



Chinese New Year cheer for Pulau Ketam community

Berjaya Corporation Berhad founder and adviser Tan Sri Vincent Tan donates RM250,000 to three schools and five temples to boost quality of life for residents.

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Cops to clarify phone check rules

Home minister tasks IGP with meeting Suhakam to provide clear explanation on circumstances under which police can access content on devices of individuals.

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Although 3D jobs are essential to the economy, they remain greatly undervalued and overlooked. - AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

MEF: Unwise to impose hiring of interns as condition for entry of expats

Forcibly implementing policy would restrict companies from procuring best global talent and have devastating effects, says federation chief.

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Concern over sustainability of 3D workforce

Few Malaysians take up dirty, dangerous and difficult jobs due to demanding nature of work and low social status.

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Suhakam, cops to discuss mobile phone checks issue

➤ IGP tasked by home minister to provide clear explanation from law enforcement perspective about random examination of content on devices of individuals

PUTRAJAYA: Police and the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) will hold a meeting soon to discuss the issue of police checking mobile phones of individuals.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail has tasked IGP Tan Sri Razarudin Husain to provide a clear explanation from a law enforcement perspective.

"The police cannot inspect mobile phones without valid reasons. Such actions must be based on intelligence, and cannot be carried out arbitrarily.

"If police are not permitted to check mobile phones, how can we respond if there is information about an individual involved in criminal activities such as terrorism?"

He was speaking at a media conference after inspecting preparations for the Asia International Security Summit and Expo 2025 at the Putrajaya International Convention

Centre yesterday.

Saifuddin Nasution said any individual who feels that his privacy has been violated due to such actions can lodge a report for an investigation to be conducted.

Razarudin had reportedly said police have the authority to check people's mobile phones if there is suspicion or credible information that an offence has been committed.

He said any officer with the rank of inspector or higher is authorised to check a person's mobile phone at police roadblocks, citing that this is allowed under the Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) 1998 and Police Act 1967.

He also said this power is granted under Section 23(1) of the CPC, which ensures that no communication contains obscene, offensive, threatening or harmful content.

In a statement, Suhakam urged the

government to clarify Razarudin's claim.

The commission had labelled the IGP's statement as troubling and said police personnel cannot be allowed to inspect an individual's mobile phone in a random manner, Bernama reported.

Suhakam said people are encouraged to be aware of their fundamental rights, in particular when stopped, questioned or even arrested by police.

It added that pursuant to Section 116B of the CPC, a police officer with the rank of inspector or higher is only permitted to access mobile or other digital devices subject to a legal search as part of an ongoing investigation, whereby the police have reasonable cause to believe that an offence has been or is being committed.

It said sections 247 and 248 of the CMA also require the search and seizure of the digital device to be conducted in connection with an ongoing investigation, having reasonable cause to believe that an offence has been committed.

The Malaysian Bar Council has issued a pamphlet titled *The Police and Your Basic Rights* that lists scenarios with the police and what Malaysians can do to exercise their rights as a citizen.

M'sia to rely on Madani principles as Asean chair

LANGKAWI: Malaysia has placed its Madani principles at the heart of its 2025 Asean chairmanship, with a focus on inclusivity and sustainability as the region navigates a volatile global landscape, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan.

He said Malaysia's leadership would aim to set a new standard for global governance, guided by the enduring values of inclusivity, diversity and future oriented planning.

"We aspire not just to set the pace for the next 12 months but also set a new standard for global governance," he said at the Asean Foreign Ministers' Retreat yesterday.

Mohamad said through Madani principles, Malaysia would adopt an inclusive approach at every level, emphasising the importance of supporting MSMEs and ensuring that technology plays a key role in their development.

He reaffirmed Malaysia's commitment to promoting inclusive development, providing equitable opportunities for all segments of society and ensuring that no one is left behind.

"In the spirit of this endeavour, we hope to see it reflected within Asean's membership, that Southeast Asia is not a region of 10 nations – there are 11 of us.

"And all 11 deserve to participate fully in an organisation that champions the well-being of this part of the world. If we do not demonstrate inclusivity within our organisation, all of our rhetoric would ring hollow.

"We must walk the talk, and we must demonstrate trust and support for one another."

He said Asean would continue to drive its own path forward amid intensifying superpower competition in the region.

He added that with a highly geo-strategic position, cultural versatility and economic weight, Southeast Asia holds massive potential.

"One frequently asked question relates to the US presidency and how this will shape the dynamics of the region in the years to come. Our region has become a site of concentrated superpower competition.

"Embedded in this tension is the unspoken truth – that this has only happened because, as I said earlier, we hold massive potential."



Mohamad speaking at the retreat in Langkawi yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC

Mohamad said the economic bloc, with a combined GDP of US\$3.8 trillion (RM17 trillion) and a population of 677 million, must drive its own path forward.

"As a collective, and as Asean, our strength is that of a giant. Asean's strength lies in the way it represents an entirely different model of engagement, one where shared decision-making transcends differences in governance.

"It is one where influence is not measured

only by military might or economic power but by the ability to foster dialogue, encourage cooperation and build the trust necessary for global peace and prosperity."

Malaysia officially assumed the chairmanship of Asean 2025 on Jan 1, the fifth time it has led the regional grouping since its establishment in 1967.

Malaysia previously chaired Asean in 1977, 1997, 2005 and 2015. – Bernama

'Third-party assessment vital for ministry's initiatives'

GEORGE TOWN: The Rural and Regional Development Ministry should conduct third-party evaluations to assess the effectiveness of each initiative implemented by the ministry, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

He said this would ensure that actions taken by the ministry truly meet the needs and expectations of the people.

"Our approach must always remain relevant and our KPIs must be centred on the well-being of the people. That is why I am proposing that we conduct third-party evaluations to objectively evaluate the effectiveness of every initiative we implement.

"Through this, we can ensure that every programme reaches its target groups with maximum impact," said Ahmad Zahid, who is also rural and regional development minister, at the ministry's Retreat 2025 dinner in Teluk Bahang on Saturday.

The event was also attended by Penang Deputy Chief Minister I Datuk Dr Mohamad Abdul Hamid and Penang Regional Development Authority chairman Datuk Dr Shaik Hussein Mydin.

Ahmad Zahid urged the ministry to intensify efforts on post-delivery services in every development programme carried out.

Citing the Perumahan Rakyat Sejahtera housing programme, he said the ministry should not just build houses and have no further engagement with the recipients.

He also outlined five key targets for the ministry this year to increase the effectiveness of its agenda, including continuing to help rural entrepreneurs grow and enhance their potential to penetrate global markets, and set a target for at least 500 *Orang Asli* children to secure university places compared with 446 who successfully entered institutions of higher learning in 2024.

"Thirdly, I am very grateful that the Kemas pre-Tahfiz Programme has received overwhelming response, but we cannot stop there.

"I want us to expand our efforts by creating a continuity programme for pre-tahfiz post-tabika nurseries so that the children can continue *Quran* memorisation even after entering primary school."

Ahmad Zahid also expressed hope that agencies like Felcra would further ensure that the agricultural sector becomes the backbone of the national food security agenda.

He said the three main principles of the Rural Transformation Agenda must be strengthened, including ensuring that people's basic needs are sufficiently met. – Bernama

MoU on tourism inked with Korea

JOHOR BAHRU: The signing of an MoU on tourism cooperation between Malaysia and Korea is expected to yield long-term benefits for both countries, said the Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister.

It said the agreement aims to boost cultural exchange, increase tourist arrivals, enhance tourism revenue and create new economic opportunities.

"It underlines mutual commitment to increasing understanding and cooperation in various aspects of tourism.

"The key areas of focus under the agreement include tourism promotion and marketing, capacity-building, sharing tourism information and best practices, increasing business tourism and developing community-based tourism and ecotourism," it said in a statement.

The MoU was signed on Saturday in conjunction with the Asean Tourism Forum 2025 between Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing and Korean Culture, Sports and Tourism Minister Yu Inchon. – Bernama

Unwise to implement interns-for-expatriate policy: MEF

► 'Move would complicate talent acquisition strategies of industries and restrict firms from hiring best global candidates'

BY JOSHUA PURUSHOTMAN
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PETALING JAYA: "Linking the placement of interns to the hiring of expatriates is tantamount to short-term thinking that could lead to (the country's) self-destruction," said the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) yesterday.

However, its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said, MEF would support a policy in which multi-national companies (MNC) and major corporations hiring large numbers of expatriates establish programmes to help fresh local graduates gain industry experience.

He was commenting on the Human Resources Ministry's Jan 15 statement that through Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad, it would implement a 1:3 Practical Training Policy that would benefit 100,000 local students.

Under the policy, every Expatriate Employment Pass approved via the Malaysia Expatriate Services Centre and Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation must be linked to three paid and structured industrial training placements for local students.

The statement said participating companies

would enjoy tax relief incentives under the National Structured Internship Programme.

The pilot phase of the policy would be from Feb 15 to Dec 31, with full implementation taking place on Jan 1, 2026.

Syed Hussain told *theSun*: "The reality is that expatriates do not need Malaysia but we need them due to the acceleration of artificial intelligence technology, the Internet of Things, digitalisation, and new ways of managing business operations and industrial processes.

"Malaysia needs to attract such experts and specialists in advanced technologies to give locals vital learning opportunities and working knowledge. However, by linking their employment with the hiring of interns, our decision-makers seem to have lost the plot."

He said expatriates are usually hired on fixed-term contracts due to their specialised knowledge, skills and experience that are not available locally.

He added that most companies plan to eventually replace expatriate jobs as Malaysians assume those positions.

Syed Hussain also said expatriates come to Malaysia to establish, equip and prepare local organisations with the latest technological know-how to help the country progress into a high-income nation with advanced technology.

"They are not here because they have nothing better to do and we should appreciate their contributions. Linking their hiring to forcibly placing interns in companies would have devastating effects.

"For instance, companies and some industries that require specialised skills may face difficulties aligning internship roles with business needs, limiting the effectiveness of internship programmes."

He said the expatriate-intern linkage would complicate the talent acquisition strategies of industries that require niche expertise while obligations to place interns alongside expatriates would restrict firms from hiring the best global talent if they are not able to accommodate interns.

The policy would also pose challenges for employers since having a higher number of interns would increase administrative workload, especially for micro, small and medium enterprises with limited human resource capacity.

Syed Hussain said if MNC and major investors in Malaysia do not see value in the expatriate-intern policy, the country would not progress and be denied much-needed technical know-how.

"The hiring of expatriates is critical for industries that need advanced technologies and instrumentation processes, so let us not limit the flow of investments in new technologies, knowledge, skills and experience available through expatriates by imposing additional employment conditions."

He urged policymakers to be realistic and understand the situation well before issuing unilateral statements or making announcements.

"It is important to hold industry dialogues and discussions to seek our views before implementing new policies. As the devil is always in the details, the success of any policy lies in its execution.

"Issuing new policy statements without prior discussions with stakeholders or just to create work for government agencies is not the right way because businesses will eventually be forced to implement them to devastating effect."

Ministry to explore used motorcycle transaction app

KUALA LUMPUR: The Transport Ministry will hold talks with the Road Transport Department to enable an app for selling and buying used motorcycles to be integrated with the MySikap system.

Its minister Anthony Loke said this is to avoid incidents involving the transfer of ownership and outstanding summonses.

He said although buyers can check summonses on the myJPJ app, there are restrictions and controls on data sharing for users.

"This is to ensure users are safer and more secure. They can see the condition of the motorcycles before proceeding with the transaction.

"The registration system for motorcycles is the same as for cars, so there is a grant. When a transaction takes place, there will be a change of name, ownership and so on. Currently, you have to do it manually at the department. For cars, there is the eAuto system that enables car owners to transfer ownership. Motorcycles do not have that yet."

He was speaking after the launch of the Rider Gate app at Lanai@MATIC here on Saturday.

Loke said the app is a concept that could meet the used vehicle market demand and ease the burden of buyers wanting to own motorcycles.

"Rider Gate is an innovation that aspires to change the landscape of the used motorcycle market and shows how technology could be used to solve challenges that have long hampered the used motorcycle market due to factors such as the risk of fraud, unclear ownership records and concerns over mechanical defects.

"This is a comprehensive and innovative solution, offering a simpler, faster and safer used motorcycle transaction experience. It also gives buyers confidence by ensuring every transaction is done transparently and free from risk of fraud." - Bernama



CLEANSING DIP ...

Children soaking in a pool before their circumcision during the Perdana Khatan Programme organised by the An-Nur Polyclinic at the Precinct 11 Neighborhood Complex in Putrajaya yesterday.
- BERNAMAPIK

Umrah operator bank guarantee law under review

PUTRAJAYA: The Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry is reviewing the requirement for *umrah* services companies to put up bank guarantees of at least RM250,000.

Bank guarantees for such companies, which is a requirement in the Tourism Industry Regulations under Act 482, will be increased for large-scale operators according to the size of company operations.

The ministry announced the move, which aims to ensure quality services and the welfare of pilgrims are maintained, following increasingly serious and frequent cases of fraud.

"When fraud occurs, funds from bank guarantees will be used to compensate victims." It said if there are companies that cannot

meet the minimum requirement, the ministry would not hesitate to revoke their licences.

It stressed its commitment to protect the interests of Malaysian *umrah* pilgrims by imposing strict action against companies that fail to comply with the stipulated requirements and regulations.

"The ministry is disappointed that although action has been taken against operators who have failed to comply with the law, there are still operators who continue to ignore their responsibilities."

It said 135 victims from various backgrounds came to the ministry in Putrajaya on Friday to complain about operators who failed to manage their *umrah* trips.

Previously, the ministry held an engagement session with representatives of the Umrah Operators Association, namely the Association of Bumiputera Tour Operators, Association of Travel and Tourism Agents and the Association of Umrah and Hajj Travel Agencies.

According to the ministry, public trust in the *umrah* industry must be restored and operators that are negligent or irresponsible would not be given the opportunity to continue operating.

The ministry called on *umrah* operators to comply with the rules and guidelines set out, which are not only to safeguard the interests of the public but also to ensure the integrity and credibility of the *umrah* industry in Malaysia.
- Bernama

Incentive to spur participation in cleanliness initiative

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is prepared to allocate funds to NGOs and associations interested in organising activities under the Bersih Semua Tempang programme in the federal territories.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa said the initiative aims to promote cleanliness and incorporate a clean environment into the daily lives of residents.

"Our goal is to implement it at the community level and we encourage NGOs to collaborate with us as strategic partners. A budget has been allocated to facilitate their involvement," she said after launching the programme for Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan yesterday.

Zaliha said the implementation of the programme is in line with efforts to promote the federal territories as clean and sustainable cities while also building a positive image of the country for the 2025 Asean chairmanship and Visit Malaysia 2026 programme.

Earlier, she launched the federal territories flag-flying campaign in conjunction with the Federal Territories Day celebrations on Feb 1.

This year, 72,000 federal territories flags of various sizes will be distributed across Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan.
- Bernama



Festive cheer for Pulau Ketam folk

➤ Berjaya Corporation Berhad founder and adviser donates RM250,000 to three schools and five temples to boost quality of life for community

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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KLANG: In the spirit of the Chinese New Year, Berjaya Corporation Berhad (BCorp) founder and adviser Tan Sri Vincent Tan Chee Yiuon has donated RM250,000 to three local schools and five temples in Pulau Ketam to support the quality of life of the island's residents.

A ceremony was held on Friday at SJK(C) Hwa Lien, Pulau Ketam to welcome Tan's first visit to the island, located off Klang town, to spread goodwill and enhance the well-being of those in need.

Also present was Kossan Rubber Industries Berhad group managing director Tan Sri Lim Kuang Sia.

"It is a great pleasure to be here for the first time in Pulau Ketam. I am pleased to make this donation with the hope that it will contribute to the continued growth of local schools, support community associations and enhance the well-being of our elderly residents.

"Education is a vital foundation for a



Tan arriving at Pulau Ketam on Friday. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

prosperous future, and together we can help create a stronger and more connected community for all. I am convinced the school will utilise the donation effectively, and I hope it will provide meaningful support to those here," Tan said.

He explained that the donation was a personal initiative driven by his awareness of the financial challenges often faced by Chinese schools.

He said while the schools had not requested any assistance, he saw this as an opportunity to

contribute to the community and offer support as a gesture of goodwill and friendship.

"My good friend Tan Sri Datuk Lim Kuang Sia is originally from here. He once shared that during his younger days he worked as a fisherman in Pulau Ketam.

"So, I decided to visit this place to see where he grew up and how he became the successful person he is today."

Tan said as this was his first time visiting the island, he found it to be a fascinating destination for tourism.

He added that it offers various attractions, including hotels and homestays, making it a great spot for visitors.

"While the lifestyle here is predominantly Chinese-influenced, it beautifully showcases Malaysia's rich cultural diversity. I find this aspect very interesting and valuable to experience."

SJK(C) Hwa Lien vice-chairman Wan Mu Cai expressed deep gratitude for the support provided, highlighting how the donation would help address the school's pressing needs and enhance its facilities.

"Tan Sri Vincent Tan personally reached out to me with the intention of donating to the school, which we warmly welcome and deeply appreciate."

Wan said the donation would be used to address various needs at the school, including repairing damaged facilities.

"For example, the projector we currently use is no longer functioning well, so we plan to instal a new LED backdrop for better use in classrooms and for events."

Wan also highlighted the recent repainting of a temple and the much-needed refurbishment to restore its vibrancy and beauty.

"If you look at the temple now, it's vibrant and colourful because it was recently repainted."

"However, repainting a temple is a costly endeavour, so Tan Sri Vincent Tan's donation came at just the right time to support this effort."

Also present were Tan's wife Puan Seri Esther Tan, Lim's wife Puan Seri Chow Cheng Moey and Berjaya Assets Berhad non-independent non-executive director Datuk Wira Vincent Lye Ek Seang, among others.

The ceremony also saw a series of cultural activities such as lion dances, the singing of popular Chinese New Year songs and the traditional prosperity toss (*ye sang*) for health, wealth and prosperity in the new year.

Fish supply adequate to meet Chinese New Year demand

PARIT BUNTAR: Fish supplies are more than adequate to meet the needs of consumers in the country for the Chinese New Year festivities, said Fisheries Development Authority chairman Muhammad Faiz Fadzil.

He said the Area Fishermen's Association currently has a stock of 1,600 tonnes of frozen fish.

"This (frozen fish supply) does not include imported fish and fish caught by local fishermen.

"We have made thorough preparations for the festive season. God willing, with sufficient fish supplies, the price (of fish in the market) will be stabilised," he said after the *Madani Anak Nelayan* Back-to-School programme, organised by the authority and Petronas.

The programme was also attended by Perak Fisheries Development Authority director Eries Azwan Deraman at the Tanjung Piandang district and land office hall on Saturday.

A total of 130 children of fishermen received clothing, shoes and other items such as school bags and water bottles worth RM150, along with a cash assistance of RM50 each.

Muhammad Faiz also said that the authority would be increasing the diesel subsidy allocation by one million litres for fishermen in Perak starting next month.

"We are increasing the diesel subsidy quota in Perak because the state has many vessels.

"This is due to our reliance on fish catches by class B and C vessels using diesel, so we are providing support to the fishermen in Perak to increase the number of fish landings."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, during the Budget 2025 presentation, had announced that the government would allocate RM2.78 billion in subsidies, aid and incentives for *padi* farmers and fishermen in 2025, an increase from RM2.6 billion last year. — Bernama

Malacca to host caravan jamboree

MALACCA: Over 1,000 campervan and motorhome enthusiasts nationwide are set to converge on Malacca for the caravan jamboree, which will be held in September in conjunction with World Tourism Day (WTD) and the World Tourism Conference (WTC).

Malacca Chief Minister Datuk Seri Ab Rauf Yusoh said the event would be organised in collaboration with the Malaysian Campervan and Motorhome Association to enhance the state's tourism sector through a new attraction,

namely recreational vehicles (RV).

"We will host Malaysia's largest caravan jamboree at Dataran 1Malaysia, one of the highlights of the WTD and WTC this September.

"The event is expected to become an attraction for over 155 delegations led by tourism ministers from around the world and attract more international visitors," he said at the official launch of the 2025 Camper Rally in Malacca on Saturday. — Bernama

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Concern over sustainability of 'undesirable' 3D jobs

➤ Need to change public perception to attract more locals, enhance staff well-being to boost economy: Academic

■ BY HARITH KAMAL
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PETALING JAYA: Dirty, dangerous, and difficult (3D) jobs are essential to Malaysia's economy, yet they remain undervalued and overlooked, raising concerns about workforce sustainability.

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan Professor of Human Resource and Industrial Relations Prof Dr Balakrishnan Parasuraman said these roles are often perceived as undesirable due to the stigma surrounding them, which includes their demanding nature and low social status.

He said despite the government's planned minimum wage increase to RM1,700 on Feb 1, Malaysians still remain reluctant to take up these positions, leading to a shortage of local workers.

"3D jobs, such as construction work, waste management, and agricultural labour are perceived as unappealing and 'unsustainable' career options.

"This perception not only discourages local participation but also negatively impacts workers' morale, further affecting the economy.

"While some employers offer benefits packages to attract workers, these efforts fail to address deeper challenges, such as the physical and emotional toll these roles

impose on employees," he said.

Balakrishnan emphasised the need for comprehensive support systems, as the demanding nature of these roles can significantly impact workers' mental health.

"Employers and the government must implement continuous and comprehensive training programmes to promote emotional stability and enhance staff well-being."

He also suggested rebranding the term "3D jobs" to eliminate negative connotations associated with terms like "dirty", "dangerous", and "difficult", which discourage potential workers.

"Changing the terminology and rebranding these roles can reshape public perception, making them more appealing to the local workforce.

"The integration of related subjects into school curricula along with technical and vocational education and training programmes, is crucial. Competitive salary packages, insurance coverage, and other benefits must also be prioritised to attract more locals to these sectors," he said.

Muhammad Shawal Rusydi Hendri, 25, a rigger scaffolder from Kuala Lumpur said that his job is both physically and mentally taxing.

"I have been working as a rigger scaffolder for over five years. The work is gruelling and exhausting, and sometimes the workload makes us feel like giving up. But my

colleagues and I stay focused on our goals, and the pay for this job is quite rewarding.

"Being a rigger scaffolder means spending most of my time high up on construction sites. Mentally and physically, I have to stay strong," he said.

Shawal also said public perception of his job can sometimes be discouraging.

"People often look down on us, comparing our work to monkeys climbing or cattle labouring.

"Even so, I remind myself that my work is meaningful and fulfilling, and I genuinely enjoy it. Without us, industries like oil and gas or construction couldn't function," he said.

Mizanur Karim, 34, a garbage collector from Bangladesh, said his job is often met with disdain.

"Even back home, this kind of work is not well sought after. Here, when my colleagues and I come by with the garbage truck, we're sometimes shunned because of the smell or the nature of our job."

Mizanur said he starts his day early, ensuring the streets remain clean by handling heavy bins, enduring unpleasant odours, and navigating traffic to transport waste to disposal sites. Initially, the nature of the work and the smell bothered him, but he has since shifted his mindset.

"Without us, the streets would be overrun with garbage, and the environment would suffer. People may not always see it, but we play an important role in making the city livable. Even though the pay is small, I'm willing to do this because it helps me support myself and send money back home," Mizanur said.

RM120m drugs and firearms seized in lab bust

SHAH ALAM: Police have uncovered a drug-processing laboratory, believed to be masterminded by an international syndicate, following the arrest of 12 individuals and the seizure of drugs and firearms worth RM120 million in three separate raids across Selangor and Kuala Lumpur.

Bukit Aman Narcotics Crime Investigation Department director Datuk Seri Khaw Kok Chin said those arrested in the raids, carried out on Jan 16, comprised a local man, 10 foreign men and a foreign woman, aged between 20 and 50.

He said the first raid on a warehouse in Puncak Alam, near here, at about 2.20pm, led to the arrest of eight foreign male suspects, who were processing drugs believed to be intended for both domestic and international markets.

"An inspection of the premises uncovered drugs such as Erimin 5 weighing an estimated 306kg and 183.7kg of Ecstasy as well as drug-processing equipment and various chemicals, which we believe were sourced from a neighbouring country," he said at the Selangor police contingent headquarters here yesterday.

Khaw said the second raid, conducted at about 2.30pm at a house in Puncak Alam, resulted in the arrest of two foreign men, believed to be coordinators for the syndicate, as well as a Thai woman, whose role has not been determined.

Further inspection of the premises found five transparent packages, each containing powder and crystal lumps believed to be ketamine, with an estimated weight of 533g, along with 70 tablet packages suspected to be Erimin 5, weighing approximately 203g.

Khaw said the interrogation of the three suspects from the second raid led to the inspection of a house in Kuala Lumpur used as



Khaw (second from right) showing the seized firearms and drugs at the Selangor contingent police headquarters yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

a storage facility for the drugs.

"An inspection of the premises found about 310kg of Ecstasy, 21.1kg of cocaine, 5.2kg of syabu, 3.6kg of heroin, 1.8kg of heroin base, 0.5kg of ganja, and 0.4kg of ketamine, along with 15 pistols, a submachine gun and 900 bullets.

"The police are looking at multiple angles to determine whether the firearms were brought in for personal reasons or for other purposes."

He said during the third raid, carried out at about 2.40pm, police arrested a local man, believed to be the syndicate's coordinator, at a house in Seri Kembangan.

Khaw said checks on all foreign national

suspects, conducted through the Justice Ministry investigation bureau, revealed that six male suspects had prior cases involving drugs, murder, violent crime, and fraud. Three of the suspects tested positive for ketamine.

"We believe this syndicate has been active since the end of last year. Police also seized other items, including several vehicles, a forklift, and cash worth about RM1 million," said Khaw.

All the suspects have been remanded for seven days until Thursday, and the case is being investigated under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952, the Firearms (Increased Penalties) Act 1971 and Section 8(a) of the Arms Act 1960. — Bernama

Probe into slapping incident at Puspakom

KUALA LUMPUR: The Computerised Vehicle Inspection Centre (Puspakom) is conducting an internal investigation to determine the cause of an incident where a customer slapped a Puspakom vehicle inspection staff member at the Johor Bahru branch, which was widely shared on social media recently.

Puspakom chief executive officer Mahmood Razak Bahman said investigations found that the suspect, a Puspakom customer, had committed the act of violence because the commercial vehicle he brought for inspection failed the brake test during the periodic inspection.

"The failure prompted the suspect to confront the Puspakom vehicle inspector concerned and attacked him," he said in a media statement.

He said any form of violence against Puspakom staff due to failure in inspections is completely unacceptable, as the inspection itself is an indication that the vehicle is not safe to be used on the road.

"Customers who receive inspection results like this should take heed and immediately repair the condition of their vehicles for their own safety, and that of other road users, instead of acting aggressively towards our staff," he said.

Mahmood said his team is reviewing measures to tighten security at Puspakom premises to prevent such incidents from recurring. — Bernama

Four more nabbed in loan scandal case

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has detained four more individuals suspected of accepting bribes in return for assisting in processing and approving personal loan applications submitted by a financial consultancy firm.

According to sources, the suspects, comprising two officers and two former officers of banking institutions in their 20s and 30s, were detained on Friday at the MACC headquarters.

Magistrate Irza Zulaikha Rohanuddin issued a five-day remand order until Wednesday for two men and two women.

"MACC received complaints and information regarding bribery activities involving banking institution officers who facilitated and approved personal loan applications through a financial consultancy company.

"These banking officers are believed to have received bribes from the consultancy company, which prepared documents suspected of containing false information about clients applying for personal loans," said the source. — Bernama

Body of man washes up on Desaru beach

KOTA TINGGI: The body of a man without any identification was found washed up on Pantai Desaru here yesterday.

Kota Tinggi police chief Supt Yusof Othman said the victim, who was fair-skinned, was aged between 30 and 40, adding that the Bandar Penawar police station received information about the discovery of the man, who was clad only in white shorts, at 7.30am.

"Acting on information, the Bandar Penawar police station chief and officers were deployed to the scene.

"An examination carried out by health officers from the Felda Sening clinic confirmed the victim was dead. The body was taken to the Kota Tinggi Hospital's forensics department for further investigation," he said in a statement.

Yusof added that a post-mortem confirmed he died from drowning.

"Anyone with information about the victim, or those with missing family members can contact investigating officer Insp Ansaliz Zainal at 016-444 6871." — Bernama



Batik appeal to mesmerise Asean delegates

LANGKAWI: Batik painting, which is seen as a way to express love for nature, has encouraged residents of Langkawi to be involved in the creation of decorative items and souvenirs for the past 10 years.

This aligns with the spirit of Asean, in which cultural exchange and the promotion of regional craftsmanship play a key role in fostering unity and shared identity among member nations.

Muhammad Hakim Iskandar Jasni, 20, developed a keen interest in the field after receiving encouragement from his parents, who also run such a business at the Langkawi Craft Complex.

"For me, painting and colouring batik, particularly those depicting flora and fauna, serves as a form of therapy for the soul. It allows me to work freely, while also helping me stay focused and attentive to details.

"Each batik painting I create is like a gift from me to the buyers or art enthusiasts, especially tourists and delegates, to take home as a cherished memory," he said when met at his booth during the Asean Foreign Ministers' Retreat at the Langkawi International Convention Centre.

Muhammad Hakim said batik paintings, created using wax as the main material, take about two days to complete, depending on the complexity of the design, with prices starting from RM100 depending on the size.

Among the paintings displayed at the booth by the eldest of five siblings are scenery of Teluk Yu Fisherman's Village, the heliconia plant (also known as *septi udang*) and the Great Hornbill.

A marketing officer for wood crafts, Azrizal Abd Aziz, who was also promoting souvenirs at the booth, said this was a good initiative to celebrate Malaysia's chairmanship of Asean.

"At the same time, we can attract the interest of delegates to explore local wood carvings made from teak and mahogany sourced from Langkawi."

He added that the souvenirs can be shipped overseas for delegates wishing to place orders. — Bernama

Good times ahead for Penang hoteliers

BY **T.C. KHOR**
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GEORGE TOWN: Hotel room occupancy rates are expected to exceed 90% in the next few months, according to Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow.

He attributed this to upcoming festivities such as Chinese New Year, Thai Pusam and the school holidays.

Chow added that he expects an increase in domestic tourism as many from outside the state will return to celebrate the festivals, while those taking advantage of the holidays will take the opportunity to visit Penang.

"Furthermore, let's not forget that this year Malaysia chairs the Asean Business Advisory Council. Several key high-level meetings are to be conducted in Penang," he said

➤ Riding on wave of festivities, school holidays and Asean meetings, room occupancy rates expected to exceed 90%

during the launch of Lyf Hotel by Ascott at Farquhar Street on Wednesday.

"Hence, hotels will play an important role in housing foreign dignitaries as well as their staff."

Also present during the launch were Penang Island Mayor Datuk A. Rajendran, Elevate Heritage managing director Datuk Yeoh Yih Sean, Oriental Holdings executive chairman Datuk Loh Kian Chong, BSG Property Sdn Bhd executive director Datuk Yaep Chin Yee, and Oriental Holdings former directors Datuk Lim Kean Seng and Datuk

Tan Hui Jing.

Meanwhile, Rajendran told reporters after the launch that the council is considering raising taxes on hotel stays.

"We have been considering it for some time now, but we have not determined the actual increase," he said, adding that the hike would be in the range of 50%.

The council currently charges a tax of RM3 per night for four-star hotel stays and RM2 for hotels that are three-star and below.

Chow said the taxes collected on hotel stays are "mostly channelled

back to tourism-related activities" like promotion, marketing and advertising, apart from minor infrastructure upgrading.

"I have not wavered from the stance that I made since 2008. We need to save dilapidated buildings. That is our first challenge. If we don't save them, a lot of buildings will collapse," he said.

Chow added that there has been a lot of restoration and refurbishment works over the past decade, especially after George Town was listed as a Unesco heritage site.

"This is one very good example of a long-abandoned garage building. It has now been injected with new life," he said, referring to the Lyf Hotel.

On another matter, State Tourism and Creative Economy committee chairman Wong Hon Wai lauded the direct flights between Chennai and Penang as a game-changer for Penang's tourism industry during the 11th Annual Global Organisation of Tamil Origin Meet held on Jan 4 and 5.

Chennai-Penang direct flights by IndiGo Airlines started on Dec 21.

Wong described the new connection as "a gateway for travellers from northern states such as Perak, Kedah and Perlis," allowing seamless transit through Penang to Chennai.

The flights are expected to deepen cultural and economic ties between Penang and Tamil Nadu, which Wong said was the second-largest contributor to Indian tourism growth in Malaysia.

With Malaysia welcoming over 1.01 million Indian visitors last year, marking a 47% increase from 2019, Wong said the direct flights position Penang as a premier destination for Indian tourists.



Chow (right) with Yeoh (centre) and Loh during the hotel launch. — T.C. KHOR/THE SUN

EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

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



Protesters storm court after Yoon's detention extended

➤ Police arrest 46, minor injuries reported

SEOUL: Hundreds of supporters of South Korea's arrested president, Yoon Suk Yeol, stormed a court building early yesterday after his detention was extended, smashing windows and breaking fittings and furniture inside, an attack the country's acting leader called "unimaginable".

Yoon on Wednesday became the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested as he faces allegations of insurrection related to his stunning, short-lived Dec 3 declaration of martial law that has plunged the country into political turmoil.

Shortly after the court announced its decision at around 3am (2am in Malaysia) yesterday, Yoon's supporters swarmed the building, overwhelming riot police trying to keep them at bay.

Protesters blasted fire extinguishers at lines of police guarding the front entrance, then flooded inside, destroying office equipment, fittings and furniture, footage showed.

Police restored order a few hours later, saying they had arrested 46 protesters and vowing to track down others involved.

"The government expresses strong regret over the illegal violence ... which is unimaginable in a democratic society," acting President Choi Sang-mok said in a statement, adding that the authorities would step up safety measures around gatherings.

Nine police officers were injured in the chaos, Yonhap news agency reported.

About 40 people suffered minor injuries, said an emergency responder near the Seoul Western District Court.

Several of those involved live-streamed the intrusion on YouTube, showing protesters thrashing the court and chanting Yoon's name. Some streamers were caught by police during their broadcasts.

With Yoon refusing to be questioned, investigators facing a deadline on detaining the impeached president asked the court on Friday to extend his custody.

After a five-hour hearing on Saturday, which Yoon attended, a judge granted a new warrant extending Yoon's detention for up to 20 days, due to "concern that the suspect may destroy evidence".

South Korean regulations require a suspect detained under a warrant to undergo a physical examination, have a mugshot taken and wear a prison uniform.

The leader is being held in a solitary cell at the Seoul Detention Centre.

The Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) for High-ranking Officials said it had called Yoon in for further questioning yesterday afternoon but the prosecutor-turned-president again did not show up. The CIO said it would ask Yoon to come in for questioning today.

His lawyers have argued the arrest is illegal because the warrant was issued in the wrong jurisdiction and the investigating team had no mandate for their probe.

Insurrection, the crime that Yoon may be charged with, is one of the few that a South Korean president does not have immunity from and is technically punishable by death. South Korea, however, has not executed anyone in nearly 30 years.

Yoon said through his lawyers, he found the violent incident at court "shocking and unfortunate", calling on people to express their opinions peacefully.

"The president said he wouldn't give up and would correct the wrong, even if it took time," the lawyers said in a statement. Saying he understands many are feeling "rage and unfairness", Yoon asked police to take a "tolerant position".

Separate to the criminal probe, the Constitutional Court is deliberating whether to permanently remove him from office, in line with parliament's Dec 14 impeachment, or restore his presidential powers. — Reuters

Mauritius PM queries Diego Garcia lease

PORT LOUIS: Mauritius Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam has questioned the duration of the lease on a US-British military base, a contentious element of negotiations in which the UK plans to cede control of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius.

Britain struck a deal in October to hand over the Chagos Islands while retaining control of the base on Diego Garcia, the largest island of the archipelago in the Indian Ocean, under a 99-year lease. The agreement has not yet been ratified.

Having ousted the former government in a November election, Ramgoolam criticised the deal, without going into details on the sticking points.

Describing Britain's agreement with the former government as a "sell out", Ramgoolam told the *L'Express* newspaper the lease should also be indexed to inflation and take exchange rates into account.

It should fully recognise Mauritius' ownership of the islands, he said, which could affect the UK's unilateral right to renew the lease.

"It is not only a question of money, but of our sovereignty," he said, adding that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken had been keen to conclude the agreement before President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration today.

Marco Rubio, Trump's pick as secretary of state, has said the deal poses a threat to US security by ceding the archipelago — with its base used by US long-range bombers and warships — to a country he claims is allied with China.

"We are not in a hurry. We remain constant in our claims and will make sure that the medium and long-term interests of the country are being looked into and not only the short term," Ramgoolam said.

Some Chagossians have also criticised the negotiations, saying they cannot endorse an agreement they were not involved in and have said they will protest against it. — Reuters

Philippines, US hold joint maritime drills

MANILA: The Philippines and the United States has carried out joint maritime exercises for a fifth time in the South China Sea, in a move that would likely irk China.

The Philippine military said in a statement it held a "maritime cooperative activity" with the US on Friday and Saturday, its first for the year and fifth overall since launching the joint activities in 2023.

Security engagements between the two allies have soared under Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, who has pivoted closer to Washington, allowing the expansion of military bases that American forces can access, including facilities that face Taiwan.

The joint maritime activity included the United States' *Carl Vinson* Carrier Strike Group, two guided missile destroyers, two helicopters and two F-18 Hornet aircraft.

The Philippine side deployed its *Antonio Luna* frigate, *Andres Bonifacio* patrol ship, two FA-50 fighter jets, and search and rescue assets of the air force.

The activities "reinforced bilateral maritime cooperation and interoperability", said the Philippine armed forces.

Their joint activity came at a time when the Philippines had called out China over the presence of Chinese coast guard vessels inside its maritime zone, including a 165m ship that it describes as "the monster" for its size.

The Chinese embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment on a weekend. — Reuters



Yoon supporters and police stand off outside the Seoul Western District Court. — AFP/PIC

Delhi probes mystery deaths at Kashmir village

NEW DELHI: India has ordered the formation of an inter-ministerial team to investigate mystery deaths at a village in Kashmir.

The orders to assemble the team were issued by Home Minister Amit Shah.

At least 16 people have died of a mysterious illness over the past 43 days at Budhal Village in the Rajouri district, about 243km south of Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir.

Victims complained of fever, pain and nausea before losing consciousness and dying within days of their hospitalisation. A child admitted to

the hospital remains in critical condition.

"The team will consist of experts from the Health and Family Welfare Ministry, Agriculture Ministry, Chemicals and Fertilisers Ministry and Water Resources Ministry. It will be assisted by experts in animal husbandry, food safety and for forensic science labs," the Home Ministry said in a statement.

The team will visit the village to find the cause of deaths.

"The team would work in collaboration with the local administration on providing immediate

relief and take precautionary measures," the ministry said.

"Experts from reputed institutions have been appointed to manage the situation and investigate the cause of deaths."

The Kashmir state government said investigations and samples indicate that the incidents were not due to a communicable disease of bacterial or viral origin and that there was no public health threat. However, it said toxicological analysis has detected toxins in biological specimens. — Bernama



Prime suspect in Saif stabbing likely a Bangladeshi

MUMBAI: A man thought to be a citizen of Bangladesh was arrested in Mumbai yesterday and is considered the prime suspect in the stabbing of Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan.

"Primary evidence suggests that the accused is a Bangladeshi citizen and after entering India illegally he changed his name," said deputy commissioner of police Dixit Gedam.

The suspect, arrested on the outskirts of Mumbai, was using the name Vijay Das but is believed to be Mohammad Shariful Islam Shehzad and was working with a housekeeping agency after having come to the city five or six months ago, Gedam said.

The police will seek custody of the suspect for further investigation.

Khan, 54, was stabbed six times by an intruder during a burglary attempt at his home. He had surgery after sustaining stab wounds to his spine, neck and hands.

Doctors said he was out of danger and has left the hospital.

Police in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh on Saturday detained a second suspect.

"We got information from Mumbai police that a suspect was travelling by Jnaneswari Express train," said Sanjeev Sinha, a representative of the Railway Protection Force.

"Mumbai police confirmed the suspect's identity and he was detained," Sinha said. — Reuters

TikTok pins hope on Trump

US users explore alternatives after ban

WASHINGTON: TikTok stopped working in the United States late on Saturday and disappeared from Apple and Google app stores ahead of a law that took effect yesterday requiring the shutdown of the app used by 170 million Americans.

President-elect Donald Trump said earlier in the day he would "most likely" give TikTok a 90-day reprieve from the ban after he takes office, a promise TikTok cited in a notice posted to users on the app.

TikTok, which is owned by China's ByteDance, told users attempting to use the app: "A law banning TikTok has been enacted in the US. Unfortunately, that means you can't use TikTok for now. We are fortunate that President Trump has indicated that he will work with us on a solution to reinstate TikTok once he takes office. Please stay tuned."

Other apps owned by ByteDance, including video editing app Capcut and lifestyle social app Lemon8, were also offline and unavailable in US app stores as of

late Saturday.

"The 90-day extension is something that will be most likely done, because it's appropriate. If I decide to do that, I'll probably announce it on Monday," Trump told NBC.

It was not clear if any US users could still access the app, but it was no longer working for many users and people seeking to access it through a web application were met with the same message that TikTok was no longer working.

TikTok, which has captivated nearly half of all Americans, powered small businesses and shaped online culture, warned on Friday it would go dark in the US yesterday unless President Joe Biden's administration provides assurances to companies such as Apple and Google that they will not face enforcement actions when a ban takes effect.

Under a law passed last year and upheld on Friday by an unanimous Supreme Court, the platform had until yesterday to cut ties with its China-based parent or shut down its US operation to resolve concerns it poses a threat to national security.

The White House reiterated that it was up to the incoming administration to take action.

"We see no reason for TikTok or other companies to take actions in the next few days before the Trump administration takes office," press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a statement.

TikTok did not respond to a request for comment on the new White House statement.

The Chinese embassy in Washington on Friday accused the US of using unfair state power to suppress TikTok.

"China will take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard its legitimate rights and interests," a spokesperson said.

Uncertainty over the app's future had sent users, mostly younger people, scrambling to alternatives including China-based RedNote. Rivals Meta and Snap had also seen their share prices rise this month ahead of the ban, as investors bet on an influx of users and advertising dollars.

"This is my new home now," wrote one user in a RedNote post.

Minutes after TikTok's US shutdown, other users took to X.

"I didn't really think that they would cut off TikTok. Now I'm sad and I miss the friends I made there. Hoping it all comes back in just a few days," wrote @Ravenclawjedi.

NordVPN, a popular virtual private network, or VPN, allowing users to access the internet from servers around the world, said it was "experiencing temporary technical difficulties".

Web searches for "VPN" spiked in the minutes after US users lost access to TikTok, according to Google Trends.

Users on Instagram fretted about whether they would still receive merchandise they had bought on TikTok Shop, the video platform's e-commerce arm.

Marketing firms reliant on TikTok have rushed to prepare contingency plans this week in what one executive described as a "hair on fire" moment after months of conventional wisdom saying that a solution would materialise to keep the app running.

There have been signs TikTok could make a comeback under Trump, who has said he wants to pursue a "political resolution" of the issue and last month urged the Supreme Court to pause implementation of the ban.

Media reports say Beijing has also held talks about selling TikTok's US operations to Trump ally Elon Musk, though the company has denied that. — Reuters

Western Australia ports shut by storm

SYDNEY: Western Australia's ports of Dampier, Ashburton, Varanus Island and Cape Preston West were shut, the ports' operator said yesterday, as tropical cyclone Sean developed off the state's vast Pilbara iron ore region.

Pilbara Ports said on its website that it closed the ports on Saturday on concerns about weather off the coast of Pilbara.

"The system is forecast to intensify into a category 3 cyclone," the port operator said. The nation's weather forecaster categorises a category 3 cyclone as one of mid-severity.

The weather forecaster yesterday issued a tropical cyclone alert for the Pilbara coast, warning of wind gusts to 120kmh in the region from Sean, a category one cyclone.

"The cyclone is forecast to turn towards the southwest, while remaining over open waters. By this time, the cyclone is forecast to begin moving away from the coast," it said. — Reuters



FINDING SOLACE ... Pasadena residents during a vigil honouring the lives lost and displaced by the Eaton Fire in Los Angeles County. At least 27 people were reported to have died. — AFP/IC

US Treasury sanctions hacker and firm

WASHINGTON: The US Treasury on Friday imposed sanctions on alleged hacker Yin Kecheng and cybersecurity company Sichuan Juxinhe Network Technology Co, accusing both of being involved in a series of hacks against American telecom companies.

The intrusions, known under the name *Salt Typhoon*, have allegedly exposed a huge swathe of Americans' call logs to Chinese spies and rattled the US intelligence community.

In some cases, hackers are alleged to have intercepted conversations, including between prominent US politicians and government officials. Some lawmakers have described them as the worst telecom hacks in US history.

In a statement, the Treasury described Sichuan Juxinhe Network Technology Co as a hacking company with strong ties to China's State Security Ministry, an intelligence agency.

It said that Yin Kecheng was based in Shanghai, had worked as a hacker for more than a decade, and also had ties to the ministry.

It further alleged he was tied to the recent breach at the Treasury.

Reuters was not immediately able to reach Yin Kecheng or Sichuan Juxinhe. China's embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Beijing routinely denies responsibility for cyberespionage campaigns. — AFP

Mexico to seal secret border tunnel

CIUDAD JUAREZ: A tunnel discovered on the US-Mexico border allowing entry from Ciudad Juarez into the Texan city of El Paso will be sealed by Mexican authorities, an army official said on Saturday.

Discovered on Jan 10 by US and Mexican security agencies, the tunnel measures about 300m in length on the Mexican side and is equipped with lighting, ventilation and is reinforced to prevent its collapse.

Hidden in a storm sewer system operating between both cities, its access is about 1.8m high and 1.2m

wide, making for easy passage of people or contraband, said General Jose Lemus, commander of Ciudad Juarez's military garrison, which is guarding the tunnel.

The tunnel's construction "must have taken a long time ... it could have been one or two years," Lemus told reporters, declining to give details about how long it had been operating as well as its possible builders and operators.

He said the Mexican Attorney General's Office was responsible for the investigation and would be in

charge of determining if the local authorities were aware of its construction and had turned a blind eye.

Lemus also said clues about the tunnel's existence and location were discussed by human traffickers on social media platforms like TikTok.

Ahead of the US presidential inauguration of Donald Trump today, both sides of the US-Mexico border have reinforced security measures, as the returning Republican has vowed to deport migrants.

In the state of Chihuahua, which

includes Ciudad Juarez, authorities reported a fire in a temporary camp for undocumented migrants, which led to the evacuation of 39 adults and 17 minors.

According to the Mexican newspaper *Reforma*, the fire was started by some of the migrants who were camping there to resist attempts by immigration authorities to detain them and transfer them to Mexico City for later deportation.

The National Institute of Migration did not respond to requests for comment. — AFP

Israel truce with Hamas begins after 3-hour delay

➤ Hundreds of aid trucks poised to enter from Egypt

TEL AVIV: Israel yesterday said a truce with Hamas began in Gaza at 0915 GMT (5.15pm in Malaysia), nearly three hours after initially scheduled, following a last-minute delay on the orders of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

During the delay, Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes killed eight people.

A statement from Netanyahu's office, issued less than an hour before the truce had been set to start at 8.30am (2.30pm), said he had "instructed the IDF (military) that the ceasefire ... will not begin until Israel has received the list" of hostages to be freed.

Hamas attributed the delay to "technical reasons", as well as the "complexities of the field situation and the continued bombing", ultimately publishing at 10.30am the names of three Israeli women to be released yesterday.

Israel confirmed it had received the list and was "checking the details", before confirming shortly afterwards that the truce would begin at 11.15am local time.

AFPTV live images from northeastern Gaza showed a plume of grey smoke about 30 minutes after the truce was earlier to take effect, and again about 30 minutes later.

The Israeli military confirmed it was

continuing "to strike within the Gaza area" following Netanyahu's directive.

Gaza civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said three people were killed in the north of the territory and five in Gaza City, with 25 wounded.

AFP images showed displaced Gazans streaming northwards from areas around Gaza City where they had been sheltering, some flashing the victory sign.

But others saw their plans to return home thwarted by the delay of the ceasefire.

"I was on my way home with my family when we heard the sound of bombing," said Mohammed Baraka, 36.

"We can't reach our house; the situation is dangerous. I don't know what to do. I feel frustrated and devastated."

The initial exchange was to see three Israeli hostages released from captivity in return for a first group of Palestinian prisoners.

A total of 33 hostages taken by gunmen on Oct 7, 2023 will be returned from Gaza during an initial 42-day truce.

Under the deal, hundreds of Palestinian prisoners will be released from Israeli jails.

The truce is intended to pave the way for an end to more than 15 months of war.

It follows a deal struck by mediators Qatar, the United States and Egypt after months of negotiations, and takes effect on the eve of Donald Trump's inauguration as president.

In a televised address on Saturday, Netanyahu called the 42-day first phase a "temporary ceasefire" and said Israel had US

support to return to war if necessary.

In Gaza City, shortly after the deal was initially meant to go into effect, people were already celebrating, waving Palestinian flags in the street.

But as it became clear the hostilities were continuing, the joy gave way to desperation for some.

"I'm dying of despair," said Maha Abed, a 27-year-old displaced from Rafah who had been waiting since dawn for her husband to pick her up and take her home.

"He called to tell me we won't be returning today. The drones are firing at civilians.

"Enough playing with our emotions, we're exhausted. I don't want to spend another night in this tent."

In Deir al-Balah, dozens of Palestinians gathered in front of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital seeking information about the unfolding events, particularly whether or not they would be able to return to their homes.

The Israeli army warned Gaza residents early yesterday not to approach its forces or Israeli territory.

"We urge you not to head towards the buffer zone or IDF forces for your safety," military spokesman Avichay Adraee said.

Hundreds of trucks waited at the Gaza border, poised to enter from Egypt as soon as they get the all-clear to deliver desperately needed aid.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said 600 trucks a day would enter Gaza after the ceasefire takes effect. - AFP

Greenland wants to deal directly with US

NUUK: Greenland wants to extend its defence agreement with the United States directly, without Denmark's participation, Kuno Fencker, a Greenlandic lawmaker from the government coalition party Siumut, said in an interview with RIA Novosti news agency.

"We are de facto a Nato country here, through Denmark. The United States has a military presence. We have a defence agreement between Denmark and the United States.

"We want to renew this, but by concluding a defence agreement only between Greenland and the United States. And we can also conclude an agreement with Denmark separately. We can even conclude a bilateral agreement with the EU. The possibilities are open," he said.

On Wednesday, TV2 reported, citing a classified report from the Danish Armed Forces, that Denmark planned to build a military air base in western Greenland for a "show of force" and to increase the personnel at the Arctic Command headquarters in the Greenlandic capital of Nuuk.

In early May 2024, Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said that the country's government was considering strengthening its military presence in Greenland. It was noted that, among other things, the possibility of deploying Arctic Command units in Kangerlussuaq was being considered.

Poulsen emphasised that the issue of how the armed forces would develop the local airfield was under consideration as well.

US President-elect Donald Trump said on Jan 7 that Greenland should become part of the United States and emphasised its strategic importance for national security and the defence of the "free world", including from China and Russia.

Greenlandic Prime Minister Mute Egede said that the island was not for sale and would never be sold. At the same time, Trump refused to promise not to use military force to establish control over Greenland.

At the end of last year, Trump called it an "absolute necessity" for the United States to own Greenland, this is how he commented on his decision to appoint former US Ambassador to Sweden and entrepreneur Ken Henshaw as the new US Ambassador to Denmark.

Greenland was a colony of Denmark until 1953. It remains part of the kingdom, but in 2009 it received autonomy with the possibility of self-government and independent choice in domestic policy.

In 2019, a series of news reports appeared around Trump considering buying Greenland. - Bernama



Displaced Palestinians make their way to return to their homes yesterday. - REUTERS/SPIC

Fuel tanker blast kills at least 70 in Nigeria

MAIDUGURI: At least 70 people were killed and many more injured in northern Nigeria on Saturday when a petrol tanker overturned, spilling fuel that exploded.

The accident in Niger state follows a similar blast in Jigawa state last October that killed 147 people, one of the worst such tragedies in Nigeria.

"Over 70 bodies have been recovered, 56 individuals are injured, and more than 15 shops have been destroyed," the National Emergency Management Authority said in a statement.

"The injured have been transported to

hospitals and recovery efforts for the deceased are ongoing."

A witness said residents and officials were digging graves to bury the victims on Saturday night in accordance with Islamic rites. Niger is a largely Muslim state in Africa's most populous nation.

Earlier, Kumar Tsukwam, the Federal Road Safety Corps sector commander for Niger state, said most of the victims were poor residents who had rushed to scoop up the spilled petrol after the truck overturned.

"A large crowd gathered despite efforts to disperse them," Tsukwam said in a statement.

He said firefighters had managed to put out the fire.

Such accidents have become common in Africa's largest oil producer, killing dozens of people in the country grappling with its worst cost of living crisis in a generation.

The price of petrol in Nigeria has soared more than 400% since President Bola Tinubu scrapped a decades-old subsidy when he came into office in May 2023.

Niger state governor spokesperson Bologi Ibrahim said residents should give priority to their safety when petrol tankers are involved in accidents. - Reuters

BRIEFS

SEA OF AZOV PART OF RUSSIA, SAYS KREMLIN

MOSCOW: The Russian Foreign Ministry said Ukraine and Britain "had no room" for cooperation in the Sea of Azov, commenting on a new 100-year partnership agreement between Kyiv and London the two countries' leaders announced last week. The Kremlin said any placement of British military assets in Ukraine under the new agreement would be of concern to Moscow, in particular in the Sea of Azov, which Russia considers its own. "Any claims to this water area are a gross interference in the internal affairs of our country and will be firmly resisted," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said. - Reuters

SPANISH GROUPS, UNIVERSITY RECTORS DROP X

MADRID: Spanish environmental organisations including Greenpeace Spain, and university rectors announced they were quitting X today. Elon Musk has made X "a danger for democracy" by promoting discourses "based on the ideas of the far right" and interfered in other countries' elections such as in Germany, they said. The Spanish University Rectors' Conference announced it would stop posting on X, also citing concerns about disinformation as well as "behaviour that diverges from democratic values" and "unethical management". - AFP



COMMENT by Manivannan Rethinam

Hidden dangers of device repairs

IMAGINE taking your smartphone or laptop for repair, trusting that your data remains secure. Now picture that same data, such as intimate photos, bank details, or private messages, being accessed, copied, or even leaked without your knowledge.

This alarming reality is not a distant possibility but a growing concern, as revealed by a recent undercover investigation by *Channel NewsAsia (CNA)*.

The investigation revealed widespread privacy violations within the electronics repair industry, sending shockwaves across the region and shedding light on a global issue that is especially relevant to Malaysia.

These findings serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need for stronger safeguards to protect consumer data.

As digital devices become increasingly integral to daily life, this issue demands immediate attention from individuals, policymakers, and industry stakeholders.

The investigation: A disturbing reality

The *CNA* investigation, conducted in collaboration with the Greyhats group at the National University of Singapore, used 40 devices embedded with hidden screen-recording software to monitor technician activities.

The findings were both alarming and revealing:

➔ **Unauthorised access:** Technicians were caught browsing through private files, including personal photographs, payslips, and email accounts.

➔ **Data theft:** Sensitive data, such as passwords and financial details, were copied onto external devices.

➔ **Intentional cover-ups:** Several technicians attempted to erase browser histories and activity logs to conceal their misconduct.

This issue extends beyond

Singapore. A 2022 study titled *No Privacy in the Electronics Repair Industry* uncovered similar breaches in North America, where technicians routinely accessed or stole personal data.

Investigative reports by *The Register*, a reputable technology news outlet, have corroborated these troubling practices, underscoring the global scope of the problem.

Privacy risks in the Malaysian context

In Malaysia, the risk of data breaches during repairs is particularly concerning. Many consumers opt for inexpensive third-party repair shops, often unaware of the security risks involved.

Mobile phones and laptops hold vast amounts of sensitive data, from financial records to personal photographs.

A single breach can result in identity theft, financial fraud, or public embarrassment.

CyberSecurity Malaysia reports that cybercrime, including data breaches, has cost the nation RM21 billion over the past five years.

The largely unregulated electronics repair industry exacerbates this vulnerability, making consumer protection a pressing priority.

Global examples of privacy breaches

Privacy violations during device repairs have been reported worldwide:

➔ **United Kingdom:** Surveys indicate that one in four consumers experienced data breaches after using third-party repair services, leading to significant financial and emotional distress for many victims.

➔ **Australia:** Reports have surfaced of technicians accessing private data during repairs, with some instances involving high-profile individuals' devices. The breach of personal data

led to serious privacy concerns and prompted calls for stronger regulations within the repair industry.

➔ **Malaysia:** Local media have reported a growing number of incidents involving the leaking of personal photos and financial data following device repairs. In some cases, these breaches have resulted in identity theft and public embarrassment.

Steps Malaysians can take to protect their data

While systemic reforms are essential, individuals can take proactive measures to protect their data:

➔ **Back-up and remove data:** Create backups and delete sensitive files before submitting devices for repair.

➔ **Encrypt files:** Use encryption tools to secure private information, making it more difficult for unauthorised access.

➔ **Strengthen passwords and enable 2FA:** Protect accounts with strong, unique passwords and two-factor authentication.

➔ **Choose reputable repair shops:** Opt for authorised service centres or those with clear, transparent privacy policies, even if they cost more.

➔ **Monitor repairs:** Use screen-recording or tracking software to monitor technician activities.

➔ **Perform a factory reset:** As a final measure, reset your device to factory settings before repairs, ensuring a backup exists.

The role of policymakers and industry stakeholders

Individual actions alone will not address this systemic issue.

The Malaysian government and industry leaders must take decisive action to strengthen regulations and enforce accountability within the repair industry.

Recommended Actions:

➔ **Amend the personal data**

protection Act: Introduce specific provisions addressing the electronics repair industry, with stricter penalties for breaches.

➔ **Mandatory privacy policies:** Require repair shops to display policies on how customer data will be handled.

➔ **Technician training and licensing:** Implement mandatory training on data ethics and introduce licensing requirements for repair shops.

➔ **Regular audits:** Conduct routine inspections of repair shops to ensure compliance with data protection standards.

➔ **Consumer awareness campaigns:** Launch public education initiatives to raise awareness about the risks of data breaches and preventive measures.

➔ **Centralised reporting system:** Establish a platform for consumers to report data breaches and hold violators accountable.

The cost of inaction

Failure to address these issues has far-reaching consequences. Cybercrime, already costing Malaysia billions, will only continue to rise.

More critically, unchecked data breaches could undermine Malaysia's ambitions of becoming a global digital hub under the Malaysia Digital Economy Blueprint.

Trust is the cornerstone of the digital economy, and protecting consumer data is non-negotiable.

Taking action to protect privacy

The revelations from Singapore's investigation are not just a wake-up call; they are a clarion call for immediate action.

Malaysians cannot afford to be complacent in the face of these growing threats to privacy.

While individuals must adopt robust measures to protect their data, the responsibility for

safeguarding consumer trust lies equally with policymakers, industry leaders, and repair professionals.

The stakes are high. Beyond the financial toll, the erosion of trust in our digital ecosystem threatens Malaysia's aspirations of becoming a global leader in the digital economy.

Safeguarding privacy is not just about compliance; it is about upholding the principles of integrity and respect for individual rights.

In a world where personal data has become the currency of the digital age, the power to protect it lies in our hands.

Act now, demand accountability, and champion a culture of transparency and trust.

The time to secure a safer digital future for all Malaysians is not tomorrow; it is today.

The consequences of inaction

The implications of ignoring this issue are devastating and far-reaching.

A breach of privacy can destroy a person's life, resulting in identity theft, financial ruin, and public humiliation.

But the damage doesn't stop there. It spreads through society, undermining trust and creating a culture of fear and suspicion.

The personal fallout is compounded by broader societal harm, destabilising communities and eroding the security that binds them together.

If we fail to act, the consequences of this neglect will be felt not only by individuals but throughout society. The time to act is now.

Every day we delay, we allow these breaches to grow unchecked, eroding the progress we've made in building a secure, thriving digital economy.

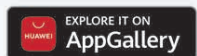
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COMMENT by Nischal Ranjinath Muniandy

Role of Urban Renewal Act in rejuvenating cities

"The URA would facilitate the renewal and redevelopment of the urban core and inner-city neighbourhoods that have been neglected due to a continued focus on suburban development."

BY the first quarter of 2025, Parliament is scheduled to table the Urban Renewal Act, which is expected to have a significant impact on urban development in the country.

What does this mean for urban development and the possibility of redevelopment in our cities?

The main point of contention with the Urban Renewal Act (URA) is that it will lower the consent threshold required for the en-bloc sale of strata title properties.

The current requirement is a unanimous (100%) resolution under Section 57 of the Strata Titles Act 1985 (Act 318).

Under the proposed changes, this threshold would be reduced to 80% for buildings under 30 years old, 75% for buildings over 30 years old, and 51% for abandoned developments or buildings.

This aligns with regional peers like Singapore, which has an 80% threshold for buildings over 10 years old, Western Australia, which has a 90% threshold for buildings under 30 years old, and New Zealand, which requires a 75% threshold.

At present, the requirement for unanimous approval from all strata title holders makes the redevelopment of existing strata-titled property extremely rare.

One such attempt was the redevelopment of the Desa Kudalari Condominium in 2016.

Built in 1984 as one of the first luxury properties in the KLCC area, it had become a shadow of its former glory and was in dire need of extensive, costly structural repairs amounting to RM12.5 million.

By this point, only 15% of the development's 186 units were inhabited by the original owners, with 30% left empty and another 55% rented out to outside tenants.

Despite both the management corporation and 87% of owners agreeing to the offer made for the property, resistance from owners seeking more than double the offered price and absentee owners rendered this attempt at redevelopment unsuccessful.

The few multi-family developments that have been redeveloped in Kuala Lumpur are legacy public housing, such as Sulaiman Court in 1986, the walk-up flats of Pusat Bandar Datuk Keramat in the early 2000s, Tunku Abdul Rahman Flats in 2015, and Razak Mansion in 2016.

The redevelopment of Razak Mansion is particularly noteworthy due to the unanimous consent that was given for the project.

Built between 1960 and 1967,

Razak Mansion comprised 657 units across 13 four to five-storey blocks.

When the area was slated for redevelopment, residents were compensated with a one-to-one replacement in 1Razak Mansion, a single-block apartment building that accommodated these residents.

The new units were larger at 800 sq ft compared with the 400-500 sq ft units in Razak Mansion and included new facilities such as a multi-purpose hall, market, surau, and shop lots.

The development of RC Residences also introduced 5,748 market-rate housing units into the market, increasing the supply of new housing and positively affecting the affordability of the housing market.

According to Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming, there is currently no law governing urban renewal and redevelopment.

The ministry has also identified 534 potential sites for urban redevelopment in Peninsular Malaysia, with 139 of these located within the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur alone.

The total area of the sites within Kuala Lumpur is equal to 13.4% of the city's total area, with a combined Gross Development Value of RM355.3 billion.

While the ministry cites the need to redevelop dilapidated and under-maintained structures, opponents argue that the URA could lead to abuse by powerful interests in the real estate sector, with sites potentially being overdeveloped for private profit.

Those opposed to redevelopment could also find themselves forced to

relocate, displacing families and communities.

Concerns have also been raised about the welfare of existing residents if the URA is passed and the consent threshold is lowered.

These concerns centre around ensuring owners are fully informed before giving consent, receiving just compensation in the event of redevelopment and maintaining existing community bonds, particularly for long-time elderly residents who may have nowhere else to go.

Even previous residents of Razak Mansion, who provided unanimous consent for redevelopment in exchange for larger, more modern units, are now struggling to pay the RM120 maintenance fee, which is 240% higher than the previous RM35 maintenance fee.

These expenses, which cover the upkeep of modern facilities, lifts and other costs such as painting and waterproofing, are unaffordable for many elderly residents, who were not fully informed of the financial implications during the redevelopment process.

However, passing the URA would allow for the redevelopment of abandoned and derelict structures, especially in historic city centres.

This is particularly important when the cost of refurbishing and renovating buildings to meet current energy efficiency standards becomes too prohibitive.

The URA would facilitate the renewal and redevelopment of the urban core and inner-city neighbourhoods that have been neglected due to a continued focus

on suburban development.

Redeveloping the historic urban core is necessary because cities like Kuala Lumpur cannot sprawl indefinitely.

At some point, the time and energy spent commuting from ever-more-distant suburbs outweigh the cost savings of living farther away.

In Greater Kuala Lumpur, for instance, "super commuters" travel daily from locations as far as Tanjong Malim, Perak and Seremban, Negeri Sembilan.

Similarly, in Greater Penang, commuters travel from as far as Taiping, Perak and Alor Setar, Kedah, while in Greater Johor Bahru, people commute from Ayer Hitam and Kota Tinggi.

This phenomenon is driven by the lack of new housing in historic urban areas, forcing households and individuals to seek affordable housing in more distant suburban developments.

The repopulation and renewal of historic city centres can help combat suburban sprawl, ensuring places such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh and George Town are not reduced to ghost towns, catering primarily to tourists and suburban visitors.

Enabling redevelopment in the urban core is also a fiscally responsible decision due to the high cost of subsidising infrastructure in low-density suburban areas.

Every kilometre of water and sewage pipes, power lines, fibre optic cables and roads serve more people in dense urban areas than in suburban areas, with suburban infrastructure ultimately being subsidised by the more productive, higher-density urban centres.

Currently, it is the blighted inner city that subsidises the wealthier outer suburbs.

Redeveloping these underinvested areas would reduce this subsidy and revitalise the historic city centre.

The URA presents a golden opportunity to rejuvenate urban areas, particularly in the urban core,

and allow redevelopment where it was once not possible.

The welfare of existing residents can be maintained by ensuring units are valued by an independent valuator, ensuring that owners receive fair compensation or a one-to-one replacement in the new development.

While there are concerns about conflict, it should be noted that many of these properties already experience conflicts over the maintenance of common facilities, parking and other issues.

The consent threshold must strike a balance between property rights and the need to redevelop the city as development patterns change.

It cannot be so low that developers can win over a small majority and demolish buildings for easy profits, nor can it be so high that redevelopment becomes impossible due to a minority of absentee or resistant owners.

The ongoing debate about the URA also highlights the need for a stronger maintenance culture, ensuring properties are well maintained to extend their lifespan and reduce the need for redevelopment.

As Malaysia aims to become carbon-neutral by 2050, considerations such as carbon scoring and allowing market forces to determine the number of parking spaces in developments should also be incorporated into the URA.

Ultimately, our cities are dynamic engines of growth and innovation that must evolve.

They cannot remain frozen in time to satisfy the nostalgia of a few individuals who wish to preserve their childhood homes.

Urban renewal and redevelopment are essential to maintaining vibrant, thriving cities for the future.

Nischal Ranjinath Muniandy is a senior researcher at the public finance unit of Ideas. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

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Environmental pollutants must be punished

KUDOS to the Selangor Water Management Authority (Luas) for their efforts in detecting the source of the pink-coloured water flowing towards Sungai Kabul from a factory in Beranang on Jan 14.

The polluted water, which stretched for 500m, would have impacted the Sungai Semenyih Water Treatment Plant, located 16km downstream.

Luas's efforts averted a possible shutdown of the water supply in Selangor, which would have affected thousands of households.

Recently, there have been several

reports of water source pollution in Selangor and Johor.

The perpetrators who discharged wastewater showed little regard for the environment or the law.

Although Malaysian environmental laws stipulate heavy fines and imprisonment for violations, in most cases, the courts have been lenient, imposing meagre fines that are often far below the maximum permitted by law.

On June 6, 2024, the Department of Environment (DOE) amended the Environmental Quality Act (EQA) 1974.

The amended act, now the Environmental Quality (Amendment) Act 2024, took effect on July 7, 2024.

The EQA Amendment 2024 introduced changes in penalty fines for various violations.

For instance, the amended act now explicitly states a minimum fine of RM50,000 for discharging waste into water bodies, which was not specified in the previous law.

While the DOE's laws are stringent, the court also plays a crucial role in protecting our environment.

The imposition of minimum fines alone does little to deter violators.

Instead, the court should consider imposing jail sentences where appropriate to send a clear message to polluters that Malaysia is serious about environmental protection.

In factories where wastewater is generated, the facility must have a wastewater treatment system.

Factories should not be allowed to accumulate wastewater and discharge it at night or during rainfall, a common practice among some factory owners looking to cut costs on operating treatment

facilities.

It is time for the DOE to send officers to assess the wastewater generated by factories and verify the existence of proper treatment facilities. Officers should also ensure there is no route for untreated effluent to enter public drains.

The DOE must take a more proactive approach and develop a master plan to demonstrate to the public that they are determined to end pollution.

Wong Soo Kan
Petaling Jaya

Angkasa's new scheme protects co-op members

➤ Collaboration with Zurich Takaful Malaysia and Zurich General Takaful Malaysia

BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysian National Cooperative Movement (Angkasa), through subsidiary MyAngkasa Holdings Sdn Bhd, has introduced the MyAngkasa Plus Protection Scheme to provide coverage for cooperatives and companies involved in the financial sector.

The protection scheme, which adds value through Angkasa's Cooperative Credit Ecosystem, is a collaboration between MyAngkasa Holding, MyAngkasa Amanah Bhd, Zurich Takaful Malaysia Bhd and Zurich General Takaful Malaysia Bhd.

Angkasa president Datuk Seri Abdul Fattah Abdullah said the scheme is a mechanism designed to assist over 7.2 million cooperative members with affordable contributions while offering comprehensive coverage.

He explained that the scheme's main objective is to provide financial protection for cooperatives and companies, as well as members financing through cooperatives or companies using the Angkasa Salary Deduction System, in the event of unforeseen circumstances affecting borrowers.

"This scheme offers financial assistance to borrowers facing disasters. Lenders are also protected with coverage for the financing provided, reducing the risk of non-repayment and defaults.

"Additionally, MyAngkasa Amanah Bhd, Angkasa's trust management company, plays a role in this initiative by serving as trustee and manager of trust deeds signed by clients," he said during the launch of MyAngkasa Plus Protection Scheme recently at Wisma Ungku A. Aziz.

Fattah highlighted that Angkasa ensures the scheme will be managed with good governance to guarantee that benefits reach



Fattah (left) and Fatihah at the signing ceremony between MyAngkasa and Zurich Takaful Malaysia.

beneficiaries directly, along with additional products such as *hibah*, wills and estate management.

"This innovative approach distinguishes this scheme from other existing market products. We aim to serve over 216,000 customers, benefiting more than 7.2 million accounts under this scheme," he said.

As Malaysia's population continues to age, with projections indicating that over 30% will be elderly in the coming years, Fattah also highlighted the importance of inclusivity in financial and insurance schemes for senior citizens.

"Currently, restrictions prevent individuals aged 65 and above from accessing certain protection plans, leaving a gap in support for this vulnerable demographic," he said.

He emphasised the need for the government to reconsider minimum entry age requirements, particularly for the elderly.

"We hope the government will invest in reviewing policies to ensure those aged 65 and even 75 are not excluded from crucial schemes. Preparing for an aging society means having robust systems in place, including health and general insurance, to safeguard

the elderly from unforeseen challenges."

He said initiatives such as the protection scheme could serve as a model to address these gaps, ensuring affordable and comprehensive protection for all, regardless of age.

Zurich General Takaful Malaysia Bhd CEO Shamsul Azman Alias highlighted that in addition to death and permanent disability benefits, Zurich Takaful also offers takaful coverage for involuntary job loss due to accidents.

Similarly, Zurich Takaful Malaysia Bhd CEO Nur Fatihah Mustafa expressed confidence that Zurich Takaful's 150 years of expertise will enable the provision of excellent services, particularly through the MyAngkasa Plus Protection Scheme, which offers comprehensive plans covering both natural and accidental events, ensuring 24/7 worldwide protection for cooperative members.

"This initiative aligns with the brand campaign 'Protect What Truly Matters' as part of our ongoing commitment to safeguarding Malaysians so they can live confidently and secure a brighter future," she said.

Moomoo partners GXBank to simplify investing for Malaysians

PETALING JAYA: Moomoo, Malaysia's most downloaded trading app, is partnering with GXBank to empower Malaysians with a more accessible, seamless, and inclusive way to invest in their financial futures.

The strategic partnership will see both companies forming a seamless integration to enable GXBank customers to make instant transfer/deposits to their Moomoo account and begin investing.

As part of the launch, GXBank customers who open a new Moomoo Universal account and deposit funds via their GXBank account will receive exclusive rewards, including up to 4x additional Grab shares and 1.7x Apple shares as part of a limited-time welcome offer.

The partnership reflects a shared vision to empower Malaysians to take control of their financial futures with ease and confidence.

By connecting GXBank accounts directly to Moomoo, this integration eliminates the common barriers to investing, allowing users to transition seamlessly from saving to building their wealth. This streamlined process ensures GXBank customers can access investment opportunities without unnecessary delays, providing a faster and more convenient way to grow their financial portfolios.

Moomoo's platform enhances this experience by offering users a range of tools and insights to support informed decision-making. From real-time market data and breaking news to advanced screeners and visualised analytics, the platform caters to both first-time investors and experienced traders.

Moomoo Malaysia CEO Ivan Mok said: "Since our launch in Malaysia earlier last year, we've seen a growing demand for tools that simplify investing while delivering real value. The ability to connect GXBank accounts directly to Moomoo not only reduces friction but also empowers users to act on market opportunities without delays."

The partnership, he added, also reflects their shared focus on supporting informed investing.

"With our suite of data-driven insights, from visualised financials to intelligent screeners, users can make decisions with confidence and clarity. Together, we're enabling Malaysians to take meaningful steps toward their financial goals," Mok said.

GXBank CEO Pei-Si Lai said the partnership is aligned with their mission to encourage Malaysians to be more proactive in their financial future and help them achieve their goals.

"Navigating one's finances can be daunting, which is why we're committed to making financial management more accessible for everyday Malaysians.

"Through this partnership, we're providing access to financial tools and exclusive rewards, empowering Malaysians to take charge of their finances with greater confidence and ease," said Pei-Si.

In line with their GX 2.0 focus, she added, they are doubling down on innovations, features, and partnerships that will uplift their customers' financial welfare.

"One million Malaysians are banking with us and have created more than 900,000 Savings Pockets. The partnership with Moomoo will provide our customers with more alternatives to their money management," Pei-Si said.

Maybank ready to seize JS-SEZ opportunities

PETALING JAYA: Following the signing of the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) agreement recently, Malaysian Banking Bhd (Maybank), Southeast Asia's fourth largest bank by assets, will further support global economic activities centred in Johor and Singapore with the aim of being the preferred financial institution for Malaysia-Singapore financial transactions and solutions.

Maybank president & group CEO Datuk Khairussaleh Ramli (*pic*) said JS-SEZ will present greater economic integration to catalyse growth and promote greater economic participation by the population and more employment opportunities, boosting intraregional trade, as well as enhancing the region's resilience as an economic bloc.

"In efforts to promote JS-SEZ becoming a high-performing economic zone, Maybank is committed to actively play a part in ensuring ease of doing business in Malaysia and

Singapore. Through our strong foundation, deep understanding of the region and proven expertise in providing financial solutions for, and meeting transactions needs of all segments of our customers, we firmly believe that the JS-SEZ can collectively bring meaningful outcomes to all stakeholders and the Asean community at large.

"Over the last few months, Maybank both in Malaysia and Singapore has been active in hosting events and engagements with the presence of the menteri besar of Johor and federal ministers to promote JS-SEZ to stakeholders and investors.

"Businesses will be able to capitalise on Maybank's one-stop support providing advisory services, enhanced credit facilities including express processing of loans for financing of investments, seamless cross-border trade and investment experience through our wide physical and online touchpoints in Johor and Singapore.

Maybank's support includes joint efforts to attract investments from Singapore but also as a gateway to expand in Asean.

"This will also include enabling key industries to thrive such as data centres, semiconductors, wealth management, logistics and manufacturing."

"We also see strong growth potential in the halal industry in JS-SEZ to serve the global market. Via our solid global Islamic banking experience in Asean, we are strategically positioned to assist in not only providing Syariah compliant Islamic finance but also enabling access to the halal ecosystem and marketplace for businesses," said Khairussaleh.

Maybank, he added, is well positioned to support its customers in the JS-SEZ region with sustainable and transition finance solutions. From 2021 to September 2024, Maybank mobilised RM104.89 billion in sustainable finance and has put in place capabilities and dedicated resources to advise on sustainable and transition finance solutions.



'Adapt to shifts in travel landscape'

► Showcase local attractions, deliver personalised value-driven services, Traveloka president advises tourism operators

BY JOHN GILBERT
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KUALA LUMPUR: With the global tourism industry projected to grow by 4.3% in 2025, driven by shifting travel trends and increasing demand for cross-border travel, domestic tourism operators must prioritise initiatives that showcase local attractions and deliver personalised, value-driven experiences to align with evolving traveller preferences and drive sustainable growth.



According to Southeast Asia's leading travel platform, Traveloka, digital transformation, affordability and sustainability are key trends that will drive the industry to meet the evolving needs of Asia-Pacific (Apac) travellers, particularly Malaysians.

Traveloka president Caesar Indra (pic) said Apac and Malaysian travellers are increasingly relying on digital tools for travel planning, with

52% using social media, 50% turning to travel apps and 49% utilising platforms such as Traveloka, highlighting the growing demand for seamless, techn-enabled travel solutions.

"Affordability remains a priority, as 46% of travellers prioritise cost, and promotions for less-considered destinations influence 39%.

"Additionally, while 82% of Malaysians are open to eco-friendly travel, barriers such as cost and accessibility must be addressed to encourage greater adoption of sustainable practices," he told *SunBiz*.

Traveloka's white paper, published recently, showed that 37% of Malaysians prioritise domestic travel, driven by factors like affordability, convenience and safety.

"These trends emphasise the importance of investing in localised digital platforms, offering practical and visible sustainable travel options, and designing value-driven ex-

periences that align with travellers' evolving expectations.

"By adapting to these shifts, businesses can better meet travellers' needs and remain competitive in an ever-changing environment," Caesar said.

To stimulate domestic tourism growth in 2025, he said, domestic tourism operators should concentrate on initiatives that showcase local attractions while offering personalised, value-focused experiences that align with changing traveller preferences.

He added that travel businesses can partner with eco-friendly hotels, such as those certified by Traveloka's partner, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, and collaborate with local communities to create authentic, sustainable travel experiences.

Additionally, the white paper indicates that travellers in Apac cite cost and difficulty finding sustainable options as the primary barriers to choosing them.

"Providing competitive pricing and enhancing accessibility for eco-friendly alternatives will be crucial in driving greater adoption among travellers.

"Our white paper indicates that 37% of Malaysians prioritise domestic travel, influenced by affordability, convenience and safety

factors. With 46% of Malaysians saying the price is a key consideration when choosing accommodation, bundling domestic accommodations, transportation, and activities into affordable packages can cater to the needs of Malaysian travellers.

"Offering promotions for off-peak travel and loyalty programmes can further incentivise repeat visits," Caesar said, adding that promotions and discounts are key to capturing Malaysia's price-sensitive travellers.

Based on the white paper, 39% are willing to explore destinations they might not normally choose if the deals are compelling.

"To stay competitive, travel operators must go beyond generic offers by using data analytics to pinpoint the right audience and timing. Personalised, value-driven promotions tailored to traveller profiles can drive higher conversions, foster loyalty, and maximise returns," Caesar said.

When asked to elaborate on travel operators exploring new options or technologies to streamline the payment process, Caesar said payment preferences across the Apac region vary widely, driven by cultural differences and differing levels of technological adoption.

"It is important to understand

customer behaviour and to tailor payment solutions accordingly. We believe this will enhance customer experience, foster trust, and drive higher engagement and loyalty. For travel businesses, the key goes beyond offering a range of options like buy-now-pay-later, digital wallets, and QR (quick response) code payments," he said.

Regarding the challenges industry players and operators anticipate in the Malaysian and the broader Apac travel market in 2025, Caesar said varying levels of digital maturity, balancing domestic and international travel preferences, and the cost of sustainable options require innovative solutions.

"By focusing on localised, affordable offerings and leveraging technology to create personalised experiences, operators can successfully navigate these challenges in 2025," he added.

Founded in Indonesia in 2012, Traveloka has expanded its operations to Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia and the Philippines, providing 24/7 support in local languages and acceptance of more than 40 payment methods. With nearly 140 million app downloads and nearly 50 million monthly active users, Traveloka is one of the region's most popular travel apps.

Top Glove expects strong recovery on rising demand, redirection of orders

BY HAYATUN RAZAK
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PETALING JAYA: Top Glove Corporation Bhd anticipates a strong recovery in 2025 on the back of rising demand and redirection of orders following the United States' implementation of new tariffs on China-made gloves.

The company, which is the world's largest glove manufacturer, also expects its performance in the coming quarters to be driven by key factors such as the ongoing global glove stock replenishment, improved pricing power as demand rises, and supply constraints exacerbated by a shortage of foreign labour in Malaysia.

"More inflow of orders from US customers, stemming from trade diversions following the new 50% tariff on glove imports from China which came into effect on Jan 1, 2025, with a further increase to 100% by January 2026. We will see the benefits of the full impact of this tariff in 2025," Top Glove told *SunBiz* via a statement.

While it is poised to benefit from the redirection of US orders from China, Top Glove expects no new expansion expected by Chinese companies due to US tariff issues. "Due to the uncertainty surrounding potential US actions, expansion by China-based manufacturers outside of China is also expected to be minimal/modest," it said.

Top Glove targets a 60% increase in sales volume for financial year 2025 and foresees improved profit margins from

higher efficiency and utilisation rates.

On Jan 1, 2025, the US imposed a 50% tariff on rubber medical and surgical gloves imported from China. This tariff is set to increase to 100% by January 2026.

Despite potential fluctuations in raw material prices and exchange rates, Top Glove is confident that strong demand for gloves, coupled with supply constraints, will allow it to pass costs on to consumers.

"We expect the glove industry recovery to sustain, and for the group to deliver increasingly stronger performances in the coming quarters," said Top Glove.

Phillip Capital Sdn Bhd equity research analyst Aiman Kamil Ahmad Shauqi said it remains positive on the rubber glove sector this year.

He noted that the industry has faced challenges in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, primarily due to an oversupply situation that led to reduced sales volumes and depressed average selling prices (ASP).

"During the oversupply period, local glove manufacturers struggled to raise ASP due to lower customer acceptance, and Chinese glove manufacturers, who used coal as a primary energy source, sold their products at significantly lower prices - resulting in a loss of market share for local producers.

"However, as inventories have been depleted and some stock has expired, local manufacturers now have room to recover," Aiman Kamil said.

He added that the main focus in



Top Glove eyes 60% increase in sales volume for financial year 2025. - BERNAMAPIC

2025 will be on the extent of earnings recovery among glove manufacturers, sales volume trends, opportunities for higher ASP, and the timeline for recommissioning capacity.

"Investors should closely monitor developments in US-China trade tensions, as they have significant implications for the glove sector, especially with the US revising its tariff policy on rubber medical and surgical gloves."

Regarding earnings, Aiman Kamil said both Hartalega Holdings Bhd and Kossan Rubber Industries Bhd have shown consistent operational improvements and earnings growth in recent quarters, driven by better sales volumes and higher ASP. "However, Hartalega reported losses in the latest quarter due to start-up costs related to recommissioning its new line."

Utilisation levels among local manufacturers rose to 75-90% in

second-half 2024, reflecting increased customer demand, said Aiman Kamil.

Phillip Capital channel checks suggest that recovery momentum remains positive, with ASP stabilising at US\$19-22 per thousand pieces, up from US\$18 in 2023, and sales volume expected to grow by 5-10% in the current quarter, supported by restocking and redirected orders from Chinese manufacturers to Malaysian players.

"Local manufacturers may consider raising ASPs by 3-5% quarter-on-quarter, targeting US\$22-24 per thousand pieces in 2025."

Phillip Capital maintains an overweight stance on the sector, favouring companies with strong balance sheets and significant US sales exposure to capitalise on the ongoing recovery.

"Hartalega has the largest US exposure at about 60%, followed by Kossan 45%, and Top Glove 17%."

Aiman Kamil said the sector's outlook remains positive, driven by continued earnings growth and favourable dynamics arising from US-China trade tensions.

"Malaysian manufacturers are expected to regain a larger global market share, potentially increasing their share to 50% (up from 35-45%), driven by order diversions and rising demand."

Malaysian Rubber Glove Manufacturers Association president Oon Kim Hung told *SunBiz* that Malaysia should see demand for rubber gloves returning with some members already anticipating order shipments from their US customers to accelerate from the end of next month.

"In 2023 until the middle of 2024, our industry was challenged by global overstocking of gloves and the collapse of the ASP. Coupled with heavy competition from the region, particularly China, Malaysian manufacturers struggled but still managed to perform fairly."

Oon said the oversupply situation is tapering off and ASP has seen improvement.

"Additionally, the US tariff on China that has come into effect since this January this year should have some impact on global trade as well as our export trade. Market direction for 2025 will continue to be dictated by developments surrounding global geopolitical tension, particularly in the Middle East, as well as the economic policies of the US under Trump administration," he added.



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E-invoice problems – how can they be resolved?

THERE have been numerous articles in the media in the past two weeks complaining about the difficulties taxpayers are facing in implementing the e-invoicing system. Currently, the implementation of e-invoicing is in the second stage involving taxpayers with annual revenue more than RM25 million up to RM100 million.

Phase 1 started on Aug 1, 2024, while Phase 2 began on Jan 1, 2025. The Inland Revenue Board (IRB) has relaxed the implementation for all categories to allow taxpayers six months to issue a single consolidated e-invoice to record all transactions undertaken during that month instead of issuing an e-invoice for every transaction.

Are the problems insurmountable?

Most of the problems have arisen because the taxpayers may not have spent enough time understanding the ground rules that were announced by the authorities.

It may be true that some of the rules may not be easy for the taxpayers to interpret and, therefore, that could have led to some confusion among taxpayers in implementing e-invoicing. Another reason for the difficulty is that taxpayers are too busy running their business and do not have enough time to understand the e-invoicing rules. Many taxpayers are not used to the concept of self-billing, which is new, and do not understand when to issue the self-billed e-invoices.

The other common problems are how to



TAX MATTERS
B.S.M. THANNEERMALAI

deal with staff claims, reimbursements and disbursements, inter-company transactions, providing goods and services for free, foreign payments, foreign receipts, payments on behalf of related companies and third parties, e-commerce transactions, payments and receipts through agents, interest payments to non-financial institutions, transactions with government bodies and government agencies.

There are also problems that taxpayers have in extracting the relevant information from their databases to meet the e-invoicing compliance requirements. Here, there are 55 fields needed to submit the e-invoice to the IRB. There are issues around completing the fields such as the enterprise resource planning or accounting system of the taxpayer may need to be updated or customised to accommodate the 55 fields.

Secondly, this information may not be readily available within the organisation and may need to be collected from suppliers and customers, which may not be easily forthcoming.

There has been an issue about whether representatives of the company will have access to confidential data of the organisation or personal information of the directors who are appointed to represent the company.

This problem can be overcome if the directors do not delegate this responsibility to another person in the organisation and are personally involved in appointing the

representative in the MyTax system. Once the representative has been appointed, that person cannot have access to the director's personal information. For the company's information, the IRB needs to put further safeguards to ensure that the director can appoint representatives only for e-invoicing purposes which will not allow them to view the organisation's information.

In the course of implementing the e-invoicing system, taxpayers are concerned about the tax implications of the various actions such as self-billing, and also the increased transparency of the data provided.

Inevitably, this will happen because the intention of e-invoicing is to bring to the surface any hidden transactions and therefore prevent leakages in the tax system. If this is an area of concern to you as a taxpayer, you should seek proper advice from your usual professionals who advise you on tax matters and on how to deal with it.

There is an excellent team at the IRB to address your problems. They can be reached by calling the e-invoice helpdesk at 03-8682 8000 which is operational 24/7, emailing myinvois@hasil.gov.my, or having a live chat with the IRB officials through their website. You can also find guidelines and frequently asked questions at the IRB website (<https://www.hasil.gov.my/en/e-invoice/>).

This article is contributed by Thannees Tax Consulting Services Sdn Bhd managing director SM Thanneermalai (www.thannees.com).

Tengku Zafrul: Expect increase in investment, trade with UK via CPTPP

LONDON: Malaysia can expect an increase in investment and trade with the United Kingdom as both countries will have a free trade agreement for the first time through the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said the CPTPP is a good beginning for companies to gain access into markets in each country from the aspect of tariffs and accessibility.

"This (CPTPP) will certainly encourage our companies to export goods and services to the UK," he told the Malaysian media covering Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's working visit to the UK.

Tengku Zafrul said the impact of the CPTPP on bilateral relationships between both countries was discussed when Anwar met his counterpart Sir Keir Starmer on Jan 15 here.

Malaysia ratified the CPTPP in October 2024, joining Peru, Japan, Singapore, Chile, New Zealand and Vietnam in doing so, while the UK joined last December.

CPTPP is an Asia-Pacific trade bloc made up of 11 countries plus the UK. The 11 original members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

On Thursday, Tengku Zafrul and UK Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security, Douglas Alexander held the inaugural ministerial-led Joint Economic and Trade Committee meeting to explore ways to increase bilateral trade and investment.

On future prospect of investment from the UK, Tengku Zafrul said more companies are looking to venture into Malaysia or increase their investments there.

"We managed to get RM11 billion in potential investments during the prime minister's visit here. The biggest amount is for data centres, with one company wanting to further invest RM5 billion," he added.

Tengku Zafrul said potential investors were keen to hear from the prime minister himself the situation in Malaysia, and the policies under his administration. – Bernama

Betamek unit hits top level in MARIi's SCL assessment

PETALING JAYA: Betamek Bhd, an original design manufacturer and a player in electronics manufacturing services for the automotive industry, announced that wholly owned subsidiary Betamek Electronics (M) Sdn Bhd has achieved Level 5, the highest rating, in the Supplier Competitiveness Level (SCL) assessment conducted by the Malaysia Automotive Robotics and IoT Institute (MARIi).

The SCL assessment by MARIi is a comprehensive evaluation designed to measure a company's competitiveness in several critical areas, such as management, leadership, technology investment, safety, and quality. Achieving Level 5 is a testament to Betamek Electronics' capabilities and commitment to maintaining high standards. It indicates that the company excels in key areas essential for competitiveness in the global market. This rating places Betamek Electronics above the Malaysian average and aligns it with global best practices.

By achieving Level 5, Betamek Electronics has demonstrated strong performance across all evaluated areas, including management and leadership, design and product development, prototype testing, and manufacturing for both domestic and export markets. This accomplishment reflects the company's commitment to excellence and its strategic direction toward maintaining a competitive edge in the automotive electronics industry.

Betamak executive director Muhammad Fauzi Abd Ghani commented: "We are honoured to receive this recognition from MARIi. Achieving Level 5 in the SCL assessment reflects the hard work and dedication of our team. This accomplishment underlines our commitment to maintaining high standards in the automotive electronics industry."



MARIi CEO Azrul Reza Aziz (left) presenting the Level 5 SCL certificate to Muhammad Fauzi.

He added, "Our performance in the SCL assessment demonstrates our ability to meet both Malaysian and global standards. We will continue to focus on enhancing our operations and strategies to remain competitive in the global market."

MARIi operates under the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, focusing on Malaysia's automotive industry. As the industry's focal point and coordination centre, MARIi plays a pivotal role in enhancing com-

petitiveness through strategic policy research and specialised technology programmes in advanced design, smart manufacturing, data sciences, intelligent transport systems and mobility-as-a-service.

MARIi's initiatives aim to empower Malaysian businesses by accelerating technology adoption, igniting innovation and elevating the capabilities of all automotive stakeholders and ecosystems through technology, human capital, supply chain, market outreach and aftersales.

Petronas introduces new range of engine oil for light commercial vehicles

PETALING JAYA: Petronas Lubricants International has unveiled Petronas Urania Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) Engine Oil range to cater to the local LCV market.

The new Petronas Urania LCV Engine Oil, formulated with StrongTech technology, enables vehicles to stay on the road longer without requiring frequent servicing. Petronas Lubricants International said it leads to lower maintenance costs, extended oil drain intervals and superior performance even in the harshest driving conditions, including for daily operations, rugged off-road adventures and fleet management.

Petronas Lubricants International regional managing director Asia, Noorhana Abdul Habib said, "As we continue to innovate and push the boundaries of technology, we are solidifying our position as a leading lubricant in the LCV market through enhanced solutions in Petronas Urania LCV Engine Oil derived from Petronas Fluid Technology Solutions that powered champions in Formula One."

She said their engine oil has been rigorously tested in extreme conditions, including in the recent Rainforest Challenge, one of the most demanding off-road motorsport events globally. The recent launch event, held at the M4TREC 4WD Training & Experience Centre in Semenyih, featured live demonstrations and expert presentations.

Southern Score completes deal for 51% stake in SJEE

KUALA LUMPUR: Southern Score Builders Bhd (SSBB), a construction management specialist for high-rise residential buildings and civil infrastructure, has completed the acquisition of a 51% stake in SJEE Engineering Sdn Bhd (SJEE), a mechanical and electrical (M&E) specialist in high-tech and data centre sectors for a cash consideration of RM23 million last week.

SSBB executive director and CEO Gan Yee Hin said, "The completion of this strategic acquisition brings excitement as we are now equipped with another growth driver. By integrating SJEE, we gain access to new market segments, diversifying our revenue streams and strengthening our competitive edge. More importantly, under the enlarged group, we are in a strong position to capture the significant M&E opportunities in Malaysia's expanding data centre sector where we continue to see large investments in Malaysia by both foreign multinational corporations and local principals."

"Following the RM73.5 million data centre project clinched a few months back, SJEE's order book is currently around RM78 million. With the support and resources from SSBB, SJEE can now take on larger scale M&E projects particularly in the data centre space and healthcare/hospital sector. SJEE's tender book stands at approximately RM513 million and given its established expertise and proven track record, we are confident to share more good news on this front to keep up the positive momentum," he added.

The RM73.5 million contract secured by SJEE was for the provision of electrical works for a data centre located in Cyberjaya, whose principal is a multinational technology corporation with its global headquarters in the US. This is also SJEE's 7th data centre project.

To recap, the acquisition comes with a profit guarantee from the vendor that SJEE shall achieve a cumulative profit after tax (PAT) of at least RM15 million over three financial years (profit guarantee). For the audited financial year ending Dec 31, 2023, SJEE reported a PAT of RM5.2 million on the back of a revenue of RM54.5 million. As such, the acquisition translates into an acquisition price-to-earnings (PE) multiple of 9 times.

Ramssol launches online platform for used motorbikes

KUALA LUMPUR: Ramssol Group Bhd, a solutions and licensing technology provider through its subsidiary, RAMS Autotech unveiled Rider Gate, a transformative digital platform set to redefine the used motorcycle market in Malaysia.

The launch event, held at Lanai@MATIC, was officiated by Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook, alongside key industry players and motorcycle enthusiasts.

Rider Gate addresses the pressing need for a safe, reliable, and comprehensive digital platform to facilitate the buying and selling of pre-owned motorcycles. By bridging the gap between buyers and sellers, the application ensures a seamless and secure transaction process while providing Malaysians with easy access to a wide variety of motorcycles. It enhances the

➤ Rider Gate provides safe, reliable marketplace for buying and selling pre-owned motorcycles

market by providing services such as ownership transfer, inspections, insurance, extended warranties, smart financing and reducing fraudulent activities.

Receiving support and endorsement from the Malaysia Motorcycle and Scooter Dealers Association, Rider Gate enters the market with more than 150 registered dealers and targets to grow its network to over 800 dealers and 3,000 outlets nationwide within the first year of its launch. The ambitious expansion will make

Rider Gate the largest online platform for used motorcycles in Malaysia.

Loke said, "Rider Gate plays a pivotal role as a digital platform for the used motorcycle market in Malaysia, addressing key challenges such as unclear ownership records, mechanical risks, and transaction safety. This innovation not only meets the needs of our motorcycle communities but also enhances trust and efficiency in the market, representing a significant step forward in embracing digital

transformation within the transportation sector. I encourage all stakeholders to explore and utilise Rider Gate, experiencing its benefits firsthand while supporting innovative initiatives that boost our country's transportation landscape."

A significant highlight of Rider Gate is its entry into a memorandum of agreement with eAuto Sdn Bhd to simplify and enhance ownership transfer services, ensuring compliance and a hassle-free process.

Ramssol Group Bhd group managing director and CEO Datuk Seri Clement Tan Chee Seng said: "At Ramssol, we are dedicated to improving lives through innovation. Rider Gate is designed to revolutionise the process of buying and selling used motorcycles by making it easier, faster, and safer. The application provides access to high-quality motorcycles, transparent services, and free inspections, ensuring a seamless and secure experience for all users. The global used bike market was valued at US\$38.7 billion (RM174 billion) in 2021 and is projected to reach US\$66.2 billion by 2031, growing at a CAGR of 5.6% from 2022 to 2031. With the rising demand for gig economy services, particularly in food and parcel delivery, pre-owned motorcycles have become a preferred choice for riders connected to online platform services due to their affordability and lower insurance premiums. Rider Gate is well-positioned to cater to these market dynamics. Our collaboration with eAuto Sdn Bhd further enhances Rider Gate's functionality, facilitating seamless ownership transfers and offering a comprehensive solution to meet market needs."

Future plans for Rider Gate include the sale of accessories, auto parts, and EV motorcycles, as well as technical training courses for mechanics and advanced riding skill training for users.



Loke (centre) launching the innovation at the Rider Gate 2025 event in Kuala Lumpur.

WARRANTS WATCH

Overall turnover slips, Gamuda most active among local issues

OVERALL warrants turnover last week saw a decrease of 11.4% week-on-week (w-o-w) to RM493.4 million from RM556.8 million in the previous week. Trading activity in Hang Seng Index (HSI) warrants was relatively unchanged from the previous week, while turnover for warrants over local stocks decreased by 20.6% to RM225.1 million and for warrants over Hong Kong stocks dropped 38.6% to RM15 million.

On Monday, the HSI fell to close below 19,000, a level not seen since September, while the HSI January futures fell 1.1% to kickstart the week. The futures then staged a strong rebound, clocking four consecutive days of gains to end the week 2.5% higher. On the economic front, China's 4th quarter GDP growth came in at 5.4%, higher than the expected 5%

growth, while December Industrial Production and Retail Sales figures also came in stronger-than-expected, offering some reassurance that the stimulus measures announced in September has helped stemmed the China slowdown.

For the week, investors traded both the call warrants, namely HSI-CWA1, HSI-CWAY and HSI-CY9, and the put warrants, namely HSI-PWB1, HSI-PWBH and HSI-PWBF.

Investors should note that some of these warrants will be expiring on Jan 27, 2025 with their last trading date on Jan 23, 2025. Investors can no longer buy or sell the warrants after their last trading date, and warrants approaching expiry will experience an accelerated rate of time decay, meaning its value will decline at a faster rate than warrants with a longer

time to expiry, even if the underlying remains unchanged.

Therefore, warrant holders are encouraged to review their warrant portfolios and plan their trading strategies accordingly.

On the local front, for the week, warrants over Gamuda Bhd were in the spotlight, followed by warrants over MY EG Services (MyEG) and YTL Power International, among others.

Warrants over Gamuda were actively traded despite the shares recording five consecutive days of losses to close the week 15.2% lower at RM4.24. The call warrants GAMUDA-C2R, GAMUDA-C2Z and GAMUDA-C2X were the top three in terms of the highest value traded.

Further, warrants over MyEG were also in limelight as the underlying

Top HSI warrants by value traded

Warrant name	Value (RM'mil)	Issuer	Exercise level	Expiry date
HSI-CWA1	60.6	Kenanga	22,000	27 Feb 2025
HSI-PWB1	60.4	Kenanga	16,000	27 Feb 2025
HSI-CWAY	17.5	Kenanga	24,000	27 Feb 2025
HSI-PWBH	14.6	Macquarie	19,000	27 Jan 2025
HSI-PWBF	14.1	Macquarie	17,000	27 Feb 2025

closed 2.6% lower week-on-week at RM0.940. Warrants in focus includes MYEG-C8A, MYEG-C6R and MYEG-C7Y, among others.

To view the full list of structured warrants available on Bursa Malaysia, kindly visit malaysiaawarrants.com.my.

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information only. This commentary has not been reviewed by the Securities Commission Malaysia. It is not an offer or recommendation to trade and is not research material. Past performance is not indicative of future performance. You should make your own assessment and seek professional advice.

The warrants will not be offered to any US persons.

Apple loses top spot in China smartphone sales

➤ US tech giant claims market share of 15%, behind Huawei's 16% and Vivo's 17%

BEIJING: Apple lost its status as the best selling smartphone brand in the crucial Chinese market last year, new data showed, with a pair of local rivals surpassing it with surging shipments.

The California-based tech giant claimed a market share of 15% in the world's number two economy, behind Huawei's 16% and top-ranking Vivo's 17%, according to industry data provider Canalis.

Also coming in at 15%, with total smartphone sales narrowly behind Apple's, were Chinese brands Oppo and Honor, the data showed.

Apple's performance in the country is

suffering from a slump in iPhone sales, which dropped to 42.9 million in 2024, compared to a market-leading 51.8 million the previous year.

"Intense competition has led to a constantly shifting landscape," said Amber Liu, research manager at Canalis, adding that Apple "faced growing competitive pressure from domestic flagship devices".

Top-ranked Vivo showed "strong momentum" last year, Liu said, noting that the firm's strategy was helping "solidify its position in entry-level to mid-to-high-end segments".

Meanwhile, Huawei, a Shenzhen-based tech giant that was once the target of tough sanctions from Washington due to national security concerns, continued a resurgence in its home market in 2024.

The firm achieved a 37% year-on-year jump in total smartphone shipments last year, the Canalis data showed.

Apple's iPhone remains popular in China, but many consumers in the vast market have

switched to domestic alternatives in recent years as sector competition intensifies.

Firm CEO Tim Cook visited China multiple times last year, as the US tech giant sought to shore up slumping sales in the country.

Apple's fourth-quarter smartphone shipments plunged 25%, according to Canalis data.

The mainland Chinese smartphone market as a whole expanded 5% year-on-year in the fourth quarter, the report added, with total shipments reaching 77.4 million units.

And in a further positive signal for the sector, Beijing last week announced that it would roll out subsidies for individual purchases of certain smartphones, part of a discount scheme it hopes will boost spending as the economy wavers.

The latest policy "has laid the foundation for this year's market growth", said Lucas Zhong, research analyst at Canalis, adding that "vendors have already begun preparations for channels and supply". - AFP

Advanced Info, Thaicom want investors to reject offers to acquire them

BANGKOK: The boards of Thailand-based mobile carriers Advanced Info Service and Thaicom have asked shareholders to reject offers from controlling entities to acquire both the firms.

In July 2024, power producer Gulf Energy Development, the largest shareholder of Thaicom, and Intouch Holdings, which controls Advanced Info, announced their intent to merge.

A merger of Gulf and Intouch, already approved by shareholders of Thai billionaire Sarath Ratanavadi's power company, would create a new entity valued at 1.037 trillion baht (RM135 billion).

As part of the restructuring, Gulf Energy, Intouch and Sarath offered to buy 58.9% of Thaicom at 11 baht apiece.

Thaicom said its rising stock price since the merger announcement is the primary reason it is asking shareholders to vote against the deal.

A similar tender offer was launched for Advanced, valuing the firm at 216.30 baht per share, with the offer later being lowered to 211.43 baht.

Advanced said its financial adviser found the revised price to be lower than its estimated valuation range of 229.55 baht to 285.70 baht.

Gulf Energy and Intouch did not immediately respond to a request for comment. - Reuters

Infosys hikes revenue forecast as demand recovers

MUMBAI: Indian tech giant Infosys hiked its annual sale forecast last week and posted an 11.4% on-year rise in profit for the December quarter, signalling a gradual revival in client spending.

India's second-largest software services exporter earns more than 80% of its revenue from Western markets.

It raised its constant-currency revenue guidance for the current financial year to 4.5%-5%, up from an earlier forecast of 3.75%-4.5%.

Net profit rose 11.4% year-on-year to 68.06 billion rupees (RM3.5 billion) for the December quarter, beating analyst estimates of 67.7 billion rupees on average.

Revenue was up 7.6% to 417.64 billion rupees for the same period, helped by strong demand from its European market and growth in its financial services, manufacturing and energy markets.

"We continue to strengthen our enterprise AI capabilities, particularly focusing on generative AI, which is witnessing increasing client traction," Infosys CEO Salil Parekh said.

"This has led to another quarter of strong, large deal wins."

Part of India's US\$254-billion IT sector, Infosys grappled with a growth slowdown over the last year as customers curtailed tech spending due to high inflation and global geopolitical uncertainty.

But the Bengaluru-headquartered firm has seen demand slowly pick up as inflation cooled off, sparking interest rate cuts and boosting the willingness of clients to spend on technology.

The slowdown hurt the job prospects of thousands of young Indian engineering graduates who depend on the industry, although in recent quarters some firms including Infosys have resumed adding employees to their headcount.

Infosys's headcount increased by 5,591 employees in the December quarter, when compared to the September quarter, according to the company's quarterly filings. - AFP



Parekh (left) speaking as Infosys chief financial officer Jayesh Sanghrajka looks on during a press conference held to announce the company's third quarter results in Bengaluru. - AFP/IC

Sri Lanka signs landmark US\$3.7b deal with Sinopec

BEIJING: Sri Lanka has secured its biggest-ever foreign investment after signing a deal with Chinese state-run oil giant Sinopec, officials said last week.

Sinopec has agreed to invest US\$3.7 billion (RM16.6 billion) to construct a "state-of-the-art oil refinery" with a capacity of 200,000 barrels in the southern Hambantota region, according to the Sri Lanka president's media division.

"During President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's four-day state visit to China, Sri Lanka marked a significant milestone by securing the largest foreign direct investment to date," it said.

A "substantial portion" of the refinery's output would be earmarked for export as part of efforts to shore up Sri Lanka's foreign exchange earnings, a statement said.

"This major investment from China is expected to bolster Sri Lanka's economic growth while uplifting the livelihoods of low-income communities in the Hambantota area," it added.

The port of Hambantota was handed to a Beijing company on a 99-year lease for US\$1.12 billion in 2017 after Sri Lanka was unable to repay a huge Chinese loan, a controversial decision which raised questions about Chinese investments in the country.

Sri Lanka also defaulted on its foreign borrowings in 2022 during a crisis that caused months of food, fuel and medicine shortages.

China accounted for more than half the country's bilateral debt at the time of the economic crash.

Leftist Dissanayake came to power in September and consolidated his position after his party won by a landslide in snap parliamentary polls last November. - AFP

US teleworkers do not want to go back to office

➤ Issue of work-from-home has become increasingly political

SAN FRANCISCO: For Curtis Sparrer, a work-from-home evangelist, an office is nothing less than a "corporate jail".

Five years after the Covid-19 pandemic sent workers scrambling for home, laptops under their arm, Sparrer methodically challenges the arguments made by corporate America as it pushes for a full-time return to office.

The issue has even become increasingly political.

The incoming Donald Trump administration, through the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) led by Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, plans to eliminate all remote work for federal employees.

"When you have a physical office, there is an implicit lack of trust. You need to see people there physically to make sure they're doing their work," PR boss Sparrer told AFP from his San Francisco apartment, overlooking the city's iconic rooftops.

In the wake of the work-from-home revolution, hybrid work became the norm in the United States, with few exceptions such as Goldman Sachs and Tesla, which quickly mandated full-time office attendance.

Now, several major companies are abandoning the compromise approach.

Amazon recently required engineers and administrative staff to return five days a week.

According to a survey conducted by the Blind professional social network last September, more than 90% of employees are unhappy with this decision.

On Reddit, users report having turned down interviews to work for the e-commerce and cloud giant because of the policy.

Some speculate it is a veiled downsizing strategy, though they believe the company founded by Jeff Bezos risks losing its top talent.

JPMorgan Chase's March announcement ending telework met similar resistance.

Employees posted so many comments about concerns - from commuting costs to child care - on an internal platform that the bank shut down that section, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

JPMorgan CFO Jeremy Barnum addressed the issue during a press call, and acknowledged the risk of losing valuable employees, saying: "We are very much not hoping for attrition as a function of return to office."

"I'm disappointed that Amazon and others dragged people back to the office when we've been making so much progress in making work-from-home a national norm," Sparrer laments.

When founding Bospar in January 2015, Sparrer deliberately chose not to rent office space, both to save money and to recruit talent beyond San Francisco and New York.

Ten years later, he stands by that decision.

Office environments inherently create inequality, he said.

"Someone gets the corner office with windows while another gets a cubicle, creating friction," he explained.

"There's also a higher likelihood of sexual harassment, illness spreading, and daily annoyances from office gossip to hearing colleagues chew their food."

Sparrer particularly emphasised telecommuting's environmental benefits, noting that most Americans drive to work in gas-guzzling cars.

"The typical office building is a polluting nightmare," he said.

His company's research suggests that remote workers are more likely to cook at home instead of ordering delivery and to recycle their waste.

According to the "Flex Index" study by IT solutions company Scoop, by the end of 2024, about one-third of US companies required full-time office presence, 38% maintained a hybrid approach, and less than 30% offered complete employee choice.

Health care software provider DrFirst exemplifies the successful transition to remote work.

The company, which previously maintained three offices in Arizona and Maryland, shifted its 400 employees to permanent telework in 2023 based on employee feedback.

"Over 85% of our people reported that working remotely improved their overall well-being, whether mental or physical health, and reduced stress," said Mathew Carrico, the company's vice president of human resources. "Productivity remained high."

To maintain company culture, DrFirst established online social groups, regular check-ins, and a performance system based on quarterly objectives.

"We don't dictate when, where, or how people work - that's where trust comes in," Carrico explained.

"But we maintain accountability through results, just as we would in an office."

Heather Happe, a 14-year DrFirst veteran, appreciates escaping rush-hour traffic.

"There's that slippery slope of knowing when to stop working, but you learn to set boundaries," she said.

"I can spend more time with my son, pets, and plants!" - AFP

Canada prepares for trade war

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and regional leaders said last week all options were on the table to respond to possible US tariffs while still holding out hope of avoiding a trade war.

After meeting with provincial and territorial leaders in Ottawa, Trudeau highlighted that more than one billion dollars have been earmarked for new border security measures to clamp down on illicit drug trade and human trafficking, in hopes of placating Donald Trump, who has vowed to slap 25% tariffs on Canadian imports.

"If the US administration chooses to still implement tariffs, we will respond purposefully, forcefully, resolutely," he said.

"Everything is on the table as potential responses."

A government source told AFP Ottawa could impose retaliatory tariffs on hundreds of American-made goods, including steel products, ceramics such as toilets and sinks, glassware, plastics, and Florida orange juice.

Provincial and opposition leaders also called for blocking exports of Canadian oil, electricity and critical minerals in what could devolve into a trade war.

But Alberta Premier Danielle Smith pushed back against any disruption of the more than three million barrels of oil shipped daily from her province to the United States - showing cracks in Canada's unified response.

"Alberta will simply not agree to export tariffs on our energy or other products, nor do we support a ban on exports of these same products," she posted on X.

Nearly 77% of Canadian exports go to the United States, which in 2023 represented about C\$548 billion (RM1.7 trillion) worth of goods.

Energy, and motor vehicles and parts from Ontario, are the largest single exports. - AFP

Short-seller Hindenburg to be disbanded

WASHINGTON: US investment group Hindenburg Research will be disbanded, its founder Nate Anderson said last week, adding that it has completed the projects it was handling.

Founded in 2017 as a kind of corporate muckraker, the short-seller with around 10 employees has pushed several companies to admit accounting errors or misrepresentations.

The company has wiped billions of dollars off companies' market values, including Indian conglomerate Adani Group after the research firm accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud.

Hindenburg's biggest success came against electric truck maker Nikola, which it accused in 2020 of lying about the status of its technology.

"The plan has been to wind up after we finished the pipeline of ideas we were working on," Anderson said.

"And as of the last Ponzi cases we just completed and are sharing with regulators, that day is today."

Anderson estimates that almost 100 people have been charged civilly or criminally by regulators "at least in part through our work, including billionaires and oligarchs".

"We shook some empires that we felt needed shaking."

Looking ahead, Anderson plans to come up with a series of materials and videos "to open-source every aspect of our model and how we conduct our investigations" over the next six months.

In the case of Nikola, it agreed to pay US\$125 million (RM563 million) to the US Securities and Exchange Commission and its founder, Trevor Milton, was found criminally guilty of misleading his company's shareholders.

The Adani Group lost US\$150 billion from its market value in 2023 after Hindenburg's report accused it of fraud. - AFP

Firms worried about Trump tariff, immigration plans: Fed

WASHINGTON: US businesses across the country are concerned about the economic impact of President-elect Donald Trump's proposals to raise tariffs and sharply curtail immigration, the Federal Reserve said.

"More contacts were optimistic about the outlook for 2025 than were pessimistic about it," the US central bank said in its *Beige Book* survey of economic conditions.

However, "contacts in several districts expressed concerns that changes in immigration and tariff policy could negatively affect the economy," it said.

On the campaign trail, Trump threatened to impose sweeping tariffs of between 10% and 20% on all goods entering the United States, and to carry out mass deportations of millions of undocumented immigrants.

Whether or not Trump follows through on his plans once he takes office as president today remains to be seen.

But manufacturers in a number of districts told the Fed they are already stockpiling inventories "in anticipation of higher tariffs".

In the Philadelphia district, inflation expectations rose on concerns about "deficits, tariffs, and immigration", the Fed said.

And in the Dallas district, contacts "noted concern about disruption from potential retaliatory tariffs on agriculture exports", and raised concerns that they would have to pass on higher cost to consumers.

Concerns in the Atlanta district meanwhile were broad-based, and included "labour shortages, concerns over tariffs, and potential supply chain disruptions at east coast ports that would result from a labor strike", the Fed said.



Razor wire fence to inhibit the crossing of migrants into the United States is seen along the bank of the Rio Bravo River, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. - REUTERS/PIC

Despite the worries, businesses across the Fed's 12 districts reported an overall increase in economic activity in late November and December, the Fed said.

Prices increased modestly overall, the Fed

continued, adding that contacts had said they expected prices would "continue to rise in 2025, with some noting the potential for higher tariffs to contribute to price increases."

- AFP

Stellantis delivers 12% fewer cars in 2024

PARIS: Automaker Stellantis reported a stinging 12% drop in the number of vehicles it sold last year, with its key North American market plunging by a quarter.

The maker of Jeep, Peugeot and Fiat cars said its fourth quarter shipments of vehicles fell by 9% as dealers focused on reducing inventories and due to a gap in its offer as it switches to new models.

"The normalisation of the US dealer inventory puts the Company in a strong position to support the arrival of new products in 2025 from Jeep, Ram and Dodge," Stellantis said in a statement.

However, the annual and fourth-quarter drop of 28% contrasted with gains reported by US automakers GM and Ford in North America.

In Europe, Stellantis' largest market where it also has the Citroen and Opel brands, it shipped 6% fewer cars in the fourth quarter.

That was an improvement from the 17% third quarter thanks to the launch of the electrified version of Citroen's compact C3 and updated SUVs.

Elsewhere in the world, Stellantis sales rose by 5% overall as a drop in China and India were offset by increases in South America, the Middle East and Africa.

The product of a 2021 merger by the Fiat-Chrysler and Peugeot-Citroen group, Stellantis enjoyed a couple of years of record profits as it ruthlessly cut costs and kept prices high.

But its hard-driving CEO Carlos Tavares resigned last year as sales fell amid quality concerns in addition to the trouble its Western rivals are facing in China and with electric vehicles.

Stellantis' French rival Renault reported last Thursday it shipped 1.3% more vehicles in 2024, while German automaker Volkswagen has said its deliveries dropped by 2.3% last year. – AFP

UAE announces giant solar farm with batteries

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates announced last week plans to build a giant solar farm with battery storage capable of providing continuous renewable energy.

State-owned renewable energy company Masdar said the project would feature five gigawatts of solar capacity alongside 19 gigawatt-hours of storage.

The setup will enable the delivery of one gigawatt of uninterrupted power, said the company's chief Sultan al-Jaber, who is also the UAE's industry minister.

The solar farm is scheduled to be fully operational in 2027, with an estimated cost of US\$6 billion, according to Masdar.

"This is a first step that could become a giant step," Jaber said.

While solar power is growing in the UAE, the country still generates most of its electricity by burning natural gas.

The Gulf country is among the world's largest exporters of oil, but is investing heavily in clean energy.

In 2023, it hosted the UN's COP28 climate summit which called for a gradual phase-out of fossil fuels.

Jaber said, however, that battery storage currently represents only "a tiny fraction of the overall power demand," which is rising due to trends like electrification and AI-driven data centres.

He added that "prematurely" reducing reliance on other energy sources would be "self-defeating". – AFP

Decision on digital pound at least two years away

Bank of England pushes back timeline for project

LONDON: No decision will be made for at least a couple of years on whether Britain will go ahead with a central bank digital currency for the general public, the Bank of England (BoE) said, pushing back the timeline for the project.

Former prime minister Rishi

Sunak championed the idea of a digital currency in 2021 when he was finance minister, but the BoE and the current government have been more reluctant and a public consultation attracted widespread privacy concerns.

Governor Andrew Bailey said in October that a central bank digital currency was "not my preferred option" but might be needed if British banks did not ensure their payment systems were more attractive than those offered by less regulated tech companies.

The BoE said last week it was starting work with Britain's Finance

Ministry on a potential design for a digital currency, in line with plans in a previous consultation.

"After completing the design phase over the next couple of years, including taking account of developments in the wider payments landscape, the Bank and government will assess the policy case for a digital pound and determine whether or not to proceed," the BoE said.

In January 2024, the BoE said a decision on whether to go ahead with a digital currency would not be made before 2025 at the earliest.

Britain's government has said a

digital pound would be private but not anonymous, unlike physical cash.

As with existing bank accounts and credit card payments, authorities would be able to track transactions they suspect involve money laundering or finance terrorism.

"This legislation would safeguard users' privacy, guaranteeing that neither the Bank nor the government could access users' personal information nor control how households and businesses use their money," the BoE said. – Reuters



A view of the Bank of England and the financial district in London. – REUTERS/SPIC

BP cuts thousands of jobs to slash costs

LONDON: British energy giant BP said it would axe 4,700 staff jobs, or about 5% of its workforce, and is cutting thousands of contractor roles to reduce costs.

The move is part of a "multi-year programme to simplify" the group and improve performance, BP said in a statement.

It comes as BP chief executive officer Murray Auchincloss puts emphasis on oil and gas to boost profits, scaling back on the group's key climate targets since

taking the helm one year ago.

"We have got more we need to do through this year, next year and beyond, but we are making strong progress as we position BP to grow as a simpler, more focused, higher-value company," he said in an e-mail sent to employees and seen by AFP.

Speaking about the job cuts, which include more than 3,000 contractor roles, he added:

"I understand and recognise the uncertainty this brings for

everyone whose job may be at risk, and also the effect it can have on colleagues and teams."

BP, which has around 90,000 permanent staff based around the globe, indicated that more job reductions were on the horizon.

"We expect around 4,700 roles to be impacted ... accounting for much of the anticipated reduction in our headcount this year," the company said.

"We are also reducing our contractor numbers by more than

3,000 – with 2,600" positions having already ended.

It follows an announcement last month that the British group will "significantly reduce" investment in renewable energy through to 2030.

That echoed an announcement by rival Shell that it will no longer develop new offshore wind projects.

BP and Shell recently reported falls to their third-quarter profits and are set to announce annual results in the coming weeks. – AFP

MARKET ROUND-UP: JANUARY 17

Bursa Trade Statistic

17 JAN 2025

Retail (16.86%)		Institution (41.05%)		Foreign (42.09%)	
Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)	
+74.24		+140.63		-214.87	
Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
554.12	479.88	1328.75	1188.12	1182.87	1397.74

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

Need Some Ideas?
Our Monthly Trader's Talk will be held Every 1st Monday of the Month Live webinar with Q&A

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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	CHANGE (%)
FBMEMAS	12,008.80	+83.78
FBMKLCI	1,566.72	+11.18
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	526.79	+3.98
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	166.65	+1.30
CONSTRUCTION	277.92	+0.89
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,808.80	+73.53
ENERGY	840.55	+9.07
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	523.98	+0.23
HEALTH CARE	2,191.98	+0.17
TRANSPORTATION	1,039.33	+4.75
PROPERTY	1,067.71	+0.56
PLANTATION	7,336.44	+0.06
FBMSHA	11,865.60	+102.90
FBMACE	5,176.26	+17.32
TECHNOLOGY	60.74	+0.68

TURNOVER: 3.114 bil VALUE: RM3,065 bil

Bursa closes week higher, driven by bargain hunting

BURSA Malaysia ended last week on a positive note, in line with most of its regional peers, as bargain hunting boosted the FBM KLCI after a lacklustre performance over the last few days.

At 5pm, the benchmark index increased 11.18 points to 1,566.72 from Thursday's close of 1,555.54.

The FBM KLCI, which opened 2.11 points easier at 1,553.43, moved between 1,545.67 and 1,569.43 during the day.

Market breadth was positive, with gainers leading losers 543 to 434, while 511 counters were unchanged, 889 untraded and 19 others suspended.

Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd equity research vice-president Thong Pak Leng said the FBM KLCI's rebound was driven by bargain hunting in utilities, energy, and consumer stocks.

"The bourse recovered slightly after a massive sell-off, and we reckon that the FBM KLCI must stay above the 1,600 level to regain its momentum," he told Bernama.

Meanwhile, UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan said the recovery in the local market was further strengthened by encouraging economic data from China and a clear, constructive statement from US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent during his testimony at the Senate Finance Committee hearing last week.

Among the heavyweights, Maybank was flat at RM10.14 while CIMB fell one sen to RM7.98. Public Bank added five sen to RM4.44, Tenaga Nasional jumped 48 sen to RM13.60 and IHH Healthcare bagged four sen to RM7.15.

Of the active stocks, Gamuda shed two sen to RM4.24, CBH Engineering trimmed one sen to 32.5 sen and SNS Network decreased three sen to 51.5 sen, while Velocity Capital and TWL Holdings were flat at eight sen and 2.5 sen, respectively.

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-PWB1	0.085	-	-	1,103,572
HSI-CWAY	0.090	0.005	5.88	1,033,404
GAMUDA	4.240	-0.020	-0.47	1,013,096
SALUTE	0.265	-0.155	-36.90	941,078
VELESTO	0.185	0.020	12.12	819,216
TWL	0.025	-	-	806,354
GAMUDA-C2R	0.125	-	-	762,132
VELOCITY	0.080	-	-	627,877
SNS	0.515	-0.030	-5.50	580,342
MYEG	0.940	0.020	2.17	557,150
CBHB	0.325	-0.010	-2.99	442,662
MAHSING	1.400	-0.030	-2.10	423,445
HSI-CWA1	0.140	-0.005	-3.45	421,589
SMTTRACK	0.020	-	-	384,115
YTL	2.190	0.010	0.46	348,565
NATGATE	2.200	-0.030	-1.35	274,241
SUNWAY	4.200	0.100	2.44	272,928
HSI-CY9	0.120	-0.015	-11.11	262,762
SIMEPROP	1.460	-0.010	-0.68	261,790
YTLPOWER	3.900	0.100	2.63	241,704



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
MPI	23.280	0.540	1,905
TENAGA	13.600	0.480	166,005
PETDAG	19.600	0.400	2,145
FBN	25.920	0.360	75
AJI	15.200	0.300	284
GCB	4.060	0.210	34,728
ABMB	5.160	0.200	38,387
HEIM	24.700	0.200	660
KGB	3.430	0.200	26,427
KGB-WB	2.020	0.160	13,133
HLFG	18.100	0.140	3,248
PERSTIM	2.500	0.130	637
CARLSBG	20.120	0.120	940
GESHEN	3.890	0.120	1,497
PGF	2.200	0.120	410
FRONTKN	4.200	0.110	42,705
SUNWAY	4.200	0.100	272,928
TM	6.480	0.100	50,365
VSTECs	3.470	0.100	4,786
YTLPOWER	3.900	0.100	241,704

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
SCBUILD	0.015	200.00	150,303
ANCOMNY-CQ	0.040	166.67	1,014
GCB-C9	0.050	150.00	5,403
ARMADA-C91	0.030	100.00	5,950
EDGENTA-CR	0.010	100.00	9,100
FBMKLCI-CQL	0.010	100.00	7,300
KGROUP	0.010	100.00	1,085
PARLO-WA	0.010	100.00	2,850
SAPNRG-WA	0.010	100.00	80
YB-WA	0.010	100.00	3,065
YTLPOWER-C61	0.010	100.00	1,081
GCB-C12	0.025	66.67	2,219
DIALOG-C1R	0.015	50.00	20
ERDASAN-WC	0.015	50.00	2,454
FBMKLCI-HA4	0.225	50.00	105
JCY-C16	0.015	50.00	500
TENAGA-C2M	0.015	50.00	103,282
TENAGA-C20	0.030	50.00	33,614
VELESTO-C39	0.015	50.00	801
ABMB-C17	0.100	42.86	4,105

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	43,487.83	334.7	0.78
S&P 500 (US)	5,996.66	59.32	1
NASDAQ (US)	19,630.20	291.91	1.51
NYSE (US)	19,607.37	58.74	0.3
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	5,148.30	41.37	0.81
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,505.22	113.32	1.35
DAX (GER)	20,903.39	248	1.2
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	38,451.46	-121.14	-0.31
TOPIX (JPN)	2,679.42	-8.89	-0.33
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	19,584.06	+61.17	+0.31
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,812.34	+11.96	+0.31
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,241.82	+5.79	+0.18
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,523.55	-3.84	-0.16
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	179.07	+1.83	+1.03
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,310.38	-16.58	-0.20
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,557.43	-11.70	-0.14
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	76,692.88	-349.94	-0.45
FBM KLCI	1,566.72	+11.18	+0.72
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,806.14	+5.01	+0.13
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	77.88	-0.8	-1.02
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	80.79	-0.5	-0.62
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,748.70	-2.2	-0.08
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	31.14	-0.58	-1.84
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	944.4	8.42	0.9
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	436.85	-7.25	-1.63
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,190.00	-40.5	-0.44
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	484.25	9.75	2.05
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	538.75	1.25	0.23
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	45.69	0.66	1.47
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	11,173.00	671	6.39
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	194.5	-3.2	-1.62

As at 5pm, Jan 17

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
ALLIANZ-PA	20.000	-0.620	131
NESTLE	92.020	-0.460	430
PETGAS	17.160	-0.260	4,202
SUNCON-C11	0.375	-0.210	1,540
MBMR	5.880	-0.160	5,855
HSI-PWBZ	0.305	-0.155	183
SALUTE	0.265	-0.155	941,078
HSI-PWBY	1.310	-0.140	19
NSOP	3.850	-0.130	51
PIE	5.630	-0.130	4,003
LPI	12.600	-0.120	680
MAHSING-C65	0.005	-0.115	110
MSM-C4	0.040	-0.110	6,100
YINSON	2.530	-0.110	82,887
GAMUDA-C2F	0.610	-0.080	1
HTPADU	2.620	-0.080	6,906
MSC	2.050	-0.080	17,629
CEPCO	1.120	-0.070	1
ECOWLD-C29	0.140	-0.070	100
99SMART-CD	0.240	-0.060	900

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
MAHSING-C65	0.005	-95.83	110
MSM-C4	0.040	-73.33	6,100
MSC-CQ	0.010	-66.67	7,000
YTL-C89	0.005	-66.67	3,000
IJM-C82	0.030	-62.50	7,200
IJM-C84	0.030	-60.00	200
TM-C1L	0.015	-57.14	2,202
IJM-C87	0.025	-54.55	7,630
EAH	0.005	-50.00	1,703
FBMKLCI-CQ0	0.005	-50.00	10,403
IDICORP-C62	0.005	-50.00	3,100
KANGER-WB	0.005	-50.00	400
MAHSING-C69	0.005	-50.00	2,000
MSC-CR	0.030	-50.00	4,734
MYEG-C7M	0.035	-50.00	200
OCR-WE	0.005	-50.00	4,800
TSH-C10	0.010	-50.00	1,500
ZENTECH	0.005	-50.00	78,341
YINSON-C37	0.035	-46.15	300
MAHSING-C73	0.025	-44.44	2,400

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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OB Holdings, CTG Group in pact to foster youth entrepreneurship

KUALA LUMPUR: OB Holdings Bhd, a fortified food and beverages (F&B) and dietary supplements manufacturing services provider has partnered with marketing company CTG Group to launch a Youth Entrepreneurship Programme.

This initiative aims to nurture 1,000 young entrepreneurs over the next three years, equipping them with essential skills, mentorship, and practical business opportunities.

While OB Holdings has steadily built its reputation through third-party manufacturing services for fortified F&B and dietary supplements, along with its own house brands including Bonlife and GoHerb, the company is taking a step forward by empowering young Malaysians to contribute to the industry's growth. This programme will provide a platform for aspiring entrepreneurs to gain real-world experience and contribute to the development of Malaysia's economy.

The collaboration with CTG Group leverages on its extensive experience in brand incubation, having successfully launched over 50 brands in the health and skincare sector. Together, OB Holdings and CTG Group will deliver a hands-on experience for participants, enabling them to market and sell OB Holdings' house brand products while gaining valuable insights into market dynamics.

OB Holdings managing director Teoh Eng Sia said that by targeting 1,000 participants over the next three years, they aim to empower a new generation of entrepreneurs who can contribute to Malaysia's socio-economic progress.

"We believe that this programme will serve as one of the largest platforms to build a community of light capital young entrepreneurs in Malaysia."

Ringgit weakens against dollar on cautious sentiment

THE ringgit weakened against the US dollar at the close last Friday on cautious market sentiment ahead of the inauguration of Donald Trump as the US president today, said an analyst.

At 6pm, the ringgit fell to 4.5040/5085 against the greenback from Thursday's closing of 4.5005/5050.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes said markets are currently in a cautious state, trimming positions ahead of the US inauguration, with much anticipation about the potential impact should Trump opt to impose the full spectrum of tariffs on China.

"Last week, internal debates within Trump's administration between trade hardliners and moderates have underscored a significant rift, adding layers of uncertainty that are particularly palpable for Asian forex, including the ringgit. The ringgit trades a tad weaker into the close, but nothing significant," he told Bernama. At the close, the ringgit was lower against other major currencies.

It slid vis-a-vis the euro to 4.6382/6429 from Thursday's close of 4.6283/6329, depreciated against the British pound to 5.4953/5008 from 5.4888/4943 on Thursday, and fell slightly versus the Japanese yen to 2.8918/8949 from 2.8914/8945.

Meanwhile, the local note traded mostly lower against Asean currencies.

It slid against the Thai baht to 13.0664/0856 from 2.9941/13.0127 at the previous close and was a little changed against the Indonesian rupiah at 274.9/275.3 from 274.7/275.2 on Thursday.

The ringgit eased against the Singapore dollar to 3.2948/2983 from 3.2906/2941 and was unchanged against the Philippine peso at yesterday's closing of 7.68/7.69.

Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5680	4.4320	4.4220
1 Australian Dollar	2.8530	2.7380	2.7220
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3420	3.2430	3.2350
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1690	3.0840	3.0720
1 Euro	4.7140	4.5600	4.5400
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5730	2.4790	2.4630
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3420	3.2430	3.2350
1 Sterling Pound	5.5990	5.4200	5.4000
1 Swiss Franc	0.5050	0.48350	0.48200
100 UAE Dirham	125.8300	119.2900	119.0900
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.8380	3.5730	3.3730
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.7300	60.0700	N/A
100 Danish Krone	64.7700	59.5800	59.3800
100 Hongkong Dollar	59.2900	56.3200	56.1200
100 Indian Rupee	5.3700	5.0300	4.8300
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0289	0.0261	0.0211
100 Japanese Yen	2.9480	2.8530	2.8430
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.9000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.3000	37.9700	37.7700
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6700	1.5600	1.3600
100 Philippine Peso	7.9200	7.4600	7.2600
100 Qatar Riyal	126.6700	120.2500	120.0500
100 Saudi Riyal	123.0900	116.8500	116.6500
100 South Africa Rand	25.1700	22.7200	22.5200
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5800	1.4600	1.2600
100 Swedish Krona	42.2600	38.4800	38.2800
100 Thai Baht	13.8100	12.2300	11.8300

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

Ancom Nylex Bhd Outperform. Target price: RM1.20



Source: Kenanga Research

ANCOMMY'S 1H'25 results came in 21% and 23% below Kenanga and consensus estimates, respectively. YoY, 1H'25 agri-chemical margins were affected by currency volatility and high freight cost while industrial chemical saw weaker trade and margins. We are cutting FY25-26 core net profit (CNP) by 21-17% on the slower sales growth, higher costs as well as taxes.

Excluding disposal and exchange gain of RM1.9 million altogether, CNP of RM27.2 million (-37%) in 1H'25 came in at only 32% and 31% of Kenanga and consensus full-year estimates, respectively. The main variance against our forecast was due to still elevated freight cost despite QoQ improvement, weaker industrial performance and higher effective tax charges. As expected, no interim DPS was declared.

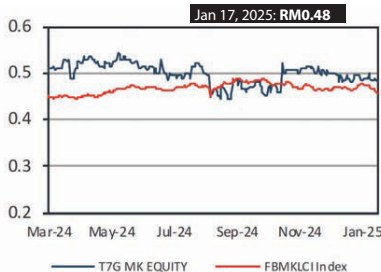
Q2'25 revenue eased to RM450.7 million (-13% QoQ, -11% YoY) on weaker industrial chemical volume as well as ASP. Agri-chemical sales was flat QoQ but managed to still inch up YoY on good orders for timber preservative and MSMA. However, CNP fell 40% YoY and slipped 3% QoQ due to mainly to higher freight cost.

Although agri-chemicals demand remains healthy, FY25 CNP margins will likely struggle with elevated cost and soft industrial chemical demand. FY25 should also end with 15% dilution to EPS, no thanks to 96.2m new shares issued to Helm in Sept CY24 with 60 million warrants converted since the start of FY25 (i.e. June CY24).

We continue to like ANCOMMY for it being: (i) largest active ingredients producer for herbicide in Southeast Asia, (ii) a beneficiary of widening ban of the highly toxic Paraquat, and (iii) an alternative, neutral supplier amidst US-China trade tension. It is indirectly a proxy to global food production and food security as well.

OUTPERFORM with RM1.20 TP. - Kenanga Research, Jan 17

T7 Global Bhd Buy. Target price: RM0.66



Source: Bloomberg, Phillip Capital Research

FOLLOWING the latest MCM contract award from Hibiscus Oil & Gas Malaysia, T7 has secured a cumulative RM2 billion in MCM-related contracts, bringing its order book to a record-high of RM4.7 billion. In preparation for the anticipated increase in work orders, T7 has been aggressively expanding its workforce to allow for the simultaneous execution of multiple MCM jobs, including 3 Pan Malaysia packages. We estimate the combined MCM projects will contribute RM400-450 million revenue in 2025, accounting for 50% of our revenue forecasts.

Regarding current O&G project development, both the Mobile Offshore Production Units (MOPUs) operate at full capacity. The Enya jack-up rig has commenced work at Labuan on nine wells, with operations on nine wells expected to be completed by end-25. Following this, the jack-up rig will be redeployed to Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak for the remaining 44 wells, keeping it busy for 2-3 years. Meanwhile, the KLIA baggage handling system (BHS) project has reached 40% completion as of end-24, compared to 29% as of end-23. Progress has been slower than anticipated, mainly due to KLIA being an operational airport and unable to close certain sections to facilitate construction work. We gather that T7 is also bidding for other government-related projects with a scope and potential contract value similar to that of the BHS project.

We remain positive on T7's earnings prospects for 2025 (+21% YoY), underpinned by contributions from its 2 MOPUs, MCM Jobs, P&A, and BHS project. Key risks include unforeseen operational delays in existing MOPUs, unforeseen delays in MCM work orders and BHS project, and higher-than-expected operating costs.

BUY with RM0.66 TP. - Phillip Capital Research, Jan 17

Dayang Enterprise Holdings Bhd Buy. Target price: RM4.50



Source: Bloomberg, Phillip Capital Research

AS one of the earliest and most experienced providers of integrated services to the oil and gas industry, Dayang is involved in the provision of maintenance services, fabrication operations, hook-up and commissioning and chartering of marine vessels.

We were pleasantly surprised by the higher actual order book value of RM6.2 billion vs. our prior estimate of RM5.2 billion. This could result in higher work order value and present upside risks to our earnings forecast, depending on clients' work programmes. Dayang has been a key beneficiary of the latest Petronas' Pan Malaysia MCM contract, accounting for 80% of the current order book. Management guided that there have been no signs of a slowdown in work orders despite concerns about possible capex cuts from Petronas.

As a Sarawak-based company, we maintain that Dayang will be one of the primary beneficiaries under PETROS. The demand for offshore vessels remains healthy for the marine business, with high utilisation rates across Dayang and Perdana Petroleum vessels. Management anticipates a 4-5% increase in charter rates, driven by the ongoing vessel supply shortage, which will further strengthen margins.

We expect Q4'24 to be stronger YoY, driven by higher overall work orders, increased vessel utilisation rates, and improved daily charter rates (DCR). Vessel utilisation in Q4'24 is expected to be higher than the 58% recorded in Q4'23, primarily due to the need to complete work orders ahead of the expiration of the previous HUC/MCM contract in Dec 24. With the recent contract wins driving a record-high order book, we remain positive on the 2025 earnings outlook.

BUY with RM4.50 TP. - Phillip Capital Research, Jan 17



What next for **TikTok**?

Fallout from US ban of social media platform - **P22**



WEEKLY **FOCUS**

MONDAY

Technology and social media

TUESDAY

Travel and leisure

WEDNESDAY

Fashion and beauty

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Users flock to Xiaohongshu app

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

A nationwide ban of TikTok took place yesterday in the US. It was the culmination of years-long scrutiny of the app's ties to China. American lawmakers had voiced fears that the social media platform's parent company, ByteDance, could be compelled to share US user data with the Chinese government.

TikTok's popularity among young Americans continues to soar on a year-to-year basis. According to a *Statista* report last year, the US ranks second in the top 10 countries with the largest TikTok audience – a list largely dominated by developing countries.

As the US typically styles itself as the leader of the free world, its decision to ban TikTok has sparked widespread debate over freedom of expression and digital sovereignty.

Short, long-term implications

In the short term, the ban will likely disrupt the daily habits of 170 million American users. Influencers, content creators and businesses who rely on TikTok's extensive reach will abruptly be denied access to their primary platform for engagement and revenue generation.

Small businesses that leverage TikTok for cost-effective advertising will be forced to quickly pivot to alternative platforms such as Instagram Reels or YouTube Shorts.

Economically, the ban could set a precedent for how US-based tech companies are treated abroad. It risks escalating tensions in an already fraught US-China geopolitical relationship, potentially prompting retaliatory measures against American firms operating in China. It also raises questions about the enforcement of such a sweeping policy.

Would users be penalised for accessing TikTok via VPNs? And how would the government deal with resistance from users and creators?

In the long run, the ban will likely reshape the US digital landscape by accelerating the development of domestic platforms keen to fill the vacuum left by TikTok's absence.

This may lead to a more self-reliant technology ecosystem, albeit one that risks losing the global diversity that TikTok brought to content creation.



China is reportedly considering the sale of TikTok US' operations to Elon Musk. – PIC FROM FACEBOOK @ELONMUSK



The TikTok ban could benefit other social media platforms keen to fill the void. – TIKTOKPIC

ban could stifle these avenues of social advancement, disproportionately affecting younger and lower-income users who rely on the platform for visibility and income.

TikTok's absence could hinder small and medium-sized enterprises that use the app to connect with local and global audiences, slowing the growth of digital economies in these countries. The ban might also exacerbate the digital divide, as more affluent users could find ways to bypass restrictions while others are left without alternatives.

Politically, a ban in Malaysia could fuel public distrust in government motives, especially if the decision is perceived as a capitulation to external pressures rather than a genuine national security concern.

No silver bullet

Will banning TikTok address Washington's concerns on sensitive data falling into the hands of a rival power? Likely not, unless said data was extracted from a TikTok clip of influencers dancing.

The ban itself is viewed by critics to be more symbolic than anything else, as the broader issue of data privacy extends beyond TikTok. This is an age where almost every app and social media platform is known to collect and store user data, often with minimal oversight.

A lack of comprehensive data protection laws raises the risk of the US carpet-bombing a single app, while conveniently ignoring systemic vulnerabilities that give room to digital misuse.

Furthermore, banning TikTok will not eliminate "Chinese influence" in the US digital sphere – other Chinese-owned platforms exist and more will crop up to fill the void. It is the equivalent of the hydra effect.

Still, the ban's short and long-term repercussions, domestically and internationally, highlight the complexity of balancing security with economic and social freedoms in an ever-changing digital age. The outcome of the US ban will inevitably set a global precedent for how other governments navigate this intricate conundrum.

US bans TikTok: What happens next

➤ Ramifications for digital sovereignty, business reach

Additionally, the ban could influence future legislation, setting a precedent for how the US government handles foreign-owned platforms that it deems a threat.

Ramifications on developing nations

If middle-income countries such as Malaysia were to adopt a similar ban, it would be far more consequential and keenly felt. The platform is a cornerstone of digital culture in many rising economies, enabling access to expression, education and entrepreneurship. A

TikTok is home to a huge variety of influencers, including those offering beauty tips.

– FREEPIKPIK





Infinix XPad 4G.

Oppo Pad 3
Matte Display
Edition.

Tablets push AI boundaries

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

THE latest releases from leading manufacturers showcase groundbreaking advances being made in display technology and artificial intelligence (AI) integration for tablet technology. These new devices push boundaries with paper-like screens that minimise glare and enhance the reading experience while powerful AI features transform everything from note-taking to photo editing.

From premium ultra-thin models to budget-friendly options, these tablets redefine what is possible in portable computing, offering enhanced productivity tools and immersive entertainment capabilities.

Oppo

The recently announced ultra-thin Oppo Pad 3 Matte Display Edition is the latest in the company's growing suite of AI-powered tech.

With an ultra-thin design, the tablet stands out at just 6.29mm at its thickest point, making it Oppo's thinnest yet. At its core is the company's first nano-texture Anti-Reflective Matte Display, which provides a paper-like experience ideal for reading, writing and sketching.

Utilising advanced nano-level anti-reflective etching technology, the display minimises glare by up to 97%, transforming harsh light into gentle reflections for optimal visibility, even under direct sunlight.

The tablet also has hardware with an in-built solution for low blue light that received the TÜV Rheinland Intelligent Eye Care 3.0 Certification and TÜV Rheinland Reflection Free Certification.

Inside, it is powered by the strong 4nm MediaTek Dimensity 8350 platform that provides a seamless experience across work, gaming and entertainment. Fine-tuned and optimised by MediaTek and Oppo, the chipset integrates the APU 780 AI processor that achieves 3.3x higher AI performance and 8x faster generative AI operations.

The AI capabilities do not end there as the Oppo Pad 3 Matte Display Edition also elevates

➤ Next-gen devices blend power with paper-like displays



Huawei MatePad Pro 12.2.

productivity with a suite of AI-powered tools such as Document Summary, AI Rewrite and Document Translation.

Furthermore, the upgraded AI Toolbox 2.0 provides system-level AI support, offering real-time summaries, translations and custom AI replies in key scenarios such as social networking, reading and office tasks.

Meanwhile, AI Assistant for Notes intelligently transforms fragmented thoughts in the Notes app into polished, structured content with features such as formatting, continuation and tailored stylistic adjustments.

For multitaskers, the Boundless View feature allows up to three split-screen apps to run simultaneously, maximising efficiency and productivity. It supports various layouts like three-way vertical or two-up-one-down splits, enabling smooth file drag-and-drop, cross-checking information and effortless app switching with a swipe.

For photography, the AI Photo Remaster feature transforms low-quality snapshots into polished, high-quality images, enhancing clarity, fixing blur and removing reflections or distractions effortlessly.

On the audio front, Holo Audio 2.0 supports up to 12 sound objects

playing independently, creating a concert-like experience. Combined with Hi-Res Audio certification for wired and wireless setups, the tablet guarantees a superior, immersive listening experience.

Infinix

Its first tablet series, Infinix's XPad 4G is a powerful budget tablet for students, young professionals, content creators and entertainment enthusiasts looking for performance at an affordable rate.

Powered by the Helio G99 processor, along with an 11-inch FHD+ display and Dolby Atmos-enhanced quad speakers, the XPad 4G is expected to elevate users experience — be it through music, films or games.

Designed for users on the go, the new tablet is a blend of performance and portability with its slim and lightweight design, while the 4G and Wi-Fi connectivity options ensure uninterrupted access to online content, entertainment and productivity tools no matter where the users are.

Powered by a 7000mAh battery, the XPad 4G can withstand an entire day of use without recharging, whether it is streaming, working or gaming. For added versatility, Infinix also offers a dedicated keyboard for

the tablet.

Keeping up with modern standards, the tablet also has AI-integration through Folax AI, which helps personalise user experience by offering smart directions, answering questions and helping with navigation.

In addition, the XPad 4G also transforms in-car entertainment and functionality by offering a hands-free, safe and seamless driving experience. Folax AI acts as a co-pilot, managing navigation, handling calls and providing real-time updates so that users can stay focused on the road.

Huawei

Designed to provide an experience equivalent to using a PC, the new MatePad Pro 12.2 is made to improve work commitments, school assignments and creative projects.

Featuring advanced multitasking capabilities, such as video editing while conducting research for a project or handling work emails and drafting a presentation at the same time, the tablet provides a PC-like experience while having the added positives of being portable and convenient.

The Glide Keyboard also addresses common issues when it comes to tables, such as the lack of a dedicated stylus storage and charging, as the keyboard design includes a 2-in-1 stylus and storage for Huawei's M-Pencil 3rd Gen that pairs automatically with the tablet and charges while stored.

Productivity is further enhanced with its office suite, the WPS Office that gives the tablet an interface and editing tools equivalent to a PC. Bringing it all together is the tablet's Tandem Oled PaperMatte display, which delivers users vibrant colours and clarity for anything the MatePad Pro 12.2 is used for, from streaming to reading.

The tech behind the display extends its lifespan significantly while optimising energy efficiency by 33% to ensure clear display even when used under direct sunlight.

Events listing

Jiwa Membumi: The Soul of the Land

📅 Date: Until Feb 25
🕒 Time: Tuesday to Sunday, 10am to 5pm
📍 Venue: Art Gallery, Level 3, BNM Museum and Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur
🎟 Admission: Free
The art exhibition explores Malaysia's rural roots and cultural heritage, showcasing the deep ties between nature, culture and the simple beauty of village life.

A Celebration of Creativity and Abundance

📅 Date: Until Jan 21
🕒 Time: Open daily, 10am to 6pm
📍 Venue: Wanani Art Centre Johor
🎟 Admission: Free
Art exhibition by artists Nai Swee Leng, Tay Poi San, Raymond Koh, BK Yap, Theng Sea Way and Goh Haw Yuan that celebrates contrasts and connections.

Solo Levelling Experience

📅 Date: Until March 11
🕒 Time: Open daily, 10am to 10pm
📍 Venue: Level 3 (Pink Zone), Pavilion Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur
🎟 Admission: RM25 Package, RM50 Package and RM80 Package
The event offers a close-up connection to the anime world through recreated iconic scenes, themed dining and a variety of limited-edition merchandise.

Maybank's Form Before Fusion Exhibition

📅 Date: Until Jan 24
🕒 Time: Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm and Saturday, 10am to 4pm
📍 Venue: Balai Seni Maybank, Menara Maybank, Kuala Lumpur
🎟 Admission: Free
An exhibition that features 11 artworks from 11 emerging Asean artists from Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos, expressed in the forms of visual and mixed media artworks, installations, sculptures and performance art.

Resounding Rhapsody of Roses

📅 Date: Feb 2
🕒 Time: 3pm
📍 Venue: Dewan Sri Pinang, Penang
🎟 Admission: RM55, RM85 and RM125
Performed by the ProArt Chinese Orchestra's 85 members, the concert will cover a rich selection of Chinese orchestral masterpieces such as *Rose Rhapsody*, *Guo Feng - Airs of the States and My Motherland*.



BY YASMIN ZULRAEZ

FANS of Cigarettes After Sex (CAS) gathered at The Landing in KL Base on Jan 11 for an unforgettable evening of ethereal melodies and dreamy soundscapes. The venue, tucked away in KL's urban sprawl, demanded a fair amount of walking to reach, leaving many attendees feeling the physical toll of the journey. Despite the aching feet and sweaty brows, everyone's mood shifted as they approached the venue, anticipation buzzing in the air.

For fans who braved the trek, the payoff was monumental. The night promised an unparalleled experience for loyal followers of the band and as the lights dimmed, it became clear that CAS would deliver exactly what its fans had come for, a chilled, love-filled atmosphere punctuated by angelic vocals and an intimate connection with music.

Love is in air

From the moment CAS took the stage, the atmosphere became a haven of love and serenity. Couples held each other close, swaying gently to the band's signature dream-pop sound. The audience, ranging from longtime fans to casual listeners, shared a collective sense of tranquility that matched the ethereal mood of the music.

The band opened with *X's*, instantly setting a reflective and emotional tone. Fans were drawn into the hypnotic allure of Greg Gonzalez's angelic voice, which carried effortlessly across the venue. Tracks such as *You're All I Want* and *Dark Vacay* elicited quiet cheers and murmurs of approval, the tender lyrics resonating deeply with couples and singles alike.

The simplicity of the stage setup complemented the intimacy of the music. Soft lighting in a white hue cast a dreamlike glow over the band, adding to the immersive experience.

Cigarettes After Sex mesmerises KL in live gig

➤ Songs filled with emotions resonate with crowd

As the night unfolded, each song seemed to wrap the audience in a warm, emotional embrace, creating an unspoken bond between the performers and their listeners.

Angelic voice paired with perfect setlist

Gonzalez's vocals were the heart and soul of the evening. His angelic tone, paired with the band's minimalist instrumentation, brought the audience into the world CAS is known for — melancholic, romantic and timeless. Songs such as *Nothing's Gonna Hurt You Baby* and *Falling in Love* hit all the right emotional notes, with couples seen holding hands and leaning on each other as if the music was made just for them.

The setlist was a well-curated mix of fan favourites and newer tracks, ensuring no one left disappointed. The poignant *Sweet and Cry* left many attendees teary-eyed while the dreamy melodies of *Heavenly* and *K* had the crowd swaying in unison.

A highlight of the evening came with *Apocalypse*, one of the band's most popular tracks. The haunting lyrics and hypnotic melody filled the venue with almost spiritual energy, with fans singing along softly, their



This is the band's second concert in Malaysia. — PIC FROM FACEBOOK @CIGARETTESAFTERSEX

voices blending harmoniously with Gonzalez's.

Shared journey through music and emotion

What set this concert apart was the shared intimacy among the audience. Couples were intertwined, friends leaned on each other and even strangers exchanged knowing glances as they connected through the universal themes of love and longing in the band's music. It was a communal experience, in which each note felt like a secret shared with thousands of others in the crowd.

The simplicity of the production allowed the music to take centre stage. There were no flashy visuals or distracting gimmicks, just pure, unfiltered sound. This minimalist approach brought out the best in the performance, letting every guitar riff, bassline and vocal nuance shine.

The crowd's respect for the music was palpable, with moments of near-silence during slower tracks such as *Opera House*. The quietness was not from disinterest but reverence as fans soaked in every moment, allowing the music to transport them into a world of reflection and emotion.

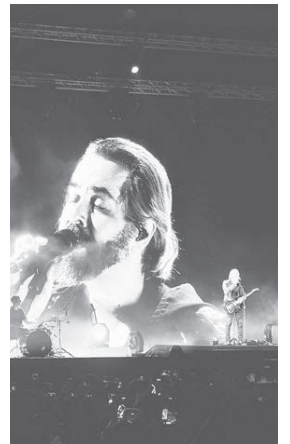
Painful journey but worth every moment

The physical journey to and from The Landing was undeniably gruelling for many attendees. The long walk, paired with the effort of navigating KL's bustling streets, tested even the most dedicated fans. But as the final notes of *Dreaming of You* faded into the night, it was clear the effort was well worth it.



Gonzalez's serene and emotional voice made it an unforgettable experience.

— PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @ALIFFJAAMXL



Concert-goers were serenaded under soft stage lights that created a romantic and intimate atmosphere.

— PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @JD_CHANG

Attendees left the venue with smiles, holding hands and exchanging stories of their favourite moments from the night. The pain of the journey seemed insignificant in comparison with the beauty of the music they had just witnessed. Many remarked that the concert felt like a private serenade, with Gonzalez's voice acting as the soundtrack to an unforgettable evening.

Evening that met every expectation CAS's KL concert was exactly what fans had hoped for — a night of chill, love-filled vibes delivered with

perfection. From the angelic vocals of Gonzalez to the band's minimalist yet impactful performance, the event was proof of the enduring appeal of its music. It was a night that reminded everyone of the beauty of simplicity, power of connection and timelessness of music that speaks to the soul.

For those who made the journey, the concert will undoubtedly remain a cherished memory. CAS created a shared experience that celebrated love, emotion and the magic of live music.



CAS captivates fans with angelic vocals and dreamlike melodies.

— PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @ANNANDHR



Holyarrow frontman Schtarch (centre) bases the band's music on past wars in China.



Zuriaake draws lyrical inspiration from Chinese literature. - PIC FROM FACEBOOK @ZURIAAKE

Chinese metal 'snakes'

► Unconventional bands that forge ancient tales in modern fire

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

FOR the Year of the Snake, instead of mainstream Chinese musicians, check out the proverbial "snakes" that slither in the deepest recesses of the underground music scene.

From atmospheric black metal that channels ancient spirits through bamboo hats and straw capes to folk-influenced extreme metal incorporating traditional instruments, these bands have carved a unique niche in their homeland and across the global metal landscape.

Their music weaves tales of history, from imperial warfare to cultural heritage, creating a soundscape where blast beats meet traditional melodies and where ancient storytelling finds new life through distorted guitars and primal screams. This fusion of East and West has produced some of the most innovative metal music of the past two decades.

Zuriaake
Recommended album: *Yi Qiu (Afterimage of Autumn)*
First up and arguably the most prolific Chinese metal band from the turn of the century is Zuriaake. Formed in 1998, the band is one of the longest surviving metal outfits from China.

Rather than the typical "corpse paint" (white and black make-up) used by their cohorts to maintain anonymity on stage, members of Zuriaake play their live shows in bamboo hats, black veils and straw capes, evoking a haunting image of spectral fishermen cloaked in the "fog" produced by smoke machines.

Zuriaake's music tilts heavily into the atmospheric side of black metal, with compositions mixing traditional styles of the latter with Chinese folk instruments, while lyrically, the band focuses on Chinese history.

Holyarrow
Recommended album: *Zhong Chi (Oath of Allegiance)*
Though Holyarrow is in the same subgenre as Zuriaake, the band



Vengeful Spectre is young, having released its first album in 2020. - PICS BY METALARCHIVES



Black Kirin plays a more extreme form of folk metal.

takes a more militaristic approach to music by opting to conquer eardrums by pummeling them into submission the way old Chinese armies once did during a war campaign.

While Zuriaake uses atmosphere dynamically, Holyarrow's take is oppressive, weaving furious blast beats with traditional Chinese instruments as frontman Schtarch shrieks out lyrics on Chinese history and war.

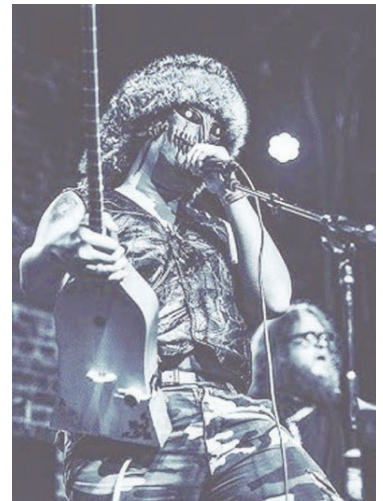
Black Kirin
Recommended album: *Jin Ling Ji (Nanking Massacre)*
The second-most accessible band

on this list, Black Kirin's music is an amalgamation of several different styles of metal, particularly traditional metal, black metal and folk metal.

In the middle of that Venn diagram, Black Kirin edges closer to the folk half, as the band tends to place - more than the other bands on this list - a heavier emphasis on incorporating folk Chinese instruments into their song compositions.

Using instruments such as the *guzheng* and *xun* alongside electric guitars, bass and drums has led to some amazingly weird songs.

Ganganbaigal, the late frontman of Tengger Cavalry. - PIC FROM YOUTUBE @TENGER CAVALRY OFFICIAL



Vengeful Spectre
Recommended album: *Yun Sha (Vengeful Spectre)*

Relatively new at the time, the band dropped its eponymous debut album at the start of the 2020 pandemic. With everyone stuck in their homes, word of mouth elevated the ferocious band to popular consciousness.

Like many new outfits, Vengeful Spectre has a more refreshed, somewhat accessible sound production-wise, where the vocals seem to be as loud and clear, if not more, than the instruments. Their use of folk instruments avoids the pitfall of being a gimmick, as the placements in each song fit the parts before and after them. Moreover, these instruments are not overused.

Ripped to Shreds
Recommended album: *Mai Zang (Burial)*

Heavier than the previous bands and the only death metal band on the list is frontman Andrew Lee's Ripped to Shreds. Based in California, US, Lee's band grew from a one-man unit into a full band in the years following its debut album.

The band's albums are known for

being eclectic and experimental, with crushing riffs and searing drumming brought together by Lee's writing and composition prowess. Though he is Taiwanese-American, the band's material draws a lot from the Chinese culture he was exposed to.

Tengger Cavalry
Recommended album: *Xue Ji Sa Man (Blood Sacrifice Shaman)*

Ten years before The Hu popularised Mongolian folk metal, Tengger Cavalry was already riding on horseback into battle on the Mongolian steppes playing the exact same music.

Formed by frontman the late Nature Ganganbaigal, a Chinese-Mongolian, the band essentially laid the framework for how metal music would sound if songs with electric guitars, bass and drums were accompanied by lengthy compositions of Mongolian folk instruments such as the *morin khuur* and *Tuvan* throat singing.

The band has split-up following the sudden passing of Ganganbaigal but its music is still widely available online, with the tunes being listener-friendly.



IN the days leading up to the US ban on social media platform TikTok, American users turned to another Chinese-owned app Xiaohongshu.

US passed a law last year forcing the popular video platform's owner ByteDance to either sell it or shut it down. The deadline imposed by the US Congress expired yesterday and TikTok opted to go offline.

Things to know about surging app Xiaohongshu

➤ US users flock to alternative Chinese platform amid Tik Tok ban

Amid all this, Xiaohongshu - a lifestyle-focused Instagram-meets-Pinterest alternative - propelled to the top of the US Apple App Store free downloads chart.

The hashtag #tiktokrefugee had more than 290 million views as of last Wednesday. Here are some key facts about Xiaohongshu:

Origin
Xiaohongshu - or RedNote in English - was launched in Shanghai in 2013 by Charliwin Mao and Miranda Qu.

Xiaohongshu translates literally to Little Red Book, but is not a reference to Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong's book of quotations.

In an interview with research agency Shensixing, Xiaohongshu founder Mao said he viewed his time at Bain & Company and Stanford Business School as "two major milestones" in his life.

"Their primary colour theme is red, so we decided to call it 'Little Red Book,'" he said, according to a transcript of the interview.

Until last Monday, Xiaohongshu was popular primarily among Chinese-speaking users - the majority of whom are young women in urban areas, according to data analysis platform Qiangua.

In contrast, other Chinese online platforms such as Weibo cater to a broader audience.

Besides mainland China, Xiaohongshu has gained traction among other Chinese diasporas in Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan.

It had 300 million monthly active users at the end of 2023.

or the micro-blogging site Weibo, Xiaohongshu leans heavily towards apolitical content such as lifestyle, travel, beauty and food topics.

Xiaohongshu's "Explore" page is similar to TikTok's "For You" page - both curated by an algorithm that suggests content based on users' interests and interactions on the platforms.

It is also an online marketplace similar to TikTok Shop,

where users can directly buy items including clothing, make-up and accessories.

It is seen as relatively less censored than other platforms - users can be found posting LGBTQ content and

discussing the merits of women remaining single, topics often considered sensitive in China.

Xiaohongshu has also popularised *da ka*, or "check-in" tourism, in which travellers plan itineraries around scenic or trending spots specifically to take photos for social media.

And similar to Instagram and TikTok, the platform has also become a hub for influencers endorsing sponsored products.

Mostly Chinese
Xiaohongshu's main challenge to retaining these

new US users is the language barrier, experts said. The app is mostly in Chinese and has no auto-translation tools.

The platform also focuses overwhelmingly on content tailored to China, while most products appear to only ship within the country.

In public group chats on the platform, new US users have asked for translations of slang terms and keywords to search for content they wanted.

Experts said the influx of American users on the app may be more of a short-term reaction than a long-term trend. - AFP



Content
Unlike TikTok's sister app Douyin

Users have been flooding to alternative apps such as Xiaohongshu with the banning of TikTok in the US.

Xiaohongshu has popularised *da ka*, or "check-in" tourism, where travellers plan itineraries around scenic or trending spots specifically to take photos for social media. - PICS BY PEXELS

Wicked tops SAG Awards nominations

HIT musical *Wicked* topped the nominations for the influential Screen Actors Guild (SAG) Awards, which are key to Oscars glory, while Golden Globes darling *The Brutalist* only got one nod and *Maria* star Angelina Jolie was shut out.

Wicked, the big-screen adaptation of the Broadway smash, earned five nods including for "outstanding performance by a cast" - the top SAG Awards prize - lead actress, supporting actor and actress and stunt ensemble.

Bob Dylan biopic *A Complete Unknown* scored four nominations while surreal narco-musical *Emilia Perez*, a major winner at the Globes, scored three nods.

Those three films will battle with Cannes favorite *Anora*, which also had three nominations, and papal thriller *Conclave* for the top cast award, organisers announced.

The Brutalist, an epic immigrant drama about a Hungarian architect who survives the Holocaust and moves to the United States, was left out of that category, only earning one nomination for Globes winner Adrien Brody.



Grande is nominated for Outstanding Female Actor in a Supporting Role.



Bailey is nominated for Outstanding Male Actor in a Supporting Role.



Erivo is nominated for Outstanding Female Actor in a Leading Role.



The *Wicked* movie has boosted its Broadway counterpart. - ALL PICS FROM FACEBOOK @WICKEDMOVIE

The SAG Awards are voted on by Hollywood actors, who represent the biggest branch of the membership of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, which votes for the Oscars.

The prizes are therefore closely watched as indicators of who might be in the running for an Academy Award.

Jolie's failure to secure a SAG nomination for her portrayal of opera diva Maria Callas in *Maria* may

not bode well for her Oscars hopes.

Vying for lead actress honours with *Wicked* star Cynthia Erivo will be Globes winner Demi Moore for body horror film *The Substance*, Pamela Anderson (*The Last Showgirl*), Karla Sofia Gascon (*Emilia Perez*) and Mikey Madison (*Anora*).

Also left out in that stacked category was Nicole Kidman, who earned critical acclaim for her turn in the steamy *Babygirl* and Globes winner Fernanda Torres for *I'm Still*

military dictatorship.

Brody will compete for lead actor honours against Ralph Fiennes in *Conclave*, Timothee Chalamet for his turn as Dylan in *A Complete Unknown*, Daniel Craig in *Queer* and Colman Domingo for *Sing Sing*.

Wicked had a difficult night at the Golden Globes, only winning the award for cinematic and box office achievement, but it came roaring back in the SAG nominations, with Ariana Grande and Jonathan Bailey

earning individual nods.

The SAG Awards also honour television, with Japanese historical drama *Shogun* - already a big winner at the Emmys and Golden Globes - leading with five nominations.

The live in-person announcement of the SAG Awards nominations was cancelled due to the devastating wildfires in the Los Angeles area.

The gala will take place on Feb 23 in Los Angeles and will stream live for the second year running on Netflix. - AFP

Alcaraz moves on

Sabalenka, Gauff on Melbourne collision course

ARYNA SABALENKA brushed aside teenager Mirra Andreeva and Coco Gauff rallied past Belinda Bencic to reach the quarterfinals of the Australian Open and extend winning streaks as Melbourne Park stifled in the summer heat yesterday.

Double defending champion Sabalenka's 6-1 6-2 demolition of Andreeva took her run of consecutive victories at Melbourne Park to 18 matches, while Gauff made it nine wins in a row in 2025 by seeing off the Swiss scourge of major champions 5-7, 6-2, 6-1.

Australia," Alcaraz said on court. "But really sorry for Jack. He doesn't deserve to get injured. He couldn't prepare the start of the season well."

It was the second time Draper retired injured against Alcaraz, having cut short their 2023 match at Indian Wells due to an abdominal strain.

Alcaraz will meet Novak Djokovic as he bids for a first semifinal at Melbourne Park. Sabalenka was stunned in three sets by 17-year-old Andreeva in the quarterfinals of last year's French Open but it was not even close yesterday as the world No. 1 wrapped up the victory in just 62 minutes.

"I'm super happy to get this win," Sabalenka told reporters.

"Mirra is so young, so mature, such a great player. She can play really great tennis."

Sabalenka will next face Russian veteran Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, who ran away with a 7-6(0), 6-0 victory over Donna Vekic after the Croatian 18th seed injured her knee before the first-set tiebreak.

Third seed Gauff lost her first set of the year to open her contest against Bencic but came out firing in the second set. Gauff continued to apply pressure and Bencic crumbled after two net cords conspired against her at 2-1 down in the third.

Gauff will face Sabalenka in the semifinals like last year if she can get past Spain's Paula Badosa, who reached the last eight for the first time in Melbourne by beating Olga Danilovic 6-1, 7-6(2) on Margaret Court Arena.

- AFP/Reuters



Aryna Sabalenka. - AFP/ICC

Pakistan demolish Windies in first Test win

SPINNER Sajid Khan took five wickets and Abrar Ahmed another four to guide Pakistan to a 127-run win on the third day of the first Test against West Indies in Multan yesterday.

They were also the best figures by a West Indian bowler in Pakistan, topping fast bowler Malcolm Marshall's 5-33 at Lahore in 1986.

Sajid took five to match figures of 9-115, while leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed snared 4-27 as West Indies were dismissed for 123, falling well short of their victory target of 251.

The Multan pitch provided sharp turn, with Sajid taking the wickets of skipper Craig Brathwaite (12), Keacy Carty (8), Kavem Hodge (0) and Mikyle Louis (13).

Pakistan's spinners took all the wickets in 'West Indies' second innings, with Noman Ali chipping in with 1-42, as the home side took an early advantage in the two-Test series.

Noman then trapped Justin Greaves leg before wicket for nine in the last over before lunch, leaving the tourists tottering on 54-5.

Left-handed batter Alick Athanaze hit 55, the only half-century of the match for the tourists, and added 41 runs for the sixth wicket with Tevin Inlach.

Warrican's nagging line and length earned him match figures of 10-101, his first 10-wicket match haul.

Sajid removed the dangerous Athanaze, while Abrar's haul included the final wicket of Jomel Warrican.

He dismissed overnight batter Saud Shakeel for two with the first ball of the day and then had Mohammad Rizwan for the same score in his next over.

Left-arm Warrican had led the spin attack for the tourists with a career-best 7-32 as Pakistan were bowled out for 157

runs in the second innings.

They were also the best figures by a West Indian bowler in Pakistan, topping fast bowler Malcolm Marshall's 5-33 at Lahore in 1986.

The Multan pitch provided sharp turn, with Sajid taking the wickets of skipper Craig Brathwaite (12), Keacy Carty (8), Kavem Hodge (0) and Mikyle Louis (13).

Noman then trapped Justin Greaves leg before wicket for nine in the last over before lunch, leaving the tourists tottering on 54-5.

Pakistan had resumed earlier on 109-3 but managed to add just 48 runs.

Warrican's nagging line and length earned him match figures of 10-101, his first 10-wicket match haul.

He dismissed overnight batter Saud Shakeel for two with the first ball of the day and then had Mohammad Rizwan for the same score in his next over.

The second match starts on Jan 25, also in Multan. - AFP

322 Notices

PERFECT EYEWEAR SDN. BHD.
(Company No.: 201101044602 (972722-W))
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459 (1)(a) of the Companies Act, 2016 that a Final Meeting of the members of the above-named Company will be held at its registered office situated at No. 31-3, Jalan Tasik Selatan 3, Metro Centre, Bandar Tasik Selatan, 57000 Kuala Lumpur on Friday, the 21st day of February, 2025 at 10.30 a.m. for the following purposes:

- To receive and consider the final accounts of the Liquidator.
- To resolve under Section 459 (5) of the Companies Act 2016 that the books and papers of the Company be destroyed after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of the final meeting.

DATIN LEE SHOOK MUN @ LEE YUE YEE (f)
Liquidator

Dated this: 20th day of January, 2025

NOTE: A member entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Company. The instrument appointing a proxy must be deposited at the Company's registered office not less than 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.

GUAN WAH SENDIRIAN BERHAD
(Company No.: 197701002894 (33865-V))
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Members of GUAN WAH SENDIRIAN BERHAD (Syarikat No. 197701002894 (33865-V)) duly convened and held at No. 35 (Ground Floor), Jalan Scottland, 10450 George Town, Pulau Pinang on 17 January 2025 at 10.00 a.m., the Special Resolution set out below was duly passed:-

- To receive and consider the final accounts of the Liquidator.
- To resolve under Section 459 (5) of the Companies Act 2016, that the books and papers of the Company be destroyed after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of the final meeting.

DATIN LEE SHOOK MUN @ LEE YUE YEE (f)
Liquidator

Dated this: 20th day of January, 2025

NOTE: A member entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Company. The instrument appointing a proxy must be deposited at the Company's registered office not less than 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.

POPULEX SDN. BHD.
(Company No.: 201001025200 (909114-M))
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459 (1)(a) of the Companies Act, 2016 that a Final Meeting of the members of the above-named Company will be held at its registered office situated at No. 31-3, Jalan Tasik Selatan 3, Metro Centre, Bandar Tasik Selatan, 57000 Kuala Lumpur on Friday, the 21st day of February, 2025 at 11.30 a.m. for the following purposes:

- To receive and consider the final accounts of the Liquidator.
- To resolve under Section 459 (5) of the Companies Act 2016, that the books and papers of the Company be destroyed after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of the final meeting.

DATIN LEE SHOOK MUN @ LEE YUE YEE (f)
Liquidator

Dated this: 20th day of January, 2025

NOTE: A member entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Company. The instrument appointing a proxy must be deposited at the Company's registered office not less than 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.

STEPPER VISION (M) SDN. BHD.
(Company No.: 201101009826 (937965-H))
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459 (1)(a) of the Companies Act, 2016 that a Final Meeting of the members of the above-named Company will be held at its registered office situated at No. 31-3, Jalan Tasik Selatan 3, Metro Centre, Bandar Tasik Selatan, 57000 Kuala Lumpur on Friday, the 21st day of February, 2025 at 11.00 a.m. for the following purposes:

- To receive and consider the final accounts of the Liquidator.
- To resolve under Section 459 (5) of the Companies Act 2016, that the books and papers of the Company be destroyed after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of the final meeting.

DATIN LEE SHOOK MUN @ LEE YUE YEE (f)
Liquidator

Dated this: 20th day of January, 2025

NOTE: A member entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his stead. A proxy need not be a member of the Company. The instrument appointing a proxy must be deposited at the Company's registered office not less than 48 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.

322 Notices

DALAM MANKAMAH TINGGI MALAKA DI HUKUM LUMPUR
(DALAM WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA)
(BANKRUPT KEDAHAN PETIYES PERSEKUTUAN MALAKA)
No. 32-437-99/2024

Dalam perkara Mengenal Selakian 33 dan 34(1) di- (a) (6) Akta Membankir Undang-Undang Perundangan, Perkhidmatan dan Penceraian 1976

Dan

Dalam perkara Selakian 88 dan 93 Akta Membankir Undang-Undang Perundangan dan Penceraian 1976

Dalam perkara Mengenal Kedua 8 Kedua-Kedua Prosiding Penceraian dan Hal Ehsai Perkhidmatan 1976

ANTARA
RAHIMAWAN A.L. RAJENDRAN
(No. K.P.: 88-2205-56-9543)

...PETIYES/STYEN

AGLA A/P RAJOO
(No. K.P.: 90022-05-5186)

...RESPONDEN

NOTIS PENYAMPAIAN GANTI

Kepada:
AGLA A/P RAJOO
(No. K.P.: 90022-05-5186)
Perumahan Awam Sri Kelantan, Senjalang, 51000 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur.

AMBI. PERHATIAN bahawa suatu Petisyen Persekutuan No. 88-23-437-99/2024 telah dikhaskan terhadap orang dalam Mankamah Tinggi Kuala Lumpur oleh **RAHIMAWAN A.L. RAJENDRAN** yang berdaftar di No. 8, Jalan Setia 2, Jorong Utama, Bandar 52000 Kuala Lumpur dan Mankamah telah membolehkan bahawa penyampaian Petisyen yang dikeselusi, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, dan Pengajutan Penyampaian yang telah dikeselusi dalam tindakan ini dikeselusi Responden secara rasmi penyampaian ganti ialah dengan memaparkan salinan-salinan yang tersebut di atas di Papan Notis Mankamah Tinggi di Kuala Lumpur dan di Petisyen Responden (alamat terakhir Responden) di No. 164-68, Perumahan Awam Sri Kelantan Sembil, 51000 Kuala Lumpur dan melalui pengumuman dalam suratkhidmat Bahasa Inggeris dan Bahasa Malaysia yang diterbitkan di seluruh negara dan di Mankamah Tinggi, Petisyen yang dikeselusi, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, Petisyen Persekutuan bertarikh 13.09.2024, dan Pengajutan Penyampaian diumumkan penyampaian yang dimaklumkan di atas selakian 33(7) hari dan diumumkan tarikh penyampaian di atas penyampaian tersebut.

AMBI. PERHATIAN SELAMUTNYA bahawa Selakian ini telah ditetapkan untuk sebuah semula pada 05.02.2025 pada pukul 9.00 pagi secara E-Petisyen di Mankamah Tinggi Mahkamah Mohamed Haniff di mana kamu dikeselusi hadir pada tarikh tersebut.

Petisyen Persekutuan dan kertas-kertas kuasa yang dikeselusi bersama-sama kepada Mankamah ini telah membolehkan kepada Mankamah ini.

Berterikh 20 Januari 2025

.....
Pendaftar Kanan Pendaftar
Mankamah Tinggi Malaysia
Kuala Lumpur

NOTIS PENKALAMARAN ini adalah dikeselusi oleh Notis E. Samanthalan & Partners, Penganalisis bagi Penyediaan dan Penyediaan, alamat pengangkutan di 10F, Jalan SS 16, Taman Industri Selat, 80100 Bahau, Cawangan, Selangor Darul Ehsan. No. Fax: 03-8187 2320. No. Tel: 03-8187 9119. E-mail: admin.10f@ipgipgati.com. [No. Kani: CDR117-10071027SP-386D2025]

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF SUNGAI PASIR ESTATE SENDIRIAN BERHAD
(Syarikat No. 19770100624 (31642-X))
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

that an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Members of SUNGAI PASIR ESTATE SENDIRIAN BERHAD (Syarikat No. 19770100624 (31642-X)) duly convened and held at No. 35 (Ground Floor), Jalan Scottland, 10450 George Town, Pulau Pinang on 17 January 2025 at 10.00 a.m., the Special Resolution set out below was duly passed:-

That the Company be wound up voluntarily pursuant to Section 439(1)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016 and that Ooi Eng Choo of No. 17, Pinhorn Road, 11600 George Town, Pulau Pinang be and is hereby appointed as Liquidator for the purpose of such winding up with all powers given by Section 456 of the Companies Act, 2016.

Dated this 20 January 2025

LIM EE HONG
Company Director

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF SUNGAI PASIR ESTATE SENDIRIAN BERHAD
(Syarikat No. 19770100624 (31642-X))
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above-named Company are required on or before 20 February 2025 to prove their debts or claims and to establish any title they may have to priority by delivering or sending through the post to the liquidator at the undermentioned address and affidavit verifying their respective debts or claims. In default they will be excluded from the benefit priority is established and from objecting to any such distribution.

Dated this 20 January 2025

.....
Liquidator
No. 17, Pinhorn Road
11600 George Town
Pulau Pinang

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR VOLUNTARY WINDING UP OF LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP (Section 50(4)(a) of the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2012)

NOTICE is hereby given that **DOMINANT MEDIA PTL (LLP No.: 201504001577 (LLP0005353-LGN))** will be making an application to the Registrar of Limited Liability Partnerships for a declaration of dissolution pursuant to section 50(2) of the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2012 within seven (7) days after the publication of this notice. Any partner or creditor of the LLP desiring to object to the application may do so in writing to the Companies Commission of Malaysia within thirty (30) days from the date of this notice.

Dated: 20 JANUARY 2025

NOTIS JUALAN SECARA LELONG AWAM
Aka Pemegang Pajak-Gadai (81) 1972
Sandaran-sandaran yang tidak dibayar Pemegang Pajak Gadai yang tersebut dibawah Akan Di-jual Dengan Lelong Umum

Di-Suarha Malam, 20 Jalan Pahlawan Taman Legenda Pada Hari: 03 Februari 2025, Waktu: 02:30 petang

NAMA PAJAK GADAI	NEGERI KEDAH
Pajak Gadai EMU Sdn Bhd	12 Lorong 1 Taman Ria 08000 Sungai Petani
Pajak Gadai Kah Yut Sdn Bhd	15 Taman Cenderawasih Jalan Kelang Lama 08000 Kuala
Mia Seng Partnership Sdn Bhd	17 Jalan Raya 08300 Kuala Keli
Pajak Gadai San Heng Loong Sdn Bhd	LC 1203 Jalan Baling 09400 Padang Serai
Pajak Gadai Sin Yit Foh Sdn Bhd	23-8 Main Road 06300 Kuala Nerang
Pajak Gadai Sing Lee Seng Sdn Bhd	1 Jalan Semiling 08100 Bedong
Pajak Gadai Poh Fook Sdn Bhd	526 Jalan Kuala Kedah Taman Gunung Indah 05400 Alor Setar
Pajak Gadai Sungai Petani Sdn Bhd	174 Jalan Kuala Keli 08000 Sungai Petani

Sandaran-sandaran tersebut boleh diperiksa dengan Pemegang Pajak Gadai berkenaan diatas pada 21th JANUARI 2025 sehingga 24th JANUARI 2025, pukul 10.00 pagi sehingga 4.00 petang sebelum tarikh jualan lelong ini.

Ikuti Berterikh 20-01-2025

CHONG KIAN CHONG
Pendaftar Berlesen
01140322589

NOTIS JUALAN SECARA LELONG AWAM
Aka Pemegang Pajak-Gadai (81) 1972
Sandaran-sandaran yang tidak dibayar Pemegang Pajak Gadai yang tersebut dibawah ini Akan Di-jual Dengan Lelong Umum

Di-The YMCA of Penang 211 Macalister Road, 10450 Georgetown Pada Hari: 03th Februari 2025, Waktu: 12.00 tengah hari

NAMA PAJAK GADAI	NEGERI PULAU PINANG
Pajak Gadai Emas Jaya Sdn Bhd	29 Jalan Ushahwan 4 Pusat Perniagaan 13200 Kepala Batas
Pajak Gadai YS Sdn Bhd	442 Jalan Penang 10000 Penang
Pajak Gadai Kah Hin Sdn Bhd	6668 Jalan Bagas Ajam 13000 Butterworth
YMC Capital Sdn Bhd	1078 Jalan Raya 14200 Sungai Telok
Shun Chang Sdn Bhd	228 Jalan Pasar 14000 Bukit Mertajam
Sing Tai Foh Sdn Bhd	716 Jalan Kikua 14200 Sungai Bakap
Pajak Gadai Lian Hin Sdn Bhd	1078 Jalan Che Ahmad 14300 Nibong Tebal
Pajak Gadai Sun Heng	1416 Jalan Kenung Kawasan Perniagaan Simpang Ampat 11000 Simpang Ampat
Yong Chang Dang Sdn Bhd	293 Jalan Burnam 10350 Penang
Sing Yee L Sdn Bhd	167 Medan Kikik 2 Pusat Bandar Seberang Jaya 13700 Perai
Lee Thong Tang Sdn Bhd	776 G Taman Kekaya Jalan Bagas Ajam 13000 Butterworth
Pajak Gadai Butterworth Sdn Bhd	6679 Jalan Baru 14100 Simpang Ampat

Sandaran-sandaran tersebut boleh diperiksa dengan Pemegang Pajak Gadai berkenaan diatas pada 21th JANUARI 2025 sehingga 23th JANUARI 2025, pukul 10.00 pagi sehingga 4.00 petang sebelum tarikh jualan lelong ini.

Ikuti Berterikh 20-01-2025

CHONG KIAN KEAT
Pendaftar Berlesen
01140322589

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF LINGMEE REALTY SDN. BHD.
(199401031624 (217306-A))
(In Members' Voluntary Winding Up)
(Incorporated in Malaysia)

At the General Meeting of the members of the abovenamed Company duly convened and held at No. 588-8-11, Kompleks Mutiara, 3 1/2 Mile Jalan Ipoh 51200 Kuala Lumpur, W. Persekutuan (KL) on the 13th day of January 2025, the Special Resolution set out below was duly passed:-

That the Company be wound up voluntarily pursuant to Section 439 of the Companies Act 2016 and that Mr. Christopher Heng Kee Chai be appointed as Liquidator of the Company for the purpose of the winding-up and that the said Liquidator be empowered to distribute amongst the members, in cash or specie, the whole or any part of the

CHONG YOKE MEE DIRECTOR
20 January 2025

surplus assets of the Company. AND NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Creditors of the abovenamed Company are required on or before the 19th day of February 2025 to send their names, addresses and the particulars of their debts or claims to the undersigned, the Liquidator of the said Company at No. 588-8-11, Kompleks Mutiara, 3 1/2 Mile Jalan Ipoh 51200 Kuala Lumpur, W. Persekutuan (KL) and if so required, are to come in and prove their debts and claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such Notice or in default will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts are proved-

CHRISTOPHER HENG KEE CHAI
Liquidator for Voluntary Winding Up
20 January 2025



BRIEFS

Kane calls on Bayern to extend with pal Dier

HARRY KANE called on Bayern Munich to extend Eric Dier's deal at the club, saying he would "love" to continue playing with his former Spurs and England teammate. Dier was a surprise signing when he arrived from Spurs in January 2024 but has gone on to play 31 games for the German giants. The 31-year-old centreback has started three of his past four league games for Bayern despite competition from central defenders Dayot Upamecano and Kim Min-jae. "Eric's been great, he's been waiting patiently, obviously Upa (Upamecano) and Min-jae have been fantastic this season, so Eric's just had to bide his time. He's come in the last couple of games and done really, really well, and got two clean sheets, so, yeah, of course I'd love Eric to stay. I guess that's between him and the club, I haven't had any conversations with him, so we'll have to see."

The Blades top Championship table

SHEFFIELD UNITED moved to the top of English football's second-tier Championship table with a 2-0 win at home to Norwich on Saturday. The Blades will now find themselves in the unusual position ahead of Sheffield Wednesday's away to Leeds. Victory for Leeds would see the fallen English giants leapfrog Sheffield United at the top of the table with 27 games played. West Brom remained in contention for promotion via the playoffs following a 1-1 draw with Stoke – the Baggies' 14th league draw of the season. Cameron Brannagan's goal earned Oxford a 1-0 win over Blackburn as Coventry defeated Bristol City by the same scoreline. Matt Bloomfield's first match in charge of second-bottom Luton was a goalless draw with Preston. Watford won 2-0 at Derby. Cardiff beat local rivals Swansea 3-0 for their biggest South Wales derby league win for nearly 60 years. Portsmouth came from behind to beat Middlesbrough 2-1 at Fratton Park. Portsmouth remain in the relegation zone but are level on points with Hull, who won 1-0 at Millwall. Queens Park Rangers continued their climb away from danger with a third straight league win against Plymouth.

PSG fight back to beat Lens

BRADLEY BARCOLA showed new signing Khvicha Kvaratskhelia he will not easily give up his place in the Paris Saint-Germain line-up as his late strike gave the Ligue 1 leaders a 2-1 win at Lens yesterday.

It looked like PSG were going to drop points in their last domestic outing before next Wednesday's crunch Champions League clash with Manchester City as they fell behind in the first half to Mbala Nzola's goal for Lens.

However, Barcola set up Fabian Ruiz to equalise for PSG just before the hour mark, and the France winger then lashed in a fine winning goal with four minutes left.

Luis Enrique's side remain unbeaten domestically this season and are now 10 points clear at the top of Ligue 1 ahead of Marseille's match against Strasbourg.

The French champions sit one point and one place outside the qualifying places for the knockout phase and so can ill afford to lose to City at the Parc des Princes.

"We are really pleased to continue our positive dynamic before going into a competition which is important to us," said coach Luis Enrique.

Kvaratskhelia, brought in to contest a spot on the left wing with Barcola, was not involved in Lens.

The Georgian is also not eligible to play against City or in their final league phase match of the Champions League away to VfB Stuttgart on Jan 29.

Meanwhile, Brest warmed up for their return to Champions League action by winning 2-1 away to struggling Brittany rivals Rennes.

Lyon were held to a 0-0 draw by Toulouse, meaning they stay fifth but have now won just one of their last four league outings. – AFP

Superb Wirtz keeps Leverkusen on pace with leaders Bayern

FLORIAN WIRTZ scored twice as Bundesliga champions Bayer Leverkusen beat Borussia Monchengladbach 3-1 yesterday to stay four points behind leaders Bayern Munich.

Bayern had gone seven clear with a 3-2 win over Wolfsburg on Saturday, throwing down the gauntlet but Leverkusen were dominant and controlled, notching their 11th straight win in all competitions.

"We're right in the middle of a title fight again – you can dream a little bit," Wirtz told *Sky Germany*.

With 32 minutes gone, Leverkusen enforcer Granit Xhaka won the ball in midfield and fed Wirtz, who beat a defender and slotted calmly home.

When Leverkusen won a penalty for handball midway through the second half, the 21-year-old Wirtz stepped up and converted.

Patrik Schick latched onto a Wirtz pass to score Leverkusen's third, his 12th goal in his past eight league games.

"I love playing against Gladbach," said Wirtz who also scored a brace against Gladbach in August.

He now has nine goals and eight assists in 18 league games this season.

Earlier, Leon Goretzka scored twice in Bayern's home win over Wolfsburg.

"Leon worked hard and showed us in training that he's hungry," Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said. "That he's playing well is a good

story not just for Leon but for the team and the younger guys, who might be going through a difficult phase."

RB Leipzig let a three-goal lead slip to draw 3-3 away at lowly Bochum, with the hosts' Myron Boadu scoring a hat-trick in 13 second half minutes.

Stuttgart took advantage of Leipzig's slip, thumping derby rivals Freiburg 4-0 to leapfrog the Saxons into fourth.

Hoffenheim hit back from Wednesday's 5-0 thrashing at Bayern, winning 3-1 at Holstein Kiel to go three points clear of the relegation spots.

St Pauli also went three points clear of the relegation placings with a 2-0 win at Heidenheim. – AFP

Title setback Frustrated Barca fail to capitalise on Atletico La Liga slip

BARCELONA could only muster a 1-1 draw at Getafe yesterday in La Liga as they were unable to recover ground on the top two in the Spanish title race.

Jules Kounde sent the visitors ahead early on but Mauro Arambarri levelled for Getafe in the first half and Barcelona could not break down Jose Bordalas' well-drilled side.

The draw leaves the third-place Catalans five points behind leaders Atletico Madrid, who lost 1-0 at Leganes earlier in the day, but Hansi Flick's side could not take advantage.

After a slump in the final weeks of 2024, Barcelona won the Spanish Super Cup last week and then thumped Real Betis in the Copa del Rey, indicating they were back to their best.

However they dropped two points on the road in their first league match of 2025 as Getafe, 16th, scrapped their way to a hard-fought point.

"It's not done yet, we still have some matches to play and as I said before, we will fight until the end," Flick told reporters.

"Today it's one point more, not two points less. We missed (out on) two points, but we have to look forwards and make it better next time."

Flick selected what has proven his strongest side in recent weeks to try and get a result at Getafe, against whom the Catalans failed to score on their previous four away visits.

"It was a shame, the match, we had control of the game and with one chance they scored one goal against us, it's a shame," Jules Kounde told *Movistar*.



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal (left) in action with Getafe's Djene. – REUTERS/SPIC

After the game Barcelona defender Alejandro Balde reported racist abuse aimed at him in the first half from some home supporters.

Meanwhile, Antoine Griezmann missed a late penalty as leaders Atletico Madrid stumbled to a shock defeat at Leganes, ending a club record run of 15 consecutive victories.

Matiya Nastasic nodded Leganes ahead early in the second half, with Griezmann dragging a poor penalty wide in the final stages to resign Atletico to a second defeat of the league season.

"I thought we were low on energy, it wasn't enough from us," Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak told *DAZN*.

"We'll keep our head up after (winning) 15 games, we lost this one and we have to keep going forwards... unfortunately the streak is over."

Atletico must now bounce back in the Champions League, where they are aiming to reach the knockout rounds, against Bayer Leverkusen on Wednesday.

"They were 15 extraordinary games, I feel enormously proud at having set the (consecutive) winning record in Atletico's history," Atletico coach Diego Simeone told *DAZN*.

"We have to accept that defeat is part of the game and prepare ourselves for Tuesday." – AFP

Napoli six points clear, Juve sink Milan

ROMELU LUKAKU fired Napoli six points clear at the top of Serie A with the decisive goal in Saturday's thrilling 3-2 win at title rivals Atalanta, as Juventus beat AC Milan 2-0 to move into the Champions League spots.

Belgium striker Lukaku nodded home his eighth Napoli goal from Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa's perfect cross in the 78th minute to give Antonio Conte's team a statement win in Bergamo.

Matteo Politano and Scott McTominay also scored for Napoli who have 50 points from 21 matches and have made it clear that they are now the team to beat in this year's title race after scoring three times from their only shots on target.

"I can't say whether it's my most important goal (for Napoli) but the win is important. We showed tonight that we're a top team," said Lukaku to *Sky*.

Napoli are gunning for a second *Scudetto* in three seasons and await the response from

champions and closest challengers Inter Milan – who also have a game in hand – against struggling Empoli on Sunday.

A sixth straight win is the perfect boost Napoli need for another massive clash with Conte's old team Juventus, in Naples, this time next week.

"It's another test for us, to see where we are," added Lukaku.

"It's easy after a win like tonight's to get slack and not keep going. We can't do that, we need to continue playing the way we're playing."

Lukaku also dealt a blow to Atalanta's unprecedented title bid, as the provincial upstarts fell to their first defeat in Italy's top flight since late September.

Meanwhile, goals in five second half minutes from Samuel Mbangula and Timothy Weah gave Juventus a deserved win in Turin which pushed Thiago Motta's side up to fourth, a point ahead of Lazio who are at

Verona overnight.

Unbeaten Juve snapped a run of three straight draws which had taken their tally of league stalemates to 13, with yesterday's win just their eighth in 21 fixtures in Italy's top flight.

Substitute Weah emulated his father in the 64th minute by netting in a Juventus match with Milan 25 years after *Ballon d'Or*-winner George Weah did the same – for Milan against Juve.

"The boys are growing, match after match, and getting to the point that they can put in a performance like the one they did tonight," said Motta.

"That's because they all work really hard every day... today's win is the reward."

Milan stay eighth and are now six points from the top four, albeit with a game in hand at Bologna which was postponed due to flooding in October and is yet to be rescheduled. – AFP/Reuters

DARWIN NUNEZ struck twice in stoppage time to earn Liverpool a 2-0 win at Brentford and a six-point Premier League lead over Arsenal, who blew a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 against Aston Villa on Saturday.

Liverpool looked set to drop points for the third consecutive league game until the much-maligned Uruguayan doubled his tally of Premier League goals for the season in the dying seconds in west London.

Nunez swept home Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross before smashing in a second for a vital twist in the title race.

Liverpool had been wasteful in front of goal in a 1-1 draw at Nottingham Forest in midweek and Arne Slot's men nearly let another two points slip away.

On a rare quiet day for Mohamed Salah, Slot was forced to turn to Nunez to make an impact off the

Liverpool extend lead

Nunez late show a significant moment for Liverpool, says Slot

bench and he duly delivered.

The 25-year-old had not scored in the league since November but was in the right place to finish after a neat one-two between Harvey Elliott and Alexander-Arnold.

Substitute Elliott was the creator for the second, feeding Nunez to cut inside and fire past Mark Flekken.

"As a striker you get judged on goals, especially at a club like Liverpool," said the Reds' captain Virgil van Dijk. "Today he put his mark on the game."

Liverpool manager Arne Slot hailed the impact of substitute Nunez after his stoppage time double.

The much-maligned Uruguayan had not scored in the league since November and only twice this season before firing the visitors to a significant victory in west London.

After a near flawless start to Slot's reign, Liverpool have wobbled of late,

drawing three of their previous six league games.

"During the season you're hoping for these moments," said Slot. "We could have scored a late winner against (Manchester) United, (Nottingham) Forest, Fulham. Today it worked. We managed to score in the last few seconds."

Nunez has been linked with a move to the Saudi Pro League this month after largely failing to deliver on his £85 million (RM466m) price tag since joining from Benfica in 2022.

The 25-year-old has fallen behind Luis Diaz and Diogo Jota as Slot's preferred centre-forward this season, but the Dutchman praised Nunez's ability to make a difference off the bench.

"He's always having a lot of impact when he

comes in. He brings energy and power," added Slot. "To have someone like Darwin is nice to have."

Slot thought his side deserved more after being held by Manchester United and Nottingham Forest in their previous two league games and believes the league leaders finally got their reward for a purposeful performance.

"I don't only look at results. We created a lot. But now it's a win so I don't have to say look at our performance," said the former Feyenoord boss.

"I was very pleased with our performance. Brentford made it a fight. They have good players and a good game plan. It was a nice game to watch like every time Liverpool are on the pitch." - AFP/Reuters



Brentford's Mads Roerslev (front) in action with Liverpool's Kostas Tsimikas. - REUTERS/SPIC

Kluivert helps Bournemouth snap Magpies' streak

JUSTIN KLUIVERT'S stunning hattrick snapped Newcastle's winning streak in style as Bournemouth stormed into the Premier League's top six with a rampant 4-1 win at St. James' Park on Saturday.

The Magpies were looking to set a club record with a 10th consecutive victory in all competitions but were thoroughly outplayed by the Cherries, who are themselves now on an 11-game unbeaten streak.

Kluivert, son of former Newcastle striker Patrick Kluivert, was the star of the show before Milos Kerkez fired in a fourth in stoppage time.

Defeat leaves Newcastle still in fourth but now just one point clear of Bournemouth in the race for the next season's Champions League.

Bournemouth have never qualified for European competition before and Kluivert said that is the goal for an ambitious squad.

"Why not dream big and let's see where we can end up," said the Dutch international.

"Our run is also beautiful and that's

what we showed here today, that we are here to make an impression."

Alexander Isak's hopes of matching the Premier League record scoring streak of 11 matches also came to an end on a humbling afternoon for the Magpies.

The Swedish striker had struck in eight consecutive games, but was barely given a sniff of a chance by a brilliant Bournemouth display.

Andoni Iraola's men flew out of the traps and never let up to move above defending champions Manchester City in the table.

Leicester have lost seven consecutive Premier League games as a 2-0 home defeat to Fulham edged Ruud van Nistelrooy's men closer to a return to the Championship.

Emile Smith Rowe and Adama Traore were on target for the visitors, who move up to ninth.

Crystal Palace are up to 12th after a third win in four games thanks to Jean-Philippe Mateta's double in a 2-0 win at 10-man West Ham. - AFP

TOTO SPORTS TOTO RESULTS

DRAW NO: 5913/2025 DATE: 19/01/2025 (SUN)
 STM LOTTERY SDN. BHD.
 1990100099 (84205)

TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

1st Prize **6833**
 2nd Prize **7485**
 3rd Prize **1124**

Special	Consolation
1187 8502	4281 4705
3483 5225	9287 6472
6521 8977	7785 0920
0919 1870	8237 6207
7668 4134	1382 7931

4D JACKPOT

Jackpot 1 **RM 17,074,562.01**

6833 7485	7485 6833
6833 1124	1124 6833
7485 1124	1124 7485

Jackpot 2 **RM 297,565.84**
 Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

4D Zodiac

1st Prize **6833** + HORSE
 2nd Prize **7485** +
 3rd Prize **1124** +
 4th Prize **Special Prize** +
 5th Prize **Consolation Prize** +
 6th Prize **Any 4D drawn number**

TOTO 5D & 6D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

5D

1ST **5 0 9 3 3**
 2ND **5 4 4 0 8**
 3RD **5 1 8 6 9**

4TH **0 9 3 3**
 5TH **9 3 3**
 6TH **3 3 3**

6D

1ST **6 7 7 9 1 2**
 2ND **6 7 7 9 1** or **7 7 9 1 2**
 3RD **6 7 7 9** or **7 9 1 2**
 4TH **6 7 7** or **9 1 2**
 5TH **6 7** or **1 2**

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 Jackpot **RM 13,632,870.10**

POWER 7/35 **7 22 27 42 43 46**
 Jackpot **RM 6,829,931.88**

STAR 7/36 **3 4 17 28 37 44 + 23**
 Jackpot 1 **RM 2,754,776.94**
 Jackpot 2 **RM 279,623.79**

Supreme 6/58
RM 104,769,468
Supreme 6/58 (EZ-Bet)
RM 16,962,670
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RM 266,213 won on 18/01/2025!
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WINNING NUMBERS
 PAYMENT GUARANTEED IN FULL

Draw Date: 19/01/25 (Sun) Draw No: 5860/25 Venue: WISMA GENTING, KL

1+3D SUPER1+3D

1st Prize **2011**
 2nd Prize **6169**
 3rd Prize **1550**

Starters	Consolation
3643 4574	9066 3118
3320 3084	9388 7164
3078 5544	2475 4589
0956 5520	8258 9803
3644 0467	7659 3497

1+3D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 **RM7,802,057.80**

2011 + 6169	6169 + 2011
2011 + 1550	1550 + 2011
6169 + 1550	1550 + 6169

Jackpot 2 **RM129,061.00**
 Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

3+3D Bonus

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
672 011 +	BOAR	RM140,000.00
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
856 169 +	DOG	RM1,135,904.60
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
841 550 +	ROOSTER	RM1,631,506.00

Starters	Consolation
863 643 594 574	019 066 043 118
723 320 273 084	829 388 767 164
063 078 665 544	492 475 634 589
520 956 505 520	528 258 269 803
733 644 350 467	907 659 913 497

3D

1st Prize **011** 2nd Prize **169** 3rd Prize **550**

3D Jackpot

Jackpot **RM706,481.80**

011 + 169 + 550	169 + 550 + 011
011 + 550 + 169	550 + 011 + 169
169 + 011 + 550	550 + 169 + 011

Winning combination matches the Top 3 Prizes in any order.

1+3D Jackpot 2 RM241,891.70 won on 18/1/2025!

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RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Arsenal 2 (Martinelli 35, Havertz 55) Aston Villa 2 (Tielemans 60, Watkins 68), Brentford 0 Liverpool 2 (Nunez 90+1, 90+3), Leicester 0 Fulham 2 (Smith Rowe 48, Traore 68), Newcastle 1 (Guimaraes 25) Bournemouth 4 (Kluivert 6, 44, 90+2, Kerkez 90+6), West Ham 0 Crystal Palace 2 (Mateta 48, 89-pen).

TOP 10	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	21	15	5	1	50	20	50
Arsenal	22	12	8	2	43	21	44
Nottm Forest	21	12	5	4	30	20	41
Newcastle	22	11	5	6	38	26	38
Chelsea	21	10	7	4	41	26	37
Bournemouth	22	10	7	5	36	26	37
Aston Villa	22	10	6	6	33	34	36
Man City	21	10	5	6	38	29	35
Fulham	22	8	9	5	34	30	33
Brighton	21	7	10	4	32	29	31

CHAMPIONSHIP: Cardiff 3 Swansea 0, Coventry 1 Bristol City 0, Derby 0 Watford 2, Luton 0 Preston 0, Millwall 0 Hull 1, Oxford 1, Blackburn 0, Plymouth 0 QPR 1, Portsmouth 2, Middlesbrough 1, Sheffield United 2, Norwich 0, West Brom 1 Stoke 1, Burnley 0 Sunderland 0.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheff Utd	27	17	6	4	38	17	55
Leeds	26	15	8	3	48	19	53
Burnley	27	14	11	2	31	22	53
Sunderland	27	14	9	4	39	22	51
Blackburn	27	12	6	9	31	24	42
West Brom	27	9	14	4	33	22	41

LA LIGA: Girona 1 (Martinez 36) Sevilla 2 (Saul 59, Lukebakio 88), Leganes 1 (Nastasic 49) Atletico Madrid 0, Real Betis 1 (Rodriguez 28) Alaves 3 (Garcia 11-pen, 80, 84), Getafe 1 (Arambarri 34) Barcelona 1 (Koukou 9), Espanyol 2 (Puado 31, Roberto Fernandez 74) Valladolid 1 (Javi Sanchez 57).

SERIE A: Atalanta 2 (Retegui 16, Lookman 55) Napoli 3 (Politano 27, McTominay 40, Lukaku 78), Bologna 3 (Castro 22, Odgaard 34, Orsolini 69) Monza 1 (Maldini 4), Juventus 2 (Mbangua 59, Weah 64) AC Milan 0, Roma 3 (Dovbyk 25, El Shaarawy 60, Leali 73-og) Genoa 1 (Masini 33).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli	21	16	2	3	35	14	50
Inter Milan	19	13	5	1	48	17	44
Atalanta	21	13	4	4	46	24	43
Juventus	21	13	0	3	34	17	37
Lazio	20	11	3	6	34	28	36
Bologna	20	8	9	3	32	26	33

BUNDESLIGA: Bayer Leverkusen 3 Borussia Moenchengladbach 1, Stuttgart 4 SC Freiburg 0, Bayern Munich 3 Wolfsburg 2, Heidenheim 0 St Pauli 2, Bochum 3 RB Leipzig 3, Holstein Kiel 1 Hoffenheim 3, Eintracht Frankfurt 2 Borussia Dortmund 0.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B. Munich	18	14	3	1	56	15	45
B. Leverkusen	18	12	5	1	44	24	41
E. Frankfurt	18	11	3	4	42	24	36
Stuttgart	18	9	5	4	36	26	32
RB Leipzig	18	9	4	5	32	27	31
Mainz	17	8	4	5	30	21	28

FRENCH LIGUE 1: Lens 1 Paris Saint-Germain 2, Rennes 1 Brest 2, Lyon 0 Toulouse 0, Montpellier 2 Monaco 1, Lille 2 Nice 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	18	14	4	0	48	16	46
Marseille	17	11	3	3	39	20	36
Lille	18	8	8	2	28	17	32
Monaco	18	9	4	5	29	20	31
Nice	18	8	6	4	36	25	30
Lyon	18	8	5	5	29	22	29

Speedy Tigers must deliver

Hockey legend Mirnawan expects results in international tourneys

THIS YEAR, the national men's hockey team must deliver their "best results" in international tournaments, said national hockey legend Datuk Mirnawan Nawawi.

He said this year is the "harvest phase" for the Speedy Tigers, following the appointment of new coach Sarjit Singh and the selection of new players, marking the time for the national squad to "reap the rewards".

"Indeed, 2024 was a team-building phase, so this year, 2025, I am confident that the plans laid out will show results. Surely, we want to see the national hockey team perform better than last year.

"In terms of preparation, it's been a year, so

what's crucial now is to see improvements in all aspects - physical, strength, technical and playing cohesively as a team," he told reporters during the Milo Breakfast Day 2025 event yesterday.

In March last year, the Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) appointed Sarjit to replace Arul Selvaraj, whose contract ended in January 2024.

Sarjit had previously coached the Speedy Tigers squad from January 2007 to December 2008.

The Speedy Tigers ended their campaign in the 2024 Asian Champions Trophy (ACT) at the bottom of the table after losing 2-4 to Japan in a penalty shootout during the fifth and sixth place playoff in

Hulunbuir, China, last September.

Meanwhile, commenting on the SEA Games in Thailand this December, Mirnawan expressed optimism that the hockey team could sweep all gold medals via the field hockey squads, hockey 5s (five-a-side hockey), and the indoor hockey teams.

"I believe we can sweep all golds at the SEA Games," he said.

For the record, the national men's and women's field hockey teams secured gold medals at the 2023 SEA Games in Cambodia, while the men's indoor hockey squad lost to Indonesia, and the women's indoor hockey squad were defeated by Thailand in their respective finals. - Bernama

Marina optimistic Adeq can improve sprint

NATIONAL sports legend Datuk Marina Chin is optimistic that the country's sprint queen Zaidatul Husniah Zulkifli can still deliver improved performances in the future.

She said Zaidatul, fondly known as "Adeq," seems to have a stable life after getting married and has the potential to achieve even greater results in upcoming competitions.

Chin, who is also a board member of the National Sports Institute (ISN), said that if the 31-year-old athlete requires any support, the institute is ready to provide whatever assistance she may need.

"I believe Adeq can enhance her performance. Her life is stable now, she is married, has moral support, and so on. I hope that if she needs

anything, she can approach ISN, and ISN will assist her.

"I want to see Adeq retire having achieved all her goals and dreams as an athlete," she told reporters at the Milo Breakfast Day 2025 event yesterday.

Meanwhile, Chin reminded the Malaysian Athletics Federation (MAF) to be more thorough and avoid repeating issues of unrecognised records, as previously experienced by Zaidatul.

She noted that such incidents could demoralise athletes, especially after they have worked hard to achieve such milestones.

"I also don't want us to focus solely on one athlete. We have junior athletes, and I hope they will send larger teams so that newcomers can gain experience. I hope they continue pushing younger athletes to participate in competitions," she said.

On Oct 12 last year, Zaidatul broke the national women's 100m record of 11.50 seconds, previously held by G. Shanti since May 7, 1993, just months before Zaidatul was born on Aug 20.

However, her time of 11.49s was initially reported as unrecognised by World Athletics (WA) due to the absence of proper wind reading documentation.

On Thursday, MAF announced that the national record had finally been recognised by WA. - Bernama



BRIEFS

World No. 5 India journey ends

MALAYSIA'S second-ranked men's doubles pair, Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik, saw their journey at the 2025 India Open Badminton Championship end in the semifinals held in New Delhi on Saturday. The world No. 5 pair fell to last week's 2025 Malaysia Open champions from South Korea, Kim Won Ho-Seo Seung Jae, losing 20-22, 19-21 at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex. The result mirrored their disappointment from last year's edition, where they also exited in the semifinals. The last time Aaron and Wooi Yik reached the final of the India Open was in 2023. In the mixed doubles event, Malaysia's top-ranked pair and current world No. 3, Chen Tang Jie-Toh Ee Wei, also suffered defeat. They lost 17-21, 15-21 to French duo Thom Gicquel-Delphine Delrue.

disadvantage in their match. "We really are weak in batting, so that's what we need to focus on and improve for the game against India the day after tomorrow, and I admit that even though India is strong but cricket is a subjective game, we can create a surprise," she told Bernama after the game. Malaysia will play defending champions India tomorrow and the West Indies on Thursday.

Sabah held in first leg semis

SABAH FC failed to make use of home ground advantage when they drew 1-1 with Sri Pahang in the first leg semifinal match at Likas Stadium, Kota Kinabalu on Saturday. The home team did manage to take an early lead, with midfielder Stuart Wilkin scoring in the ninth minute, while the visitors were unable to get an equaliser even though they dominated the game in the last 10 minutes of the first half. After halftime, both teams went on the attack and managed several attempts at their opponent's goal, but were unable to score until Kpah Sherman stole the limelight in the 66th minute to secure the equaliser with a lovely goal from the penalty box. Sabah were unable to capitalise on a one-man advantage to regain the lead when Manuel Hidalgo was sent off after being shown the red card by referee Muhammad Izzul Fikri Kamaruzaman for a foul, and the match ended in a 1-1 draw. Both teams will play the return leg at Darul Makmur Stadium, Kuantan on Feb 2.

Malaysia lose T20 World cup opener

THE national women's cricket squad lost their opening U-19 T20 World Cup Group A match against Sri Lanka at the Bayemas Cricket Oval yesterday. Favourites Sri Lanka had no difficulty beating the home team with 139 runs in 20.0 overs against Malaysia's 23 runs with 14.1 overs. National team captain Nur Dania Syuhada Abdul Samad admitted that the team was weak in batting, which put them at a severe

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SPECIAL	CONSOLATION
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4053 8111	6380 6300
6452 5457	7476 4012
2512 3350	8718 6618
5927 7302	6438 3408

4D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 **RM9,278,129.56**
WON

7486 + 6063	7486 + 5495
6063 + 7486	6063 + 5495
5495 + 7486	5495 + 6063

Jackpot 2 **RM176,887.87**
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Jackpot 2 **RM100,000.00** **PARTIALLY WON**
 Jackpot 2 - Group 2 + Golden Number

GROUP 1	8 6 6 3 9 5
GROUP 2	8 6 6 3 9 OR 6 6 3 9 5
GROUP 3	8 6 6 3 OR 6 3 9 5
GROUP 4	8 6 6 OR 3 9 5
GROUP 5	8 6 OR 9 5
	OR 6 3
GOLDEN NUMBER	1 4

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SCAN ME

Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin clinch India Open title

Malaysia's Goh Sze Fei (right) and Nur Izzuddin pose during the award ceremony after their win in the men's doubles final match at the India Open. - AFPPI

NATIONAL MEN'S doubles pair, Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin Mohd Rumsani, claimed their first victory of the season, after defeating the South Korean duo, Kim Won Ho-Seo Seung Jae, at the 2025 India Open yesterday.

In a match held at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex in New Delhi, Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin, ranked second in the world, were not given an easy path by the pair, who won the 2025 Malaysia Open last week. Despite winning the first set 21-15, they were pushed to a decider.

In the second set, Won Ho-Seung Jae fought back strongly with a 21-13 victory. However, the Malaysian pair quickly regained control in the deciding set, winning 21-16, to clinch the title at the Super 750 event.

This success also ended a 15-year drought for Malaysian men's doubles at the India Open, with the last win coming from Mohd Zakry Abdul Latif-Mohd Fairuzizuan Mohd Tazari in 2010.

"We are happy to overcome the challenge (against them). They didn't make many unforced errors, so we had to be patient," said Sze Fei, in an audio message shared with the press.

The victory earned the duo a cash prize of US\$70,300 (RM316,631). - Bernama



Arsenal held

Arteta acknowledge Gunners must take blame for Villa fightback

MIKEL ARTETA admitted Arsenal had to take the blame for their damaging 2-2 draw against Aston Villa after sloppy defending cost them a chance to keep pace with Premier League leaders Liverpool.

After Liverpool's 2-0 win at Brentford on Saturday, the Gunners were left with no margin for error when they faced Villa at the Emirates Stadium.

Arteta's side were on course to move back within four points of Liverpool after Gabriel Martinelli and Kai Havertz scored to build a two-goal lead by the 55th minute.

But Arsenal collapsed midway through the second half as Youri Tielemans reduced the deficit before boyhood Gunners fan Ollie Watkins bagged the equaliser eight minutes later.

It was a hammer blow to Arsenal's hopes of a first title since 2004, with Liverpool now six points clear and holding a game in hand over the second-placed north Londoners.

Arteta conceded Arsenal were culpable for the defensive mistakes that allowed Villa back into the game.

"Pride at the way the boys played and competed, the third time in six days. To deliver that dominance, that performance, they were outstanding. We deserved much more, that's clear," he said.

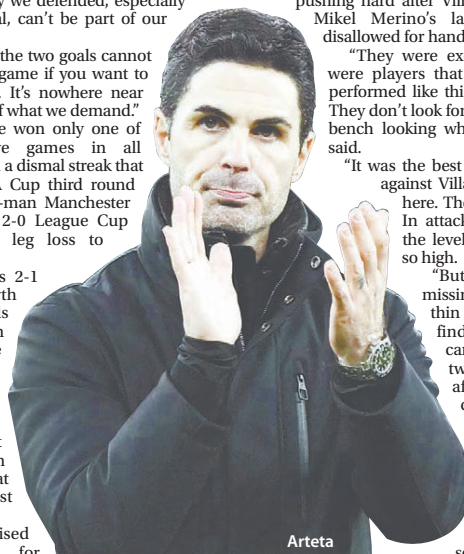
"But the way we defended, especially the second goal, can't be part of our game.

"Conceding the two goals cannot be part of our game if you want to constantly win. It's nowhere near the standards of what we demand."

Arsenal have won only one of their last five games in all competitions in a dismal streak that includes an FA Cup third round exit against 10-man Manchester United and a 2-0 League Cup semifinal first leg loss to Newcastle.

Wednesday's 2-1 win over north London rivals Tottenham looked to have revived Arsenal, but once again their inconsistent form this season reared its head at the worst possible time.

Arteta praised his players for



Arteta

pushing hard after Villa's equaliser, but Mikel Merino's late winner was disallowed for handball by Havertz.

"They were exceptional. There were players that were dead and performed like this for 97 minutes. They don't look for excuses or to the bench looking what to do," Arteta said.

"It was the best game we played against Villa since I've been here. They're a good side. In attack and defending, the level we're playing is so high.

"But something was missing. The line is so thin and we have to find it. Today we cannot concede the two goals we did after everything we did."

Arsenal have dropped 12 points from winning positions in the Premier League this season, their most

in a single campaign since 2019-20.

But Arteta didn't complain about the disallowed goal, saying: "It looks like handball in one of the cameras.

"It's difficult because we have so much emotion, the celebration and it's taken away from you. Not easy."

Villa's escape act left them in seventh place, just two points adrift of the top four as they look to qualify for the Champions League for a second successive season.

Their boss Unai Emery once again haunted the Gunners, who sacked him in 2019 after less than two seasons in charge.

Villa's two wins against Arsenal last season played a key role in stopping his former club from catching Manchester City and the Spaniard could enjoy putting a dent in their latest title bid.

"Brilliant how the players reacted after the two goals, it was fantastic. In our mentality, today we never gave up and we tried to score," Emery said.

"Arsenal were pushing and creating some chances, but even with that we had another goal.

"Arsenal are very powerful at home. This is the level we want to be close to, but we still have work to do as they're very strong. To complete like we did is the only way to get something here." - AFP