this decade through partnerships with TSMC, Foxconn, Wistron, Amkor and SPIL.

"Onshoring these industries is good for the American worker, good for the American economy, and good for American national security," the White House said in a statement. - AFP

Stocks rise as stability returns, auto firms surge

HONG KONG: Equities mostly rose yesterday as some stability returned to markets after last week's rollercoaster ride, with auto firms boosted by Donald Trump's possible compromise over steep tariffs on the sector.

However, the American president's unorthodox approach to trade diplomacy continues to fuel uncertainty among investors, with speculation over new levies on high-end technology and pharmaceuticals dampening sentiment.

The announcement last week of exemptions for smartphones, laptops, semiconductors and other electronics - all key Chinese-made products - provided a little comfort, though Trump's suggestion they would be temporary tempered the optimism.

Traders gave a muted reaction to Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent's remarks Monday that a China-US

➤ American Treasury chief holds out hope for 'big deal' with China

deal could be done in an apparent olive branch as the two economic powerhouses trade tariff threats.

His comments came as Trump has hammered China with duties of up to 145%, while Beijing has imposed retaliatory measures of 125%.

"There's a big deal to be done at some point," Bessent said when asked by Bloomberg TV about the possibility that the world's largest economies would decouple.

"There doesn't have to be" decoupling, he said, "but there could be".

Meanwhile, US National Economic Council director Kevin Hassett said the White House had received "more than 10 deals where

there's very, very good, amazing offers made to us", but did not specify from which countries they came.

After a broadly positive day on Wall Street, Asian markets pushed higher.

Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Taipei, Mumbai, Manila and Jakarta all rallied, with London and Frankfurt also climbing but Paris edged down.

The gains were boosted by a rally in autos after Trump said he was "very flexible" and "looking at something to help some of the car companies" hit by his 25% tariff on all imports.

In Asia, Toyota jumped 3.7% and

Hyundai jumped more than 4%, while in Europe Stellantis - maker of Peugeot, Jeep and Fiat - surged 5% in Milan and Volkswagen piled on close to 3%.

Federal Reserve governor Christopher Waller provided some support to markets after suggesting he would back the central bank to cut interest rates to help the economy, instead of focusing on higher inflation.

However, OANDA senior market analyst Kelvin Wong warned central bankers would face some tough choices.

"Combination of slowing growth and persistent inflation, hallmarks of a stagflation environment, poses a significant challenge for the US Federal Reserve, which may find it increasingly difficult to implement counter-cyclical monetary policies to support the economy," he said in a commentary. - AFP



A man looking at an electronic board showing the numbers of morning trading on the Tokyo Stock Exchange along a street in Tokyo yesterday. - AFP/IC

US may need bigger rate cut if tariffs persist: Fed official

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve may need to make a bigger-than-expected interest rate cut if President Donald Trump keeps large tariffs in place for an extended period, a top Fed official warned on Monday.

Trump unveiled sweeping tariffs in early April against most US trading partners in a bid to address practices that Washington deems unfair, including a 10% global levy and higher country-specific rates, especially on China.

The higher rates on countries other than China have been paused for 90 days but would have bumped

the effective average US tariff rate to 25%.

Even with the pause, the overall average still remains around 25% due to the high tariff rates imposed on Chinese goods.

If this level is maintained for some time, "economic growth is likely to slow to a crawl and significantly raise the unemployment rate", Federal Reserve governor Christopher Waller told an event in Missouri, according to a copy of his prepared remarks.

Waller expects elevated inflation "would be temporary", but noted that it could go as high as five percent in the near-term,

and said the effects "on output and employment could be longer lasting."

"If the slowdown is significant and even threatens a recession, then I would expect to favour cutting the FOMC's policy rate sooner, and to a greater extent than I had previously thought," the governor said, referring to the Fed's rate-setting committee.

He added that with a rapidly slowing economy in this scenario, the risk of recession would likely outweigh the risk of escalating inflation.

The American central bank has

held interest rates steady at 4.25% to 4.5% since the start of this year.

On Friday, the Trump administration temporarily excluded products such as smartphones, laptops and chip-making equipment from the "reciprocal tariffs," providing a reprieve from the 10% global rate and the 125% levy on goods from China.

But many others remain, including an earlier 20% tariff on imports from China over its alleged role in the fentanyl supply chain, and levies on steel and aluminum imports. - AFP



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People walking outside the Bank of England building in London. – REUTERS/PIC

UK employers cut jobs in run-up to tax hike

➤ Vacancies below pre-pandemic levels for first time since 2021

LONDON: Britain's labour market weakened before this month's tax hike on employers, data showed yesterday, but wage growth remained strong, complicating the job for the Bank of England (BoE), which is also expecting an economic hit from US trade tariffs.

Vacancies fell below their pre-Covid pandemic level for the first time in almost four years in the first three months of 2025, the Office for National Statistics said.

Provisional data given by employers to the tax authorities showed the number of employees fell by 78,000 in March. That was the biggest drop since early in the pandemic in 2020 although the numbers are often revised.

February's figure was updated to show a drop of 8,000 compared with a previous estimate of a 21,000 gain.

Sanjay Raja, Deutsche Bank's chief UK

economist, said the softening in the jobs market would outweigh Britain's still-fast pace of pay growth for the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee.

"Big picture, the MPC has the green light to cut Bank Rate in May," Raja said.

"Trade uncertainty remains rife. And slack in the labour market is emerging."

Investors were pricing a more than 90% probability on the BoE cutting rates by a quarter of a percentage point on May 8, after its next scheduled meeting.

US President Donald Trump's tariff onslaught is expected to slow the world economy, hurting Britain alongside the direct impact of new American duties applied to its exports.

Yael Selfin, chief economist at KPMG UK, said the rise in labour costs in April – when Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves' increase in social security contributions came into effect – was likely to slow pay growth soon.

Britain's minimum wage also went up by almost 7% this month, which could weigh on hiring plans.

The BoE is trying to gauge whether inflation pressures in the labour market are easing

sufficiently for it to continue cutting interest rates.

Official figures due today are expected to show consumer price inflation of 2.7% in the 12 months to March.

That would be a slowdown from 2.8% in February but it would be above the BoE's 2% target and the central bank has said it expects inflation to hit almost 4% later this year.

The ONS said average weekly earnings, excluding bonuses, rose by 5.9% in the three months to February compared with the same period a year earlier, faster than a revised 5.8% increase in the three months to January.

Private-sector pay excluding bonuses – a gauge of domestic inflation pressure watched closely by the BoE – rose by 5.9%, compared with the same period a year earlier, unchanged from the pace in the three months to January.

A Reuters poll of economists had pointed to slightly stronger growth of 6.0% in both measures of basic pay.

The ONS said Britain's unemployment rate, which is based on a survey that the agency is overhauling and is no longer considered an accurate gauge of the jobs market, held at 4.4%. – Reuters

Ericsson profit rises but 'not immune' from trade war

STOCKHOLM: Swedish telecommunications equipment giant Ericsson posted a jump in first-quarter net profit yesterday as North American sales soared ahead of tariffs, but warned it was not "immune" from the trade war.

Ericsson said its profit after tax reached 4.2 billion kroner (RM1.9 billion) in the first three months of the year, surging 61% compared to the same period in 2024.

Sales rose 3% to 55 billion kroner, slightly lower than forecast by analysts surveyed by Bloomberg.

It sales in the Americas region surged 20%, offsetting declines in other parts of the world, the company said in its quarterly earnings statement.

"In North America, sales in Networks grew strongly, benefiting from previous contract wins and accelerated network investments by other customers, in part reflecting tariff uncertainty," Ericsson said.

North America is a key market for Ericsson, accounting for almost a third of its revenue.

US President Donald Trump implemented a tariff of 10% on global imports this month, but he paused plans for higher duties on dozens of countries, including a 20% duty for goods from EU nations.

"In the evolving global trade landscape and macro volatility, we continue to focus on controlling what we can control and delivering to our customers," Ericsson chief executive Borje Ekholm said.

"We are not immune, but we are resilient, with well diversified production close to the customer and the flexibility to adapt to changing conditions over time," he said. – AFP

India's wholesale inflation slows to four-month low

NEW DELHI: India's wholesale inflation eased to a four-month low in March as food prices rose at a slower pace, according to government data released yesterday.

Wholesale inflation, a proxy for producer prices, fell to 2.05% year-on-year from 2.38% in February, and was lower than the 2.5% projected by economists in a Reuters poll.

Wholesale food prices rose slowly at 4.66% in March against 5.94% in February.

Vegetable prices fell 15.88%, compared to a 5.80% drop in the prior month.

Food prices in the wholesale markets have eased in recent months as vegetable output improved.

Last week, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut its key repo rate for a second consecutive time this year, while also lowering India's growth forecast for the current year to 6.5%.

The RBI, however, warned that lingering global market uncertainties and the recurrence of adverse weather-related supply disruptions pose upside risks to the inflation trajectory.

India's weather office is set to forecast this year's monsoon later this week, followed by March retail inflation data.

Cereal prices in the wholesale markets rose 5.49% in March, against a 6.77% rise a month earlier, the data showed.

Prices of manufactured products, which account for about 64% of the wholesale price index, increased 3.07% after rising 2.86% rise in February.

Meanwhile, fuel and power prices rose 0.20% year-on-year, compared with a 0.71% drop in the previous month. – Reuters

LVMH sales dip as Trump tariffs dent luxury tastes

PARIS: Luxury giant LVMH saw sales fall 2% to €20.3 billion (RM101 billion) in the first quarter of 2025 as US President Donald Trump's tariffs shook the global economy, the company said on Monday.

The producer of Louis Vuitton bags and Dom Perignon champagne, owned by Europe's richest man Bernard Arnault, generates a quarter of its revenue in the United States.

Despite putting up decent numbers in

fashion, watches and jewellery in the country, LVMH saw a "slight decline" in overall US sales, the firm said in a statement – without giving a figure for that fall.

"We all need to ... stay very calm because we are in unknown territories," LVMH's chief financial officer Cecile Cabanis told analysts.

"The worst is never certain." Arnault acknowledged that LVMH had been "heavily solicited" to step up its production presence in the United States and

this was being "seriously considered".

Since tariffs were announced by Trump however, French President Emmanuel Macron has called on French businesses to suspend investment in the United States.

Cabanis said that the group could step up production of Louis Vuitton and Tiffany goods in the United States, where about a third of demand was locally produced.

But she indicated there could also be price increases for consumers. – AFP

MARKET ROUND-UP: APRIL 15

Bursa Trade Statistic

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

15 April 2025

Participation		Retail (20.43%)	Institution (36.32%)	Foreign (43.25%)
Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)
+2.91		+117.72	-120.64	
Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)
392.63	389.72	753.99	636.27	767.41
				888.05

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



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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

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Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	11,039.20 +39.45
FBMKLCI	1,486.43 +5.57
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	489.18 +3.34
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	145.28 +1.79
CONSTRUCTION	253.61 +1.06
FINANCIAL SERVICES	17,827.30 +72.21
ENERGY	654.88 -1.18
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	476.88 +4.70
HEALTH CARE	1,846.92 -5.82
TRANSPORTATION	964.93 +7.36
PROPERTY	958.64 +8.30
PLANTATION	7,205.89 -4.44
FBMSHA	10,853.70 +34.16
FBMACE	4,537.76 +13.02
TECHNOLOGY	44.78 -0.66

TURNOVER: 3.340 bil

VALUE: RM2.912 bil

Bursa extends gains on improved sentiment

BURSA Malaysia continued its positive momentum to close higher yesterday on improved investor sentiment in tandem with the upbeat regional market performance.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI rose 5.57 points to 1,486.43 compared to Monday's close of 1,480.86.

The benchmark index opened 3.15 points higher at 1,484.01 and moved between 1,480.02 to 1,489.90.

In the broader market, gainers beat decliners 478 to 431, while 459 counters were unchanged, 1,029 untraded, and nine others suspended.

Turnover expanded to 3.36 billion units valued at RM1.91 billion from 2.99 billion units valued at RM2.06 billion on Monday.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors Sdn Bhd head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan said renewed optimism was largely fuelled by recent developments in US trade policy.

Meanwhile, Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd equity research vice-president Thong Pak Leng said that the local benchmark index is showing signs of recovery, with bearish momentum easing and sentiment gradually improving.

Among the heavyweights, Maybank added 5 sen to RM9.94, Tenaga Nasional increased 6 sen to RM13.44, and IHH Healthcare climbed 3 sen to RM6.81.

CIMB Group slipped 3 sen to RM6.70, and Public Bank was flat at RM4.31.

Among the actives, Pertama Digital climbed 4.5 sen to 13 sen, ACE Market debutant MSB Global declined 3 sen to 17 sen, Kucingko slid 2.5 sen to 14.5 sen, and Reach Energy eased 1 sen to half-a-sen, while Velocity Capital was flat at 8 sen. - Bernama

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-CWC4	0.105	-	-	2,998,382
HSI-PWD2	0.110	-	-	2,577,574
HSI-CWEP	0.120	-0.005	-4.00	2,392,630
HSI-PWDU	0.120	-	-	2,377,108
HSI-PWFK	0.165	+0.005	+3.13	804,869
MSB	0.170	-0.030	-15.00	638,572
HSI-PWFQ	0.155	-0.005	-3.13	632,806
VELOCITY	0.080	-	-	584,329
REACH	0.005	-0.010	-66.67	542,957
PERTAMA	0.130	+0.045	+52.94	471,960
KUCINGKO	0.145	-0.025	-14.71	443,952
HSI-CWEI	0.165	-	-	421,144
MYEG	0.925	-	-	395,584
ELRIDGE	0.555	+0.050	+9.90	382,612
HSI-CW7	0.065	-0.005	-7.14	303,237
EKOVEST	0.320	-0.005	-1.54	296,452
TANCO	0.835	+0.020	+2.45	287,477
IWCITY	0.375	+0.005	+1.35	278,150
BPURI	0.345	-	-	274,892
GAMUDA-C2R	0.040	-	-	236,324



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	80.000	+1.500	706
FGN	25.980	+1.100	1,970
ALLIANZ-PA	18.000	+0.800	10
HEIM	26.380	+0.380	585
AJI	13.960	+0.240	262
HLBANK	19.600	+0.240	11,639
HLFG	17.100	+0.240	1,165
HKEX-CQ	0.540	+0.235	19
CANONE	2.230	+0.230	780
ATECH	2.970	+0.220	4,848
PMETAL	4.950	+0.220	56,740
MCCEMENT	4.680	+0.190	3,213
ORNA	0.950	+0.190	1
LPI	14.000	+0.180	584
BIPORT	5.850	+0.150	1
EUROSP	2.350	+0.150	60
PERSTIM	2.100	+0.150	3
ALLIANZ	17.500	+0.120	141
DKSH	4.800	+0.120	221
HUMEIND	2.710	+0.110	771

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
ORGABIO-WA	0.065	+1200.00	8,550
HSI-PWDN	0.100	+233.33	200
AXIATA-CIK	0.025	+150.00	2,300
MALAKOFC55	0.025	+150.00	1,003
99SMART-CQ	0.010	+100.00	6,622
BORNOL	0.010	+100.00	23,072
GENTINGC3L	0.010	+100.00	5,095
HONGSENG	0.010	+100.00	11,130
LIONIND-WA	0.010	+100.00	270
MAXIS-C47	0.010	+100.00	200
OWG-WB	0.010	+100.00	1,019
PMETAL-C1W	0.120	+100.00	3,500
YTLPOWER-C7I	0.010	+100.00	37,967
PMETAL-CIS	0.065	+85.71	2,900
99SMART-CK	0.045	+80.00	10
JPG-CA	0.045	+80.00	920
HKEX-CQ	0.540	+77.05	19
GENM-C3J	0.050	+66.67	10,000
YTLPOWER-C72	0.025	+66.67	4,002
GCB-C13	0.070	+55.56	750

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA [US]	40,524.79	312.08	0.78
S&P 500 [US]	5,405.97	42.61	0.79
NASDAQ [US]	16,831.48	107.02	0.64
NYSE [US]	18,432.25	212.6	1.17
EURO STOXX 50 [EUR]	4,953.17	41.78	0.85
FTSE 100 [UK]	8,212.36	78.02	0.96
DAX [GER]	21,238.66	283.83	1.35
NIKKEI 225 [JPN]	34,267.54	285.18	0.84
TOPIX INDEX [JPN]	2,513.35	24.84	1
HANG SENG INDEX [HK]	21,466.27	48.87	0.23
CSI 300 [CHN]	3,761.23	2.09	0.06
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	175.73	2.44	1.41
SHANGHAI SE COM [CHN]	3,267.66	4.85	0.15
KOSPI INDEX [SKN]	2,477.41	21.52	0.88
SENSEX INDEX [IND]	76,694.81	1,537.55	2.05
ASX 200 [AUS]	7,761.72	13.13	0.17
ALL ORDINARIES INDEX [AUS]	7,969.89	10.15	0.13
FBM KLCI	1,486.43	5.57	0.38
STRAITS TIMES INDEX [S'PORE]	3,621.66	72.75	2.05
WTI [US\$/BBL.]	61.5	-0.03	-0.05
BRENT [US\$/BBL.]	64.86	-0.02	-0.03
GOLD [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	3,245.20	18.9	0.59
SILVER [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	32.35	0.19	0.58
PLATINUM [US\$/T OZ]	959.59	6.74	0.71
COPPER [COMEX] [US CENTS/LB.]	466.4	-1.4	-0.3
COPPER 3MO [LME] [US\$/MT]	9,187.00	32.5	0.36
CORN [US CENTS/BU.]	495	2.25	0.46
WHEAT [US CENTS/BU.]	561	-0.75	-0.13
SOYBEAN OIL [CBOT] [US CENTS/LB.]	46.76	-0.09	-0.19
COCOA [ICE] [US\$/MT]	8,188.00	29	0.36
RUBBER [S'PORE] [US CENTS/KG]	168.2	-2	-1.18

As at 5pm, April 15

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
MPI	15.080	-0.640	2,490
DLADY	27.120	-0.500	183
HSI-PWFE	0.955	-0.435	20
HSI-PWFW	0.675	-0.185	10
KESM	2.750	-0.140	213
ARKA	1.270	-0.130	222
KLK	20.000	-0.120	4,705
SPSETIA-C95	0.045	-0.105	20,000
KEINHIN	1.180	-0.100	15
FFB-C14	0.060	-0.090	300
VITROX	2.540	-0.090	5,832
ECOWLD-C40	0.065	-0.085	10,000
MISC	7.060	-0.080	9,802
OCB	0.700	-0.080	70
HTPADU	2.190	-0.070	1,899
HSI-PWFP	0.310	-0.070	50
UNISEM	1.950	-0.070	16,101
HSI-CWEY	0.315	-0.065	4,748
GENP	5.070	-0.060	1,754
HARTA	2.160	-0.060	48,752

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
SPSETIA-C95	0.045	-70.00	20,000
REACH	0.005	-66.67	542,957
ARMADA-C95	0.020	-60.00	80
FFB-C14	0.060	-60.00	300
KOSSAN-C72	0.015	-57.14	1,000
ECOWLD-C40	0.065	-56.67	10,000
BJCORP-WC	0.005	-50.00	3,736
BINACOM-WA	0.005	-50.00	1,110
CTOS-C14	0.005	-50.00	2,117
D&O-C14	0.005	-50.00	5,000
PENTA-C48	0.010	-50.00	500
PERMAJU-PA	0.005	-50.00	8,439
SNTORIA	0.005	-50.00	285
YTL-C1A	0.005	-50.00	1,989
HKEX-CR	0.040	-42.86	2,000
PMETAL-CIT	0.065	-38.10	6,000
AHB-WC	0.010	-33.33	974
ARMADA-C96	0.010	-33.33	2,500
GENM-C3E	0.020	-33.33	40,085
KOSSAN-C69	0.030	-33.33	333

MARKETS/FROM THE BROKERS

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

Compiled by **SunBiz Team**

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Kerjaya Prospek bags RM98m job for E&O project in Penang

KUALA LUMPUR: Construction outfit Kerjaya Prospek Group Bhd's wholly owned subsidiary Kerjaya Prospek (M) Sdn Bhd (KPSB) has secured a new contract valued at RM98.1 million from Persada Mentari Sdn Bhd (PMSB), an indirect subsidiary of Eastern & Oriental Bhd (E&O), to undertake the construction of Phase 3 and 4 of the Fera & Senna landed residential development on Andaman Island, Penang.

According to a Bursa Malaysia filing yesterday, the upcoming phases will comprise 76 landed homes including three-storey terrace and semi-detached units.

Construction works are scheduled to commence on April 22 and are expected to be completed within 24 months.

This contract was carried out independently and on standard commercial terms with a related party in which certain directors and major shareholders of Kerjaya Prospek have direct or indirect interests.

Kerjaya Prospek CEO and executive director Tee Eng Tiong said, "We're pleased with the strong response to the Fera & Senna development, as buyers are drawn to its great location, elegant design, and low-density setting.

"Kerjaya Prospek is honoured to spearhead the construction of Phase 3 & 4, which form part of E&O's broader Andaman Island master plan, an integrated development that is shaping up to be one of Penang's most desirable urban-island townships.

"This latest contract win brings Kerjaya's year-to-date new contract wins to RM708.3 million, while the total outstanding order book stands at RM4.4 billion.

"This is expected to boost the group's earnings outlook over the next three financial years," he said in a separate statement.

Ringgit almost flat in cautious trading ahead of US-Japan talks

THE ringgit ended almost flat against the US dollar yesterday as traders remain cautious ahead of the trade talks between the US and Japan tomorrow, said an analyst.

At 6pm, the local note was little changed at 4.4100/4155 against the greenback, compared to Monday's close of 4.4100/4160.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes said the market is currently in the wait-and-see mode, monitoring how aggressively the US is pressuring its allies for tariff concessions.

"Markets are treating Japan like a geopolitical test to see how hard the US leans in trade talks.

"If the talks with Japan go smoothly, it might set the tone for a softer diplomatic pivot. If not, we could be in for another round of protectionist tensions," he told Bernama.

With the Easter holiday slowdown underway and the European Central Bank expected to keep rates steady this week, Innes said traders are hesitant to make bold moves, especially now that the US Treasury market volatility has started to ease.

Meanwhile, the ringgit traded mostly lower against major currencies.

It gained against the euro to 4.9996/5.0059 from 5.0199/0267 at the close on Monday, but eased versus the Japanese yen to 3.0852/0895 from 3.0811/0855 on Monday and was lower vis-a-vis the British pound to 5.8366/8439 from 5.8097/8176 previously.

At the same time, the local note traded mixed against Asean currencies.

It rose against the Singapore dollar to 3.3498/3545 versus 3.3506/3556 on Monday and edged higher versus the Thai baht to 13.1461/1708 from 13.1481/1754 previously.

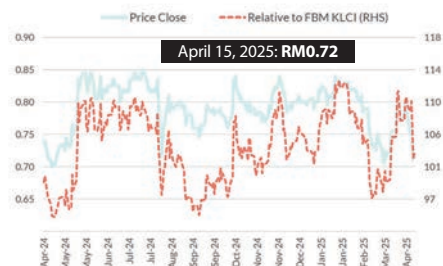
Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.4675	4.3335	4.3235
1 Australian Dollar	2.8460	2.7320	2.7160
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3920	3.2940	3.2860
1 Canadian Dollar	3.2130	3.1260	3.1140
1 Euro	5.0680	4.9040	4.8840
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.6430	2.5450	2.5290
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3920	3.2940	3.2860
1 Sterling Pound	5.8960	5.7100	5.6900
1 Swiss Franc	5.5030	5.2690	5.2540
100 UAE Dirham	123.0300	116.6700	116.4700
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7530	3.4950	3.2950
100 Chinese Renminbi	61.4800	58.9000	58.9000
100 Danish Krone	69.5900	64.0400	63.8400
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.1900	55.2900	55.0900
100 Indian Rupee	5.2800	4.9600	4.7600
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0275	0.0249	0.0199
100 Japanese Yen	3.1230	3.0240	3.0140
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	43.4100	39.9100	39.7100
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6200	1.5200	1.3200
100 Philippine Peso	7.9400	7.4900	7.2900
100 Qatar Riyal	123.9000	117.6200	117.4200
100 Saudi Riyal	120.3500	114.2500	114.0500
100 South Africa Rand	24.5000	22.1200	21.9200
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5400	1.4100	1.2100
100 Swedish Krona	47.1000	42.8700	42.6700
100 Thai Baht	13.9100	12.3400	11.9400

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

Focus Point Holdings Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM1.05



Source: Bloomberg

WITH the US market accounting for 40% of China's eyewear exports, management expects Chinese exporters to face weaker demand due to Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs. As a result, Focus Point plans to negotiate more favourable terms with its Chinese suppliers, who will be seeking alternative buyers. The company sources <10% of its total COGS from China, while its principal brands may also benefit from reduced procurement costs. On the expansion front, Focus Point plans to open 10 new optical outlets across the Klang Valley, and in the southern and northern regions.

The Medical Device Authority's (MDA) recent ban on sales of contact lenses on e-commerce platforms positions Focus Point to capture market share from unlicensed sellers. This should drive customers to purchase contact lenses (currently RM40 million annual sales) from authorised retailers like Focus Point, while reducing price competition from unlicensed providers.

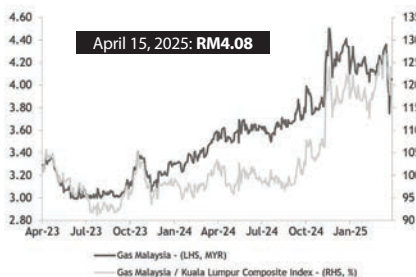
Focus Point will continue to strengthen its brand equity through effective marketing initiatives and innovative product offerings. It has planned 10 marketing roadshows in FY25, while preparing to launch SOLOS Smartglasses to further differentiate itself from competitors. The optical corporate customer segment (FY24: +67% YoY) is expected to see stronger growth, driven by improved brand equity and rising demand from employers offering competitive optical benefits to retain employees.

New F&B corporate customers: Orders from ZUS Coffee are on hold after an unsuccessful trial, likely due to location problems. Focus Point is now exploring other partnerships, including one with Gigi Coffee, which may launch widely in Q3 2025.

BUY with RM1.05 TP. - **RHB Research, April 15**

Gas Malaysia Bhd

Hold. Target price: RM4.00



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

RECALL domestic gas prices (Petronas' Malaysia Reference Price) lags crude oil prices by 6-7 months. Given the YTD trajectory of Brent prices, we expect average domestic gas prices to decline by 7-10% YoY in 2025, in line with our assumption of 9% decline. GMB's retail profit is based on an undisclosed percentage of its gas cost and should thus trend in tandem with domestic gas prices in our view (in the absence of cost adjustments).

GMB's volume recovered in FY24, having registered an 8.6% growth following 2 years of decline. We expect a 2% volume CAGR in FY25-26. Note that only the retail segment bears volume risk, with the distribution (pipeline) segment running on a revenue-cap model. The current gas supply disruption (since April 1) is expected to normalise after April 20. Channel checks indicate that gas supply has been selectively restored (notably for the F&B segment). We estimate a full month curtailment would shave 4% of GMB's FY25 earnings.

Our forecasts remain unchanged. We assume 81% payout ratio going forward, which implies GMB maintains DPS at FY24 levels. By our estimates, every 10sen/mmBTU change to our spread assumption would move our FY25 net profit by RM12 million (3%).

There are several risk factors for our earnings estimates, price target, and rating for GMB. Regulatory developments, particularly in relation to regulated return, capex and retail margin, have direct impacts on earnings. GMB also bears some degree of volume risk.

HOLD with RM4.00 TP. GMB remains our preferred pick among the gas utilities. - **Maybank Investment Bank, April 15**

KJTS Group Bhd

Not Rated



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

LISTED on the ACE market of Bursa Malaysia Securities, KJTS' principal activities comprise the provision of cooling energy services, cleaning services and facilities management services. While KJTS' core businesses provide for a very stable stream of recurring income, it is the group's venture into cooling energy asset ownership that sets the tone for earnings diversification and growth. The stock is Shariah-compliant.

With over 70% of recurring revenue, the group's business model provides for strong earnings visibility and financial stability. Moreover, the business is scalable and replicable across the region. As it stands, KJTS already derives more than 26% of revenue from abroad. That its clients' cooling energy systems are linked to a Central Command Centre encourages a dependency on the group, while its proactive role in energy conservation makes it a great ESG play.

The acquisition of Malakoff Utilities Sdn Bhd (MUSB) expedites the group's cooling energy asset ownership on a non-concessionary basis, and this is expected to be augmented through its 10:90 joint venture with Stonepeak Kelvin Holdings. With targeted investments of RM1.5 billion, this JV is set to expand its portfolio of cooling assets over time. As both the EPC and O&M contractor to the JV, this is an asset light business model that will provide KJTS with an expanding base of recurring income.

KJTS' revenue and net profit have expanded at a 4-year (FY20-24) CAGR of 17% and 30% respectively. Consensus estimates a FY25/26 net profit of RM32.4 million/RM40.8 million respectively for the group. - **Maybank Investment Bank, April 15**



theSun **LYFE**

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WEEKLY FOCUS

MONDAY

Technology and
social media

TUESDAY

Family
and parenting

WEDNESDAY

Fashion
and beauty

THURSDAY

Home
and living

FRIDAY

Travel
and leisure

SATURDAY

Food
and beverage

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in new movie

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KRU to take fans
down memory lane

- PIC COURTESY OF CHEW KAI HUNG

BY T.C. KHOR

CHEW Kai Hung, a 26-year-old bag designer from Penang, is creating a buzz in the Malaysian fashion scene after one of his creations gained national attention. His creation was used by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim during the Budget 2025 announcement.

As the designer behind his namesake brand Kai Hung, his bags are bold, bright coloured and crafted using a unique combination of materials, making them stand out in a market that often favours more neutral tones. His route to fame to the pinnacle of primetime TV began when Chew was approached by a local event organiser.

"Someone I had previously met, who was involved in an event promoting local artisans and textiles, reached out to me with a request to create a bag using handmade *songket*," Chew told *theSun*.

While custom orders were not typical for him, Chew decided to take on this unique request as a personal challenge.

Initially, Chew thought the bag would be for the organiser, but it was later revealed the recipient would be someone working in the government, though the identity was kept confidential at the time. A few days after sending out the bag, Chew received a video that revealed who had chosen his design.

"When I watched the video and saw who was holding the bag, I was absolutely stunned and speechless."

The *Songket* bag, designed to represent Malaysia's three main ethnicities, became a symbol of cultural unity, with the Malay element represented by *songket* fabric, Indian heritage showcased in the *saree* fabric lining and Chinese representation symbolised by Chew himself. Although Chew has not received direct feedback from the Prime Minister or his team, he views this achievement as a personal and professional milestone.

"This achievement means a lot to me personally and professionally. It is the biggest milestone in my career so far, especially as a small designer. It has helped me gain more recognition and has been a significant stepping stone in growing my brand," Chew said.

How it all started

From a young age, Chew has had a deep interest in art and sewing became a natural extension of that passion. With the help of his parents, Chew honed his skills from the



Chew loves working with bright, bold colours such as yellow.



Chew sewing the *Songket* bag.

Man behind PMX's Budget Day *songket* bag

► Penangite talks life, passion, navigating through saturated fashion industry

tender age of 10.

"When I was 10, I asked my mother to teach me how to sew by hand for a *Kemahiran Hidup* homework assignment, and that is when my interest in sewing began," Chew said.

This initial exposure sparked a lifelong hobby, which later blossomed into a career. A year later, when he turned 11, Chew's parents bought him a second-hand sewing machine.

"My father taught me how to use it, and I started sewing simple pouches from old clothes to carry my stationery to school. Over the years, I kept sewing as a hobby, improving my skills by watching YouTube tutorials," he said.

By the time he was in Form 1, he had set his sights on becoming a fashion designer, and by the time he completed his studies in fashion design at Equator College in Penang, Chew had set his sights on a career in fashion. However, the arrival of the movement control order (MCO)

changed the course of his journey.

"When the MCO happened, I was close to finishing my diploma. After completing all my college assignments, I found myself with extra free time and no job during the lockdown," he said.

With newfound free time, Chew revisited his interest in bag designing as a potential source of income. He started posting his designs on multiple social platforms, and in 2021, one of his TikTok videos went viral.

"From that moment on, I knew I wanted to turn this passion into a full-time endeavour," he said.

Design philosophy

Chew's work is home-based and he creates a variety of bags, including tote bags, crossbody bags, bucket bags and handbags, often pairing PU leather or faux leather with fabrics such as *batik*, *songket*, lace, tweed, netting, sequins and so on.

"My designs are often inspired by the fabric itself and I choose the bag style that best complements it.

My customers respond well to my designs."

Chew loves bold, bright hues, especially yellows, and these have become a signature part of his designs. This, together with his flair for incorporating elements of nature into his designs, has found a dedicated following among his enthusiasts.

Among his design collection is a bag inspired by the sunrise, seashell-shaped bag and a bucket bag shaped like a flower, all of which showcase his ability to transform the natural world into wearable art.

Chew said his design philosophy evolves as he experiments with new materials, especially PU leather.

"The main material I work with is PU leather or faux leather, primarily because of the wide variety of colours available."

This material gives him the freedom to experiment with different shades and techniques – such as quilting – to create texture and depth, he said. Despite his success, Chew faces challenges in the competitive world of bag design. As a one-man operation, he is responsible for everything – from design and sewing to marketing and customer service.

"One of the biggest challenges I



Chew and his Black Glitter Ruffled Tulle Mini Handbag.



Chew and his Silver & Black *Songket* Mini Handbag.

face is time management and competing with mass-produced designs that dominate the market," he said.

However, Chew has managed to overcome these obstacles by staying true to his brand.

"I focus on creating unique bags that stand out, especially with my bold colour choices, which are rare in the industry."

Chew also ensures his creations are functional and aesthetically appealing, with thoughtful features such as interior pockets and the ability to accommodate essential items such as smartphones.

"I make sure all my bags have interior pockets, providing space for essentials," he explained.

Going forward

Although he has not yet collaborated with traditional artisans, he is open to exploring these opportunities in the future. Chew also plans to continue building on his success and expanding his reach in the fashion industry.

"Moving forward, I want to keep growing and expanding my reach in the industry to preserve and promote Malaysia's cultural heritage."

Even with a feather in his hat, Chew remains humble and driven.

"There is always something inspiring me – whether it is nature, fashion or the characters I see in movies or TV."

"As I am still early in my career, I still have so many ideas that I have yet to explore. I prefer to create based on my own ideas rather than paying attention to fleeting fashion trends."

Kai Hung's bags are priced between RM200 and RM400.

GADGET REVIEW

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

Max gaming meets mid-range

► realme 14 5G delivers close to flagship-level performance

THE mid-range smartphone market has just received what realme is touting as a “game-changer” and “gaming dominator” with the launch of the realme 14 5G.

Now, we are not really that hot on all the buzz words, but the company's latest smartphone certainly left a good impression with its strong performance, features and a smooth gaming experience.

At the heart of the realme 14 5G is the world's first Snapdragon 6 Gen 4 processor. The processor boasts an AnTuTu score of 780,000 and it shows, with the chipset providing a 15% increase in CPU power in handling apps and tasks that require more juice. The realme 14 5G's overall performance is also boosted by its up to 26GB RAM and 256GB ROM.

One of its standout features is its ability to support 120FPS gameplay in popular titles including *Mobile Legends: Bang Bang* and *Honour of Kings*. It is also optimised for a stable 90FPS experience in high-performance games.

Compared to other mid-range

smartphones targeted to the mobile gaming crowd, the smartphone's 6000mAh Titan Battery is on the stronger end of the spectrum. It is marketed as being able to provide up to 17.5 hours of video playback and 10 hours of continuous gaming. On top of that, the smartphone has fast charging.

Heat is also a non-issue. During intense gaming sessions, the phone's internal temperatures never got out of hand due to the smartphone's Bionic Cooling System.

Beyond gaming

While the smartphone was made with gaming in mind, the realme 14 5G does a fair job when it comes to photography with its 50MP OIS AI Camera – at least in the mid-range smartphone market.

Equipped with AI Shutter and LightFusion Algorithm, the camera is able to capture crisp, well-lit photos even in challenging conditions. For minor edits, the AI Eraser feature



Mecha Silver stands out from the other two options by blending modern sleekness with a touch of futurism.



The smartphone offers an impressive package in the upper mid-range category.

allows users to remove unwanted elements from photos, making it ideal for social media-ready shots.

In other words, artificial intelligence (AI) does most of the heavy lifting when it comes to taking pictures and it does a fine enough job at it.

The realme 14 5G is equipped with a 6.67-inch AMOLED display with a 120Hz refresh rate. It offers fluid visuals and an ultra-responsive

touch experience. Expect vibrant colours, high contrast and excellent brightness levels, making it superb for gaming and content consumption. With a peak brightness of 2000 nits, it remains easy to view even under direct sunlight.

One of the smartphone's standout features is its industry-leading IP69, IP68 and IP66 water and dust resistance ratings. This means the

device can withstand high-pressure water jets, dust and even submersion in water, making it one of the most durable smartphones in its category.

The Mecha design with the Victory Halo light adds a futuristic touch, blending aesthetics with functionality. Available in Storm Titanium, Mecha Silver and Warrior Pink, this phone looks as premium as it performs.

Smarter performance

Powered by realme UI 6.0, the smartphone offers a more refined, modern user experience with Next AI capabilities, with features such as AI Smart Loop 2.0, Circle to Search and AI Recording Summary making daily life a little easier by streamlining tasks and enhancing productivity.

The realme 14 5G is a compelling choice for gamers and power users alike. With its powerful Snapdragon 6 Gen 4 processor, long-lasting battery, efficient cooling system and high refresh rate AMOLED display, the smartphone outshines many competitors in the mid-range market.

Combine all that with its superior durability, premium design and AI-powered camera features and it becomes clear why this device is a strong contender to dominate the segment.

For those seeking a feature-packed smartphone that delivers near flagship-level gaming performance without the flagship price, the realme 14 5G is a top-tier option that delivers beyond expectations.

Rolls-Royce makes bespoke vehicle showcasing cherry blossoms

ROLLS-ROYCE Motor Cars's Phantom Cherry Blossom is inspired by the fleeting beauty of the Sakura blooms and a Japanese client's formative memories of this stunning natural spectacle.

In Japanese culture, cherry blossoms are a powerful symbol of nature's rhythms, the arrival of spring and the beauty of impermanence. They serve as a poignant reminder to cherish the present and embrace life. This symbolism is deeply embedded in Japanese art, literature and philosophy.

Phantom cherry blossom: Bespoke vision brought to life

A client in Japan wished to capture their cherished Hanami (flower viewing) memories, spanning both childhood and parenthood. They wished to create their highly bespoke Phantom as a legacy and experience to be passed down through the generations in their family, evoking the same spirit as Hanami itself.

This elegant, exquisitely detailed motor car exemplifies bespoke artistry, not only expressing the client's personal ambition but also the peerless skill and commitment of the Bespoke Collective. Now delivered to its proud custodian in Japan, this one-of-a-kind automobile is a reflection of their individuality and passion.

Floral sanctuary: Expansive 250,000-stitch embroidery

Inside the motor car, intricate



The Starlight Headliner recreates cherry blossoms with exquisite embroidery.

embroidery captures the sensation of sitting beneath a flowering tree during Hanami, just as the client envisioned. A bespoke Starlight Headliner is adorned with an embroidered cherry bough, sprinkled with delicate white blossoms. The falling petal embroidery appears on the rear door panels and Privacy Suite partition between the front and rear passenger compartments.

The design and development of this expression of contemporary craft spanned more than six months. The headliner required three weeks alone

to embroider and exceeds 250,000 stitches.

As light plays across this expansive embroidery, it reveals the intricate detail and ingenuity required to bring it to life. The rich thread texture of the embroidered cherry tree is achieved using an offset tatami stitch, inspired by the ancient Japanese weave technique.

The embroidered branches appear to be intertwining, growing over and under one another. To achieve this effect, a single artisan meticulously aligned 11 individually embroidered frame sections to create a single, seamless graphic rising from the rear of the motor car and flowing forward over the rear passengers.

Finally, the headliner is embroidered with cherry blossom flowers, formed of individual satin-stitch petals designed to capture the light at different angles with a

jewel-like quality. The petals can be seen throughout the rear cabin, falling onto the doors and partition wall of the motor car's Privacy Suite.

Sculptural 3D embroidery

In a Rolls-Royce first, the interior is completed with three-dimensional cherry petal embroidery. These tactile, sculptural details grace the partition wall, creating a striking contrast to the classic stitchwork of the falling cherry petals on the doors.

Creating these three-dimensional embroideries required specialists to pioneer a new technique, where the thread is layered upon itself to form a self-supporting structure.

Each petal is then shaped and sculpted into its final form by hand before being stitched into place, individually positioned to complement the interior lighting and create soft shadow effects.



The client's vision has been realised through 250,000 stitches and six months of development.

Renting wedding dress cheaper than buying

➤ Sustainable practices make presence felt in modern-day nuptials

IS it possible to tie the knot without harming the planet? Since the pandemic, weddings have been reinventing themselves with all kinds of green solutions, including wedding dresses. More initiatives are emerging to enable future brides and grooms to celebrate their special day while reducing their impact on the environment.

Faced with climate crisis, weddings – whether religious, civil or secular – are being transformed to take into account their environmental impact. While these changes are affecting all aspects of preparation for the big day, outfits and wedding dresses are becoming key symbols of this changing approach. As such, rental services, buying second-hand and upcycling are three ways to make a bridal wardrobe greener.

Rent, do not buy

Considering a wedding dress is usually worn only once in a lifetime, it is probably the least eco-friendly item in anyone's wardrobe. Abandoned in a slipcase at the back of a closet after the big day, it effectively becomes a souvenir that gets recalled with every spring-clean. But, is this necessary at a time when people are trying to make an effort to reduce their carbon footprint? Clothing rental is a good way to avoid this kind of waste. While this alternative has been slow to catch on with users, it is gaining ground. According to a study by Market Data Forecast, relayed by Fevad, the global online clothing rental market could grow by 10.6% a year between now and 2027.

Evening and formal wear are among the most popular rental items. And for good reason, this alternative allows you to treat yourself to an exceptional piece without breaking the bank, all while minimising your impact on the planet.

"If you only need to wear your outfit once, consider renting it. Today's offers for renting formal wear (even from major brands) are

wide-ranging and accessible at all price points. In the French Agency for Ecological Transition, Ademe's guide to eco-friendly weddings advised it is much cheaper than buying new.

Shop second-hand

There are countless platforms specialising in second-hand clothing – such as eBay. Not to mention the brands and e-commerce platforms that have launched their own pre-loved clothing resale services. It is undoubtedly the green alternative that is gaining the most traction today, as evidenced by figures published by thredUP, in partnership with analysis firm GlobalData. This data suggested the global pre-loved fashion market is set to double by 2027, to reach US\$350 billion (RM1.54 trillion), demonstrating the public's growing enthusiasm for this more responsible solution.

Of course, weddings are no exception, even if people have long preferred to buy new to enjoy a unique and personal piece on their big day. Wedding dresses can be found on all the above-mentioned platforms, but some specialist players have also entered this niche. So, it is important to do your homework before taking the plunge.

Ademe said: "For those looking for a more sustainable approach, explore the treasures of second-hand, where each piece tells a unique story."

Donating your dress is also a possibility, as one American woman from Ohio did in 2022, causing a stir on social media.

One dress, multiple possibilities

If, despite everything, you do not want a piece that has already been worn, this third solution might appeal to you. Today, it is possible to buy a wedding dress that will not end up in a closet, but which can be worn again, every day. This trend is being driven by the visionary spirit of fashion brands and even more so of the major labels specialising in bridal wear. Many of them now offer the possibility of transforming your wedding dress into a more casual piece after the big day. One example is Nadia Manjarrez, which markets versatile, modular dresses with details such as trains, skirts, capes and sleeves that can be detached for everyday wear after



Rental services, buying second-hand and upcycling are three ways to make a bridal wardrobe greener.

the event.

Meanwhile, Pronovias launched its "Second Life" service in 2022, offering a special collection designed to be transformed into pieces that can be worn for other specific occasions or simple evenings out after your wedding.

All these solutions bear witness to the bridal fashion industry's desire to reinvent to make these special days altogether greener. – ETX Studio

Three natural beauty ingredients for fresh, glowing appearance

CARROT, coffee grounds and a touch of calendula: these three natural ingredients can be used in treatments aimed to revitalise skin that has suffered the effects of dry conditions. From deep cleansing to redness reduction and promoting a radiant complexion, here are three steps to perking up skin for a freshened new look.

Gently exfoliate with coffee grounds

Revitalising your skin involves deep cleansing, and therefore, regular exfoliation to get rid of dead skin cells that build up. A budget-friendly, accessible aid for this process is coffee grounds. Not only do they help refine skin texture to make it smoother, softer and more radiant, without stripping it too harshly, but they also absorb sebum.

Since they are rich in caffeine, they can give a real boost to the eye area, diminishing puffiness and dark circles to make way for skin that is radiant with vitality and health. Plus, it will not cost you a thing, since the grounds from your coffee maker were probably destined to be thrown out anyway. An excellent way to recycle waste.

Boost skin glow with carrots

Carrots are not only a healthy, tasty vegetable to crunch on, they also give your skin that healthy glow it needs after being exposed to dry weather and helps it prepare for exposure to sunnier days.

Rich in vitamin A, carrots are known to provide many benefits to the skin, including a healthy glowing complexion and long-lasting radiance – highly desirable if your skin has been deprived of sunlight. Carrots also promote tanning and thanks to their antioxidant properties, they prevent skin aging.

Soothe redness with calendula

The fluctuating temperatures that come with seasonal transitions can promote skin issues, resulting in redness or blemishes, for example. Therefore, it is also important to use ingredients rich in soothing active ingredients, such as calendula, as it calms all types of irritation, leaving skin soft and soothed.

Calendula also has reparative properties that allow the skin to heal more easily. Add it to your skin detox routine to greet spring with a fresher face.



Carrots, coffee grounds and calendula are holy grails of the skin detox routine.

Synthetic human skin could replace animal testing



While cosmetic testing on animals is now banned in many countries, the testing of pharmaceutical products is still permitted. – ALL PICS FROM PEXELS

SCIENTISTS have developed a form of 3D-printed human skin, incorporating living cells. The idea is to be able to use it for pharmaceutical and cosmetic testing rather than using animals, as is still currently the case.

Researchers at the Graz University of Technology in Austria and the Vellore Institute of Technology in India have succeeded in developing a synthetic imitation of human skin that could prevent the need for animal testing. This artificial skin faithfully reproduces the three-dimensional structure and biomechanical properties of real epidermis. This is due to a clever mix of human cells and specially formulated hydrogel – a jelly-like material composed mainly of water and polymers forming a kind of "net" capable of retaining the liquid and promoting the proliferation of other cells.

At this stage, the first 3D-printed skin samples are ready for nanoparticle testing. If they are successful, this breakthrough could

help reduce or even eliminate the need for animal testing in the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries. This is the main objective of this innovation, to provide an ethical and reliable alternative to animal testing. Animal testing is used, in particular, to assess the toxicity of nanoparticles present in products such as sunscreens.

While cosmetic testing on animals is now banned in many countries – including in the European Union, Canada, Australia and Brazil – the testing of pharmaceutical products is still permitted, although it is often regulated.

In the European Union, these tests are intended to assess the toxicity of the drug, safety of use and its potential effectiveness. These tests precede the clinical trial phases on humans.

It is strongly advised to use alternative methods when they exist, to minimise the number of animals used and to improve procedures in order to limit the suffering of animals. – ETX Studio

Good Bad Ugly excels as tribute to Tamil cinema

MOVIE REVIEW

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

DIRECTED by Adhik Ravichandran, *Good Bad Ugly* is an Indian Tamil-language action comedy film starring Ajith Kumar in a layered role that explores identity and family through a stylish lens. The film is a mashup of swagger and humour, making it a truly unmissable flick that will entertain no end.

Ajith plays AK, once a feared underworld don known as "Red Dragon", who mysteriously surrenders to the authorities to turn over a new leaf. Eighteen years later, he walks free only to discover that his son, Vihaan, has been arrested overseas on a drug charge. Soon, AK uncovers that this is no random incident – it is the work of twin ganglords Johnny and Jammy (both played by Arjun Das) who are out for revenge for an incident tied to the secrets of AK's past with his wife Ramya (Trishna Krishnan).

Scene-by-scene nostalgia, humour

It is so refreshing to see Ajith back on screen with this much style. His commanding presence, his brooding silences and even that signature smirk before a fight scene – this is Ajith in full star mode. As AK, he brings a great balance of coolness and controlled rage that is magnetic.

The film makes clever nods to his legacy, referencing his past acting roles and moments from his filmography. It is like watching an homage to Ajith while he is still at the top of his game.

What really makes *Good Bad Ugly* stand out is how every scene evokes something familiar. Whether a callback to an old song, familiar fight choreography inspired by a classic Ajith film or dialogue lifted and twisted from the 2000s, this movie celebrates nostalgia unabashedly and unapologetically.

But what is truly impressive is how light it all feels. Just when you think a scene is going to dive deep into serious territory, a well-placed joke or a silly throwaway moment shifts the tone. The film never gets too

► Plenty of laughs, thrills in Ajith comeback



Good Bad Ugly is stylish, irreverent and ultimately, a lot of fun to watch.

DIRECTOR:

Adhik Ravichandran

CAST:

Ajith Kumar, Trishna Krishnan, Arjun Das

E-VALUE

9

PLOT

8

ACTING

9

Ajith and Trishna light up the screen with their obvious chemistry.

heavy, and that balance is what makes the film imminently watchable. The film does not take itself too seriously and it is all the better for it.

Unexpected scene-stealer

Arjun is easily one of the film's

brightest highlights. His performance is cool and surprisingly playful. That unbothered energy he brings? So refreshing. And that moment when he casually breaks into a little dance to a retro Tamil song? Iconic. He has presence, charisma and exceptional

comic timing that elevates every scene he is in. You could say he is well-balanced eye candy in the film.

Queens of screen

Trishna, as always, is effortlessly beautiful on screen. She brings grace to the role. Even when she is not

speaking, her expressions carry the weight of past heartbreak and inner strength. Her chemistry with Ajith is subtle but impactful, anchoring the film's emotional beats.

Then there is Simran, who shows up in a surprise cameo that left the audience gasping. Her screen presence is timeless, and the background music that accompanies her entry was extremely gorgeous. It is a small role, but she made every second count. It just proves how talented she is, adding a further touch of beauty to the film's nostalgic core.

Action, style, cinematography

The action is stylish without being too over-the-top. The prison fights, slow-mo walk-ins and car chases feel grounded enough to stay believable but cinematic enough to feel grand.

Music director G.V. Prakash Kumar did not exactly deliver a revolutionary score. The original background music is serviceable, but not particularly memorable. What *does* make the movie sing though is the use of old, popular Tamil songs at key moments. These retro tunes drop unexpectedly and instantly lift the mood, making you smile in recognition. It is a clever and heartwarming trick that keeps the film emotionally connected to its audience.

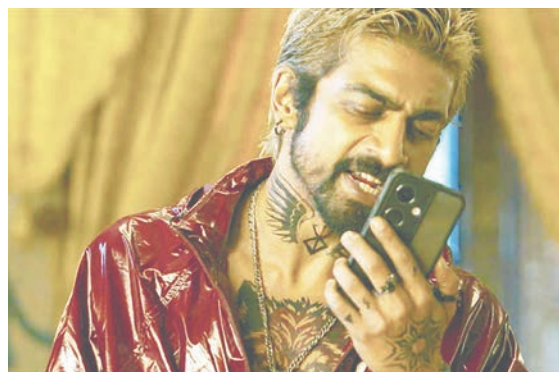
What makes *Good Bad Ugly* a standout is that it does not rely on one or two big "hero" scenes to carry it. Instead, every scene has something: a nod to the past, a funny line or a stylish frame. You walk away not remembering just one climatic event but a string of moments that all hit differently. It is a film built on vibes and callbacks, and it works.

Good Bad Ugly is an unapologetically fun and self-aware film that plays to its strengths – Ajith's iconic image, a cast that is having fun and moments that celebrate Tamil cinema's past and present. It is not trying to reinvent the wheel, but instead just wants you to enjoy the ride, and honestly, that is exactly what it delivers.

Good Bad Ugly is now playing in cinemas.



The film's dialogue makes witty and clever references to past movies.



Arjun plays a large and memorable role in the film.

Shazza strides into new terrain

DRAWING strength from womanhood and her ethnic roots, Singapore's Shareefa Aminah, better known as Shazza, has impressed many with the newest single off her sophomore album *Medieval*, which was released last Friday.

With this standout track in her discography, Shazza channels personal feelings and experiences that many kindred souls are all too familiar with, culminating in an empowering anthem born of lyrical outpour and creative effusion.

As a female artiste deeply connected with her diversity and ethnicity, Shazza is a beacon of representation. Through her songwriting and music, she inspires listeners with her commitment to staying true to herself in a world that challenges her voice.

Shazza explores new sonic territory with *Medieval* as she weaves traditional Indian percussion into her music for the first time. She embraced the musical influences of her culture as an artiste. This deliberate choice not only honours the authenticity of the sound but also emphasises Shazza's dedication to pushing herself to explore uncharted sonic frontiers.

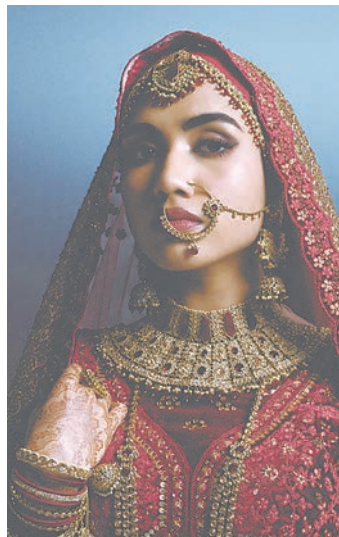
The fusion of English pop with the rich, rhythmic textures of Indian percussion and folk arrangements creates a unique sound that is innovative and deeply personal – a reflection of her evolution and authenticity as an artiste.

Co-written by Shazza alongside collaborator and guitarist Ashlyn Yeo, *Medieval* was crafted with purpose-driven musicality and vision. The cover art for the single also features Shazza in traditional Indian dress, creating a visual spectacle aligned with celebrating her heritage through music and imagery.

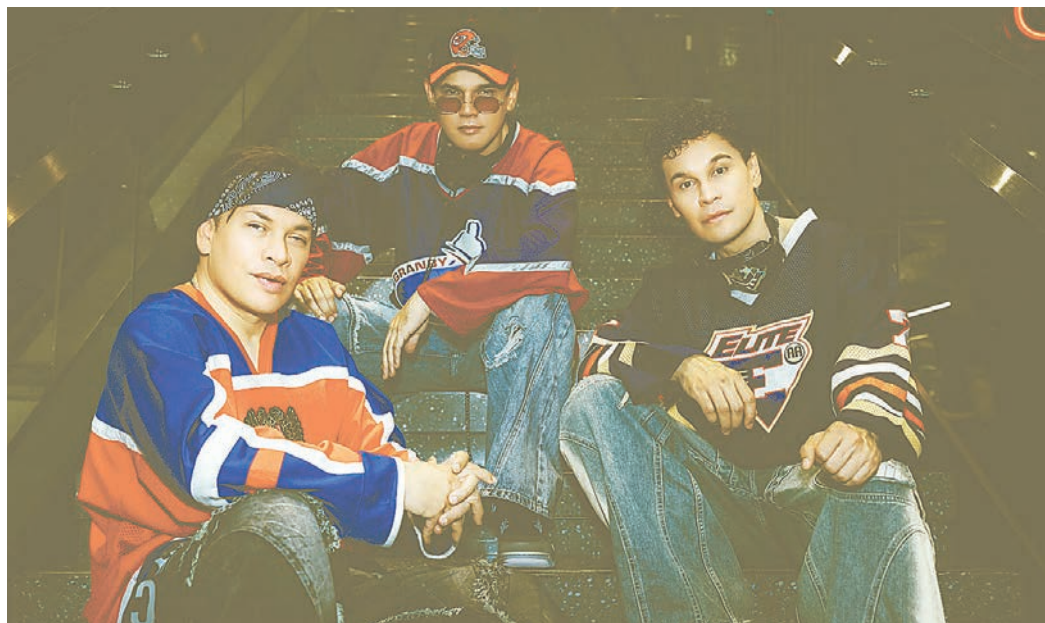
"This is the proudest I have ever been of a song. I try to approach the work that I do with the mentality that my art is bigger than myself – my music speaks to people, makes them feel seen and validates their experiences.

"*Medieval* was written from an extremely personal and raw place, but I also know it will resonate deeply with my audience for that very same reason. This song is my anthem and my sincere response to those who might doubt my art and my heart," Shazza said.

Medieval features some of Shazza's finest vocal performances yet, with her steel resolve and emotionally raw vocals drawing audiences into the depths of their soul. Redefining her vocal delivery, she navigates the song's complexities, delivering moments of soaring intensity alongside quiet, introspective pauses. *Medieval* is available on all streaming platforms.



Medieval is available on all streaming platforms.



The brothers still look noticeably young despite their 33 years in the music industry.

KRU announces Singapore date

► Legendary rap siblings to celebrate 90s vibes in upcoming gigs

■ BY R. BALA

FEELING nostalgic for that 90s vibe? Well, that is precisely what KRU has promised to serve up at its upcoming gigs in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Looking extremely youthful despite having been in the music industry for 33 years, the band said the concerts aim to provide fans with the ultimate 90s KRU experience, focusing on hits from the first decade of KRU mania.

After selling out three shows at the Axiata Arena in Bukit Jalil scheduled for May this year, the three brothers announced they will be performing at Singapore's Star Arena on June 28. It will be the band's first show in the island republic in six years.

The trio, consisting of siblings Datuk Norman Abdul Halim, Datuk Yusry Abdul Halim and Edry Abdul Halim, said the concerts will be a nostalgic step back in time. Apart from the early hits, ticket holders will be treated to a special fan zone outside the stadium, featuring a merchandise store, skateboard area and DJs pumping out hits to recreate that 90s vibe.

The band also unveiled exclusive merchandise, including snazzy football and ice hockey-style jerseys. These have been made in limited quantities so fans are advised to grab them while they are available.

The concept behind the GenKRU live experience has to do with the rap trio's music garnering fans from Gen X all the way to Gen Alpha. Hence it is a chance for younger fans to experience the band live.

Norman said he is excited to be going on stage again as the higher ticket prices allowed



The trio will perform in Singapore on June 28.

for better production values.

"We could not charge this much for a ticket back in the 90s. With higher ticket prices, we can deliver a bigger stage production for fans to enjoy," he explained at a media conference.

Prices for the Singapore show start from S\$208 (RM696) onwards with limited meet-and-greet packages available.

The band was also at pains to ask fans to come and enjoy the concert naturally and not through their handphones.

"For two hours plus, just come enjoy this concert and have a good time. Do not be busy recording with your phone a video which no one will ever watch," laughed Edry.

The band was keen to point out that it will be recording the KL shows for a DVD.

"There is no need for fans to be our cameraman for the night, just come and enjoy the show," added Edry.

Given that the Singapore venue has 5,000

seats, the band said it will be a more intimate experience.

"We definitely feed off the energy of large crowds but I cannot remember a single face. It will be different and definitely special to play a more intimate venue," explained Edry.

The tour builds up to the release of a new album *Kaset* – the title being a nod to the popular audio format of the 90s. It is slated to drop next Wednesday and features lead single *Voodoo*.

Noting that a number of hardcore fans from Malaysia, especially from neighbouring Johor, have indicated their intention to attend the Singapore gig, the band advised them to only get tickets via official ticketing agent Sistic's channels.

"It is not every day we go on tour. Our concerts do not happen very often, plus this may be the last time you will get to experience the 90s KRU show," said Norman.



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322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF
 LIM CHON JIN
 TRADING COMPANY
 (IN LIQUIDATION AND
 UNDER ADMINISTRATION)
 (198403020281 (00062963-K))

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the general public that the Liquidator and Administrator of the above-named Partnership pursuant to an Order of the High Court of Malaysia at Seremban under No. 2004-148 TAHUN 2010 dated 30 October 2024.

All creditors and any person or corporate entity having a claim against the above-named Partnership, are required on or before 4.00 p.m. of 15 May 2025, to send their names and addresses and the particulars of their debts or claims and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the Liquidator at 41, Jalan Goh Chok Kiat, 41400 Klang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, and if so required in writing from the Liquidator, are by their solicitors or personally to come in and prove their debts or claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice or in default thereof they will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts are proved.

Dated this 16 April 2025
 NG CHON JIN
 LIQUIDATOR

SHORTS

Dhoni snaps Chennai Super King's losing streak

FORMER India captain MS Dhoni rolled back the years with an unbeaten 26 as Chennai Super Kings bounced back from five losses to down Lucknow Super Giants by five wickets in the IPL yesterday.

Chasing a tricky 167, Chennai rode on an unbeaten stand of 57 between Shivam Dube, who hit 43, and Dhoni to achieve their target with three balls to spare at Lucknow's Ekana Stadium.

The 43-year-old Dhoni, who took over as captain from the injured Ruturaj Gaikwad in their previous defeat, strode in at No. 7 and smashed four fours and a six in his 11-ball knock to silence suggestions that he had lost his touch as a master finisher.

"Good to win a game, unfortunately the games haven't gone our way, it gives a lot of confidence to the team," Dhoni said after winning his first IPL player of the match award since 2019.

"It was a tough game, glad to be on the winning side and hopefully it gives us momentum."

The left-handed Dube, who came in as an impact substitute for the five-time champions, got the winning boundary in his 37-ball knock.

The result snapped Chennai's streak of losses but they still remain bottom of the 10-team table with two wins in seven matches.

Lucknow suffered their third loss in seven matches but can take consolation from skipper Rishabh Pant's back-to-form 63 in their 166-7 after being invited to bat first.

"We had to keep stitching in partnerships. The wicket was stopping a bit, but we could have got 15 runs more I feel," Pant said.

On his own knock, Pant said: "I am feeling better with each and every game, but sometimes it doesn't come off. (I'm) Slowly getting into my rhythm, taking every match at a time."

Kiwi Ferguson out after 'serious' injury

NEW ZEALAND fast bowler Lockie Ferguson is likely to miss the remainder of this year's Indian Premier League after sustaining a "pretty serious" leg injury, his team Punjab Kings said.

Ferguson bowled just



two balls in the defeat against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday before limping off clutching his left thigh in visible pain.

"Ferguson is out indefinitely and the chances of us getting him back by the end of the tournament are very slim, I would have thought," Punjab fast bowling coach James Hopes said yesterday. "I think he has sustained a pretty serious injury."

Ferguson, 33, only recently recovered from a hamstring injury that forced him to miss the Champions Trophy in February and March. He has taken five wickets in four IPL matches this season.

This is the third time since November 2024 that Ferguson has been injured. Before his hamstring issue, he suffered a calf injury, which forced him to miss the ODIs against Sri Lanka last year.

Punjab, who have three wins and two losses, face Kolkata Knight Riders at home in Mullanpur overnight.

CSKs' captain MS Dhoni arranges the field during the IPL Twenty20 cricket match against Lucknow Super Giants. - AFP/ICC

302 Jobs

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1 MEDIA SALES - Specialist

Job Description

- Building and sustaining strong working relationship with advertising agencies and clients.
- New business development and business retention.
- Conceptualise, plan and execute creative and innovative marketing campaigns to enhance brand visibility and engagement.
- Create, develop and continuously improve marketing material, presentations and proposals that showcase our products/services effectively.

Requirements

- SPM level with at least two years of experience.
- Diploma or Bachelor's degree in business, marketing or other related fields.
- Fresh graduates are encouraged to apply, training will be provided.
- Good communication, presentation, problem-solving and organisational skills.
- Passionate in client servicing.
- Possess own transport and willing to travel.
- Able to start work immediately.

Office based in Petaling Jaya (Five-day week)

2 MEDIA SALES - Representative/Agent (Freelance)

Requirement

- Minimum one year sales experience in classified ad, print and digital advertising.
- Those without sales experience but with media advertising knowledge may also apply.
- Attractive commission package and incentives.
- Able to start immediately.
- Central, Northern, Southern, East Coast and Sabah/Sarawak.

Send in your CV with your photo via email to : thesun.hr2@gmail.com

302 Jobs

theSun
 Malaysian Paper

WE ARE HIRING!

1) EXECUTIVE / SENIOR - HR & Admin
2) ASST MANAGER / MANAGER - HR & Admin

Job Description

- Maintain HR records, including employee files, salaries and benefits information.
- Handle employee attendance records, payroll and claims.
- Handle employee relations and resolve any workplace conflicts or issues.
- Provide HR support and guidance to managers and employees.
- Ensure compliance with all employment laws and regulations.
- Stay updated on changes in work legislation and industry standards.
- Handle employee training and development programmes.
- Manage employee benefits programmes and ensure compliance with regulations.
- Stay updated on current industry trends and best practices in HR management.
- For Senior/Assistant Manager - with supervisor skills.
- Handle staff training and recruitment matters.
- Experience in payroll system would be advantageous.
- Handle General Admin and other HR duties.

Requirements

- Diploma/Bachelor's degree in Human Resources Management or related field.
- Executive: 1+ years of experience in HR & Admin or related field.
- Senior: 3+ years of experience in HR & Admin or related field.
- Asst Manager: 5+ years of experience in HR & Admin or related field.
- Fresh graduates are encouraged to apply for Assistant Executive post.
- Basic HR knowledge and proficiency in Microsoft Office.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

3) EXECUTIVE - Safety & Building Maintenance

Job Description

- Perform routine and preventive maintenance on factory & office building systems, including HVAC, electrical, plumbing and mechanical systems.
- Conduct regular inspections of the factory & office building to identify and address maintenance issues.
- Respond promptly to maintenance requests and ensure timely resolution.
- Maintain accurate records of maintenance activities, including work orders, inspections and repairs.
- Ensure all maintenance activities comply with relevant health, safety and environmental regulations.
- Coordinate with external contractors and vendors for specialised maintenance and repair works.
- Monitor and optimise energy usage to improve efficiency and reduce costs.
- Assist in preparation and management of maintenance budget.
- Assist in any ad-hoc operations and admin tasks assigned by Management from time to time.

Requirements

- Diploma/Degree in Building or Facilities Management, Safety & Health or related field.
- Additional certificate: Electrical Chargeman, preferably A4 or minimum A1 would be an added advantage.
- Minimum of one year of experience in Building Maintenance or Safety & Health.
- Adequate technical knowledge of building systems (HVAC, electrical, plumbing etc).
- Excellent problem-solving and troubleshooting skills.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
- Able to work flexi hours.
- Able to handle urgent and last-minute job request.

Send in your CV with your photo via email to : thesun.hr2@gmail.com
 (Closing Date: April 30, 2025)

322 Notices

NOTICE OF APPOINTMENT OF JOINT AND SEVERAL RECEIVERS AND MANAGERS FOR KILANG BERAS KERPAN SDN. BHD. (IN LIQUIDATION AND IN RECEIVERSHIP) (REGISTRATION NO.: 199001012030 (203600-A))

We wish to inform that Mr. Lim Tian Huat and Mr. Chiang Teng Guan of Messrs Rodgers Reidy & Co (NF: 2243) was appointed as Joint and Several Receivers and Managers of Kilang Beras Kerpan Sdn. Bhd. (In Liquidation and In Receivership) ("the Company") on 17 March 2025 under the terms of debentures dated 2 February 1994, 23 January 1995, 9 February 1999, 9 April 2000 and 20 December 2006 given to OCBC Bank (Malaysia) Berhad.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that any party and / or creditors of the above-named Company having a claim present or future, certain or contingent, over any assets and machineries of the Company located at Geran Mukim 181 Lot No. 17, Simpang Empat Kerpan, Mukim Jerlun, Kubang Pasu, 06150 Alor Setar, Kedah are required on or before 5.00pm on Tuesday, 6 May 2025 to notify the Joint and Several Receivers and Managers of the Company at the following address:

Kilang Beras Kerpan Sdn. Bhd. (In Liquidation and In Receivership)
 c/o Messrs. Rodgers Reidy & Co. (NF: 2243)
 K-3A-09, No. 2
 Jalan Solaris
 Solaris Mont' Kiara
 50480 Kuala Lumpur
 Tel: 03-6204 0929
 Faks: 03-6204 0428

Attention: Mr. Lim Tian Huat and Mr. Chiang Teng Guan

If you do not notify the Joint and Several Receivers and Managers of the Company of your claim present or future, certain or contingent, over any assets and machineries of the Company on or before 5.00pm on Tuesday, 6 May 2025, you will be deemed to have relinquished and/or abandoned your claim(s) and the Joint and Several Receivers and Managers of the Company will deal with the assets and machineries of the Company as they deem fit.

322 Notices

TW ASSOCIATES SDN. BHD. 200101001512 (537268-A)
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up) (Incorporated in Malaysia)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE Final General Meeting of the Company will be held at the office of the Liquidator, Suite D23, 2nd Floor, Plaza Pekeliling, No. 2 Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur on Friday, 16th day of May 2025 at 10.00 a.m. for the following purposes:-

(1) To receive accounts from the Liquidator showing how the winding-up has been conducted and to receive any explanations thereon.

(2) To resolve under Section 518 of the Companies Act 2016 that after the expiration of three months from the date of the Final Meeting, the books and papers of the company may be destroyed.

16th April 2025
 Kuala Lumpur

Yap Siew Cheng
 Liquidator

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF
 THE COMPANIES ACT 2016
 AND IN THE MATTER OF
 OP STAR AGRICARE SDN. BHD.
 (IN LIQUIDATION)
 (201801007842 (178570-T))

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN to the general public that the Liquidator of the above-named Company are required on or before 4.00 p.m. of 15 May 2025, to send their names and addresses and the particulars of their debts or claims and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the Liquidator at Suite 9-1, 8th Floor, Oval Dampasara, No. 888, Jalan Damansara, 60000 Kuala Lumpur, and if so required in writing from the Liquidator, are by their solicitors or personally to come in and prove their debts or claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice or in default thereof they will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts are proved.

Dated this 16 April 2025
 NG CHON JIN
 LIQUIDATOR

Mclroy reveals message to Rose

■ BY JACK RATHBORN

RORY MCILROY shared an "ironic" story after a touching moment with runner-up Justin Rose after beating his friend in a playoff to win the 89th Masters.

The victory completed the career grand slam for Mclroy in a nailbiting finale, despite squandering the lead, which ballooned to as much as five shots at one point, on multiple occasions.

The 35-year-old described the win as "a dream come true," though the five-time major winner had some kind words for his Ryder Cup teammate after a birdie on the 18th in the first playoff hole clinched the green jacket.

"I just congratulated him on a great week," Mclroy said in his post-championship press conference. "I said, so, ironic how these things happen."

"We were invited to a dinner by a few members of the club on Tuesday night and we were the only two players at that table and we were the ones who end up being in the playoff."

"It's funny how these things work, he's a great champion and displayed so much grace throughout his career."

"Selfishly I was happy it was another European in the playoff, we're on a good run at the minute, Ryder Cup this year."

"Justin is a great champion and I remember watching the playoff in 2017 when he went up against Sergio, that didn't quite go his way either, he's had a phenomenal record around here."

"I feel for him as he's been so close. He's a good friend and hopefully he has a few more opportunities."

Mclroy also revealed how Tiger Woods served as his inspiration to claim glory at Augusta National

one day.

"I have dreamt about that moment for as long as I can remember," the Northern Irishman added.

"Watching Tiger (Woods) here in 1997 do what he did, winning his first green jacket, I think that inspired so many of my generation to want to emulate what he did."

"It feels incredible. This is my 17th time here and I started to wonder if it would ever be my time."

"The last 10 years coming here with the burden of the grand slam on my shoulder and trying to achieve it, I wonder what we're going to talk about going into next year."

"I'm absolutely honoured, thrilled and proud to be able to call myself a Masters champion."

"There was a lot of pent up emotion that came out on the 18th green and a moment like that makes all the years and close calls worth it." – The Independent

Welcome to the club: Tiger

Woods leads reaction to Mclroy's stunning long-awaited Masters win

■ BY PHIL CASEY

TIGER WOODS has welcomed Rory Mclroy to golf's most exclusive club after his dramatic victory in the 89th Masters.

Mclroy defeated Justin Rose on the first hole of a play-off at Augusta National to join Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Ben Hogan and Gene Sarazen in having won all four major titles.

"Welcome to the club @MclroyRory," Woods posted on social media.

"Completing the grand slam at Augusta is something special. Your determination during this round, and this entire journey has shown through, and now you're a part of history. Proud of you!"

Mclroy's close friend Shane Lowry joked that Mclroy could happily retire after completing the career grand slam.

"This means everything to him," Lowry told *Golf Channel*. "This is all he thinks about, all he talks about."

"He always said to me he'd retire a happy man if he won the green jacket, so I told Erica (Mclroy's wife) he can retire now."

"He's had a long 10, 11 years, he's had a lot of hurdles to get over and it's a credit to him."

Tommy Fleetwood, who finished 21st after a closing 69, added: "I've said it a bunch of times, I think Rory is the best player of our generation. I don't think he's had to prove that for a while."

"For him to have finally got this one, a career grand slam, is unbelievably special. I think this time was always going to come, it's just Rory makes you feel like it's not going to at some point."

"Whatever he did today, Rory's place in golf (history) was secure, but this has just added another layer on top of that."

"I do believe he's the best of our generation and now he's one of the greatest of all time."

The President of Ireland Michael D Higgins joined political leaders from across the island in celebrating Mclroy's victory, calling it a "truly outstanding achievement".

Northern Ireland's First Minister Michelle



A combo picture shows Rory Mclroy celebrating winning all four major c'ships.

O'Neill said the Hollywood golfer's "incredible" triumph placed him among the sport's greatest.

"This is a huge moment in sporting history, and one that has filled everyone back home with great pride and that will undoubtedly inspire future generations to chase their dreams," she posted on X.

"Enjoy the well-deserved celebrations, Rory!" Irish premier Micheal Martin described the win as "epic".

"The Green Jacket is yours Rory Mclroy," the Taoiseach posted on X.

"A finish for the ages at Augusta to win The Masters and complete a richly-deserved career Grand Slam. Epic achievement by one of golf's greatest talents."

Meanwhile, five hours of unbearable sporting agony gave way to scenes of unbridled joy as

crowds at Mclroy's home club in Co Down celebrated his dramatic Masters victory.

After a night when members at Holywood Golf Club endured an emotional rollercoaster like no other, the clubhouse erupted as the local hero sank his birdie putt at the first play-off hole at Augusta National to finally capture a long sought green jacket and enter golfing immortality as a winner of the career grand slam of major titles.

There were tears and cheers as club stalwarts embraced, while junior members who dream of emulating their hometown champion chanted his name.

The celebrations were a marked contrast to the sombre mood inside the club earlier in the night during the agonising moments of Mclroy's final round when he looked to have blown his chances of glory. – The Independent

PIT LANE

Max sent RM5.5b Aston Martin offer

ASTON MARTIN are willing to pay Max Verstappen more than £1 billion over the course of a five-year contract, according to *OE24*. The proposal is said to be 'tempting' the Dutchman after a difficult start to the season at Red Bull. Aston's mind-boggling bid would see Verstappen bank £206m (RM1.15b) per season, totalling £1.03b (RM5.7b). Red Bull advisor Helmut Marko whipped up fresh uncertainty around Verstappen's future after the Bahrain Grand Prix.

Bearman 'so happy' after showing up Antonelli

OLIVER BEARMAN is making his case to be the top youngster in F1 after beating Kimi Antonelli into the points in Bahrain. Haas star Bearman started last on the grid but worked his way up to P10, ahead of Mercedes teenager Antonelli. He said: "Those last 20 laps after the safety car I was under pressure trying to hold position with the Mercedes behind, and trying to fight ahead as well – so it was a tough one. I'm so happy to bring a point home for the team after a really tough qualifying on Saturday."

Red Bull chiefs hold crisis talks

A NUMBER of senior Red Bull figures put their heads together after a frustrating Bahrain Grand Prix on Sunday. *The Guardian* claim that team principal Christian Horner, technical director Pierre Wache, motorsport advisor Helmut Marko and chief engineer Paul Monaghan were all present at a meeting to discuss their early-season woes. Four-time world champion Verstappen is extracting every drop of performance out of the car but he was only quick enough for P6 in Sakhir.

Perez signs lucrative contract

SERGIO PEREZ has signed a lucrative contract with a prominent F1 sponsor in another hint that he will return to the grid in 2026, according to *Blick*. Perez was axed by Red Bull at the end of last season but there are reports suggesting that he will make his comeback for Cadillac when they become the 11th team on the grid next year. Nothing has been made official as yet, but Perez has put pen to paper on a big-money deal with Heineken 0.0, which could be a tell-tale sign that the rumours are true.

Red Bull need more time to fix issues, says Horner

■ BY SCOTT HUNT

RED BULL team principal Christian Horner acknowledges the urgency of addressing performance issues following a disappointing Bahrain Grand Prix, which fueled speculation about Max Verstappen's future with the team.

Despite securing four consecutive drivers' championships with Verstappen, Red Bull has appeared significantly off the pace compared to McLaren in the initial two races of the season.

While a remarkable pole position and victory for Verstappen in Japan offered a

glimpse of the car's potential, his seventh-place qualifying position and subsequent struggles in Bahrain, compounded by two slow pit stops, resulted in a sixth-place finish.

Following the race, Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko expressed significant concern to *Sky Sports Deutschland* regarding Verstappen's future with the team.

Horner conceded that the success in Suzuka masked persistent issues that require immediate attention.

Horner said: "I think this race has exposed some pitfalls that are obviously very clear that we need to get on top of very quickly."

"I think ultimately you can mask it a little through setup and we were able to achieve that last weekend in Suzuka."

"I think we understand where the issues are, it's introducing the solutions that obviously take a little more time."

Verstappen told Dutch media after qualifying that he was "taking part" in the championship and not fighting for it.

"Look it was a bad weekend for the team, nothing went our way from the start of the race, we didn't get off the line cleanly and pit stops didn't work well for us today," Horner added.

"But it's a 24-race championship, we're eight

points behind in the drivers championship and we know we need to make progress very quickly."

Verstappen insists he is not getting too down about his struggles in the car ahead of the next round in Saudi Arabia this weekend.

"I don't need to reset. I'm ok, it is what it is. I always try to do the best I can even when it is disappointing or frustrating situations," he said.

"You have to move on and we keep discussing, trying to improve. We know that we have our problems even if you win a race that does not go away. We just have to keep on working." – The Independent

BAYERN MUNICH and Harry Kane head to Inter Milan tomorrow (3am Malaysian time) needing a victory to reach the semifinals and keep their dream of playing in a home Champions League final alive.

Inter's 2-1 win in Munich puts the Italians in the box seat to reach the Champions League semis for the second time in three years.

Despite a bulging injury list, Bayern had enough chances to win the first leg but failed to make their dominance show on the scoresheet.

It has been a familiar story recently for the German giants – and in particular star striker Kane.

With 25 minutes gone, Kane hit the outside of the post from just 5m out with only Inter 'keeper Yann Sommer to beat.

In Saturday's 2-2 draw against rivals Borussia Dortmund, Vincent Kompany's men failed to make a glut of chances count.

If the German giants are to reach the Champions League showpiece at their Allianz Arena home at the end of May, Kane and the forward line will need to find their lost killer instinct.

Home final at stake

Kane, Bayern need killer instinct against Inzaghi's Inter

In their past two games, Bayern have scored three times from 46 shots on goal.

Goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, centrebacks Dayot Upamecano and Hiroki Ito and wing-back Alphonso Davies will all miss the trip to Milan, hollowing out Bayern's defence. Midfield creator Jamal Musiala will also be absent.

Under-pressure central defender Kim Min-jae, who was hooked shortly after a mistake leading to Dortmund's first on Saturday, is still nursing an Achilles injury, but looks set to play on Wednesday.

Against Dortmund, Bayern finished with one fit centreback on the field: English veteran Eric Dier.

Given the defensive woes, the need to

convert chances becomes even more important.

Bayern and Kane had no trouble in the last 16 against Bayer Leverkusen, when the England captain scored three goals across the two-game tie.

The 31-year-old has 10 goals in 12 games this Champions League season.

Kane told reporters on Saturday his side were "dominant" but "were a bit wasteful with our chances" against Dortmund, as they had been against Inter in Munich.

"We just have to be more clinical. On another day we would have got three or four against them (Inter).

"It gives us confidence because we know we can create chances against them," Kane said,

adding "it's about being there in the right moments.

"We didn't quite have that in the past two games so hopefully we can turn that around."

Bayern are chasing the romance of winning the title on home soil and hoping to exorcise the ghosts of their 2012 final loss to Chelsea in Munich.

Joshua Kimmich, often called upon to lead the side in Neuer's absence, said "if we're a bit more efficient, the game can go our way.

"It's not like we need a miracle. We just need to win the game."

After a 3-1 win over Cagliari on Saturday, Inzaghi said of tomorrow's return leg: "We've got to replicate our first-leg performance, playing with pace, aggression and organisation.

"We go into this clash with a lot of confidence, against one of the top three or four teams in the world." – AFP

Alvarez bags penalty double against Valladolid

JULIAN ALVAREZ netted two penalties as Atletico Madrid dispatched bottom side Real Valladolid 4-2 yesterday in La Liga.

Coach Diego Simeone's son Giuliano and Alexander Sorloth were also on target as the *Rojiblanco*s moved back within seven points of league leaders Barcelona.

Atletico, third, also trail rivals Real Madrid by three points and still hold onto slender hopes of winning the title.

"We can't do anything more than keep moving forward, thinking about what's to come," Alvarez told DAZN.

Valladolid, without a win in 12 matches, gave Atletico a more uncomfortable evening than they would have imagined or hoped for.

The visitors took the lead through a Mamadou Sylla penalty after Clement Lenglet handled a corner kick.

However the hosts were quickly level with a penalty of their own after Javi Sanchez fouled Simeone and Alvarez made no mistake from the spot.

Two minutes later Simeone sent Atletico ahead from a Pablo Barrios pass.

Lenglet allowed Valladolid back after a foul outside his area. Sanchez took the freekick and it deflected off Conor Gallagher's shoulder in the wall past the helpless Jan Oblak.

Atletico were handed a chance to reclaim the lead when Marcos Llorente turned into the box and was clumsily brought down by Henrique.

Alvarez tucked home the game's third spot-kick, sending Andre Ferreira the wrong way.

Sorloth wrapped up Atletico's win with another goal off the bench, as has been his penchant this season, mopping up after Ferreira saved an Alvarez effort.

"We have to

rest and we have a very tough game against Las Palmas (on Saturday)," said Diego Simeone, refusing to be drawn on whether his team were still hopeful of catching up with Barcelona and Real Madrid.

His son was equally determined to follow the party line.

"We have to keep working, enjoy this win and then think about Las Palmas," said Giuliano. – AFP

Bruno vows Devils will fight back against Lyon

■ BY DAMIAN SPELLMAN

MANCHESTER UNITED captain Bruno Fernandes has vowed a fightback in the Europa League after their heavy defeat at Newcastle.

The Red Devils face Lyon at Old Trafford on Thursday (Fri 3am Malaysian time) in the second leg of their quarterfinal, with the tie delicately poised at 2-2.

However, Sunday's 4-1 Premier League humbling at St James' Park, where a second-half collapse proved costly.

Fernandes told MUTV: "We will fight back on Thursday. We will fight back and we will put everything back on the pitch that

we have to do.

"From tomorrow on, we are going to put our heads on to the game, fresh legs, fresh minds and together with the fans, we are going to do something special again."

Manager Ruben Amorim made significant changes to the starting line-up, with goalkeeper Andre Onana among five players omitted.

Alejandro Garnacho levelled the scores before half-time, cancelling out Sandro Tonali's earlier opener.

However, the second half saw a starkly different United performance.

Harvey Barnes' double and a fourth from Bruno Guimaraes, which was handed to him on a plate following a mistake by Onana's replacement Altay Bayindir, left the travelling supporters in a glum mood as they contemplated their journey home.

Fernandes admitted he could understand their frustration, but vowed to give them something to cheer on Thursday night.

He said: "They have always been by our side, so it's time for us to pay back and I'm pretty sure this team is aware of that.

"We are very aware of what the fans have been doing for us, how much they care about the club, how much they care about

the players.

"I know sometimes frustration gets into them, but that's normal. As it gets into me on the pitch, it's normal to get into the fans in the stands, and everyone is very aware of what we have to do on Thursday.

"It's going to be a big game for us, it's going to be a big game for the club. It's going to be a big game for Lyon too, but we have to be at the level."

Amorim, who declined to reveal whether or not Onana would be recalled to face Lyon, lost Joshua Zirkzee to a hamstring problem at St James' Park and withdrew Garnacho and Fernandes as he attempted to retain a measure of freshness for what lies ahead. – The Independent

Lukaku stars as Napoli keep pressure on leaders

ROMELU LUKAKU

made sure that Napoli would stay three points behind Serie A leaders Inter Milan with a goal and two assists in yesterday's 3-0 win over struggling Empoli.

Belgium striker Lukaku has scored 12 times and set up 10 more in Italy's top flight this season and has been key to Napoli's battle with reigning champions Inter for the league title.

The 31-year-old has developed his game under coach Antonio Conte and is having as much of an impact with his distribution as he is with his goalscoring, with Scott McTominay being the beneficiary yesterday.

McTominay rattled in Napoli's other two goals, taking his tally to eight in his debut Serie A season after being brilliantly served by Lukaku, who arrived last summer to replace banished star Victor Osimhen, and has surpassed expectations.

"Romelu's obviously a great teammate. He's very demanding, he demands a lot from all the team, from myself to score more, to create more

opportunities for him to score as well," said McTominay to DAZN.

"He's got two assists and one goal, he's obviously an amazing player with an incredible career and we're so happy to have Rom."

Scotland international McTominay drilled home Napoli's opener from just outside the area in the 18th minute after Lukaku used his strength and control to hold up the ball and slip in the marauding midfielder.

Empoli, who sit second-from-bottom and have failed to win in 17 matches, were in the match and dangerous until Lukaku doubled the hosts' lead in the 56th minute, collecting Mathias Olivera's pass and smashing in with his left foot.

Five minutes later and Lukaku showed a more delicate touch when setting up McTominay for his brace, floating over a perfect inswinging cross which his former Manchester United teammate confidently headed home.

McTominay nearly had a hattrick in the 66th minute when, after again being laid on by Lukaku, he rolled a low shot against the post when one-on-one with Empoli goalkeeper Devis Vasquez.

Yesterday's win keeps the pressure up on Inter who face Bayern Munich in the second leg of their Champions League quarterfinal and then travel to high-flying Bologna this weekend before facing local rivals AC Milan in the Italian Cup semifinals. – AFP



Napoli's Romelu Lukaku (left) celebrates scoring their second goal with Scott McTominay. – REUTERS/PICTA



BY MIGUEL DELANEY

IN the hours immediately after Real Madrid's 3-0 defeat to Arsenal, their chastened players insisted on making a point.

They started posting on social media about how it's not over, which may seem the sort of banality that modern stars do, but was actually part of something more concerted.

It is a modern version of the first of club legend Juanito's 10 requirements for *remontadas* – in what is essentially the club's playbook for such moments – which is to already start talking about beating the opposition on the bus back for the first leg.

The former winger became synonymous with comebacks due to a series of epics in the 1980s. The Madrid industrial complex has already started cranking into gear to create *ambiente de remontada* – a comeback atmosphere.

There are few like it in football. Even teams with a strong lead have felt beaten as soon as that Bernabeu atmosphere starts up.

As Juanito told Internazionale's Graziano Bini during a 3-0 Madrid comeback from 2-0 in the 1984-85 Uefa Cup final, "90 minutes is a long time in the Santiago Bernabeu".

Three minutes can be bad enough. You only have to look at the end of the famous 3-1 over Manchester City in the 2021-22 Champions League semifinal.

Part of it is down to this famous "aura" that everyone from City to Bayern Munich and Chelsea have felt in the Bernabeu.

Arsenal are going to face the same scenario. The stadium is infused with belief, radiating through the players.

Doubt doesn't really come into it. Even if they're still three goals down into the second half of the Arsenal second leg, the chant will start up, *si se puede* – yes we can.

Part of it is also down to the history that has created such an aura. It is one reason why Madrid renovating the Bernabeu rather than moving was so important.

When their players look around, they know they're somewhere where a lot of football history has happened, with almost all of it having amplified the greatness of the club.

"Younger players like myself have understood the legend of the Santiago Bernabeu during European nights after these matches," goalscorer hero Rodrygo said after the win over City.

No club has successfully come back from at least two goals down in the first leg of a European knockout tie as much as Madrid.

The 15-time Champions League winners have done it nine times. Barcelona are actually next, with



'It ain't over 'til it's over'

History of Real comebacks mean Arsenal cannot switch off against Madrid

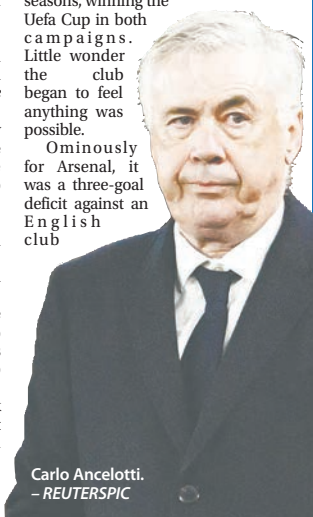
Real Madrid's players look dejected after losing to Arsenal last week. – REUTERSPIC

eight, and Manchester United on five. Four of Madrid's have also been in the European Cup or Champions League.

Their most spectacular came during a sensational two seasons in the old Uefa Cup in the middle of the 1980s, which was where the "spirit of Juanito" was created.

The winger, who died in a car accident in 1992, was central to all of them. Madrid managed five in two seasons, winning the Uefa Cup in both campaigns. Little wonder the club began to feel anything was possible.

Ominously for Arsenal, it was a three-goal deficit against an English club



Carlo Ancelotti.
– REUTERSPIC

Real Madrid's biggest European Cup / Champions League comebacks

1975-76 2nd round

1st leg: Derby County 4

Real Madrid 1

2nd leg: Real Madrid 5

Derby County 1

1979-80 Quarterfinal

Celtic 2 R. Madrid 0

Real Madrid 3 Celtic 0.

1986-87 Quarterfinal

Red Star Belgrade 4-R. Madrid 2

R. Madrid 2 Red Star 0.

2015-16 Quarterfinal

Wolfsburg 2 R. Madrid 0

R. Madrid 3 Wolfsburg 0.

Other European comebacks (all in the Uefa Cup)

1984-85 2nd round

1st leg: Rijeka 3-Real Madrid 1

2nd leg: Real Madrid 3 Rijeka 0

1984-85 3rd round

Anderlecht 3 R. Madrid 0

R. Madrid 6 Anderlecht 1

1984-85 Semifinal

Inter Milan 2 R. Madrid 0

R. Madrid 3 Inter Milan 0

1985-86 3rd round

M'gladbach 5 R. Madrid 1

R. Madrid 4 M'gladbach 0

1985-86 Semifinal

Inter 3 R. Madrid 1

R. Madrid 5 Inter Milan 1

in the European Cup that gave rise to the start of all of this.

Even after Dave Mackay's Derby County had destroyed Madrid 4-1 at the old Baseball Ground in 1975-76, former left-back Jose Antonio Camacho was repeatedly saying they would win 6-0 on the bus back to London. "We're going to do it. We were totally convinced we would still knock them out," Vicente Del Bosque, then a midfielder, has said.

They didn't quite get six but they did get enough, beating Derby 4-1 in normal time before Carlos Santillana claimed the clinching fifth in extra-time.

Juanito had taken note of Camacho's fervour and would subsequently include it as the first requirement on his list.

Known as *el decalogo de Juanito*, it was supposedly written before the 1979-80 European Cup quarterfinal second leg against Celtic, when Madrid came back from 2-0 down to win 3-0.

The list is going to be raised a lot before kickoff tomorrow (3am Malaysian time), and it goes as follows:

- Start talking about destroying the opposition in the second leg as soon as you get on the bus back after the first leg.
- Remind everyone every day you are going to win, and write it on the dressing-room wall.
- Intimidate the opposition before

the match by looking them in the eyes, to make them think you might be capable of anything

- Choose to kickoff if you win the coin toss in order to have the first kick; immediately get into the opposition area and create what feels like a chance, to get the crowd going
- Commit the game's first foul and make it hard; have the first shot of the match, and make it noisy
- Come out early after halftime so the opposition arrive to see you ready
- Don't let the opposition into your half; maintain maximum intensity, with the crowd immersed.

Madrid are going to try to do much of this tomorrow. None of it means it's any kind of guarantee. That's just what Madrid try to make you think.

To do this, they are going to have to work, and they collectively ran 12km less than Arsenal in the first leg.

There have similarly been 23 first-leg defeats that Madrid haven't recovered from in their European history, with 20 coming in the European Cup and Champions League.

Ruud Gullit said before Milan humbled them 5-0 in 1988-89 that you had to remember you were playing the team, not the shirt.

Arsenal are going to need to play a game where they have a 3-0 lead, not Madrid's idea of an occasion. – The Independent

Arsenal target Champions League glory to save season

ARSENAL face Real Madrid tomorrow (3am) with one foot already in the Champions League semifinals but with the added pressure of knowing their entire season hinges on the result at the Bernabeu.

Mikel Arteta's men last week demolished the defending champions 3-0 in the first leg of their quarterfinal in London and are favourites to reach the last four of Europe's top club competition for only the third time.

But all their eggs are now in one basket as they seek to end their trophy drought, with leaders Liverpool almost out of sight in the Premier League.

Arsenal, who have never been crowned European champions, have become used to battling for the English league title – narrowly

losing out to Manchester City in the past two seasons.

This year it has been their misfortune to be competing against a Liverpool team that flew out of the blocks in Arne Slot's first season at Anfield.

Arsenal have had chances to put the pressure on the runaway leaders but 12 draws in the Premier League, and just two wins in their past seven games, have cost them.

Saturday's 1-1 draw at home to mid-table Brentford meant the Gunners finished the weekend 13 points behind Liverpool, who could wrap up a record-equalling 20th English League title as early as next weekend.

Arteta denied that his players had been distracted by their upcoming match in Spain but his team selection showed where his priorities lie in

the final weeks of the season.

The Spaniard made five changes to the side that beat Madrid, with winger Bukayo Saka and captain Martin Odegaard left out of the starting line-up.

Afterwards, he turned his attentions to Real Madrid.

"We still have six games to play in the Premier League, which are going to be really important, for sure," he said. "But, for now, it's all about Wednesday."

Arsenal will travel to Madrid in high spirits, even though the 15-time European champions regularly defy logic in the competition, meaning Arteta will not breathe easily until the final whistle.

Arsenal's high-wire act means they risk ending the season without major silverware for a fifth straight season despite the undoubted progress

made under Arteta.

And the Gunners' hold on second place in the Premier League is by no means secure.

They are six points above a faltering Nottingham Forest. Newcastle, in fourth spot, are seven points behind but have a game in hand and are in a rich vein of form.

Despite their stumbles, Arsenal are almost certain to secure one of the five qualification places for next season's Champions League.

But slipping below second would dent the Gunners' pride and challenge the perception that they are making relentless progress towards their first Premier League title since 2004.

The Gunners could make club history in Europe in the next few weeks but if they fall short, the season could end with a whimper. – AFP

RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Bournemouth 1
(Semenyo 1) Fulham 0.

TOP 10	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	32	23	7	2	74	31	76
Arsenal	32	17	12	3	57	27	63
Nottm Forest	32	17	6	9	51	38	57
Newcastle	31	17	5	9	56	40	56
Man City	32	16	7	9	62	42	55
Chelsea	32	15	9	8	56	39	54
Aston Villa	32	15	9	8	49	46	54
Bournemouth	32	13	9	10	52	40	48
Fulham	32	13	9	10	47	43	48
Brighton	32	12	12	8	51	49	48

CHAMPIONSHIP: Hull 1 Coventry 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	42	25	13	4	82	29	88
Burnley	42	24	16	2	57	13	88
Sheff Utd	42	26	7	9	57	33	83
Sunderland	42	21	13	8	57	38	76
Bristol City	42	16	16	10	54	45	64
Coventry	42	18	9	15	59	54	63

LA LIGA: Atletico Madrid 4 (Alvarez 25-pen, 71-pen, Simeone 27, Sorloth 79) **Valladolid 2** (Sylla 21-pen, Sanchez 56).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	31	22	4	5	84	29	70
Real Madrid	31	20	6	5	64	31	66
A. Madrid	31	18	9	4	53	26	63
A. Bilbao	31	15	12	4	49	25	57
Villarreal	30	14	9	7	53	40	51
Real Betis	31	13	9	9	42	39	48

SERIE A: Napoli 3 (McTominay 18, 61, Lukaku 56) **Empoli 0.**

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter Milan	32	21	8	3	72	31	71
Napoli	32	20	8	4	51	25	68
Atalanta	32	18	7	7	65	30	61
Juventus	32	15	14	3	49	30	59
Bologna	32	15	12	5	51	37	57
Lazio	32	16	8	8	53	43	56

BRIEFS

e-sports recognised as core high-performance sports

THE Malaysian Electronic Sports Federation (MESF) welcomes the recognition of e-sports as one of the core high-performance sports as announced by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi on Monday. In a statement, MESF said the move is part of the Ministry of Youth and Sports' (KBS) E-sports Development Strategic Plan 2020-2025 and is an important step in strengthening the country's e-sports athlete development ecosystem towards world-class achievements. MESF also welcomes the emphasis on strengthening the implementation of the One Student, One Sport (1M1S) Policy by the Ministry of Education which will open up wider space for e-sports as a high-impact sports education channel among students. As a proactive response, MyLeague, a grassroots development initiative by MESF together with Esports Integrated (ESI), has been established as an official platform to unearth local talent across various major gaming titles including MyRL (eRacing), MyEL (eFootball), MyTL (Tekken 8), MyPL (PUBG), MyFL (Free Fire), MyCL (Counter Strike), MyHL (Honor of Kings) and MyML (Mobile Legends).

Rachel fails to reach El Gouna quarterfinal

NATIONAL women's squash player Rachel Arnold failed to advance to the quarterfinals of the 2025 El Gouna International Squash Open in Egypt after losing to world No. 4 Olivia Weaver from the United States early this morning. In the second round match held at the El Gouna Conference and Culture Centre, world No. 20 Rachel was unable to match her opponent's game, going down 7-11, 4-11, 4-11 in just 24 minutes. This marks Rachel's fourth defeat to Weaver in their four encounters. Weaver will next face Belgium's Tinne Gills in the quarterfinals after the latter defeated New Zealand's Joelle King.

Mazlan's legacy lives on

THE passing of former National Sports Council (NSC) Director-General Datuk Mazlan Ahmad is deeply mourned by the Malaysian sporting community and is regarded as a great loss.

Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) president Tan Sri Mohamad Norza Zakaria described Mazlan as a calm sports figure who spoke little, but whose every opinion was always insightful and respected.

"He not only made great contributions to the NSC but continued to contribute to the development of national sports through his role as an independent member of the OCM Selection Committee.

"His services were immense, particularly in introducing programmes that elevated the country's sporting performance to a higher level.

"We appointed him as an independent member because we trusted his transparency, expertise, and integrity in selecting the best athletes to represent the nation."

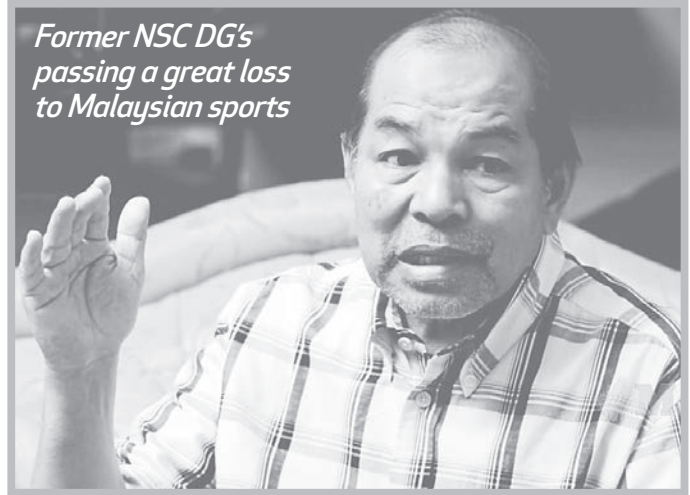
Former National Sports Institute chief executive officer Datuk Dr Ramlan Abd Aziz said: "It's difficult to quantify his contributions and services to the country's sporting arena.

"His contributions and services were not limited to sports and will be widely acknowledged by his successors because we will all follow in his footsteps.

"And we will always remember the examples he set for us," Ramlan told reporters at the Section 9 Muslim Cemetery in Kota Damansara yesterday.

Earlier, Mazlan's son Saiful Ezane told *Bernama* that his father had been admitted to Universiti Malaya Medical Centre (PPUM) in

Former NSC DG's passing a great loss to Malaysian sports



Petaling Jaya since Friday after suffering a stroke and pneumonia.

Mazlan led NSC from 1993 to 2005 and was known as the main architect behind the success of the Jaya '98 and Gemilang 2001 programmes, which boosted Malaysia's achievements at the 1998 KL Commonwealth Games and the 2001 Kuala Lumpur SEA Games.

During his 12 years of service, he introduced long-term sports development policies,

strengthened the national backup athlete programmes, and restructured the National Sports Institute (ISN) to enhance scientific support for elite athletes.

He also held key roles in national sports bodies, including the Malaysian National Cycling Federation and was Malaysia's chef-de-mission for the 2001 SEA Games.

Mazlan received the National Sports Icon Award in 2022. - *Bernama*

'M'sia will produce results at Sudirman Cup'



Men's doubles badminton head coach Herry Iman Pierngadi.
- *BERNAMPIC*

MEN'S doubles badminton head coach Herry Iman Pierngadi is optimistic that Malaysia has three of the strongest men's doubles pairs and will be able to produce positive results at the 2025 Sudirman Cup in Xiamen, China from April 27 to May 4.

He said Malaysia, which is competing in Group C, only needs to be wary of the threat of Japan as the main challenger, while they will not face any problems in taming Australia and France.

The three pairs involve Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik, Goh Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin Mohd Rumsani and Man Wei Chong-Tee Kai Wun who have extensive experience besides being ranked in the top 10 of the world.

"To me, the men's doubles this time is the best that Malaysia will send.

"Nonetheless for the group we need to pay more attention to Japan. While I see Australia and especially France not sending their best pairs as they will be represented by backup players," he told reporters after the centralised training camp at Academy Badminton Malaysia (ABM) in Bukit Kiara, Kuala Lumpur, yesterday.

The Indonesian coach admitted that Malaysia's main weapon in this Sudirman Cup campaign also lies in the diversity of playing styles of the three men's doubles involved.

"Each pair has a different playing style, so I have many options to field any pairing depending on who our opponents are.

"From a technical point of view, we will also look at the suitability of the opponent, but our advantage now is that we have various types of games that can be adapted to the situation," he said. - *Bernama*

Sri Pahang FC's league future to be decided after season ends

MALAYSIA CUP finalist Sri Pahang FC have yet to decide whether it will continue in next season's Super League.

Club chairman Datuk Seri Raja Shaharudin Shah Raja Jalil Shah said a decision will be made only after the end of the current Super League and Malaysia Cup campaigns.

He said the Sri Pahang are currently reviewing its overall performance this season before discussing the matter with key stakeholders.

"This includes discussions with the club's

owner Tengku Muda Pahang Tengku Abdul Rahman Sultan Ahmad Shah, management and league organisers.

"For now, the focus is on preparing for the final Super League match against Penang and the Malaysia Cup match against JDT," he told reporters during the Sri Pahang FC Hari Raya celebration on Monday.

Shaharudin Shah added that the club must take this careful approach as the decision involves licensing matters, besides the fact that the decision could impact Sri Pahang's youth

teams in the Youth Cup and President's Cup for 2025/26.

"The club previously considered withdrawing due to unpaid salaries, but that issue has now been resolved," he said.

He said the current focus is to end the Super League and Malaysia Cup on a high note.

Meanwhile, club chief executive officer Datuk Mohamed Suffian Awang urged fans to buy tickets early for the Malaysia Cup final on April 26.

So far, 8,633 out of 33,600 tickets allocated to Sri Pahang have been sold, he said. - *Bernama*



Time to buy

Van Dijk outlines what Liverpool need to retain challenge for titles in upcoming years

VIRGIL VAN DIJK believes Liverpool need a "big summer" in the transfer market to position them to win silverware in the next few seasons.

Liverpool only need two victories to win the Premier League title and could become champions as soon as Sunday but captain Van Dijk is looking to the future.

The defender has dropped a hint that he will follow Mohamed Salah in signing a new contract and has underlined that he wants to stay by saying it is "obvious" how much he loves Liverpool and that the club is "part of me".

And now he believes they need to be busy in the summer after only buying one player who is part of Arne Slot's squad, Federico Chiesa, last year.

Liverpool are likely to lose Trent Alexander-Arnold when his contract expires, with the rightback a target for Real Madrid, and Van Dijk feels that, behind the scenes, director of football Richard Hughes and

in, I think it should be a big summer. "I think they're planning to make it a big summer, so we all have to trust the board as a Liverpool-connected fan to do the right job."

Van Dijk's own contract ends this summer but he has been in talks with Liverpool for months and said last week that progress had been made.

But there has long been the expectation he would remain at Anfield and the defender, a £75 million (RM413m) signing from Southampton, said why Liverpool means so much to him.

"I think it's the whole combination," he added. "I joined the club in 2017 for many reasons.

Reasons like how much it means to all the Scousers, to all the fans around the

whole world to be connected to Liverpool.

"Being successful with Liverpool; the culture of the club, everything that embodies Liverpool that is just part of me.

"That's why I'm always proud when I wear that shirt, go out there and try to be the best version of myself in terms of the football player that I am.

"We are two wins, six points away from glory. I know what it means

to the club and I know what it will bring us if it happens.

"Most of the players don't so when it happens, it will be beautiful but we still have a job to do.

"But going back to the fact that I love the club, that's pretty obvious.

"I think you can see that in the way I speak about the club, the way I work for the club in terms of what I do on the pitch on and off the pitch, and that will always be the same."

Salah, who could have left on a free transfer, signed a new two-year deal on Friday. The Egyptian has scored 32 goals and got 23 assists this season and Van Dijk believes he can carry on excelling.

"You can't put it in words how consistent he is," he said. "Obviously his numbers, but the work rate he's put in over those last eight years at the club is incredible and he can still show it for another few years."

Van Dijk scored a late winner against West Ham on Sunday but only

owners Fenway Sports Group will look to do to business.

He said: "I think Liverpool should be able to challenge for titles in the upcoming years.

"Whatever happens in terms of players going out, players coming

FROM LEFT: Salah, Van Dijk and Alexander-Arnold

after being involved in the mix-up that led to Andy Robertson scoring an own goal.

"It's unfortunately part of the game," he said. "Very, very unlucky. I think if you play the game of football, these moments are split second and in the end, we don't get punished for it, so that's a good thing." - The Independent

