



**Road crashes drop by 6% in KL during CNY**

First five days of *Op Selamat 23* recorded 639 cases compared with 681 last year.

Report on page 5

# AI set to transform healthcare industry

While technology could shift system towards predictive and preventive care models, experts call for mitigation of privacy concerns, potential job losses and unintended consequences on environment.

Report on page 2



Report on page 4

Ramesh Marathamuthan (left) with his family and a priest performing prayers at a temple in Batu Caves to give thanks for the recovery of his daughter Sasmetasri (fourth from right). - ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

## Address prevalent gender pay gap: WAO

Women's NGO calls for greater transparency in determination of salary, saying it should be based on value of work, skills and experience.

Report on page 3

## Pledge of gratitude

Couple vows to fulfil Thaipusam ritual 'for as long as we live' over divine help in healing of cancer stricken daughter.

## King opens fourth session of 15th Parliament

**KUALA LUMPUR:** His Majesty the King of Malaysia Sultan Ibrahim will open the First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the 15th Parliament today.

Sultan Ibrahim is scheduled to deliver the royal address, with both the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara holding their meetings simultaneously.

The royal address is expected to cover various key matters, including national development and Malaysia's role as Asean chair this year.

The opening ceremony will begin with the arrival of the King at Parliament Square, with His Majesty inspecting a guard-of-honour mounted by the Royal Malay Regiment Battalion from the Sungai Besi camp.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, deputy prime ministers Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, Cabinet members and heads of foreign delegations are also scheduled to attend the ceremony.

The debate on the royal address by MPs will run for seven days from Feb 4 and the winding-up by the relevant ministries will be from Feb 19 to 25, with debates on Bills and other government matters taking place over the final six days of the meeting starting from Feb 26.

The Dewan Negara is scheduled to sit for 13 days, beginning March 3.

Among the key agenda items in this Dewan Rakyat sitting is the tabling for the second reading of several Bills, including the Mufti

(Federal Territories) Bill 2024, Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (Amendment) Bill 2024, Malaysian Media Council Bill 2024 and the Bernama (Amendment) Bill 2024.

Additionally, the White Paper on the Ageing Nation Agenda is also expected to be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat, focusing on medium and long term socio-economic development plans as Malaysia approaches ageing nation status in 2030 and aged nation status in 2044. – Bernama

## 'AI can transform nation's healthcare industry'

➤ Leveraging on cutting-edge technology enables predictive analytics, personalised treatment and efficient diagnostics for public health system, say experts

BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become the buzzword in everything from retail, e-commerce, banking and financial services to supply chain, logistics, travel and real estate.

In Malaysia, it is also set to transform the healthcare industry, with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim emphasising its potential during the Country Strategy Dialogue session at the World Economic Forum Annual Summit 2025 on Jan 21.

Anwar highlighted that AI would enhance efficiency, help reduce wastage and enable the government to leverage cutting-edge technology for improving public health.

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan Institute for Artificial Intelligence and Big Data (Aibig) director Dr Muhammad Akmal Remli said AI in healthcare involves advanced computing techniques, robust data infrastructure and machine learning algorithms to transform patient care.

He said it enables predictive analytics, personalised medicine and efficient diagnostics, all of which are essential for building a proactive and preventive healthcare system.

He added that with data from electronic health records and wearables, predictive algorithms can identify early signs of chronic diseases.

"They will enable proactive medical interventions and early treatment for patients."

Muhammad Akmal said collaboration between academia, industry and government could also protect data privacy while overcoming funding limitations and talent shortages.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia public health medicine specialist Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh said AI is playing a key role in public health intervention in more advanced countries through disease surveillance, outbreak response and healthcare systems management.

"In Malaysia, AI could assist in personalising treatments, automating administrative tasks and powering advanced tools like robot assisted surgery.

"The use of wearable devices, software systems in health clinics and AI tools at general practitioners' offices can bridge gaps and empower underserved populations, improving overall healthcare delivery.

"AI can also leverage computer systems and algorithms to simulate human intelligence, enabling faster and more accurate disease diagnosis, clinical care and drug development."

Muhammad Akmal added that Malaysia is currently in the exploratory stage of AI adoption in healthcare.

"Healthcare is one of the most critical sectors globally, alongside education. While AI adoption is a key priority for policymakers, there are substantial challenges in ensuring its acceptance, capturing its full value and mitigating risks."

To accelerate digitalisation, he stressed the importance of a national AI strategy tailored to

Malaysia's healthcare needs.

"We should benchmark against countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, which have integrated AI into healthcare ecosystems. However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach."

He said Aibig is already conducting notable research that includes using deep learning and machine learning to generate synthetic cancer data, reducing costs and mitigating privacy concerns.

He added that Aibig is also developing integrated data platforms for drug discovery and cancer bioinformatics.

"Our projects are funded by national and international agencies, reflecting a strong collaborative framework."

Muhammad Akmal emphasised the importance of ethical considerations in deploying AI.

"AI bias arises when training data lack diversity, so ensuring diverse, high-quality datasets and focusing on 'Explainable AI' is critical for transparent and equitable healthcare solutions."

Sharifa Ezat also highlighted the potential risks of AI adoption in healthcare, including job losses due to automation as well as environmental concerns stemming from the energy-intensive nature of AI systems.

"AI governance is crucial. A dedicated governing body is needed to oversee data usage, monitor AI systems and mitigate unintended consequences on healthcare and the environment."

She called for a balanced approach to AI adoption, ensuring that it enhances healthcare outcomes without worsening inequalities or ethical challenges.

"With strategic planning and collaboration, Malaysia could harness AI capabilities to create a more efficient and inclusive healthcare system," she said.

## PAC schedules five new proceedings for Parliament session

**MALACCA:** The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has scheduled five new proceedings for the Parliament session, said its chairman Datuk Mas Ermeyati Samsudin.

She said one of the proceedings would cover the development of Kuala Lumpur land under the Federal Territories Department, the Director-General of Lands and Mines Department and Kuala Lumpur City Hall.

"Additionally, we will review the proposed leasing of electric multiple unit trains under the Transport Ministry, Railway Assets Corporation and Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad.

"The management of public airports under the Finance Ministry, Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB), Khazanah Nasional and the Employees Provident Fund will also be examined."

Mas Ermeyati, who is also Bersatu Srikandi chief, was speaking after officiating at the Melaka Bersatu Srikandi Service Centre in Taman Tambak Harmoni on Friday.

The Masjid Tanah MP said other proceedings would cover Khazanah Nasional's domestic investments under the Finance Ministry and the sovereign wealth fund itself.

She added that PAC would look into the rising cost of health insurance premiums, private hospital charges and their impact on public healthcare under the Finance Ministry, Health Ministry and Bank Negara Malaysia.

She said for the public airport management proceedings, PAC has set terms of reference for its members, addressing all relevant issues, including the delisting of MAHB from Bursa Malaysia, high ticket prices and delays in the resumption of aerotrain services.

"This year, PAC aims to table 25 reports and hold over 150 meetings on matters of public interest and the Auditor-General's Report, compared with 148 meetings and 22 reports last year.

"About Khazanah Nasional's loss-making investments, PAC has scheduled a proceeding on its domestic investments to obtain explanations and statements from the sovereign wealth fund," she said. – Bernama

## Border control agency launched

**SEPANG:** The setting up of the Malaysian Border Control and Protection Agency marks the government's unwavering commitment to smooth and efficient border control, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof.

He said the agency, launched yesterday, would serve as the sole border control authority.

Fadillah added that it brings together expertise and resources from various government agencies, including Immigration and Customs, to streamline operations at the country's international entry points.

"The era of globalisation that lies ahead demands that all parties be more prepared with a

robust and integrated border management system.

"Various efforts and initiatives have been pioneered by the government to ensure that Malaysia remains a competitive trading nation with efficient and integrity-driven service delivery at the country's entry points."

Fadillah was speaking at the agency's launch at KL International Airport Terminal 1 yesterday.

Also present were Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari and IGP Tan Sri Razarudin Hashim. – Bernama



Fadillah, flanked by Saifuddin (left) and Fahmi, during the launch at KL International Airport Terminal 1 in Sepang yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC



## Call for proactive steps to curb student dropouts

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Federation of Peninsular Malay Students must take proactive steps to address the issue of student dropouts in the country, said the prime minister's political secretary Datuk Azman Abidin.

He said one effective approach would be conducting door-to-door visits with community leaders to identify students at risk of dropping out.

"There are many dropouts not only in the Federal Territory but also nationwide. These students do not miss school solely because of poverty. They are also affected by social problems, parental issues and family circumstances.

"We hope the federation can ensure all students complete their education up to the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) level, as some drop out as early as Form 1 or Form 3," he said after officiating at a "Tahlil and Doa Selamat" ceremony held here on Saturday to mark the 11th anniversary of the national federation alumni.

Azman added that the federation could assist underprivileged families by working with the Education Ministry and school teachers to ensure that necessary aid is provided to prevent students from dropping out before their SPM exams.

Meanwhile, the national federation alumni president Datuk Syed Anuar Syed Mohamad said addressing education dropout rates is a key focus of their efforts, including raising student awareness about technical and vocational education and training opportunities. — Bernama

## Upgrade road before Ramadan, KL City Hall told

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Kuala Lumpur City Hall has been instructed to complete the Jalan Melayu upgrade work before Ramadan, which begins in early March.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa said in a Facebook post yesterday she had personally reviewed the progress of the project following Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's recent visit.

On Jan 10, Anwar had reportedly asked KL City Hall to inspect the dilapidated business areas around Jalan Masjid India, which are in need of improvement.

Following this, KL City Hall said upon completion of the upgrade, the hawker stall areas surrounding Jalan Melayu and Jalan Masjid India will be revamped with a cleaner, more attractive and orderly design. — Bernama

# 'Have stronger enforcement to bridge gender salary gap'

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA  
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**PETALING JAYA:** The Women's Aid Organisation (WAO) has called for greater salary transparency and stronger enforcement of gender-equitable compensation practices to address the wage gap between men and women in Malaysia, which exists despite women being the top scorers in universities.

Its acting executive director Nazreen Nizam was commenting on Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri's statement that the Graduate Statistics 2023 report, released by the Statistics Department, revealed that female graduates earn an average of RM900 less than their male counterparts, despite having comparable academic qualifications.

Nazreen said the lack of specific regulations mandating equal pay for work of equal value across genders in Malaysia has caused wage disparities to go unnoticed and unaddressed in various sectors.

➤ Lack of specific regulations mandating equal pay leads to wage disparities going unnoticed and unaddressed in various sectors, says women's group

"There are no specific legislations that mandate equal pay for work of equal value.

"To achieve pay equity, Malaysia must implement laws to prevent wage discrimination and enforce remedies and penalties for violations."

She said despite increasing numbers of women entering the workforce, there are still significantly fewer of them in senior roles, which are typically associated with higher pay.

"Underrepresentation of women in leadership positions further compounds the wage gap, while cultural norms and workplace policies that fail to support equal career advancement opportunities for women also contribute to the imbalance."

Nazreen said persistent wage

disparities contribute to broader income inequality, worsening social stratification and economic instability.

She said the wage gap perpetuates cycles of poverty and limits educational opportunities for future generations, particularly in families headed by single mothers or households in which women are the primary earners.

"Women's reduced earning capacity makes them more vulnerable during economic downturns and personal crises, such as divorce or the death of a spouse. With fewer financial resources, women have less flexibility to leave unsatisfactory relationships and have more difficulty recovering from financial setbacks," she said.

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan

Professor of Human Resource and Industrial Relations Prof Dr Balakrishnan Parasuraman said despite women being top scorers in universities, societal biases, workplace stereotypes and systemic injustices often prevent their achievements from translating into equal pay or workplace opportunities.

"Salaries should be determined by the value of their work, skills and experience rather than gender or educational accomplishments.

"Historically, women have encountered systemic barriers that hinder their career advancement and access to well-paid positions within organisations."

Balakrishnan said the wage gap also has the potential to adversely affect employee morale and retention, particularly among women, by creating feelings of undervaluation and inequality.

He said women employees may feel frustrated and demotivated when they encounter pay disparities despite having similar qualifications of male colleagues.

Over time, their frustration may drive them to seek opportunities elsewhere, he added.

"A lack or absence of robust policy support regarding workplace gender equality could worsen wage disparities.

"For instance, inadequate parental leave policies, limited access to affordable childcare and lack of flexible work arrangements adversely affect women, restricting their career growth and earning potential.

"Concerns regarding potential career interruptions due to family commitments, such as maternity leave, strengthen the misconception that women are less serious about their careers."

He said men are more likely to be assertive in salary negotiations, compared with women, who usually refrain from doing so due to societal standards and the fear of backlash.

"Assumptions that men are the primary earners or better suited for high-stakes positions also influence evaluations and salary offers. This highlights the need for standardised, transparent hiring and evaluation processes to ensure fairness and equity," he said.



Nazreen said the wage gap limits educational opportunities for future generations, particularly in families headed by single mothers or households in which women are the primary earners. — BERNAMAPIC

## Workers give thumbs up for new minimum wage of RM1,700

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The implementation of the new Minimum Wage Order on Saturday is seen as a significant step to ease the burden of workers in the country and improve their living standards.

Customer service employee at a courier company, Nur Fatimah Sophian, 27, said the minimum wage increase to RM1,700 per month provides much-needed relief, especially for workers in the federal capital, as they cope with rising living costs.

"Previously, my salary was barely

enough to cover rent and transport expenses and at times, I couldn't afford to support my parents financially. This increase helps ease those burdens," she told Bernama.

Corporate communications executive at a plantation firm, Siti Khadijah Amir Hamzah, 26, expressed gratitude for the revised minimum wage and described it as a good start for workers in 2025.

"Perhaps in the future, the minimum wage could be raised further, given Kuala Lumpur's high cost of living. However, any increase

should align with factors such as education levels and productivity," she said.

Business manager at a cybersecurity company, Shamin Merrisa, 33, said the minimum wage increase was necessary and should be reviewed progressively to remain relevant.

"It's time for the Malaysian workforce, particularly newcomers to the job market, to receive salaries that match the cost of living.

"We fully support this implementation and will ensure full

compliance with the order. Our employees' welfare remains a priority," she said.

Entrepreneur Mohd Fahmy Ishak, 37, described the implementation as a proactive government step in increasing the purchasing power of workers, eradicating poverty and improving quality of life.

Mohd Fahmy, who has been running a tuition centre for over 11 years, said most of his employees earn wages above the minimum threshold.

"There is no major impact on my

company since most of our employees already earn above the minimum wage," he said.

The Human Resources Ministry announced that the order sets a minimum wage of RM1,700 per month for employers with at least five staff, and those engaged in professional activities, regardless of the number of workers employed.

The initiative is expected to benefit 4.37 million workers, in line with the Madani Economy agenda, which prioritises social justice and the well-being of the people.



# Couple 'forever thankful' for divine healing of daughter

➤ Entire family fulfils Thaipusam vow of gratitude every year over recovery of cancer stricken girl

■ BY JOSHUA PURUSHOTMAN  
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**PETALING JAYA:** The saying that love and faith have no bounds holds true for the Ramesh Marathamuthan family.

For the past 17 years, its five members have been fulfilling a vow by carrying the *paal kodam* (milk pot) up the 272 steps of the Sri Subramaniam Swamy Temple in Batu Caves in conjunction with Thaipusam.

Service engineer Ramesh, 54, said he noticed swelling around the lower jaw of his second of three children, Sasmetsari, who was four years old then, and initially believed it was just a dental issue.

"Upon taking her for a check-up, the dentist told us it could be more serious and referred us to the Universiti Malaya Medical Centre.

"That was the start of our journey, which led to her diagnosis of having Ewing sarcoma."

His wife, Malathy Arumugam, 49, said the

disease is a rare form of bone cancer that usually affects children and young adults, and begins as a growth of cells in the bones and soft tissue around it.

"Sasmetsari was always a precocious child full of life and it pained us to see her withdrawn and suffering. She went through a difficult journey with the treatments.

"Although she was too young to understand what was happening to her, she knew something was wrong since her hair fell out in clumps and she had bouts of vomiting due to chemotherapy. She also had a fever every so often and had to miss school."

Malathy said while they did everything possible to comfort her as parents, they also held on to hope and faith, which kept them strong as they prayed for Sasmetsari's recovery.

"It was then that I made a vow to Lord Murugan that if Sasmetsari recovers from her ordeal, we will carry the *paal kodam* each year for as long as we live. It has been 17 years since she has been cancer-free and we have been fulfilling my vow each year as a family," Malathy said.

Sasmetsari, now 22, said she remembers little about being sick, but her parents told her that she had seven cycles of chemotherapy.

However, although she is now cancer-free, she is still not out of the woods yet.

"I wasn't able to carry the *paal kodam* this year as I had to undergo a complex surgery in

June last year to reconstruct my lower jaw due to having had Ewing sarcoma. Surgeons used a bone from my calf for the procedure and I am still recovering as my leg is weak from the surgery.

"I guess this is just another challenging chapter in my life but I couldn't have pulled through without my faith and family, who have always been my pillar of strength," said Sasmetsari, who just started university after taking last year off to recover from her surgery.

She said she is looking forward to returning to her studies, making new friends and building a future for herself.

Her sister Kirtinee, 25, the first-born and a journalist at *theSun*, said what kept the family together throughout Sasmetsari's challenges is their faith.

"As my mother always said, Sasmetsari is the family's 'miracle child'. We owe her survival to Lord Murugan and the wonderful doctors. In more ways than one, her ordeal has strengthened our family bond too. Even my brother Vickash Ram, 13, has strengthened his faith in God after seeing our sister's recovery."

On Friday, the family carried the *paal kodam* to chants of *Vel Vel, Vetrivel*, as they do each year in the run-up to Thaipusam.

"Doing it on Thaipusam, which falls on Feb 11, would be too maddening due to the huge crowds. Besides, we find it more convenient to carry the *paal kodam* earlier as we can pray in peace," said Kirtinee.

## Probe into different version of Friday sermon delivered

**IPOH:** The Perak Islamic Religious Department (PIRD) has been urged to investigate a *khatib* in Parit Buntar for allegedly delivering a Friday sermon prepared by the Penang Islamic Religious Affairs Department instead of the one issued by PIRD.

Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad said the *khatib*'s actions raised concerns as he did not follow the sermon provided by PIRD.

"There may be something wrong. I believe PIRD will investigate and the findings will determine whether this incident actually occurred.

"Friday sermons are not prepared on an *ad hoc* basis. They are written one or two months in advance and are based on significant events in Islamic history," he said after attending a Madani community empowerment event organised by the Perak Community Development Department at the Darul Ridzuan Building on Saturday.

In a statement on its official Facebook page, PIRD clarified that the sermon, titled *Keberukan Fitnah: Pengajaran Dari Peristiwa Al-Ifki* was based on the historical incident of slander against Aisyah, the wife of Prophet Muhammad.

The department stated that the sermon delivered on Friday had no connection to any individual and was specifically written to reflect on the Al-Ifki incident, which took place during the month of *Syaaban*.

Earlier, Perak PAS Ulama Council Committee member Muhammad Rif'at Razman questioned the choice of sermon topic, suggesting it appeared to target State PAS Commissioner Razman Zakaria, who is also his father. — Bernama

## Over 12,000 still displaced in Sarawak

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The flood situation in Sarawak showed slight improvement yesterday morning, while in Sabah, the number of evacuees at temporary evacuation centres has increased.

In Sarawak, although the number of evacuees has decreased, it remains above 12,000.

As of 8am yesterday, 12,116 evacuees were housed in 62 centres across six affected divisions, down from 12,423 on Saturday night.

According to the Sarawak Disaster Management Committee Secretariat, Bintulu recorded the highest number of evacuees at 5,184, followed by Serian with 2,617, Samarahan with 1,926, Sibuan with 1,189 and Miri with 1,138.

Mukah reported the lowest number, with 62 evacuees.

In Sabah, the number of flood evacuees has risen slightly to 1,651 individuals from 537 families as of 8am yesterday, compared with 1,485 from 493 families on Saturday.

The Sabah State Disaster Management Committee Secretariat reported that Tongod district, which had recovered on Saturday afternoon, was hit by floods again. — Bernama



Aerial view of a flooded area in Salim Stabau district in Sibuan, Sarawak. — PIC BY CIVIL DEFENCE DEPT DRONE UNIT

## Theme park operator called for questioning

**SEKINCHAN:** The Selangor government will summon the management of a theme park in Shah Alam after a visitor was injured by a float that fell from a water slide on Wednesday.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari said the meeting would address safety concerns before the theme park's latest attraction is allowed to resume operations.

"For now, it is not operating. If they can meet the specifications set by the Shah Alam City Council, we will review their updated safety measures in their next application before allowing operations to resume," he said after attending the Selangor Thaiponggal 2025 celebrations on Saturday.

The council confirmed in a statement yesterday that nine notices had been issued against the theme park, including three warnings on Nov 14, 2024, and one on Jan 19. — Bernama

## Over 1.5 million expected at Thaipusam festival in Penang

**GEORGE TOWN:** More than 1.5 million Hindu devotees and tourists are expected to gather in Penang for this year's Thaipusam festival, which falls on Feb 11.

Penang Hindu Endowments Board chairman R.S.N. Rayer said all parties, especially temples and organising committees, are actively preparing to ensure the smooth running of the religious event.

"We anticipate welcoming 1.5 million Hindu devotees from across the country. Last year, the number reached one million. People are not only travelling from across Malaysia but also from abroad, including Australia, New Zealand

and Singapore.

"We expect an even larger crowd this year as Thaipusam coincides with the school holidays. Preparations are in full swing, and I would like to extend my highest appreciation to all parties, especially the temples involved, for their dedication," he said.

He was speaking at a press conference on the Thaipusam 2025 celebrations at the Sri Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Temple office on Jalan Kebun Bunga on Saturday.

At the event, he introduced a tracking system for the Golden Chariot, developed in

collaboration between the board and Digital Penang.

He explained that the system, first introduced last year, has been enhanced with new features, allowing devotees to access real-time information more easily through the "Patrikai & Chariot Tracker" app.

"Last year, the board introduced a digital tracking system in partnership with Digital Penang. This enabled devotees to track the movement of the Golden Chariot before and after the procession using an app on their mobile phones.

"With this feature, devotees can plan their prayers at nearby temples along the chariot's route or make offerings during the procession. This will greatly assist devotees in performing their religious rituals during Thaipusam," he said.

Rayer announced that the Golden Chariot will depart from the Maha Mariamman Temple on Lebuhraya Queen at 6am on Feb 10 and is expected to arrive at the Sri Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Temple the following day. The chariot will start its return to the Maha Mariamman Temple on Feb 12 and is scheduled to arrive on Feb 13. — Bernama



# Road crashes in KL drop 6% during CNY *Op Selamat 23*

► Traffic police and RTD issue over 13,000 summonses, seize 72 motorcycles in safety operations

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Enforcement efforts under *Op Selamat 23* during this year's Chinese New Year festive period have helped reduce road accidents in Kuala Lumpur by 6% compared with last year's celebrations.

Kuala Lumpur Traffic Investigation and Enforcement Department chief ACP Mohd Zamzuri Mohd Isa said as of the fifth day of *Op Selamat 23*, which began on Jan 28, a total of 639 crashes have been recorded, with 13,107

summonses issued.

This marks a 6% decrease compared with *Op Selamat 21* during Chinese New Year in February 2024, which recorded 681 crashes and 14,230 summonses.

"We are still conducting *Op Selamat 23* and will continue working to further reduce the number of accidents. I believe many Kuala Lumpur residents will be returning from their hometowns or vacations.

"Traffic flow in the capital is expected to increase on Sunday and

reach peak levels. Therefore, we will take steps to prevent congestion," he said after inspecting the *Op Motosikal* and *Op Samseng Jalanan* road safety operations on Saturday night.

During *Op Motosikal* and *Op Samseng Jalanan*, a total of 1,500 vehicles were inspected across several key locations, including Dataran Merdeka, Jalan Loke Yew, Jalan Kuching, Jalan Tun Razak and Jalan Raja Laut, starting from 10pm on Saturday.

Mohd Zamzuri said the operations, conducted in collaboration with the Road Transport Department (RTD), focused on drivers and riders without a valid licence, vehicles with illegal modifications as well as those without road tax.

He added the operation was also aimed at reducing road crashes and preventing young riders from performing dangerous motorcycle stunts in these areas.

As a result of the operations, 72 motorcycles were seized for illegal modifications, while 789 summonses were issued by the police and 250 by RTD, Bernama reported.

Five males, aged between 15 and 25, were arrested during the operations for various offences, including falsifying vehicle registration numbers under Section 29(1) of the Minor Offences Act and Section 108 of the Road Transport Act, possession of *ketum* under Section 30(3) of the Poisons Act, and vehicle theft under Section 379A of the Penal Code.



Kuala Lumpur traffic police, in collaboration with the Road Transport Department, conducting *Op Tutup* targeting motorcycles and reckless road users yesterday. —BERNAMAPIC

## Police looking for hit-and-run suspects

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Police are searching for three more suspects in a hit-and-run incident involving two vehicles driven recklessly in front of an entertainment outlet in Jalan Klang Lama early Wednesday morning.

Brickfields district police chief ACP Ku Mashariman Ku Mahmood said the suspects have been identified as M. Devindran, 25, whose last known address is in Taman Seri Bayu Morib, Banting, Selangor; M. Ranjith, 19, last known address at Lot 307, Jalan

Raba, Banting; and M. Lavindran, 27, last known address at Jalan Raja Nala 12, Taman Intan, Kapar, Selangor.

"No new arrests have been made in connection with the case," he said in a statement, urging those with information to contact the police.

Earlier, Kuala Lumpur police chief Datuk Azry Akmar Ayob said five suspects linked to the case were arrested on Thursday.

The incident is believed to have stemmed from a misunderstanding between the suspects and the

victims at a nearby club.

Two vehicles, a Toyota Hilux and a Toyota Vios, were seen being driven recklessly as they exited a parking lot and onto the road in front of the entertainment outlet, hitting a group of men and injuring two individuals.

Meanwhile, in Penang, police are searching for the driver of a white BMW involved in a hit-and-run incident that left a woman on a motorcycle injured on the Butterworth Outer Ring Road (BORR) last Thursday.

North Seberang Perai District police chief ACP Anuar Abdul Rahman said the incident occurred at 8.45am, and the BMW driver failed to stop after the collision.

"Efforts are under way to locate the driver. Initial investigations showed that the registered addresses of the vehicle owner are in Perak and Johor.

"We have requested assistance from authorities in both states to track down the suspect," he said in a statement. — Bernama

## Man gets 12 years for setting fire to five motorcycles

**BALING:** The Sessions Court yesterday sentenced an unemployed man to 12 years in prison after he pleaded guilty to three counts of mischief by fire involving five motorcycles between December last year and early January this year.

The accused, Afif Jazimin Jamaluddin, 23, made the plea after the charges were read before Judge Najwa Che Mat.

For the first charge, he admitted

to setting a Honda EX5 motorcycle alight at a house in Kampung Jerai at 3.15am on Dec 27, 2024.

He also pleaded guilty to torching a Modenas Kriss motorcycle, a Honda EX5 and an SM Sport at a house in Kampung Pisang, Kupang, at 3.30am on Dec 24, 2024.

For the third offence, Afif Jazimin admitted to setting fire to a Modenas Kriss motorcycle at a house in Kampung Hangus, Kupang at

3.30am on Jan 2 this year.

All charges were framed under Section 435 of the Penal Code, which carries a maximum sentence of 14 years in prison and a fine.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Amirul Halimi Md Salleh represented the prosecution, while the accused was defended by lawyer Intan Nursyafina Baharudin.

The judge sentenced him to four years in prison for each charge, with

the sentences to run consecutively, starting from the date of his arrest on Jan 20.

Aff Jazimin was detained to assist investigations into a series of fires that broke out at nine houses in Kupang between mid-December and early January.

The fires also destroyed two vehicles and 18 motorcycles, causing total losses estimated at RM770,000. — Bernama

## Teenager drowns while swimming with friends

**IPOH:** A 17-year-old teenager drowned while swimming with friends at Lata Tebing Tinggi near Selama.

Perak Fire and Rescue Department assistant director of operations Sabarodzi Nor Ahmad said they received an emergency call about the incident at 4.53pm on Saturday and arrived at the scene 14 minutes later.

"Upon arrival, the team from the Selama Fire and Rescue Station found that members of the public had already retrieved the victim, identified as S. Muguthan, from the water," he said in a statement.

Efforts were made to resuscitate the victim, but there was no response. Medical personnel later confirmed his death at the scene.

The victim's body was handed over to the police for further action and the operation concluded at 5.50pm. — Bernama

## Student loses RM147,000 in phone scam

**KUANTAN:** A university student lost RM147,000 in a phone scam after being deceived by syndicate impersonating Shopee representatives and police officers last month.

Pahang Police Chief Datuk Seri Yahaya Othman said the 20-year-old male victim received a phone call on Jan 23 from someone claiming to be a Shopee representative, alleging that he had advertised illegal items.

The call was then transferred to a supposed "police officer," who accused him of being involved in money laundering activities.

"The scammer instructed the victim to transfer money to avoid arrest and clear his record of any criminal charges. The victim transferred a total of RM47,000 to three different accounts.

"In addition, he also handed over his mother's gold jewellery, estimated to be worth RM100,000, to an unknown woman near his residential area," Yahaya said in a statement.

The student realised he had been scammed when his mother questioned the missing jewellery and the depletion of his bank savings. — Bernama

## Man arrested for slapping wife in public

**SEPANG:** A video clip showing a 50-year-old man slapping his wife at a shopping mall in Kota Warisan went viral, leading to his arrest.

Sepang district police chief ACP Norhizam Bahaman said the man was detained in front of a clinic in Kota Warisan at 10am yesterday.

The case is being investigated under Section 323 of the Penal Code and Section 18 of the Domestic Violence Act 1994.

"The man will be brought to court for a remand order," Norhizam said in a statement.

Earlier, the media reported that the man had slapped his 35-year-old wife, with the incident recorded and streamed live on social media. — Bernama



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Introduced in 1995, previous editions of the festival have drawn a huge following among local and international kite enthusiasts. - PIC FROM WEEKEND GO WHERE SINGAPORE FB PAGE

## International kite festival set to be soaring success

**JOHOR BAHRU:** A total of 44 countries have confirmed their participation in the Pasir Gudang World Kite Festival, scheduled to be held at Bukit Layang-Layang here from Feb 12 to 16.

Malaysia Kite Council president Datuk A. Rahim Nin said the 27th edition of the festival features 376 international and local kite enthusiasts taking part with three new participants, namely La Reunion, Tasmania and Tahiti.

"The event showcases modern and traditional kites at both international and national levels, with competitions for *wau* and other traditional kites. A special gallery will be set up to display kites from different countries.

"We anticipate over 500,000 visitors for this year's festival, themed 'Stay Clean, Enjoy Fly,'" he told a press conference on Saturday.

A. Rahim, who is also Johor Kite Association president, said the opening ceremony would be held at Astaka Tradisional in Bukit Layang-Layang on Feb 15 at 8pm and would be officiated by Johor Menteri Besar

Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi.

A. Rahim said due to good response from international and local participants, the Johor government has agreed to organise a national level kite festival in October.

"The festival will be held twice a year, at the world and national levels, to allow for a more spectacular and lively celebration," he said.

First introduced in 1995, the Pasir Gudang World Kite Festival has drawn participation from countries such as Indonesia, China, Singapore, Thailand, England, Australia, Portugal and Argentina. It is also listed in the national and Johor tourism calendars.

A. Rahim added that in conjunction with Malaysia's Asean Chairmanship this year, the Perlis government has agreed to host the Asean Kite Festival in May, featuring participation from all 10 Asean member states.

"We will also collaborate with the Perlis government to organise the Perlis International Kite Fiesta on Feb 18 and participate in the Satun International Kite Festival in Thailand from Feb 20 to 23," he said. - Bernama

# Custodian of vintage art keeps craft alive

➤ Certified sole male hand-embroidery tailor in Malaysia keen to impart skills to next generation

**BUKIT MERTAJAM:** In today's fast-paced world, embroidery has largely become the work of machines. The delicate art of hand-stitched lace and intricate patterns is fading, replaced by faster, automated methods that prioritise speed and convenience.

Yet, amid this shift, one man remains devoted to a time honoured craft.

Wan Azwade Ahmad, 47, is a rare gem - perhaps the only male tailor in Malaysia still practising *sulam goyang*, a traditional embroidery technique that demands extraordinary skill, patience and precision.

For Wan Azwade, it is not just about stitching fabric but creating history, ensuring that this delicate art form does not vanish into obscurity.

A native of Lunas in Kedah, his love for fashion began at the age of 19.

Without formal training, he taught himself the basics of sewing, picking up techniques from village elders and refining his craft through trial and error.

"I first came across *sulam goyang* on the internet, but learning it without a mentor was difficult. Even with a strong foundation in sewing, mastering the technique on my own was a struggle," he said.

His breakthrough came in 2021

when he was invited to attend a two-week course organised by the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation in Kepala Batas, Penang.

There, he deepened his knowledge, honed his skills and received formal certification - earning recognition as the only male tailor in Malaysia with expertise in *sulam goyang*.

"The art requires remarkable coordination, much like driving a car. Your hands must move in a rhythmic motion, your feet must operate the sewing machine pedal in sync, and your eyes must stay sharp to ensure the embroidery is precise. It's tedious and time-consuming, but with patience and passion, it becomes second nature."

What makes *sulam goyang* truly special is its craftsmanship. Unlike machine embroidery, which often creates stiff and coarse lace due to its perforation technique, *sulam goyang* is soft and intricate.

"The sewing machines I use are over 100 years old. The older the machine, the finer the embroidery it produces. While computerised embroidery is neat, it can't fully stitch through lacework. It usually burns tiny holes into the fabric to create patterns, which can be uncomfortable when worn.

"In contrast, *sulam goyang* is

done entirely by hand, ensuring every curve and floral motif follows the original sketch perfectly. The end result is more refined, comfortable to wear and uniquely personal," Wan Azwade added.

Using a special tool called a ram to keep the fabric taut, he can complete five to six sleeves with *biku* (scalloped edges) in a day, Bernama reported.

More intricate floral motifs or customised patterns could take up to two days, with prices ranging from RM150 to several thousand ringgit, depending on the complexity of the design.

His work is not limited to traditional clothing as his embroidery can also be found on doll outfits, shoes, handkerchiefs and even framed artwork for collectors.

His clientele is as diverse as his craft, spanning Malays, Chinese, and Indians who appreciate the timeless elegance of his designs.

Despite his passion, Wan Azwade knows the survival of *sulam goyang* depends on passing it down to the next generation. He dreams of mentoring apprentices, particularly single mothers and rehabilitation centre trainees, empowering them with a skill that can provide financial independence.

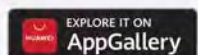
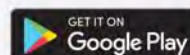
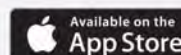
"Right now, I have only one student from Ipoh, Perak, who is eager to learn. I'm willing to provide support, including sewing machines and equipment, as long as they have the dedication and determination to master the craft," he said.

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# Seeking light in dark times four years after coup

## ➤ Yangon consumers turn to solar power kits

**YANGON:** Resident Aung Ko Gyi browses stalls for a solar power kit he can use to weather the blackouts that have become a feature of life in Myanmar four years on from a military coup.

"I need power supply to use at night, to use a computer for my business and to use for internet connection," the 64-year-old said at the country's biggest annual solar exhibition.

Power outages are common in his township, a result of rolling blackouts scheduled by the government as it battles for control of areas seized by rebels.

Aung Bo Bo, another Yangon resident, bemoaned the power cut timetable that can plunge houses into darkness 12 hours a day.

He has to wake up at midnight to cook and pump water when the electricity comes on.

"We're getting no sleep," he said.

Yin Kay Thwe, an office worker in Yangon, said the situation is especially difficult for families with children.

It would be better for power cuts to happen during office hours, she said, not in the evenings until past midnight.

"How can we live with that?" she said.

Myanmar is mired in a civil war that has killed thousands, triggered when the military ousted the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi four years ago Saturday.

The Southeast Asian nation has oil, gas and coal reserves as well as strong hydroelectric and solar potential, but is crippled by political instability, investor flight, poor policy and a lack of infrastructure.

An Electric Power Ministry report said that of the 7,000 megawatts (MW) of daily installed capacity, in normal times the power system could distribute around 4,000 MW.

Average daily electricity production has plummeted to 2,200 MW, it said, with only half of that being distributed.

The government has blamed the worsening outages on rising gas prices and attacks on infrastructure by rebels.

Around a third of firms surveyed by the World Bank in April last year reported power outages as their primary challenge, up from 12% in September 2023.

Only 48% of the population had access to electricity last year, according to the UN - the lowest rate in Asia.

And the crisis is having a major impact on both the economy and civilians' well-being. "We can't cook with charcoal or wood in

Yangon's small rooms. So we rely on gas for cooking but ... we also face gas shortages," Yin Kay Thwe said.

"We are struggling with cooking everyday."

The uncertain outlook has seen a surge in the use of alternative energy sources, particularly solar, much of which comes from China.

"Long-term solutions are being explored through renewable energy sources such as hydropower, solar, and wind, in alignment with the country's natural resources," the report said.

A World Bank report found that 17% of Myanmar firms surveyed had invested in off-grid solar power.

Zaw Htay Aung, the director of Sun Solar Myanmar Company, said he has seen a rise in the number of households installing solar panels as electricity and fuel shortages bite.

"People follow the solar energy trend these days because solar is more convenient to solve electricity shortages in Myanmar," he said, adding that home solar panels can be installed from around US\$570 (RM2,539).

Aung Kyo Gyi encourages others to switch to solar power to make it through the dark times.

"It's not noisy and we use the energy from nature," he said.

"Perhaps solar panels cost more than other options at first but it's way better in the long term." - AFP



## REBEL TALES

... Activists perform a play to mark the fourth anniversary of Myanmar's 2021 military coup at Three Kings Monument in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

- REUTERSPIC

## 18 troops killed in Pakistan ambush

**QUETTA:** Pakistani separatists claimed on Saturday an attack on a highway in a volatile southwestern province that killed 18 paramilitary troops and seriously wounded three others.

The attack was claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army, a group behind rising violence in Balochistan province that borders Afghanistan and Iran.

A vehicle carrying unarmed border troops "came under gunfire from 70 to 80 armed assailants who had blocked the road," a police official said.

The official said 17 troops were killed, along with another who came to their aid in the attack on Friday near Mangochar, a city close to the Afghan border.

The military said 18 paramilitary troops were killed as they responded to gunmen who "attempted to establish roadblocks," while 12 attackers were killed.

The BLA said in a statement it had killed 17 troops and had carried out multiple "operations". Attacks have increased in Balochistan province in recent months, often against security forces.

The BLA frequently claims deadly attacks against security forces or Pakistanis from other provinces, notably Punjab in Balochistan.

The group has also targeted energy projects with foreign financing, most notably from China, accusing outsiders of exploiting the resource-rich region while excluding residents.

In November, the BLA claimed responsibility for a bombing at Quetta's main railway station that killed 26 people, including 14 soldiers.

The group also said it was behind coordinated attacks by dozens of assailants in August that killed at least 39 people.

Violence has surged in Pakistan's border provinces since 2021.

Pakistan has accused the Afghan government of failing to rout out gunmen who launch attacks from Afghan soil, a charge it denies.

More than 1,600 people were killed in attacks last year - the deadliest year in almost a decade - including 685 civilians, according to the Centre for Research and Security Studies, an Islamabad-based analysis group. - AFP

## One dead in Australia floods

**SYDNEY:** One woman died in Australia yesterday as authorities ordered residents in the country's flood-ravaged northeast to evacuate and be on the lookout for crocodiles as river levels approach historic highs.

Authorities in the Australian state of Queensland said parts of the state received more than 600mm in 24 hours.

With heavy rains continuing, residents in flood-prone areas of Townsville were told to evacuate their homes by midday yesterday.

Rising floodwaters forced the closure of the local airport and Townsville University Hospital to delay elective surgeries.

The state's premier David Crisafulli warned yesterday more rain was forecast which could result in "record rainfalls".

The weather conditions were unlike anything the state had experienced "for a long time", Crisafulli said.

"It's not just the intensity, but it's also the longevity of it," he told the ABC national broadcaster earlier.

According to police a woman died yesterday after the boat she was in capsized in the rural town of Ingham, around 230km from Cairns.

"Take the precautions, prepare for the worst, listen to the advice, please don't discount this," Crisafulli said.

The environment department has warned people to be on the watch for crocodiles that may move about in "search of calmer waters".

"Expect crocodiles in all north and far north Queensland waterways even if there is no warning sign," it said in a statement.

The heavy rain will continue in the coming 24 hours, with the Bureau of Meteorology warning some areas will receive 450mm of rainfall. - AFP

## Sydney cars, houses defaced with graffiti

**SYDNEY:** Cars and houses in Sydney were daubed in graffiti, police said yesterday, the latest in a string of incidents in Australia's biggest city.

In the latest incident, police said vehicles and residences were damaged with graffiti in Sydney's east, an area with a significant Jewish community.

"Crime scenes have been established," police said in a statement, a day after they doubled to 40 the number of officers in a special taskforce set up in December to target antisemitic crime in the country's most populous state of New South Wales.

David Ossip, president of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, said in the attack yesterday "cars and homes were defaced with hate speech for the sole purpose of intimidating and terrorising the Jewish community and destabilising Sydney's social harmony".

On Thursday, graffiti was sprayed on three sites including Mount Sinai College in the city's east, one of almost a dozen incidents in the city of around five million in recent months that police say appeared to be coordinated.

Police said on Wednesday they found explosives in a caravan, or trailer, in Sydney that could have created a blast wave of 40m, and may have been intended for a mass casualty attack on Jews.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, previously criticised by the conservative opposition coalition as weak for failing to prevent hate crimes, has repeatedly condemned antisemitism, saying there is no place for it in Australia's "tolerant multicultural community".

Australia has seen an increase in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents since October 2023 when Israel launched its war on Gaza. - Reuters



## GREECE SHUTS SCHOOLS ON ISLE AFTER TREMORS

ATHENS: Greek authorities have advised people on the Aegean island of Santorini to shut schools today, avoid two small ports and refrain from gathering in indoor spaces after increased seismic activity in the area over recent days. A series of tremors up to a 4.3 magnitude were registered on Friday and Saturday in the area between the volcanic island of Santorini and Amorgos, the Civil Protection Ministry said on Saturday. One of the largest eruptions in history, around 1600 BC, formed Santorini. The last eruption in the area occurred in 1950. – Reuters

## PUTIN ALLY IN INDIA FOR IMPORTANT TALKS

MOSCOW: Vyacheslav Volodin, the chairman of Russia's State Duma, the lower house of parliament, said yesterday that he was leaving for India for a series of 'important' talks. "We will be in New Delhi by nightfall, important meetings and negotiations are planned tomorrow," Volodin, a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, said in a post on Telegram. "India is a strategic partner. We have long-standing relations of trust and mutually beneficial cooperation with it. It is necessary to develop contacts in all areas." – Reuters

## Democrats elect Ken Martin to reverse fortunes

WASHINGTON: Looking to rebuild after the party's election loss to Donald Trump in November, the Democratic National Committee on Saturday elected Ken Martin, the leader of the state party in Minnesota, as its new chair.

Martin will be tasked with reversing the fortunes of a demoralised Democratic Party that not only lost control of the White House last November but failed to win either chamber of Congress.

Since then, the party has struggled to respond to Republican Trump's barrage of executive orders, many of which reversed former Democratic president Joe Biden's policies.

Martin has called for restoring and augmenting the party's national infrastructure to contest races across the country.

He beat Wisconsin Democratic Chair Ben Wikler on the first ballot.

"Today's elections mark a new chapter in DNC leadership, and Donald Trump and his billionaire allies are put on notice: we will hold them accountable for ripping off working families, and we will beat them at the ballot box," Martin said in a statement. – Reuters

# 'All quiet at Canada border, situation under control'

## ➤ No illegal migration crisis, say Mounties

STANSTEAD: Fresh footprints cut across the thick blanket of snow outside a small white house near the line dividing Canada and the United States.

For Canadian border officer Keven Rouleau, it's a clear sign of illegal migration.

"They regularly run across the border," he said.

In 2024, these southbound migrants numbered 21,000 – a drop in the ocean compared to the 1.5 million intercepted on the US border with Mexico.

Migrants who cross from Canada into the United States in the winter face dangerous conditions, with deep snow and high winds, and are often forced to abandon their vehicles to proceed on foot.

They are sometimes only lightly dressed and wearing "simple sneakers in 20cm of snow", Rouleau said of the migrants, who sometimes hide under trees to avoid detection.

Canadian officers with bullhorns and powerful searchlights give chase, seeking to stop them from crossing the border, according to Rouleau.

Since US President Donald Trump returned to the White House, the border has been thrust into the spotlight.

On Saturday he made good on his threats to impose tariffs on Canada over the flow of migrants, as well as the smuggling of lethal drugs.

Canadian exports to the United States will now face a 25% tariff, although energy resources from Canada will have a lower 10% levy.

The meandering border between the neighbours is the longest in the world at 8,891km

long. It is largely open without significant fencing and crisscrossed by thousands of miles of dense forests and farmland, and only a few rural roads.

Rouleau patrols a 300km stretch of the border in the province of Quebec.

Ten officers are on duty around the clock, either in vehicles to detect suspicious footprints in winter, or by monitoring feeds from surveillance cameras.

They also field reports of suspicious activity from the local community.

Since Trump started to rail against Ottawa's handling of border security, Canada has been at pains to insist that its frontier is nothing like the US border with Mexico.

Nonetheless Prime Minister Justin Trudeau quickly rolled out a US\$894 million (RM4 billion) border security plan.

To much fanfare, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)

unveiled two Black Hawk helicopters, repainted in police colours from their former US Army camouflage, that will help with "rapid intervention."

An RCMP spokesman insisted there was no migration "crisis" and that "the situation is entirely under control".

Canadian authorities say the number of crossings from their side of the line to the United States has dropped 90% since last summer.

US Customs and Border Protection stats show that 19kg of fentanyl was seized last year entering the country from Canada, compared to 9,598kg from Mexico.

Rouleau said that while the concern of local people has been palpable since Trump's reelection, his job has remained the same.

"It's the status quo," he said. Jody Stone, mayor of Stanstead, a small Canadian town in Rouleau's patch, said "the border is quiet." – AFP

**CROWD CONTROL ...** Security personnel direct Hindu devotees heading to take a dip at the sacred confluence of Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers in Prayagraj, India. – AFP/IC



## Mexico accuses US of 'slander' over cartel alliance claim

MEXICO CITY: Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum angrily rejected an accusation by US President Donald Trump's administration on Saturday that her government has an alliance with drug cartels.

Tensions between the closely connected neighbours soared after the White House said Trump would slap 25% tariffs on Mexican as well as Canadian goods because of illegal immigration and drug smuggling.

Sheinbaum said she had told her economy minister "to implement Plan B, which includes tariff and non-tariff

measures in defence of Mexico's interests".

She hit back at Washington's accusation that her government has an "intolerable alliance" with drug trafficking groups.

"We categorically reject the slander made by the White House against the Mexican government about alliances with criminal organisations," she said.

Sheinbaum touted her government's record since she took office in October – seizing 20 million doses of fentanyl, in addition to

detaining over 10,000 people tied to drug trafficking.

"If there is such an alliance anywhere, it is in the US gun shops that sell high-powered weapons to these criminal groups," she said.

"If the United States government and its agencies wanted to address the serious consumption of fentanyl in their country, they can combat the sale of narcotics on the streets of their main cities, which they don't do, and the money laundering generated by this illegal activity that has done so much harm to their population."

Although US politicians and analysts have previously alleged collaboration with cartels, it is the first time that a formal accusation has been made, retired Mexican diplomat Agustin Gutierrez Canet said.

"It's really unprecedented that the US government has formally linked the Mexican government to drug trafficking in an official document.

"Trump uses this rhetoric to pressure but it should never be taken lightly," he said.

The measures were "one of the heaviest attacks Mexico has received

in its independent history," said Mexico's ruling party congressional leader Ricardo Monreal.

The United States bought more than 80% of Mexico's exports last year, according to official figures.

An across-the-board tariff of 25% could lead to a drop in Mexican exports of 12%, according to Gabriela Siller, head of economic analysis for financial group Banco BASE.

"By the end of 2024, Mexico was on the verge of a recession. If this tariff lasts for several months, the economy will fall into a severe recession." – AFP





A man jumps to greet a former Palestinian prisoner as he disembarks from a Red Cross bus in Ramallah. —AFP/IC

# Netanyahu to begin talks on 2nd phase of truce

## 182 Palestinians freed on Saturday

**TEL AVIV:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will begin talks on a second phase to the Gaza ceasefire in Washington today, his office said hours after the completion of the fourth hostage-prisoner exchange of the truce.

Netanyahu spoke with the US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff yesterday and agreed that negotiations would "begin when they meet in Washington."

A date for formal talks involving mediators and delegations from Hamas and Israel has not been set, with the 42-day first phase due to end next month.

Netanyahu's office said Witkoff would talk to Qatar and Egypt, key mediators, before discussing with the Israeli premier "steps to advance the negotiations, including dates for delegations to leave for talks."

The second phase is expected to cover the release of the remaining captives and to include discussions on a more permanent end to the war, something several members of Netanyahu's government oppose.

As part of the first phase, Hamas on Saturday freed three Israeli hostages in exchange for more than 180 Palestinian prisoners released from Israeli custody.

Hostages Ofer Kalderon and Yarden Bibas were paraded on stage by Hamas fighters before being handed over to the Red Cross in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. US-Israeli Keith Siegel was freed in a similar ceremony at Gaza City's port in the north.

The Israeli military later confirmed that all three were back in Israel.

Israeli campaign group the Hostages and Missing Families Forum hailed their release as "a ray of light in the darkness."

"I hope that this is a sign of the rebirth of the people of Israel, not just of Ofer, not just of the hostages,"

said Kalderon's uncle Shemi.

Later in the day, a bus carrying released Palestinian prisoners was greeted by a cheering crowd in the West Bank city of Ramallah, while three other buses were met by hundreds of well-wishers in Khan Younis.

"I need a great deal of composure to control myself, to steady my nerves, to absorb this overwhelming moment," said one released prisoner, Ata Abdelghani, as he prepared to meet his now 10-year-old twin sons for the first time.

After holding the hostages for more than 15 months, gunmen in Gaza began releasing them on Jan 19 under the terms of the ceasefire deal with Israel.

Hamas and its ally Islamic Jihad have so far handed over 18 hostages to the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Israelis among them in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, many of them women and children.

A total of 183 prisoners were freed on Saturday, all of them

Palestinian except for one Egyptian.

Hamas sources said a fifth hostage-prisoner exchange would take place next Saturday.

The ceasefire's six-week first phase hinges on the release of a total of 33 hostages in exchange for around 1,900 people, mostly Palestinians, held in Israeli jails.

A total of 251 people were taken hostage on Oct 7, 2023. Of those, 76 remain in Gaza, including at least 34 the military says are dead.

Those seized include Bibas' wife Shiri and their two children, whom Hamas has declared dead, although Israeli officials have not confirmed that.

Bibas' sons - Kfir, the youngest hostage, whose second birthday was in January, and his older brother Ariel, whose fifth birthday was in August - have become symbols of the hostages' ordeal.

Footage released by the Israeli military showed Bibas being reunited with his sister and father, who held him in a lengthy embrace. —AFP

## Gunmen killed in West Bank airstrikes

**TEL AVIV:** The Israeli army said yesterday it had killed armed men in three airstrikes the previous day in the occupied West Bank, where a new operation was under way around the village of Tamun.

Eyewitnesses reported a "large" deployment of Israeli forces around Tubas and Tamun.

An AFP journalist said the army was blocking the exits of the nearby Faraa refugee camp and entering homes. Drones were also visible in the sky.

The army said early yesterday that

a "tactical group" had begun operations around Tamun and uncovered weapons.

It said it was "extending the counterterrorism operation to five villages".

The day before, the air force "eliminated a unit on its way to carry out an attack" in Qabatiya, the military said.

"After the strike, secondary explosions were set off by explosives inside the vehicle," it said.

The military said one of those killed had been released from Israeli

detention in 2023 as part of the first truce in the Gaza war.

It also reported conducting two strikes in Jenin on Saturday.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said on Saturday that Israeli strikes in the Jenin area had killed five people, including a 16-year-old.

When asked about that strike, the military said it had "struck armed men".

Last month, the Israeli military launched a major offensive in the West Bank dubbed "Iron Wall" aimed at rooting out armed groups from the

Jenin area of the West Bank.

Jenin and its nearby refugee camp have long been a hotbed of militancy. Violence there and across the territory has soared since the Gaza war broke out in 2023.

Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 881 Palestinians in the West Bank since the start of the war, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry.

At least 30 Israelis have been killed in Palestinian attacks or Israeli military raids in the territory over the same period. —AFP

## Migrants leave Albania after court ruling

**SHENGJIN:** Dozens of migrants left Italian-run facilities in Albania on Saturday after judges in Rome refused to approve their detention, in another setback for Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

An Italian boat carrying 43 migrants departed from the Albanian port of Shengjin for the Italian port of Bari.

The migrants arrived in Albania on Tuesday, the third group transferred under Italy's effort to outsource migrant processing to a non-EU country and speed up repatriations of failed asylum seekers.

Other European nations are watching the scheme closely, but it has been heavily criticised by rights groups and has faced repeated holdups. No migrant has spent more than a few days at the centre in Albania.

On Friday, Rome's Court of Appeals referred the case of the latest group of 43 migrants to the European Court of Justice (ECJ), said an Italian government source. The ECJ is already examining legal questions raised by several Italian courts over the scheme.

An Italian Interior Ministry source said the government would not give up the scheme it said had been discussed by EU ministers last week.

The EU is considering controversial plans to set up dedicated return centres outside the 27-country bloc. "The government, therefore, will move forward," the source said.

The 43 were among 49 people intercepted by the Italian authorities as they tried to cross the Mediterranean. —AFP

### BRIEFS

#### RUSSIA BLAMES KYIV FOR SCHOOL ATTACK

**POLTAVA:** Kyiv and Moscow traded blame yesterday for a strike on a school in a Ukrainian-occupied town in Russia's Kursk region, while Kyiv also said weekend missile and drone attacks killed at least 15 people in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Air Force said four people were killed in an attack the previous day on a three-storey former school building sheltering evacuated civilians, with dozens more pulled out from the rubble. Russia has not given a toll for the strike, but accused Kyiv of targeting the school in a "crime that has no forgiveness and no statute of limitations". —AFP

#### ISRAEL NAMES NEW MILITARY CHIEF

**TEL AVIV:** Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israeli Katz have agreed on the appointment of Defence Ministry Director-General Eyal Zamir as the next chief of staff. The announcement by the prime minister's office was made late on Saturday and comes nearly two weeks after military chief Herzi Halevi said he was stepping down. Eyal Zamir, a retired major general who served in the Israeli military for 28 years. —Reuters



COMMENT by Dr Salini Devi Rajendran

# Food security in the face of climate change

**A**GRICULTURE remains the backbone of Malaysia's economy and a critical element of our national identity. However, as the climate crisis escalates, this vital sector faces mounting threats that can jeopardise our ability to feed the nation.

The unpredictable nature of climate factors – from rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, floods and droughts – are threatening food production and distribution. These accelerating changes underscore the urgent need for resilient and sustainable food systems.

The recent flood season in December 2024 has caused vegetable prices in Malaysia to skyrocket, rising by 50-80%, destroying over 100ha of farmland in five states (Johor, Malacca, Perak, Kelantan and Terengganu).

The flooding has resulted in a significant shortage of supply, causing prices to rise even further. Common vegetables like *sawi*, *bayam* and *kangkung* now cost RM8 p/kg, up from RM3.50 previously.

Similarly, tomato and lady's finger prices have nearly doubled, reaching RM8 and RM9.50 p/kg, up from RM4 and RM6.50, respectively. Red peppers have seen the most dramatic increase, now selling for RM22 p/kg, up from RM14 prior to the floods.

When food prices rise, they directly affect lower-income households, forcing families to spend a larger portion of their income on food, often at the expense of other essential needs such as healthcare and education.

Nutritious items like fresh vegetables, fruits and protein sources become increasingly unaffordable, leading to dietary deficiencies, malnutrition and long-term health issues, which are already prevalent in Malaysia.

The urgency of addressing food security is further highlighted by Malaysia's 2.6% year-on-year increase in food prices as of November 2024, the highest increase since December 2023.

Higher costs for food away from home (4.1%), vegetables (2.7%) and meat (1.4%) all played a significant role. These statistics are more than just economic indicators; they reveal underlying systemic vulnerabilities.

Extreme weather events, such as the devastating floods and the subsequent droughts, have disrupted agricultural cycles,

reduced yields and stressed supply chains.

## Building resilient agrifood system.

Malaysia's food security challenges are deeply intertwined with climate change and systemic inefficiencies. Existing strategies, while helpful, often fall short of a resilient and sustainable food system.

*“Extreme weather events, such as the devastating floods and the subsequent droughts, have disrupted agricultural cycles, reduced yields and stressed supply chains.”*

Addressing these challenges requires a multipronged strategy that integrates technology, policy and community engagement.

Despite the recurring monsoon seasons at year-end, long-term solutions to prepare agricultural supplies remain inadequate.

Farmers remain vulnerable to extreme weather events, leading to frequent yield losses and supply disruptions.

Local food production, while receiving attention, has yet to achieve adequate self-sufficiency levels for key staples, intensifying food insecurity during crises. This issue necessitates a shift from short-term fixes, such as reliance on imported supplies, toward a more sustainable and resilient agrifood system.

We should invest more in local innovations. Imagine flood-tolerant rice being grown here, ensuring stability during the rainy seasons. For example, geographical areas identified as flood-prone should develop promising innovations and climate-resilient practices to mitigate risks while ensuring that modern technology can yield to its full capacity during the climate crisis.

To increase the sustainability and resilience of agrifood systems, there is a clear necessity to shift the focus of technology from efficient food production to the facilitation of value chain development. By collaborating with research institutions, we can bring these ideas to life and protect our farmers.



By embracing innovation and fostering collective action, Malaysia can ensure a future where food security is not a privilege but a guarantee for all. – FREEPIK PIC

Smallholder farmers constitute a significant portion of Malaysia's agricultural workforce but often lack access to critical resources such as modern technology, financial credit and training. This limits their ability to modernise practices or adapt to climate challenges.

Tools such as satellite imaging, precision agriculture tools and early warning systems can optimise resource use and enhance preparedness for adverse weather. These technologies are not just futuristic, they are game-changers that can attract younger generations to farming.

Technologies like artificial intelligence-driven analytics, robotics and drone systems can automate labour-intensive tasks, improving efficiency and reducing dependency on unpredictable weather patterns.

Government subsidies, affordable credit and capacity building programmes are necessary to encourage smallholder farmers and young agripreneurs to adopt these technologies more widely.

Cooperative models that pool resources and encourage knowledge-sharing among farmers can further bolster resilience at the grassroots level. Empowering local communities through education and collaboration is vital for fostering resilience.

Urban farming, from rooftop gardens to backyard vegetable patches, is an excellent way to grow food close to home. Not only does this reduce pressure on commercial supply chains but it also helps families save money and eat

healthier. Imagine neighbourhoods coming together to create community gardens, sharing the produce and fostering a spirit of self-reliance.

As consumers, choosing locally produced and seasonal foods, and reducing food waste are other simple yet impactful steps to support farmers and promote sustainability.

## Call to action

As Malaysia stands at a critical juncture in addressing climate change and food insecurity, the stakes are clear. Failure to act risks unravelling decades of economic and social progress, but it also presents an opportunity to redefine our food systems into a model of resilience and sustainability.

The road ahead demands collaboration across sectors, from policymakers and scientists to farmers and consumers.

By embracing innovation and fostering collective action, Malaysia can ensure a future where food security is not a privilege but a guarantee for all.

It is time to sow the seeds of resilience, nurture collaboration and grow a future where every Malaysian has access to safe, nutritious and affordable food.

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# EDUCATION

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# Leveraging apps safely to prevent data leaks

## COMMENT

By Dr Nur Syazwani Ahmad

**N**OWADAYS, messaging applications such as WhatsApp and Telegram have become indispensable tools for organisational communication.

Initially designed for personal use, these apps are now widely utilised for managing daily tasks, sharing critical information and making decisions more efficiently.

The conveniences offered by these applications, such as instant messaging and the ability to share images, videos and documents, have greatly streamlined communication within organisations, significantly boosting productivity.

However, alongside these evident benefits, the use of WhatsApp and Telegram in professional contexts comes with considerable risks, particularly in terms of data leaks.

Many organisations rely on these apps to communicate with colleagues and share important documents. Yet, what is often overlooked is the security and integrity of the information shared on these platforms.

The risk of data breaches becomes particularly concerning when sensitive documents, which should remain confidential, are shared without stringent controls or management oversight.

Take WhatsApp, for example. In a group setting, every member has access to download and distribute shared documents without any supervision or traceable records. This opens the door for sensitive information to be easily disseminated to unintended parties.

Interviews conducted by the writer with several organisations revealed that the use of WhatsApp and Telegram has become a daily practice, even for work-related matters.

Although these apps are not officially recognised as formal communication channels, they are actively used not only among employees but also with external parties such as suppliers and customers.

These applications are especially helpful in facilitating swift information and document sharing, particularly in urgent situations.

Despite their widespread use within organisations, most employees do not receive adequate training or exposure on the aspects of security, ethics and privacy when using these applications for professional purposes. The



Organisations should implement clear policies and enforce stringent procedures to regulate the use of these applications in professional contexts. – UNSPLASH PIC

absence of clear guidelines from organisations further heightens the risk of data leaks.

The issue of data leakage poses not only a threat to data security but also has serious repercussions on an organisation's reputation and credibility.

When sensitive information, which should be carefully safeguarded, finds its way to social media or public platforms, the trust of clients, business partners and the public in the organisation is compromised. This can lead to significant losses – not only financially but also in terms of long-term trust in the organisation.

Customer and public trust in an organisation's integrity is heavily dependent on how well their data is protected.

Any data breach can damage business relationships and diminish an organisation's reputation in an increasingly competitive industry.

While applications like WhatsApp and Telegram provide immense convenience in improving communication and productivity, it is crucial for organisations to consider the risks associated with the lack of control over these platforms.

Moreover, employees must understand the risks involved in using these technologies. Organisations should ensure that their employees are well-trained in cybersecurity,

ethical use of technology and data-sharing protocols. With better education and awareness, employees can use these applications more responsibly, reducing the risk of data leaks and ensuring greater data security.

In conclusion, while apps like WhatsApp and Telegram bring numerous benefits in facilitating communication and expediting organisational tasks, the rapid advancement of technology, including artificial intelligence, necessitates that organisations strengthen their control over the use of these tools.

Risks like data leaks, stemming from unmonitored use, must be addressed with urgency. Organisations should implement clear policies and enforce stringent procedures to regulate the use of these applications in professional contexts.

Additionally, it is vital to provide employees with adequate exposure to the ethics of technology use, data security and the proper ways to leverage these conveniences.

With a more cautious approach and effective management, organisations can fully capitalise on these technologies without compromising their data security or reputation.

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## LETTERS

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

### Challenges in academic integrity with AI

**THE** use of AI has prevailed at universities and is on every student's lips. They use various methods to ensure that their AI-generated work cannot be detected by their lecturers.

For instance, they transform the advanced English generated by ChatGPT into simpler English to avoid detection.

Despite the availability of cutting-edge software like Turnitin to identify AI-generated content, students use other AI tools to outsmart these systems. This makes it increasingly challenging for educators to evaluate their students' genuine work.

While it is not wrong for students to use technology to enhance their learning, it raises serious concerns when it affects their critical thinking abilities. Many students rely on AI without truly understanding or engaging with the knowledge it provides.

When asked about assignments that are entirely AI-generated, they struggle to expound well. Some students do not even read the answers provided by ChatGPT; they simply copy and paste them into their assignments before submitting them, reducing critical thinking abilities.

This situation raises concerns about the overall quality of university graduates and their preparedness for the workforce. It also undermines the purpose of higher education, which is to develop knowledge, skills and independent thought.

Important questions arise: Can these students secure employment after graduation? Can they present themselves effectively to employers? Can they solve real-world problems?

To address this issue, we need to encourage students to engage more in class presentations. This ensures they can articulate their knowledge genuinely and develop essential communication skills.

Additionally, increasing the weight of examinations in assessments can provide a better measure of their understanding of the subjects. These steps can help safeguard the integrity of education and foster critical thinking in students.

**Assoc Prof Dr Mohd Shahidan Shaari**  
Faculty of Economics and Business  
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

## Nurturing a lifelong learning mindset

### COMMENT

By Syed Azman Syed Ismail

**LEARNING** is not something we can grow out of. It is like a friend that stays with us from the time we are born until the time we leave this world.

It reminds us that there is always more to know. It does not matter if you are a child discovering new things, an adult learning new skills or an older person writing notes in a small notebook. Learning is an important part of life, just like breathing.

I often think about how children learn. They are naturally curious. They ask questions and explore the world without being afraid to fail. But as adults, we lose this kind of curiosity. This is because of responsibilities or the fear of making mistakes.

What if we tried to think like children again? Learning would feel less like a task we must complete and more like an adventure.

Once, I decided to try a new hobby, which was gardening. In the beginning, I failed many times. My plants died and my garden looked bad but I

did not give up. I kept trying. I read books, asked people for advice and learned new things. After some time, I started to see small improvements. This experience taught me that persistence and taking small steps are important for growth.

Today, it is easier to be curious because of technology. We can learn almost anything online. From videos on YouTube to lessons on educational websites, the classroom is now everywhere. It is on our phones and just one click away.

If you want to try out a new recipe, a quick search can teach you. If you need to get better at public speaking, you can find online lessons. All these tools make learning easier, but the truth is, learning begins with wanting to learn.

For me, lifelong learning has taught me how to break my ideas about people and the world.

*"The beauty of lifelong learning is that it does not have to be complicated. It is not about being perfect but about being curious."*

For example, I used to believe that people who are good at mathematics cannot also be artistic. Numbers and creativity seemed so different to me. But my supervisor proved me wrong. She is both a brilliant mathematics educator and a talented watercolourist. Seeing her use precision and creativity changed the way I think. I learned that learning is not about limiting yourself. It is about opening your mind to new possibilities.

The beauty of lifelong learning is that it does not have to be complicated. It is not about being perfect but about being curious. You do not need to take formal classes or get certificates to be a lifelong learner. It can be as simple as reading a book, asking questions or trying a new activity. Every small thing you do helps you grow.

Of course, learning is not always easy. It takes courage to admit you do not know something and to try learning it. Mistakes will

happen but they are not failures. They are part of the process. If you embrace your mistakes, they will help you move closer to your goals.

To nurture a lifelong learning mindset, you need to stay inspired. Surround yourself with people who love what they do. Explore topics you do not know much about. Most importantly, do not be afraid to try something new, even if it feels difficult at first.

Learning never ends. It is a journey without a final stop. From the beginning of life until the end, the world offers us many lessons. We just need to seek them.

So, pick up that paintbrush, start learning a language or talk to someone about their ideas. Life is too short to stop growing.

Embrace learning and stay curious. Let it guide you through every stage of your journey. The most meaningful path is the one where we keep learning and growing. The best time to start is now.

**Syed Azman Syed Ismail** is a postgraduate student at the Faculty of Education at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Comments: [letters@thesundaily.com](mailto:letters@thesundaily.com)

# Maybank Islamic gets audax to drive digital transformation

➤ Collaboration is supported by AWS as cloud provider

**PETALING JAYA:** audax Financial Technology, a digital banking technology solutions provider backed by Standard Chartered, has been appointed by Maybank Islamic Bhd, one of the region's leading financial institutions and the sixth largest Islamic bank in the world, as its strategic partner to spearhead the digital transformation of banking services.

The collaboration, supported by AWS as the cloud provider, will deliver modern, customer-centric digital banking solutions, with its first product to launch this year.

As the technology partner behind Asia's first Banking-as-a-Service (BaaS) offering by a global bank, audax has demonstrated its ability to transform digital banking experiences. audax is now bringing this expertise to Maybank Islamic, the Islamic banking arm of one of Southeast Asia's leading financial institutions, Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank).

Through the partnership, audax is enabling Maybank Islamic to redefine customer experiences across its markets including Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines with innovative, inclusive, and syariah-compliant digital banking solutions.

Audax's scalable, cloud-native platform is designed to empower other banks and financial institutions in the region to better serve their customers.

The Islamic finance market is projected to reach US\$4.94 trillion (RM22 trillion) by 2025, with Southeast Asia contributing 22% of global Islamic financial assets in 2020. By leveraging audax's expertise, Maybank Islamic is poised to not only enhance its capabilities but also set the stage for future advancements in Islamic banking across Asean and beyond.

Through the collaboration, audax will enable Maybank Islamic to deliver a full suite of Islamic financial products via seamless digital channels. These include paperless, real-time onboarding, efficient account management, and instant access to digital banking services.

Powered by AWS's secure and scalable cloud infrastructure, audax's platform ensures rapid, reliable, and secure deployment. This solution not only meets customer needs with agility but also ensures full compliance with Islamic finance principles, reinforcing audax's commitment to delivering inclusive and innovative banking solutions at scale.

Audax CEO Kelvin Tan said: "This collaboration with Maybank Islamic underscores our commitment to driving digital transformation in Islamic banking, audax's platform will enable Maybank Islamic to

deliver transformative customer experiences while navigating the complexities of syariah compliance, ensuring they remain a leader in the rapidly evolving Islamic finance landscape."

Maybank group CEO Islamic banking and Maybank Islamic CEO Datuk Muzaffar Hisham said: "Partnering with audax and AWS marks a significant milestone in our journey to build global Islamic banking leadership. This collaboration underscores our commitment to delivering customer-first solutions that are seamless, inclusive, and fully compliant with Islamic finance principles. We are confident that audax's expertise and AWS's secure cloud infrastructure will empower us to better serve our customers and drive growth across Southeast Asia's rapidly expanding Islamic finance sector."

Meanwhile, AWS's Asia emerging markets general manager for Malaysia, Peter Murray, stated: "We are excited to support audax and Maybank Islamic in this transformative initiative. By leveraging AWS's secure, scalable, and reliable cloud infrastructure, audax is delivering innovative solutions that enable Maybank Islamic to modernise and scale their services. Together, we are helping redefine the future of digital banking in Islamic finance, ensuring customers benefit from faster, more secure, and more accessible financial services."

## Hong Leong Bank, China's WeBank seal strategic tie-up

**PETALING JAYA:** In a move that solidifies its position as a leading digital-first financial institution in Malaysia, Hong Leong Bank (HLB) has formed a strategic cooperation alliance with WeBank Technology Services, a subsidiary of WeBank, China's largest digital bank.

The alliance brings together two organisations committed to pushing the boundaries of financial technology and delivering exceptional customer experiences.

An agreement for the strategic partnership was signed at a ceremony recently alongside WeBank Technology Services' financial institution partners from Thailand, Indonesia and Hong Kong respectively. Through the partnership, HLB aims to elevate its operational efficiency and leverage cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) technology to ultimately deliver more personalised and impactful financial solutions to its customers and communities.

The bank will leverage WeBank Technology Services' expertise in AI to develop automation tools and applications, uplifting the productivity of its sales force and operational teams. These technology solutions would then be aimed at extending capabilities across data systems, marketing, and campaign management, improving the bank's customer-focused offerings and financial solutions.

HLB group managing director and CEO Kevin Lam, commenting on the transformative potential of this strategic collaboration, said, "As a digital-first bank, we have already made significant investments in technology to ensure we provide seamless, innovative, and personalised financial solutions. This partnership perfectly complements our strategy. It allows us to further accelerate our growth by leveraging their AI expertise to boost our operational efficiency and deliver even greater service excellence to our customers worldwide."

"By combining our strengths and shared commitment to innovation, we will unlock new possibilities for our customers and redefine the banking experience. We are confident that this partnership will accelerate our progress towards becoming the best-run bank in Malaysia and a leading force in the digital banking landscape."

HLB was the first bank outside of China to enable merchants to accept Weixin Pay in 2018, simplifying payments for Chinese travellers in Malaysia. Building on this momentum, HLB became the first bank in Malaysia to introduce eKYC and enable end-to-end digital onboarding for customers in 2020.

## Liberty's SME BI 365 protects small, medium firms against losses from fire, natural disasters

**PETALING JAYA:** In today's fast-paced business landscape, safeguarding your enterprise has never been more critical.

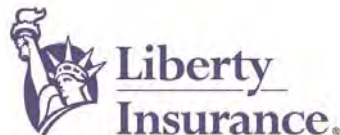
Liberty General Insurance recently introduced SME BI 365, a comprehensive and simplified business interruption insurance product tailored specifically for small and medium enterprises in Malaysia.

This offering complements Liberty's detariffed fire insurance policies such as Liberty Premier Fire & Con Loss, Fire 365 and Fire Enhanced, providing SMEs with a fortified layer of protection to support business continuity and resilience.

The saying "fail to plan, plan to fail" holds true for many businesses, especially SMEs which operate in a very lean structure and are vulnerable to major losses from fires or natural disasters.

In a joint report issued by the World Bank and Bank Negara Malaysia, around 75% of small businesses stated that supply chain bottlenecks are the main cause for delays in return to operations and the SMEs surveyed indicated that insurance payouts are a vital source of funding for recovery efforts.

Understanding the needs of SMEs in Malaysia, Liberty's SME BI 365 offers a simple and



straightforward business interruption insurance solution that helps business owners protect their loss of income after a fire, flood or any other insured event. The product is not only easy to understand, but is also designed to streamline the coverage process, allowing business owners to focus on what they do best - growing their business.

"The SME BI 365 is a game changer for the SME segment of the market with its ease of calculation for the sum insured," Liberty CEO Puneet Pasricha (Pasha) said "This will help significantly reduce the burden on business owners to figure out the best course of action or safety net needed so they can focus on expanding their business with confidence."

The key features of SME BI 365 are:  
 ➤ **Simple Application:** Simple calculation of the sum insured is required and simple questions to be answered for acceptance of the proposal

➤ **Comprehensive Protection:** Protection against loss of net takings and increased costs of working from business interruption due to fire, lightning, domestic explosion, other insured perils and/or other extended extensions.

➤ **Tailored For Various Trades:** Covers risks within Malaysia, specifically targeted at selected trades such as restaurants, retail shops, clinics, laundries, pet shops, and mini markets.

➤ **Robust Coverage Limits:** Flexible sum insured up to a maximum of RM5 million per location.

➤ **Flexible Add-Ons:** Coverage extensions are available for an additional premium and include scenarios like prevention of access or public utility failures.

SME BI 365 aims to simplify the complex world of business interruption insurance. Business owners would need to only provide essential information and simple calculation of sum insured, making it easier than ever for SMEs to secure the protection they need.

"Understanding the risks associated with running a business is crucial, and SME BI 365 makes this process more approachable," explains Pasha. "Our aim is to equip SMEs with the necessary tools and support to navigate the uncertainties with more confidence."

## UOB Malaysia signs landmark pact with Singapore chamber and ACCCIM

**PETALING JAYA:** In a significant step towards enhancing regional business collaboration, trade and investment, UOB Malaysia signed a landmark memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI) and the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce

and Industry of Malaysia (ACCCIM) on Jan 16.

Deputy Investment, Trade, and Industry Minister Liew Chin Tong, was present at the signing ceremony in Singapore.

UOB Malaysia CEO Ng Wei Wei said, "The collaboration with SCCCI and ACCCIM marks another milestone in UOB Malaysia's journey

of supporting the country's growth for over 70 years. As Malaysia assumes the Asean Chair this year, we are committed to helping local businesses connect to opportunities in the JS-SEZ and across Asean, driving sustainable growth and strengthening Malaysia's role in the region's economic progress."

Under the MoU, UOB, SCCCI and ACCCIM aim to bolster cross-border business collaboration and tap into growth opportunities in Southeast Asia, with a special focus on Singapore, Malaysia, and the JS-SEZ (Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone).





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## Increased integration of blockchain and crypto ahead: Wealth Wolves

BY HAYATUN RAZAK  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Blockchain and cryptocurrency integration is expected to increase in Malaysia, according to Wealth Wolves Sdn Bhd.

Executive director Leong Seng Tat (*pic*) foresees greater blockchain integration by the government alongside increased transparency in transactions and higher interest in using cryptocurrencies for payments.

"Whether we like it or not, the government has long implemented blockchains. In the nearest future, we will see a major integration taking place although the government does not announce it," he told *SunBiz*.



Leong expects increased transparency through governance, transactions and enforcement of legislation. "For instance, government records such as police summons are stored in a system unless settled. Our history is kept in a system unless we pay it off," he explained.

Businesses will follow suit as they also need to comply with government requirements, he added.

Key challenges for businesses in the next few years, Leong said, will be to lead the transition toward accepting cryptocurrency as a form of payment. "This requires significant adjustments to align with government regulations. Currently, the ringgit is the only legal tender in Malaysia, which poses regulatory challenges for cryptocurrency adoption among merchants." Leong stressed that while the shift towards crypto payments may appear straightforward, businesses must navigate various legal, technical and market-related obstacles to successfully implement and integrate blockchain-based transactions.

Bitcoin's price reached an all-time high above US\$109,000 (RM485,700) ahead of the US President Donald Trump's inauguration last month, driven by anticipated regulatory shifts.

The new US administration has shown support for cryptocurrencies, with the president issuing executive orders aimed at reviewing digital asset regulations and considering the establishment of a national bitcoin reserve.

The US Securities and Exchange Commission, under the new leadership, has softened its approach to crypto regulation. A Crypto Task Force has been established, and restrictive accounting rules have been rescinded, creating a more supportive environment for the crypto industry.

Additionally, crypto exchanges are expanding their presence in the European Union due to the enforcement of the Markets in Crypto-Assets Regulation (MiCA), which provides clear guidelines. Exchanges such as OKX, Crypto.com and Bitpanda have secured MiCA licences in Malta and Germany, respectively.

## Asean cross-border payments scene evolving rapidly: Fiuu

➤ Increasingly linked networks fostering greater regional connectivity and efficiency, says CEO

BY JOHN GILBERT  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The cross-border payments landscape in Asean is evolving rapidly, with member countries integrating their individual networks to enable seamless transactions in most parts of the region.

Thanks to interconnected networks, Malaysian payment methods can now be used in some Asean countries and vice versa. This trend is transforming cross-border payments by eliminating the need for physical currency exchange.

A key example is the Malaysia-Thailand corridor, where merchants in both countries can accept payment methods such as Touch 'n Go and Thailand's PromptPay, enhancing convenience to customers.

Fiuu CEO Eng Sheng Guan (*pic*) said, however, not all Asean countries are integrated. He noted that countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar have yet to establish such payment networks.

"Despite this, ongoing efforts by countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines are reshaping the payments landscape and fostering greater regional connectivity and efficiency, he told *SunBiz*.

Fiuu is a digital payment service provider that helps merchants unlock more than 110 major methods across Southeast Asia while enabling businesses to accept local and cross-border transactions in the region.

Fiuu also has an established instalment payment solution, connecting businesses with

seven banks, namely HSBC Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Hong Leong Bank, RHB Bank, AmBank, Affin Bank and OCBC Bank. It provides a single platform that simplifies the payment setup and removes the need to approach multiple banks.

Moving on, Eng said more payment corridors have been established in recent years. He added that Malaysia and Singapore have been interconnected for over two years, while Indonesia-Singapore and other corridors, such as Malaysia-Philippines and Singapore-Thailand, are also emerging.

These integrations are uniting previously fragmented payment systems by linking banks and networks under one framework, streamlining cross-border transactions across Asean, Eng said.

Asked about the growing trend of using cryptocurrencies as a mode of payment, Eng said acceptance of crypto as a payment method remains sensitive and highly regulated.

"Fiuu currently supports cryptocurrency payments only in Singapore, where the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) provides clear regulatory guidelines. For other Asean countries, regulations vary, and many lack a defined framework for merchant acceptance of cryptocurrencies or converting crypto to fiat currency.

"Fiuu facilitates crypto payments for merchants through its Singapore entity, which is licensed and compliant with MAS regulations. Merchants outside of Singapore who wish to accept crypto must register with Fiuu's Singapore entity to ensure compliance.

"While Singapore leads in crypto regulation within the region, most other Asean countries primarily focus on regulating crypto exchanges rather than merchant transactions. This lack of a clear regulatory pathway limits the expansion of crypto payment solutions

beyond Singapore for now," Eng said.

Fiuu operates across key Asean countries, excluding Vietnam, connecting to each country's in-country payment networks. Through Fiuu's application programming interface, merchants gain access to a unified platform, enabling them to open payment channels across the region seamlessly.

Unlike credit card systems that require local company registration, Fiuu simplifies the process for alternative payment methods. Merchants only need to sign up with Fiuu in one Asean country to access payment methods across the entire region.

Fiuu's focus is entirely business-to-business, serving merchants by linking them to multiple payment channels. However, customers can simply use the payment options offered by merchants connected to Fiuu.

Eng highlighted that major e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada and TikTok Shop are among Fiuu's key merchants, reflecting evolving consumer behaviour in the Asean market.

A notable trend, he said, is the shift towards smaller ticket sizes - whereby average purchases have decreased to about 60 from 80 - indicating consumers now shop more frequently but in smaller quantities.

"This behaviour is driven by the efficiency of modern logistics, which ensures faster deliveries, often within one or two days, and the availability of free shipping. As a result, transaction volumes have been growing annually by about 30%, boosting the adoption of e-payments across the region.

"Retail, online shopping, and travel sectors are thriving, with travel experiencing a significant post-pandemic boom. These trends highlight the dynamic growth opportunities in e-commerce and related industries in Asean," said Eng.



## No big impact from stamp duty reforms expected

BY AIMIE SHAZRIE  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysia's property market is set to experience a transformation with the government rolling out its phased Stamp Duty Self-Assessment System (STSDS) starting January 2026.

Knight Frank Malaysia group managing director Keith Ooi (*pic*) provided critical insights into how these changes could shape market sentiment, affordability and the country's appeal to investors.

He said the market will face only minimal disruptions as the reforms are not expected to negatively impact market sentiment or property affordability significantly.

"The current stamp duty rates remain unchanged, ensuring stability for buyers and developers alike. First-time home buyers will continue to enjoy full exemptions for properties valued up to RM500,000, easing

their financial burden," he told *SunBiz*.

Commenting on boosting transparency with challenges ahead, Ooi said the STSDS mandates that taxpayers self-assess and pay duties through the Inland Revenue Board's STAMPS platform, promoting efficiency and transparency.

"However, administrative hurdles such as proper classification of transactions and the risk of late penalties may pose challenges, particularly for developers and smaller stakeholders," he said, emphasising the importance of engaging legal and financial experts to ensure compliance and avoid penalties.

Despite the reforms, Ooi stressed, Malaysia remains a competitive market for foreign investors. "With a fixed 4% stamp duty rate and investor-friendly programmes like the Malaysia My Second Home and Premium Visa Programme, the country continues to attract international buyers.

He said Malaysia's relatively affordable

property prices enhance its appeal compared with other markets in the region.

On long-term benefits for the property market, Ooi said that while the initial phases of implementation may bring operational challenges, Knight Frank believes the long-term benefits outweigh the costs.

"The reforms are expected to streamline property transactions, bolster compliance, and create a more transparent system that enhances investor confidence in Malaysia's property market. For stakeholders, staying informed and proactive is crucial. Participating in industry workshops and consulting professionals to navigate the evolving regulatory landscape effectively, is vital."

Knight Frank foresees the reforms benefiting the property market by simplifying and modernising processes in the long term, Ooi said.

"Malaysia's property market remains resilient, driven largely by domestic demand. These reforms, while initially demanding, aim to ensure a more efficient and transparent system that bolsters investor confidence in the country's real estate sector," he added.



# Challenges in settling intercompany balances

**A**S BUSINESSES expand, they often form groups with multiple subsidiaries or associate companies to provide specialised services and support one another.

For example, a property development company may rely on its subsidiaries for construction, procurement, landscaping and project management. This structure is commonly found in larger groups, where specialisation allows for economies of scale.

As the group grows, the volume of intercompany transactions inevitably increases. These transactions generally fall into three categories: goods and services, financing (loans and advances), and payments made on behalf of one another.

However, as businesses grow, particularly in medium-sized and smaller groups, accounting for these intercompany transactions may not receive the attention it deserves. Entrepreneurs often justify this neglect with the reasoning that accounting is a "back-office operation" that does not directly generate revenue. Unfortunately, this mindset can lead to significant problems, particularly in the accurate recording and reconciliation of transactions between related companies.

Over time, inaccuracies in these records can result in discrepancies that accumulate, sometimes leading to substantial imbalances. When these discrepancies go unaddressed, they can spiral into larger issues, especially when the discrepancies involve large sums of money.

Addressing these differences at a later stage can be challenging and costly, with both

accounting and tax implications. Entrepreneurs who once paid little attention to the details may find themselves facing unexpected surprises. Adjustments to reconcile these balances will not only affect the profit and loss account but also the balance sheet. These adjustments will also require justification to auditors, tax authorities, investors and other stakeholders, adding to the complexity of the situation.



TAX MATTERS  
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## The tax ramifications

The first step in settling intercompany balances involves rectifying discrepancies by adjusting the balances upwards or downwards between the involved parties.

These adjustments can have a significant impact on the current year's profits and losses, as well as retained earnings for the respective companies. This can raise concerns among bankers, investors, and shareholders, who may not fully understand the reasons behind the adjustments.

One key issue when settling intercompany balances is distinguishing between trade and non-trade items. If there is a waiver or forgiveness of a debt, the entity benefiting from the waiver may face taxable income. However, the party forgiving the debt may not be entitled to a tax deduction unless it can be demonstrated that the debt is a bad debt, irrecoverable under the law, and that the write-off is justifiable.

The Public Ruling on this matter states that businesses should "make a stringent examination before deciding to write off a trade debt arising from a related or connected person." Furthermore, to support such write-offs, businesses must provide evidence

proving that the decision was made on an arm's length basis and for valid business or commercial reasons.

Where intercompany debts have arisen from trade transactions, and one party has claimed deductions or capital allowances, waiving the debt can trigger tax consequences. If a debt was written off in one party's tax records but later forgiven or waived, the tax benefits previously claimed may need to be recaptured.

Another common approach to settle the intercompany balances is to capitalise the amount outstanding through the issue of new shares by the debtor to the creditor. This will be tax neutral.

Whether a company chooses to write off intercompany debts, waive them, or capitalise them, it is essential to consider the broader accounting, tax, and legal implications of these adjustments.

## Conclusion

Settling intercompany balances is not a simple task and requires careful attention to accounting practices and tax regulations. The potential tax consequences, such as the recapture of tax deductions, and the need to demonstrate arm's length and business-driven decisions, mean that businesses must be thorough in their approach to managing these balances. Therefore, businesses must prioritise proper documentation, regular reconciliations, and a proactive approach to intercompany accounting to mitigate these risks.

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

## Malakoff completes acquisition of stakes in Zec Solar, TJZ Suria

**PETALING JAYA:** Malakoff Corporation Bhd has fulfilled all conditions precedent under the share sale and purchase agreement (SSPA) for the acquisition of 22,393,389 ordinary shares, representing a 51% equity interest, in Zec Solar Sdn Bhd, and 49,000 ordinary shares, representing a 49% equity interest, in TJZ Suria Sdn Bhd.

The completion of the acquisition provides a bigger opportunity for Malakoff to become one of the key players in the country's growing renewable energy (RE) sector, and is expected to immediately increase its effective capacity to 159MW in the RE sector and optimise operational costs through resource synergies, resulting in economies of scale, the company said in a statement.

Zec Solar is the owner and developer of a large-scale solar (LSS) facility with a capacity of 29 MWac in Kota Tinggi, Johor under the country's LSS programme with a 21-year solar power purchase agreement (SPPA) effective until 2040.

Zec Solar won the project through the first round of LSS competitive tendering issued by the Energy Commission.

Malakoff managing director and group CEO Anwar Syahrin Abdul Ajib said: "This expansion will significantly enhance Malakoff's technical capabilities, bringing the total of Malakoff's installed RE capacity to 159MW. It also provides a reference plant to meet the requirements of future LSS bidding exercises, both domestically and internationally."

He added that Malakoff has also ventured into a hydropower project via the RP Hydro (Kelantan) Sungai Galas Project, with a capacity of 84MW.

Additionally, the company secured SPPAs with major industry players such as DRB-Hicom Group, UMW Group, Railway Assets Corporation, and Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd.

"There is an undeniable sense of momentum at Malakoff as we accelerate the country's energy transition. It is a testament to our commitment towards contributing to the nation's target of achieving net zero emissions as early as 2050 and increasing RE capacity to 70% within the same period, fostering a greener future," said Anwar Syahrin.

## Local banking system in healthy liquidity position in December, says Bank Negara

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's banking system maintained strong liquidity buffers in December 2024, with an aggregate Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) of 160.7%, up from 147.9% in November, supporting ongoing financial intermediation, Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) said.

In its Monthly Highlights December 2024 report released on Friday, the central bank noted that the aggregate loan-to-fund ratio remained broadly stable at 83.5% (November 2024: 83.8%).

"The banking system's resilience continues to be underpinned by sound asset quality, with the overall gross impaired loans ratio improving to 1.4% from 1.5% in November, while the net impaired loans ratio remained steady at 0.9%," BNM said.

The report also highlighted that the loan loss coverage ratio, including regulatory reserves, remained prudent at 129.1% of impaired loans, up from 128.0% in November 2024.

According to the central bank, the higher increase in LCR was primarily due to a decline in expected cash outflows, as interbank borrowing maturities were rolled over beyond 30 days.

"This is in line with banks' pre-emptive measures to build buffers in preparation for seasonal year-end deposit competition," it said.

BNM said that, in December, headline and core inflation declined to 1.7% (November



Bank Negara Malaysia says both headline and core inflation averaged 1.8% in 2024. — BERNAMA PIC

2024: 1.8%) and 1.6% (November 2024: 1.8%), respectively. Both headline and core inflation averaged 1.8% in 2024.

It said the Index of Wholesale and Retail Trade grew by 3.9% in November 2024 (October 2024: 5.1%).

The central bank said that credit to the private non-financial sector grew by 5.2% (November 2024: 5.4%), amid a moderation in growth for outstanding business loans (5.1%; November 2024: 5.4%) and corporate bonds

(3.4%; November 2024: 3.8%).

The bank said that the financial markets were largely influenced by expectations for a more gradual US monetary policy easing path in 2025, amid upward revisions in the US Federal Reserve's growth and inflation forecasts.

"In addition, uncertainties arising from potential trade policies by the US administration continued to weigh on investors' risk sentiment," it added. — Bernama

## Malaysia's official reserve assets at US\$116.22b end-2024

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's official reserve assets amounted to US\$116.22 billion (RM517.87 billion), while other foreign currency assets stood at US\$4.5 million as at end-December 2024, said Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM).

The central bank said that for the next 12 months, the predetermined short-term outflows of foreign currency loans, securities, and deposits, which include, among others, scheduled government external borrowings and the maturity of foreign currency Bank Negara Interbank Bills, amounted to US\$10.6 billion.

"The net short forward positions amounted to US\$29.23 billion as at end-December 2024, reflecting the management of ringgit liquidity in the money market," BNM said in a statement on the detailed disclosure of international reserves as at end-December 2024.

In line with the practice adopted since April 2006, BNM said, the data excludes projected foreign currency inflows arising from interest income and the drawdown of project loans.

It said projected foreign currency inflows amount to US\$2.49 billion in the next 12 months. — Bernama



## Weststar Aviation bags US\$40m helicopter services deal from Santos

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Weststar-GAP Aviation LDA, a joint venture between Timor GAP-Timor Gas Petroleo, EP and Weststar Aviation Timor, Unipessoal, LDA, has secured a helicopter transport services contract with an Australian energy company Santos NA (19-12) Pty Ltd worth US\$40 million (RM175.6 million).

In a statement, Weststar Aviation Group said the agreement solidifies Weststar's position as a leading provider of offshore helicopter services in the region.

"Operations under this contract are set to commence on Feb 1.

"The contract, structured for an initial 12-month period with options for two six-month extensions, will provide helicopter transport services supporting Santos' offshore operations in the Bayu-Undan region," it said.

The group said this agreement marks a critical milestone in Weststar-GAP's broader strategy to enhance offshore aviation services in Timor-Leste, with prospective growth into the Greater Sunrise field to support ENI and Sunda Gas.

"The total potential value of Weststar-GAP's projected project pipeline over the next 10 years is estimated to exceed US\$400 million, demonstrating the substantial long-term opportunities arising from this collaboration," it said.

To fulfil this contract, Weststar-GAP will deploy two state-of-the-art Leonardo AW189 helicopters renowned for their superior performance and reliability in offshore environments.

It said these aircraft will be dedicated to crew change and Medevac (medical evacuation) standby services, operating between Dili, Timor-Leste and Darwin, Australia under the Malaysian (9M) aircraft registration, fully compliant with the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia regulations.

"This initiative not only underscores Malaysia's aviation excellence on the global stage but also strengthens regional aviation cooperation," it said.

Meanwhile, Weststar Group managing director Tan Sri Syed Azman Syed Ibrahim said the company is fully committed to developing Timor-Leste's aviation capabilities.

"Through comprehensive training programmes and skill enhancement initiatives, we aim to empower local talent and contribute to the country's aviation self-sufficiency," he said.

According to the statement, Weststar-GAP Aviation directors Syed Muhammad Azni Syed Azman and Vicente da Costa Pinto signed the agreement on behalf of the company. – Bernama

# Jordan-Malaysia in halal ecosystem development

**PETALING JAYA:** Jordan has taken a significant step towards enhancing its halal ecosystem by partnering with Malaysia-based halal digital technology leader Serunai Commerce under the Reverse Linkage modality of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).

This collaboration was conducted through an 11-day comprehensive Diagnostic Mission on Halal Ecosystem Development, marking a crucial phase in assessing Jordan's existing capacities and formulating strategic enhancements to its halal certification processes.

The diagnostic mission, led by IsDB and Serunai Commerce in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), involved extensive engagements with key Jordanian ministries and regulatory bodies.

These included the Jordan Standards and Metrology Organisation (JSMO), the Ministry of Industry, Trade & Supply (MIT), the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA), Jordan Customs, and the Municipality of Greater Amman, Iftaa' Department, Jordan Chambers of Industry (JCI) and the Embassy of Malaysia in Amman, Jordan. The high-level

➤ Diagnostic mission helps assess capacities, identify gaps, and understand the needs of the recipient country

discussions centred on identifying current challenges, capacity gaps, and opportunities for Jordan to strengthen its position in the global halal economy.

Beyond ministerial meetings, a workshop coordinated by the IsDB and MoPIC delivered by Serunai Commerce provided a platform to exchange knowledge, discuss capacity building strategies, and explore innovative solutions to improve Jordan's halal certification processes. The delegation also visited prominent manufacturing facilities such as Siniora Food Industries and BioEnergyTech to gain insights into Jordan's halal production capabilities and explore avenues for enhancement in line with international best practices.

IsDB reverse linkage lead technical specialist Aminuddin Mat Ariff said "A diagnostic mission is a vital step in the reverse linkage process, as it enables us to thoroughly assess the existing capacities, identify gaps, and

understand the needs of the recipient country, in this case Jordan – as it works towards developing a comprehensive and sustainable halal ecosystem. This initiative embodies the essence of South-South Cooperation, fostering expertise exchange and innovative solutions to drive economic growth and institutional strengthening."

The delegation from Serunai Commerce represented by its director of international partnership Intan Suriya emphasised the importance of capacity building in aligning Jordan's halal certification standards with international best practices. They highlighted how this initiative would empower local agencies like JSMO and JFDA to streamline their processes and support local businesses in accessing global markets.

Representatives from MoPIC and JSMO reaffirmed Jordan's commitment to advancing its halal industry, highlighting the government's efforts in boosting

regulatory frameworks and supporting local businesses in accessing international markets. The mission featured hands-on sessions, capacity gap analyses, and strategic discussions to develop an actionable roadmap for Jordan's halal industry expansion.

"Jordan is dedicated to enhancing its halal sector, and this collaboration with Serunai Commerce and IsDB is a critical step in achieving our national objectives," said MoPIC Arab and Islamic relations section head Malek Breazat.

He added that with Malaysia's extensive experience in halal certification and digital innovation, they aim to fortify their halal certification ecosystem, ensuring global compliance and boosting economic opportunities for local businesses.

This diagnostic mission marks the beginning of a long-term strategic partnership between Jordan and Malaysia. Moving forward, the collaboration will focus on implementing digital halal certification modules, harmonising local standards with international requirements, and unlocking new trade and investment opportunities to position Jordan as a key player in the global halal economy.



The Malaysian delegation with participants at the diagnostic mission in Jordan.

## CapBay offers SC's Sarana scheme for SME financing

**KUALA LUMPUR:** CapBay, a pioneering Malaysian fintech and leader in the peer-to-peer (P2P) financing platform industry, has announced its participation in the newly launched Sarana scheme by the Securities Commission Malaysia (SC).

This scheme, designed to support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) and small contractors engaged in government contracts, further underscores CapBay's commitment to providing innovative, flexible financing solutions that meet the unique needs of businesses across Malaysia.

With over RM4 billion in financing

disbursed to date, including RM1.4 billion in Shariah-compliant financing, CapBay has been at the forefront of supporting MSMEs with an extensive range of financing options, tailored specifically to meet the needs of government contractors.

CapBay, with its innovative product offerings in pre-shipment and post-shipment financing, provides tailored solutions for SMEs serving government contracts. This includes financing for the purchase of machinery, equipment, and technology, as well as support for manpower requirements in sectors like security, cleaning, catering and

trading. CapBay enables businesses to access Shariah-compliant working capital to fulfill government contracts, empowering them to scale their operations while adhering to ethical financing principles.

As part of the Sarana initiative, CapBay offers two primary financing options designed to address the specific challenges faced by MSMEs and small contractors participating in government contracts: Invoice Financing, which supports cash flow post-contract delivery; and Financing for Contract Implementation (pre-financing), which bridges contractors' initial working capital needs before a

project is executed. These flexible solutions allow contractors to meet the rigorous financial demands of government projects, contributing to business continuity and growth.

"CapBay's leadership in the alternative financing space is a direct result of our ability to blend experience with cutting-edge technology," said CapBay chairman Datuk Seri Mohd Mokhtar Mohd Shariff. "Our innovative credit scoring system has allowed us to support underserved businesses often overlooked by traditional banks. By combining technology with our deep expertise in working with government contract vendors, we've transformed

the financing landscape and established ourselves as the leading platform for MSMEs, particularly those engaged in government projects."

Mahizan Mohd Nor, senior vice-president of CapBay, Islamic Finance said, "With CapBay, we go beyond providing financing by creating new opportunities for Shariah-compliant solutions that cater to the diverse needs of Malaysian businesses. By leveraging the Sarana scheme and our extensive experience supporting government contract vendors, we empower MSMEs and contractors with fast, alternative, and tailored financing options."



Trucks carrying vehicles and steel driving into America at the Otay Mesa Port of Entry on the US-Mexico border.  
- AFP/IC

# Trump orders tariffs on Mexico, Canada, China

➤ US president wants action on stanching flow of fentanyl and migrants

**WASHINGTON:** U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday ordered sweeping tariffs on goods from Mexico, Canada and China, demanding they stanch the flow of fentanyl - and illegal immigrants in the case of Canada and Mexico - into the United States, kicking off a trade war that could dent global growth and reignite inflation.

Mexico and Canada, the top two US trading partners, immediately vowed retaliatory tariffs, while China said it would challenge Trump's move at the World Trade Organisation and take other "countermeasures".

In three executive orders, Trump imposed 25% tariffs on Mexican and most Canadian imports and 10% on goods from China, starting tomorrow.

He vowed to keep the duties in place until what he described as a national emergency over fentanyl, a deadly opioid, and illegal immigration to the US ends.

The White House provided no other parameters for determining what might satisfy Trump's demands.

Responding to concerns raised by oil refiners and Midwestern states, Trump imposed only a 10% duty on energy products from Canada, with Mexican energy imports facing the full 25% tariff.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canada would respond with 25% tariffs against US\$155 billion of US goods, including beer, wine, lumber and appliances, beginning with US\$30 billion taking effect tomorrow and US\$125 billion 21 days later.

Trudeau warned US citizens that Trump's tariffs would raise their grocery and gasoline costs, potentially shutting down auto assembly plants and limiting supplies of goods such as nickel, potash, uranium, steel and aluminum.

He urged his own citizens to forego travel to the US and to boycott American products.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, in a post on X, said she was instructing her economy minister to implement retaliatory tariffs but gave no details.

Canada and Mexico said they were working together to face Trump's tariffs.

China's Commerce Ministry did not specify its planned countermeasures.

Its statement left open the door for talks between Washington and Beijing.

"China hopes that the US will view and handle its own fentanyl and other issues in an objective and rational manner," it said, adding that Beijing wanted to "engage in frank dialogue, strengthen cooperation and manage differences".

A White House fact sheet said the tariffs would stay in place "until the crisis alleviated", but gave no details on what the three countries would need to do to win a reprieve.

At nearly US\$100 billion in 2023, imports of crude oil accounted for roughly a quarter of all US imports from Canada, according to US

Census Bureau data.

Automakers would be particularly hard hit, with new steep tariffs on vehicles built in Canada and Mexico burdening a vast regional supply chain where parts can cross borders several times before final assembly.

The tariff announcement makes good Trump's repeated threat during the 2024 presidential campaign and since taking office, defying warnings from top economists that a new trade war with the top US trade partners would erode US and global growth, while raising prices for consumers and companies.

Republicans welcomed the news, while industry groups and Democrats issued stark warnings about the impact on prices.

National Foreign Trade Council President Jake Colvin said Trump's move threatened to raise the costs of "everything from avocados to automobiles" and urged the US, Canada and Mexico to find a quick solution to avoid escalation.

U.S. tariff collections are set to begin at 12.01am EST (1pm in Malaysia) tomorrow, according to Trump's written order.

Trump declared the national emergency under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and the National Emergencies Act to back the tariffs, which allow the president sweeping powers to impose sanctions to address crises.

Trade lawyers said Trump was once again testing the limits of US legislation and the tariffs could face legal challenges, while Democratic lawmakers Suzan DelBene and Don Beyer decried what they called "a blatant abuse of executive power". - Reuters

## Japan govt pulls ads from Fuji TV

**TOKYO:** The Japanese government said it has pulled advertisements from Fuji Television in the wake of sexual assault allegations lodged against its celebrity host, as the company slashed profit forecasts.

Dozens of companies have already scrapped advertising contracts with Fuji since the furore over J-pop megastar turned TV presenter Masahiro Nakai erupted last month.

The government has decided to "suspend placing ads on Fuji Television for the time being", top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi told reporters.

Two ads still running and two others due to be aired have been pulled "considering the situation surrounding Fuji Television", Hayashi said.

A leading tabloid magazine reported last month that Nakai had performed a sexual act without a woman's consent in 2023.

A former member of boy band sensation SMAP, Nakai allegedly paid the unnamed woman ¥90 million (RM2.5 million) and both signed a non-disclosure agreement.

Fuji has been sharply criticised for its handling of the situation, especially after it admitted knowing about the allegations in 2023 but still allowed Nakai to appear on its shows.

Last Monday, two top Fuji executives stepped down for "failing to provide adequate care" due to "a lack of awareness of human rights".

Parent company Fuji Media, meanwhile, slashed its earnings forecasts.

It projected full-year net income of ¥9.8 billion (RM283 million), down from its earlier forecast of ¥29 billion, according to a statement. - AFP

## Typhoons and drought wreck Philippine economic growth target

**MANILA:** The Philippine economy fell well short of its 2024 growth target, officials said, as deadly typhoons and drought dampened economic activity.

Gross domestic product ticked up slightly to 5.6% compared with 5.5% in 2023, the Philippine Statistics Authority said.

But that failed to approach the government's target of 6% to 6.5%, economic planning undersecretary Rosemarie Edillon told a news conference.

The official blamed a dry spell in the early part of the year and six consecutive typhoons that pummelled the country in October and November.

"These extreme weather conditions led to a 1.8% year-on-year contraction in the agriculture, forestry and fishery sector," Edillon said.

The succession of typhoons also dampened tourism, the government agency said, even as industry and the services sector remained key growth drivers.

Scientists from the World Weather Attribution network concluded in a report last month that human-induced climate change had fuelled the rare string of typhoons that struck the Philippines, killing more than 170 people and causing hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of damage.

The Philippines also topped the *World Risk Report* last year of countries threatened by "extreme weather events".

"It is clear then that the key to economic growth in the new normal is to build resilience and ensure adaptability to changing preferences," Edillon said. - AFP

## Indian IT minister praises DeepSeek's low-cost AI

**MUMBAI:** India's IT minister has praised Chinese startup DeepSeek for shaking up the sector with its low-cost AI assistant, likening its frugal approach to his government's efforts to build a localised AI model.

India announced a US\$1.25 billion (RM5.6 billion) AI investment in March, dubbed IndiaAI mission, which includes funding for AI startups and developing its own AI infrastructure.

"Some people question the amount of investments the government has committed in (IndiaAI mission)," Ashwini Vaishnav said at an event in the eastern state of Odisha.

"You have seen what DeepSeek has done? "US\$5.5 million and a very very powerful

model. Because, the use of brain," he said.

DeepSeek has triggered a dramatic rethink on artificial intelligence spending around the world, claiming it took just two months and cost under US\$6 million to build an AI model using Nvidia's less-advanced H800 chips.

Downloads of its app recently surpassed OpenAI's ChatGPT on Apple's App Store, while the cost and performance of its tools upended industry beliefs that China was years behind US rivals in the AI race.

Vaishnav's statement appeared to target comments made by OpenAI CEO Sam Altman during a visit to India last year, when he cast doubt on the possibility of an Indian team

being able to build a substantial model in the OpenAI space with a US\$10 million budget.

"The way this works is we're going to tell you it's totally hopeless to compete with us on training foundation models. You shouldn't try. And it's your job to like try anyway. And I believe both of those things," he said, comments which are now in focus again on online platforms such as X after DeepSeek's success.

Altman is due to visit India again on Feb 5, just as his company is currently locked in a court battle in the country with digital news and book publishers over copyright breaches. - Reuters



# Theft, violence in UK retail soar to record levels

► Industry body says many incidents linked to organised crime

**LONDON:** Theft and violence against retail workers in Britain soared to record levels last year and are "out of control", driven partly by criminal gangs, according to a report published last week.

An annual crime survey by industry body British Retail Consortium (BRC) found more than 20 million incidents of theft were committed in the year to Aug 31, 2024, which equates to 55,000 a day, costing retailers a total £2.2 billion (RM12 billion).

There were 16 million incidents in the previous year.

The BRC said many more incidents in the latest period were linked to organised crime, with gangs systematically targeting stores across the country.

Incidents of violence and abuse in 2023/24 climbed to more than 2,000 per day from 1,300 the year before.

"Retail crime is spiralling out of control. People in retail have been spat on, racially abused, and threatened with machetes. Every day this continues, criminals are getting bolder and more aggressive," said BRC head Helen Dickinson.

Satisfaction with the police response to incidents remains low, with 61% of respondents describing it as "poor" or "very poor", the report showed.

"With little faith in police attendance, it is no wonder criminals feel they have a licence to steal, threaten, assault and abuse," said Dickinson.

The BRC said the amount spent on crime prevention also hit a record high, with retailers investing £1.8 billion on measures such as CCTV, security personnel, anti-theft devices and body-worn cameras, up from £1.2 billion in 2022/23.

Responding to the report, the police said they had made progress in 2024.

"Over the last year we have made significant strides in our fight

against retail crime, strengthening relationships with retailers and greatly improving information sharing which has resulted in a number of high harm offenders being brought to justice," the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for retail crime Alex Goss said.

The new Labour government has pledged to address the rise in retail crime through stronger measures to tackle shoplifting and anti-social behaviour.

It also plans to introduce a standalone offence for assaulting a retail worker.

The issue of theft and violence has been raised by many of Britain's biggest retailers over the last year, including Tesco, John Lewis and Primark, echoing similar reports in the US and elsewhere. - Reuters

## Scottish court rules against two new North Sea oil and gas fields

**LONDON:** A Scottish court last week ruled against the development of two oil and gas fields in the North Sea in a "historic win" for two environmental groups.

Scotland's Court of Session agreed with campaign groups Upfit and Greenpeace and ruled that the previous UK government's approvals for the Rosebank and Jackdaw fields were unlawful as they did not consider the carbon emissions the projects would indirectly generate.

Judge Andrew Stewart, who presided over the judicial review, said he had considered all the circumstances and concluded in favour of granting "reduction", a legal term for revoking approval.

"The public interest in authorities acting lawfully and the private interest of members of the public in climate change outweigh the private interest of the developers."

Shell, which owns the Jackdaw gas condensate field 250km east of the Scottish city of Aberdeen, and Equinor, the majority owner of Rosebank oil field 145km off the Shetland Islands, will now have to resubmit their environmental impact assessments.

The decision follows a ruling by the UK Supreme Court in June that greenhouse gas emissions indirectly generated by a business must be taken into account.

The oilfields were approved by the previous Conservative government, but the Labour government that came into power in July said it would not contest the Scottish court case in light of the Supreme Court ruling. - AFP

## German economy shrinks more than expected

**BERLIN:** Germany's economy shrank more than expected at the end of 2024, official data showed last week, the latest bad news for Europe's traditional powerhouse which is battling myriad headwinds.

Output in the eurozone's biggest economy fell 0.2% in the fourth quarter compared to the previous quarter, according to preliminary figures from federal statistics agency Destatis.

Analysts polled by data firm

FactSet had expected a contraction of 0.1%.

Destatis also confirmed that output shrank 0.2% across the whole of 2024, in line with its earlier estimate, and marking the second straight year of contraction for the German economy.

Germany has been suffering due to high energy costs, a manufacturing slowdown and weak demand for the country's exports, combined with a host of structural issues.

In the final quarter, while domestic spending helped support growth, it was not enough to offset falling exports, Destatis said.

Analyst Carsten Brzeski from ING Bank said the figures underlined the scale of the challenge for Germany.

"2024 was the year when cyclical and structural headwinds became a storm," he said.

"A substantial recovery of German industry is not in sight just yet," he added, pointing to empty order books

as well as the threat of US President Donald Trump imposing tariffs.

The bleak data came a day after the government said it expected the German economy to grow just 0.3% in 2025, down from a previous forecast of 1.1%.

France, the eurozone's second biggest economy after Germany, also performed worse than expected in the fourth quarter as data showed its economy contracted by 0.1%. - AFP

## Dubai airport sees 92.3 million passengers in 2024

**DUBAI:** A record 92.3 million passengers travelled through Dubai's international airport last year, its operator said, underlining the Gulf city's economic boom.

The figure broke the previous high of 89.1 million in 2018, Dubai Airports said, despite regional tensions caused by the Gaza war and last April's unprecedented floods which badly disrupted operations.

The United Arab Emirates city, located between Asia, Europe and Africa, has now been ranked as the world's busiest international air hub for a decade.

In a statement, Dubai's ruler and UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum called the airport a "global success story" and said it was targeting 400 international destinations, up from 272 currently.

Dubai Airports CEO Paul Griffiths said he was confident of breaching 100 million passengers by 2027.

Dubai, expecting competition from a major new airport being built in Riyadh, in neighbouring Saudi Arabia, is also planning a US\$35 billion expansion and relocation to Al Maktoum International, on the city's outskirts.

The trade, tourism and business centre is also witnessing record real-estate prices and soaring population growth, spurred by the UAE's efforts to diversify its economy away from oil. - AFP



Emirates Airline planes are seen at Dubai International Airport. - REUTERS/SPIC



# Apple logs US\$36b profit in 'best quarter ever'

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Apple last week reported its revenue was a whopping US\$124.3 billion (RM554 billion) in the year-end holiday quarter, but sales growth fell shy of market expectations as the iPhone faces stiff competition, particularly in China.

Apple logged US\$36.3 billion in profit in what chief executive Tim Cook called its "best quarter ever".

Revenue growth was powered by Apple's service and digital content unit, with iPhone sales slipping in markets like mainland China where they tallied US\$18.5 billion.

Overall iPhone sales in the quarter were US\$69.1 billion, about a half-billion less than it took in for handsets in the same period a year earlier, according to an earnings release.

"Our record revenue and strong operating margins drove (earnings per share) to a new all-time record with double-digit growth," said Apple chief financial officer Kevan Parekh.

"We are also pleased that our installed base of active devices has reached a new all-time high across all products and geographic segments."

In the quarter, Apple's services

## ➤ Sales growth misses expectations as iPhone faces stiff competition

segment - which includes Apple Music, iCloud, the App Store, and Apple TV+ - reported revenue of US\$26.3 billion, compared to US\$23.1 billion in the same period a year earlier.

The Americas remained Apple's largest market with US\$56.2 billion in revenue, while Europe showed strong growth at US\$33.9 billion.

"On the Apple intelligence side, we have not rolled out in China," Cook said on an earnings call.

"We did see better results in the markets that we had rolled Apple Intelligence out in than markets we hadn't; and, of course, it's the most competitive market in the world."

Investors are eyeing demand for new iPhones with artificial intelligence features, especially after Apple stumbled with the technology.

Apple Intelligence is a new suite of software features for all devices that was announced at the company's annual developers conference, where it also announced a partnership with

ChatGPT-maker OpenAI.

In the short-term, the new powers include AI-infused image editing, translation, and small, creative touches in messaging, but not more ambitious breakthroughs promised by other AI players, such as OpenAI or Google.

"While the company's cautious approach to AI rollout has drawn criticism, robust services growth and ecosystem expansion are providing crucial momentum to help ease its continued iPhone struggles in China," said Emarketer analyst Jacob Bourne.

"However, Apple needs to accelerate its Apple Intelligence deployment and be a bit more aggressive in emerging areas like smart glasses development to maintain an innovative edge."

Apple pushed out a software update in mid-January which disabled news headlines and summaries generated using AI that were lambasted for getting facts wrong.

Apple's decision to temporarily

disable the recently launched AI feature came after the BBC and other news organisations complained that users were getting mistake-riddled or outright wrong headlines or news summary alerts.

The company hopes that customers are attracted to buy the latest iPhone models by its new AI powers.

Along with Apple, other tech giants like Google, Microsoft and Amazon are convinced that generative AI's powers are the next chapter of computing and are boosting spending so as not to be left behind.

Apple lost its status as the best selling smartphone brand in the crucial Chinese market last year after a pair of local rivals surpassed it with surging shipments, according to industry data provider Canalis.

"Intense competition has led to a constantly shifting landscape," said Amber Liu, research manager at Canalis. - AFP

## Electrolux says US tariffs could hit demand

**STOCKHOLM:** Home appliance maker Electrolux last week posted a better-than-expected operating profit for the final quarter of 2024, but warned US tariffs could mean further uncertainty for the North American market.

The Swedish group reported an operating profit excluding non-recurring items of 1.25 billion Swedish crowns (RM506 million) for the fourth quarter, beating analysts' average estimate of 1.22 billion crowns, according to LSEG's IBES data.

Its North America division booked an operating profit of 45 million crowns for the same period, breaking a streak of ten consecutive quarterly losses in the region.

"In North America good momentum from our new products and improved productivity contributed to an improvement in operating income," CEO Yannick Fierling said in a statement.

However, J.P.Morgan analysts said that the operating margin of 0.4% the region was below the 0.9% expected by the market.

"Stock has outperformed in past couple of months, and with somewhat weaker guide for 2025 earnings bridge, we may see a travel and arrive today," the analysts said in the note.

Fierling, who took the CEO role at the start of 2025, warned that possible new trade policies in the US could impact demand, while "significant headwinds" from currency exchange and negative pricing could also hit the 2025 results.

US President Donald Trump ordered sweeping tariffs on Canada, Mexico, China on Saturday.

He has also pledged to impose tariffs on imports from Asia, from where Electrolux sources about 20% of components for products sold in the United States.

Electrolux, which did not provide a numerical earnings guidance for 2025, said the market outlook was neutral across its geographies.

Intense competition from China's Midea and other lower-priced home appliance makers coupled with high inflation, which has left consumers cautious about spending, has squeezed Electrolux's earnings in recent quarters.

The company said it would not pay out a dividend for 2024, marking a third year in a row with no return to shareholders. - Reuters



Customers shopping at an Apple Store in New York. - AFP/IC

## GM results and forecast top Wall Street targets

**DETROIT:** General Motors posted fourth-quarter 2024 results and a 2025 earnings forecast ahead of Wall Street expectations as the US automaker continued to see strong consumer demand for its pricey gasoline-powered trucks and SUVs.

GM sold vehicles at an average price of US\$50,000 for the year, and executives see a 1% to 1.5% drop in North American pricing power and a modest decline in gas-powered vehicle volume in 2025, leaving it in a relatively strong position.

The company expects losses will narrow with its battery-powered

vehicles, a reorganisation of the China business will lead to improved results, and GM is ending robotaxi development at Cruise, its autonomous vehicle unit, which will lead to savings.

The automaker is projecting net income of US\$11.2 billion to US\$12.5 billion this year, topping analyst expectations of US\$10.8 billion, as calculated by LSEG.

The guidance does not account for tariffs, cuts to electric vehicle incentives and tax changes.

GM is one of the automakers most exposed to US President Donald

Trump's tariff plans on two important fronts: EVs, where it has made aggressive investments, and tariffs, because it has substantial manufacturing in Mexico and Canada, countries that Trump is targeting.

The Detroit carmaker does not break down its EV losses, but said in 2024 that revenue was higher than fixed costs including labour and material costs, a metric that it calls positive variable profitability.

The figure does not include costs such as building assembly lines, but indicates financial progress in the EV rollout.

GM did not meet its goal of producing and wholesaling 200,000 EVs in North America in the year, instead ending up at 189,000 units wholesale, chief financial officer Paul Jacobson said on a call with reporters.

GM did reduce its EV inventory from 100 days at the end of the third quarter to 70 days.

GM previously had forecast EV operating losses would narrow by between US\$2 billion and US\$4 billion this year from undisclosed levels, although Jacobson told reporters the decline in losses was

likely to be closer to the US\$2 billion end based on a wholesale goal of 300,000 for the year.

"We do think that we can grow our EV demand."

"We're going to continue to see how EV adoption progresses in 2025," Jacobson said.

GM's fourth-quarter revenue of US\$47.7 billion surpassed analyst expectations of US\$43.9 billion.

The American automaker's adjusted earnings per share of US\$1.92 in the quarter also exceeded analyst forecasts of US\$1.89 per share. - Reuters



# MARKET ROUND-UP: JANUARY 31

### Bursa Trade Statistic

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

31 Jan 2025

Participation

Retail (18.22%)	Institution (36.29%)	Foreign (45.49%)
Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)
<b>+78.34</b>	<b>-37.86</b>	<b>-40.48</b>
Bought (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)
389.26	678.35	853.67
Sold (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
310.92	716.21	894.15

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

**Need Some Ideas?**  
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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

**DISCLAIMER:** The data and reports are provided as a service to investors. Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd shall not be liable or responsible for any consequences resulting from usage of the information.

### Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	11,893.71 +40.85
FBMVKLCI	1,556.92 +4.23
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	524.12 +4.63
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCT	165.37 +0.36
CONSTRUCTION	266.82 +2.50
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,854.36 +62.25
ENERGY	823.32 +0.84
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	520.80 +0.44
HEALTH CARE	2,162.21 +5.05
TRANSPORTATION & L	1,050.03 +2.00
PROPERTY	1,049.43 +9.53
PLANTATION	7,345.60 -48.91
FBMSHA	11,737.14 +42.64
FBMACE	5,195.07 +49.37
TECHNOLOGY	58.17 +0.12

TURNOVER: 1.472 bil VALUE: RM1.921 bil

## FBM KLCI rebounds on renewed buying interest

BURSA Malaysia staged a rebound from early losses to end the holiday-shortened trading week last Friday on a positive note, albeit in thin trading, supported by renewed buying interest, said an analyst.

At 5pm, the benchmark FBM KLCI rose 4.23 points, or 0.27%, to 1,556.92 compared to Tuesday's close of 1,552.69.

Market breadth was positive, with 508 gainers outpacing 319 decliners while 446 counters were unchanged, 1,048 untraded, and 37 suspended.

Turnover dwindled to 1.47 billion units valued at RM1.92 billion compared to 2.19 billion units valued at RM2.01 billion registered on Tuesday.

Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd equity research vice-president Thong Pak Leng said the FBM KLCI managed to close marginally higher despite muted trading activities following the Chinese New Year (CNY) holidays.

Regionally, he noted that key markets also posted gains across the board bolstered by improved sentiment, despite United States President Donald Trump's threat to impose steep tariffs on the BRICS bloc over de-dollarisation.

"Overall, trading was quiet as some countries were closed for the festive season," he told Bernama.

Among the heavyweights, Maybank rose 10 sen to RM10.34, CIMB gained eight sen to RM8.02, IHH Healthcare added one sen to RM7.16, Tenaga Nasional was flat at RM13.60, while Public Bank fell six sen to RM4.31.

For the actives, YTL Corp and Gamuda were up one sen to RM1.91 and RM4.04 respectively, YTL Power gained two sen to RM3.13, Velesto Energy put on half-a-sen to 19 sen, while Nationgate was unchanged at RM1.79.

### Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
YTL	1.910	+0.010	+0.53	458,354
YTLPOWER	3.130	+0.020	+0.64	445,674
GAMUDA	4.040	+0.010	+0.25	369,358
VELESTO	0.190	+0.005	+2.70	306,466
NATGATE	1.790	-	-	291,622
TWL	0.030	+0.005	+20.00	244,149
SALUTE	0.260	-0.015	-5.45	225,708
KOPI	0.835	-0.010	-1.18	213,649
CIMB	8.020	+0.080	+1.01	205,918
EAH	0.010	+0.005	+100.00	191,146
GAMUDA-C3B	0.065	+0.005	+8.33	185,167
YEWLEE-WA	0.280	-0.005	-1.75	177,774
IJM	2.390	+0.020	+0.84	171,728
PBBANK	4.310	-0.060	-1.37	166,122
YTL-C1D	0.120	-	-	158,387
AUMAS	0.875	+0.065	+8.02	153,848
RL	0.350	-0.005	-1.41	150,423
YTL-C1F	0.030	-	-	148,158
SIME	2.250	+0.080	+3.69	140,964
KAB	0.330	-0.005	-1.49	135,128



### Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
DLADY	30.500	+0.380	83
PETDAG	19.620	+0.380	1,866
GESHEN	4.450	+0.280	1,401
PPB	11.960	+0.280	4,793
MANULFE	2.550	+0.220	4,863
SUNCON	3.450	+0.160	68,825
CANONE	2.430	+0.150	1
VSTECs	3.440	+0.130	614
CHINAETF-MYR	4.750	+0.120	119
ALLIANZ	19.000	+0.100	99
DKSH	4.990	+0.100	39
GENETEC	1.490	+0.100	84,985
KLUANG	5.800	+0.100	203
MAYBANK	10.340	+0.100	77,090
RANHILL	1.320	+0.100	16,280
SAB	3.000	+0.100	100
SUNCON-C1I	0.380	+0.100	2,710
SBAGAN	5.840	+0.100	1,118
TM	6.600	+0.100	42,212
UTDPLT	30.600	+0.100	3,514

### Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
BAIDU-C2	0.010	+100.00	1,400
BORNOIL	0.010	+100.00	50,166
EAH	0.010	+100.00	191,146
YTL-C93	0.010	+100.00	10
SUNCON-C18	0.025	+66.67	17,859
ECOWLD-C35	0.055	+57.14	4,500
CME	0.015	+50.00	502
DXN-CO	0.015	+50.00	500
FBMVKLCI-CQT	0.015	+50.00	6,250
MAHSING-C67	0.015	+50.00	36,791
SCBUILD	0.015	+50.00	166
YB-LA	0.015	+50.00	20
IOIPG-C30	0.070	+40.00	1,306
MAHSING-C71	0.035	+40.00	2,676
ALIBABA-C40	0.055	+37.50	1,500
APPLE-C18	0.075	+36.36	400
SUNCON-C1I	0.380	+35.71	2,710
ANCONMY-CQ	0.020	+33.33	1
BPURI-WB	0.160	+33.33	65
BINACOM-WA	0.020	+33.33	1,110

### World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	44,544.66	-337.47	-0.75
S&P 500 (US)	6,040.53	-30.64	-0.5
NASDAQ (US)	19,627.44	-54.31	-0.28
NYSE (US)	19,998.82	-167.4	-0.83
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	5,286.87	4.66	0.09
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,673.96	27.08	0.31
DAX (GER)	21,732.05	4.85	0.02
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	39,572.49	58.52	0.15
TOPIX (JPN)	2,788.66	6.73	0.24
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	20,225.11	27.34	0.14
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,817.08	-15.78	-0.41
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	184.1	-0.11	-0.06
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,250.60	-2.02	-0.06
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,517.37	-19.43	-0.77
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	77,691.38	180.81	0.25
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,532.30	38.6	0.45
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,789.70	43.81	0.5
FBM KLCI	1,556.92	4.23	0.27
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,855.82	54.75	1.44
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	72.53	-0.2	-0.28
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	75.67	-0.22	-0.29
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,835.00	-10.2	-0.36
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	32.27	-0.23	-0.7
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	982.56	11.23	1.16
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	427.9	-2.85	-0.66
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,048.00	-80.5	-0.88
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	482	-8.25	-1.68
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	559.5	-7	-1.24
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	46.11	1.13	2.51
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	10,855.00	-195	-1.76
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	199.9	1.7	0.86

As at 5pm, Jan 31

### Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	89.980	-0.840	509
HEIM	24.320	-0.180	2,189
KLK	19.900	-0.180	2,643
F&N	25.420	-0.140	245
SDG	4.850	-0.130	20,407
FRONTKN	3.770	-0.030	21,495
HSI-PWDK	0.195	-0.075	3,282
QUALITY	1.020	-0.070	9
RPLANET	0.220	-0.070	50
CARLSBG	19.840	-0.060	520
E80-LC	0.910	-0.060	210
PBBANK	4.310	-0.060	166,122
SAM	3.960	-0.060	406
SPS500-H51	0.240	-0.060	6,764
GAMUDA-C2N	0.110	-0.050	1,816
GREATTEC	2.000	-0.050	16,388
ORIENT	7.050	-0.050	531
PAM-C50	1.260	-0.050	2
WPRTS	4.580	-0.050	5,086
NIKKEI-HI	0.265	-0.045	1,860

### Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
ECONBHD-CN	0.005	-80.00	450
HENGYUANC57	0.005	-50.00	4,276
JTIASA-C1	0.035	-50.00	2,000
KANGER-WB	0.005	-50.00	600
MI-C23	0.005	-50.00	6,280
NATGATE-CB	0.010	-50.00	2,071
PHB	0.005	-50.00	25,201
TECHBND-WA	0.010	-50.00	23,016
YTL-C91	0.005	-50.00	3,900
YTL-C92	0.005	-50.00	5,000
FFB-C8	0.035	-46.15	200
YTLPOWER-C67	0.035	-46.15	229
GREATTEC-C13	0.035	-41.67	400
HSI-PWBR	0.035	-41.67	11,069
HSI-PWBW	0.075	-34.78	12,729
CMSB-C50	0.010	-33.33	1,000
COMPUTG	0.010	-33.33	4,462
GAMUDA-C2Q	0.020	-33.33	1,855
IJM-C92	0.020	-33.33	1,100
NETX-WD	0.010	-33.33	60

# 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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## Rubber market to stabilise amid rainfall, CNY supply delays

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Rubber market prices are expected to be trading at equilibrium this week, with supply and demand dynamics offsetting each other due to the incessant rains in rubber-producing countries and the long Chinese New Year (CNY) holidays, said industry expert Denis Low.

He said there will be sporadic buying and replenishment activities of stock based on current usage.

"Prices should remain flattish with a slight tendency to be higher mainly due to the uncanny weather in the rubber-producing region, which would affect the rubber production during this period," he told Bernama.

Quoting the Meteorological Department of Thailand forecast, Low said there would be a significant drop in temperatures across Thailand, particularly in the northeast region.

He said that as the Southeast Asian monsoon intensifies, it will lead to more rainfall in the southern regions and cold temperatures with strong winds in the northern regions.

Meanwhile, a dealer expected the rubber market to trend downward weekly due to mixed signals from regional futures, influenced by the uneven economic performance of the US and China.

She said sentiment would be pressured by the strengthening of the ringgit against the US dollar and declining crude oil prices following the latest tariff declarations by the US.

"However, further losses were limited by expectations of upcoming Chinese stimulus measures aimed at addressing economic challenges, along with the US Federal Reserve's decision to keep interest rates unchanged," she said.

## Ringgit falls on new US tariffs, trade worries

**THE** ringgit weakened against the US dollar last Friday as market sentiment deteriorated following US President Donald Trump's latest tariff announcements targeting China, Canada and Mexico. At 6pm, the ringgit fell to 4.4550/4600 against the greenback from Tuesday's close of 4.3905/3980.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes said the new tariffs heightened concerns over North American trade stability and broader global economic headwinds.

"Trump also signalled a potential escalation of tariffs on China, raising fears of renewed trade tensions.

"While the measures may not be as severe as initially feared, even moderate tariffs could add pressure on China's economy, which is already struggling with the fallout from its property market downturn," he told Bernama.

Innes added that despite China's monetary easing and fiscal stimulus, policy interventions had yet to drive a meaningful recovery, further weighing on regional currencies, including the ringgit.

The ringgit also weakened against other major currencies. It fell against the Japanese yen to 2.8798/8832 from 2.8242/8292, against the euro to 4.6247/6299 from 4.5819/5898, and against the British pound to 5.5336/5398 from 5.4653/4746.

The local note also lost ground against Asean currencies. It eased against the Singapore dollar to 3.2854/2896 from 3.2481/2542 and against the Thai baht to 13.2274/2498 from 12.9437/972.

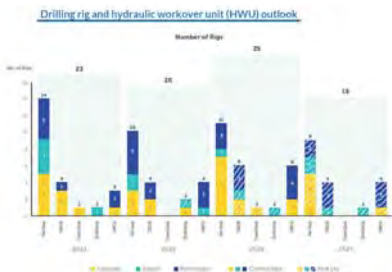
It also declined against the Indonesian rupiah to 273.2/273.6 from 271.5/272.0 and against the Philippine peso to 7.63/7.64 from 7.51/7.53.

## Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.4660	4.3310	4.3210
1 Australian Dollar	2.7910	2.6760	2.6600
1 Brunei Dollar	3.2990	3.2020	3.1940
1 Canadian Dollar	3.0780	2.9940	2.9820
1 Euro	4.6500	4.4980	4.4780
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5250	2.4300	2.4140
1 Singapore Dollar	3.2990	3.2020	3.1940
1 Sterling Pound	5.5570	5.3780	5.3580
1 Swiss Franc	4.9430	4.7300	4.7150
100 UAE Dirham	123.0000	116.6000	116.4000
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7240	3.4930	3.2930
100 Chinese Renminbi	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Danish Krone	63.8700	58.7600	58.5600
100 Hongkong Dollar	57.9200	55.0300	54.8300
100 Indian Rupee	5.2400	4.9200	4.7200
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0284	0.0257	0.0207
100 Japanese Yen	2.9000	2.8060	2.7960
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	40.4900	37.2200	37.0200
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6300	1.5300	1.3300
100 Philippine Peso	7.7700	7.3300	7.1300
100 Qatar Riyal	123.8200	117.5500	117.3500
100 Saudi Riyal	120.3500	114.2500	114.0500
100 South Africa Rand	24.9500	22.5300	22.3300
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5400	1.4200	1.2200
100 Swedish Krona	41.7200	37.9600	37.7600
100 Thai Baht	13.8700	12.3000	11.9000

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

## Oil & Gas Overweight



Source: Petronas Activity Outlook 2025-2027

**THE** general reduction in upstream activities is premised on the slowdown in spending by Petronas. Drilling activities will be scaled down sizeably this year while overall offshore support demand is also likely to decline (-9% YoY) as a result of that. We anticipate project delays for offshore fabrication, pipeline installation and decommissioning, with a more prominent uptick in activities starting from 2026 onwards.

Oil prices are projected to stay at US\$70-80/bbl in the long term, and the national oil major remains committed to sustaining Malaysia's production target of 2mboepd (from 1.7mboepd in 2024). Petronas has also guided for an average of 367 facility improvement projects (FIPs) pa (vs the guided 300 FIPs pa last year) to be carried out in the next three years. We continue to favour the maintenance space, which should feel the least impact from the spending scaleback, given the importance of maintaining production levels for operating cash flow generation purposes.

Toning down drilling activities: Petronas only utilised 23 rigs in 2023, which is slightly lower than the initially planned 28, due to lower HWU and higher tender assisted drilling rigs (TADR) utilisation. Overall rig guidance was further decreased to 20 in 2025 vs last year's report - mainly due to a lower guidance of jack-up rigs (from 14 to 10) and HWU (from eight to four). Demand for the number of jack-up rigs is estimated to hover around 9-11 in 2026-2027. This somewhat confirms our view that drilling activities are likely to slow down, in view of relatively cautious spending by Petronas. As such, we expect drillers such as Velesto Energy to see a slowdown in new contract awards. On the other hand, there is an upward revision for TADR demand over 2025 and 2026 to 4-6 (from three previously) and this could benefit TADR owner Sapura Energy.

- RHB Research, Jan 31

## CIMB Group Holdings Bhd Buy. Target price: RM9.20



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

**HAVING** seen a strong 9M'24, we expect CIMB's Q4'24 earnings to be softer QoQ. While loan growth is likely to have picked up sequentially due to higher corporate loan disbursements, NIMs are expected to have been softer QoQ, while NOII is expected to have tapered off from an exceptionally strong Q3'24. Credit cost, nevertheless, is expected to have remained fairly benign. That Q4'24 is likely to have been softer is already baked into our forecast, whereby we are looking at an 8% QoQ decline in earnings, but for Q4'24 net profit to be up 9% YoY.

What is positive into FY25 is that domestic corporate lending picked up momentum in Q4'24, and is likely to sustain into FY25, while mortgage lending is likely to resume amid more reasonable pricing. In Thailand, the consumer portfolio has stabilised. NIMs are likely to recover in Malaysia (amid less aggressive deposit competition), and eventually Indonesia (as NIMs adjust to recent rate cuts). Credit cost, however, is likely to normalise higher from a low base.

The group is likely to have achieved its 11-11.5% FY24 ROE target, which would be within our expectations. To drive future ROEs higher, the focus will be on countries and businesses that generate high returns such as Indonesia, Singapore and commercial banking. Also, the turnaround of CIMB Thai should also be given emphasis. We, however, do not expect any capital management plans via special dividends. CIMB Group CEO, Novan Amirudin, is expected to unveil his strategic business plan on March 5.

BUY with RM9.20 TP. - Maybank Investment Bank, Jan 31

## Ramssol Group Bhd Buy. Target price: RM1.00



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

**RAMSSOL** (via whole owned unit RAMS AutoTech) officially launched Rider Gate on Jan 18. A domestic online marketplace for used motorbikes, Rider Gate differentiates itself from incumbents by offering a slew of auxiliary services including ownership transfer, inspections, insurance, extended warranties and smart financing. RAMSSOL has invested >RM10 million into the development of the platform and aims to be the "Carsome equivalent" for the Malaysian used motorbikes market.

AMR posits the global used motorbike market was valued at US\$38.7 billion in 2021 and is expected to grow at a 10Y CAGR of 5.6% to reach US\$66.2 billion by 2031. M'sia has an estimated 16.7m registered motorbikes and was the 13th largest 2-wheeler market in the world in 2023. With 500-600k bikes sold in Malaysia annually, facilitating transactions for just a small fraction of the pie could equate to tangible future earnings accretion for RAMSSOL.

At launch, RAMSSOL disclosed that it had onboarded 150 registered dealers onto the platform and aims to grow its network to 800 dealers spanning 3,000 outlets nationwide by end-2025. During its trial phase in 2024, Rider Gate successfully executed 1,450 transactions. Our model has imputed for 2,500 transactions in FY25-26 at a charge of RM85 per transaction (mgmt guidance: RM100-130) yielding forecasted revenue/CNP accretion of RM6.4 million/RM1.3 million p.a. for FY25 and FY26 respectively.

There are several risk factors that may have some implication to our recommendation, target price and earnings forecasts for RAMSSOL. These include heavy reliance on HCM software vendors in the provision of its HCM services to clients, and risk of security breaches on its applications.

BUY with RM1.00 TP. - Maybank Investment Bank, Jan 31





# the Sun **LYFE**

MONDAY | FEB 3, 2025

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# Musical art

*Tunes inspire Chinese  
brush painter - P22*



## WEEKLY FOCUS

**MONDAY**  
Technology and  
social media

**TUESDAY**  
Travel  
and leisure

**WEDNESDAY**  
Fashion  
and beauty

**THURSDAY**  
Home  
and living

**FRIDAY**  
Food  
and beverage

- ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN

**INSIDE** **p23** Taking gaming audio to new heights **p24** First CNY chatbot launched **p25** Bluffer's guide to Bob Dylan **p26** Escalation of events in *Bleach Wars*





BY STAMARAI CHELVI

# Musical strokes

▶ Painter Sim Li Wei lets rhythms guide her brush

**F**OR Sim Li Wei, a Chinese brush painter since she was 10 years old, paintings connect deeply with her soul. Each stroke is a journey into self-discovery and an opportunity for expression. Over the years, Sim, who hails from Klang, has completed an incalculable number of paintings on various canvases.

With music in the background, Sim, 30, takes just 10 minutes to paint a mesmerising image of peonies, birds and butterflies. In her art, she often blends the traditional with contemporary elements.

### Deeply connected to soul

“Chinese brush painting has taught me the importance of simplicity, the value of patience and mindfulness. Each stroke is deliberate and must reflect a deep connection to the subject, whether it is a flower, bird or landscape.

“The process encourages me to slow down, focus and express emotions through the flow of the brush, rather than relying on perfection.

“It connects with my inner self by fostering a sense of calm and balance. The quiet, meditative nature of the practice helps me reflect internally, allowing me to express my thoughts and feelings without words. This makes the painting not just an external creation, but a personal journey of self-expression and discovery,” Sim told *theSun*.

### Passion to paint

Her artworks allow her to connect deeply with tradition and nature.

“I love using watercolors and pencil sketches in my work to bring out delicate details and vibrant colours while maintaining the fluidity and simplicity that Chinese brush



A close-up of Sim's painting featuring peonies.



Sim's artworks allow her to connect deeply with tradition and nature.

### Birds, butterflies, flowers

“Flora and butterflies have always been a major focus in my work because they symbolise life, beauty and transformation. The delicate details of flowers and the fluid motion of butterflies offer endless inspiration and I love how they evoke feelings of grace and freedom.

“However, I have also explored other themes such as mountains and rivers, which represent nature's strength and tranquility, as well as human figures that capture emotion and storytelling through brushstrokes,” she said.

### Traditional and contemporary

Unlike many traditional painters, Sim experiments by bringing together different elements.

“I enjoy blending traditional Chinese brush painting with more modern or contemporary elements. While I deeply respect the classical techniques and themes, I think it is exciting to experiment with different media such as painting on fans, lanterns or red paper.

“These materials bring a fresh perspective to the art and I find that they make the work more accessible to a wider audience.



Sim posing with her painting.

painting is known for.

“The technique itself is unique because it combines calligraphy with painting, where each brushstroke holds meaning and emotion. It is all about capturing the spirit of the subject, whether it is a flower, bird or landscape, rather than just a realistic representation,” she explained.

“By using these traditional techniques in a modern context, I can keep the art alive and relevant while also introducing people to the beauty and depth of Chinese brush painting in a fun and engaging way. It is all about striking that balance between tradition and innovation,” she said.

Apart from this, she also dabbles in Chinese calligraphy and hopes to experiment with rainbow painting. “It is all about continuing to evolve and explore new ways to combine

traditional and contemporary elements.”

### Melodic inspiration

Music plays a significant role in her painting as it sparks ideas she skillfully transfers onto canvas. She often listens to music while painting – sometimes, she dances a little too.

“Music is integral to my creative process in Chinese brush painting, helping to create flow and rhythm in my strokes. Traditional Chinese instruments such as the *gu zheng* or *erhu* set the mood, allowing me to align my brush movements with the music's fluidity.

“This creates a meditative, almost dance-like quality in the painting. I also listen to ambient or classical music for focus, letting the rhythm guide my brush and enhance the connection to the subject,” said Sim.

### Colours of life

Sim took interest in painting when she was young, as her father is an artist who teaches Chinese brush painting.

“I was fascinated by how a few simple brushstrokes could create such beautiful and expressive works of art.

“He patiently taught me the basics, and over time, I grew to appreciate the depth and tradition behind this ancient art form. It felt like a way to connect with my heritage and express emotions through each brushstroke. That early exposure not only ignited my passion but also gave me a lifelong appreciation for the art.



Sim meticulously applying brush strokes to paper.



Sim also dabbles in Chinese calligraphy. – ALL PICS COURTESY OF SIM LI WEI



One of Sim's completed works, complete with painted flowers.



# Revolutionising compact gaming audio

► High-performance GameBuds for everyday convenience

■ BY YASMIN ZULRAEZ

**S**TEELSERIES has once again raised the bar with its Arctis GameBuds, a pair of true wireless earbuds designed specifically for gamers. These earbuds are designed to combine audio quality, smooth connectivity and all-day comfort to deliver an exceptional gaming experience, whether on a console, PC or mobile device. But do they deliver?

**Built for gamers, also fantastic for everyone else**

The Arctis GameBuds are a meticulously designed gaming tool. Crafted using insights from over 62,000 ear scans, the GameBuds offer a snug, ergonomic fit that caters to all ear sizes and shapes.

Multiple silicone ear tips are included to ensure a comfortable and secure fit, even during marathon gaming sessions.

Their lightweight and pocket-friendly design makes them ideal for on-the-go use, whether when gamers switch between platforms or step outside.

The IP55 water resistance rating means they can survive rain, sweat and the occasional coffee spill, making them versatile beyond gaming.



The ideal buds for people on the go.

## Audio excellence

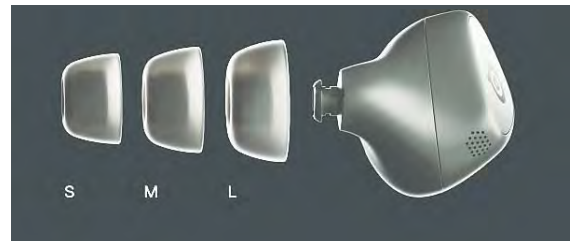
SteelSeries is renowned for its audio quality and the Arctis GameBuds are no exception. Equipped with high-fidelity drivers, the GameBuds deliver rich, detailed audio with 360° spatial sound. Whether hearing an enemy's footsteps in *Apex Legends* or enjoying the ambient sounds of an open-



Easy to fit in the palm, the GameBuds are compact yet powerful.

world RPG, these earbuds immerse players in their gaming world like never before.

Distractions can be game-ending, but the GameBuds' hybrid four-mic Active Noise Cancellation (ANC) system blocks out unwanted noise. This feature ensures gamers stay locked into their world without interruptions. For those moments when external awareness is necessary, the Transparency Mode lets users adjust the hear-through levels with just a press of a button.



The customisable tips promise convenience and comfort.

## Gaming anywhere, anytime

The Arctis GameBuds excel in cross-platform connectivity, making them the ultimate choice for gamers who switch between consoles, PCs and mobile devices. The ultra-compact USB-C dongle supports low-latency 2.4GHz wireless connections, ensuring stable, high-speed audio for PlayStation, Xbox, Nintendo Switch, PC and Meta Quest.

For everyday tasks such as answering calls or streaming music, the GameBuds use Bluetooth 5.3, allowing users to connect to smartphones, tablets and smart TVs. Quick-Switch Wireless enables smooth transitions between 2.4GHz gaming and Bluetooth audio, with just a button tap.

## Game-changing features

The standout feature of the Arctis GameBuds is their revolutionary audio customisation through the Arctis app. With over 100 meticulously crafted game-specific

presets, players can tailor their sound to match the exact needs of their favourite titles. From the immersive bass of *Fortnite* to the crisp audio details of *Minecraft*, these presets provide a competitive edge by optimising in-game sound in real time.

SteelSeries co-developed a custom chipset specifically for the GameBuds, pushing the boundaries of what wireless earbuds can do. This purpose-built platform enables ultra-low latency, real-time EQ adjustments and an all-around ideal gaming experience.

## Designed for all-day use

The Arctis GameBuds are built for long sessions, with a single charge providing up to 10 hours of use. The charging case offers three additional charges, giving users up to 40 hours of total battery life. For those in a hurry, a 15-minute fast charge delivers three hours of playtime, while the case also supports Qi wireless charging for

added convenience.

What sets the Arctis GameBuds apart is their ability to transition effortlessly from gaming to daily activities. Whether it is gaming, listening to music, working or watching movies, these earbuds are designed to be used all day. Their premium materials and comfortable fit ensure that users will not feel fatigued, no matter how long they wear them.

## Revolution in gaming audio

The RM899 SteelSeries Arctis GameBuds combine comfort, portability and cutting-edge features such as ANC, customisable presets and cross-platform connectivity. These earbuds redefine what is possible for wireless gaming audio. Whether you are a hardcore gamer or someone looking for an all-day audio solution, the GameBuds are a worthwhile investment. SteelSeries has once again proven that great things come in small packages.



Level up your gaming experience with immersive sound.

## Allowing space for viewer's imagination

"We often worked in a performance setting, in which I had to finish a drawing in 10 minutes while music was played by my sibling in the background.

"The rhythm of the music guided my strokes, helping me stay focused and create quickly without overthinking. The challenge was balancing speed with expression, trusting my instincts and making quick decisions. The fastest I have completed a piece is around 10 minutes but I focus more on the impact of the work than just finishing quickly.

"I had to focus solely on capturing the essence of the flower quickly, using fluid, expressive strokes while maintaining the balance of colour and form. The energy of the live setting and the challenge of finishing

in such a short time made it an exhilarating, one-of-a-kind artistic moment," she said.

## Art influences work

Besides Chinese brush painting, Sim, an architect, is fascinated by the charm of heritage homes and buildings.

"As an architect, Chinese brush painting influences my building sketches by encouraging more fluidity and spontaneity.

"The use of thin and thick strokes reflects the texture and form of old buildings, while empty spaces invite reflection, much like the blank areas in brush paintings.

"I always focus on capturing the essence and mood of a building rather than exact details, allowing space for the viewer's imagination, just as old buildings tell their stories

through what is left unsaid," she explained.

## Preserving ancient art

She feels it is important to keep the ancient art alive and hopes the new generation learns from her Chinese brush painting.

"Keeping ancient art such as Chinese brush painting alive is crucial because it connects us to cultural heritage, tradition and the wisdom passed down through generations. It teaches us not only artistic skills but also values such as patience, mindfulness and the beauty of simplicity.

"I hope the new generation learns Chinese brush painting is not just about technique but also expressing emotion, connecting with nature and understanding the balance between effort and letting go," she added.



Sim says brush painting is not just about technique, but also expressing emotion. — ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN

From page 22



### 6 tips to slither safely into the year of the snake

- Shop for goodies at merchants you trust**  
Time for new clothes, decorations, and of course, delicious Lunar New Year snacks!  
To be safe, make sure you know who you are buying from. Contact friends and family, read reviews, and check staff who where you are shopping from to keep your credit cards and money safe.
- Slide away from suspicious messages**  
Plenty of text messages and promotional messages will be sliding into our inboxes.  
Received a dubious message asking you for money on the flip up or from its with a picture? Ignore and delete them to avoid falling victim to phishing.
- Sending that e-hongbao? Check before you hit send**  
Every Lunar New Year brings a flurry of hongbaos, to and from loved ones. Sending a e-hongbao? Triple check your recipients before you hit send.
- Slink away from suspicious deliveries and add-on fees**  
Especially waiting for your Lunar New Year shopping to arrive?  
While you wait, you may receive fraudulent messages asking you to fill out a form or pay for "express shipping". Verify with your merchant before responding to any requests.
- Verify travel deals before you slip away for the New Year**  
Be it a short getaway or a trip back home, make sure your journey is as safe one.  
Check that you are booking trips on an official travel agency and airline websites. It helps to verify you receive approvals that your car can track requests and protect you from fraud.
- Secure your belongings everywhere you go**  
Many of us will be out and about during the new year holiday.  
Keep your belongings, cards, and mobile phones close to public. Don't leave your cards or any credentials, disable them on your banking apps.

# Local startup launches first CNY AI chatbot 'DuitGPT'

➤ Initiative fuses traditions, culture with technology

**W**ITH the on-going Chinese New Year (CNY) celebrations, Malaysian artificial intelligence (AI) startup DahReply has launched DuitGPT, the first AI chatbot in Malaysia designed specifically for CNY.

This initiative marks a fusion of traditional cultural festivities with AI technology, aimed at delivering an interactive and enjoyable celebration during this festive season.

#### Introducing CNY-focused AI chatbot

In an era of rapidly advancing technology, more individuals and organisations are exploring the potential of AI in everyday life. Recognising people's desire for social interaction, festive blessings and engaging experiences during CNY, users can access various CNY-related features through DuitGPT, adding a modern twist to traditional celebrations.

#### AI Ang Pow Master and AI Fortune Teller

1. AI Ang Pow Master  
Creative greetings contest: Simply enter your most creative CNY greeting into the chatbot.

DuitGPT will evaluate each submission based on creativity, originality and overall appeal. The top 10 scorers will share a total prize pool of RM1,350.

Sparking Social Buzz: Users can share their creative greetings or their *ang pau* winnings on social media, heightening interaction and enhancing the festive spirit.

#### 2. AI Fortune Teller

Comprehensive zodiac insights: After inputting their zodiac sign, users will receive a holistic forecast covering financial prospects, love and career.

Multi-faceted guidance: Powered by AI analysis of extensive data, users can discover financial opportunities, strengthen personal relationships and gain valuable career advice for the year ahead.

2025 special: In celebration of 2025, DuitGPT offers more tailored annual readings, helping users prepare in advance for the new year.

#### New highlight of CNY

"As an AI professional, I hope to leverage the technology to make CNY more lively and fun, while at the same time providing useful information and convenience to users. Through DuitGPT, we aim to offer practical advice and insights that help people navigate challenges and seize opportunities



The chatbot aims to tap into the festive vibes with its CNY-themed chatbot. —PEXELSPIC

in the coming year," DahReply CEO Wong Zhi Heng said.

He added that DuitGPT goes beyond mere entertainment. Through in-depth interactions, the chatbot also preserves the traditional atmosphere of the holiday and stimulates public interest in AI technology.

The "Ang Pow Master" feature enables users to extend festive well-wishes while standing a chance to receive *ang pau* packets, and the "AI Zodiac Predictions" function serves as a discussion point for those seeking insight during the festive season.

**AI CHOISAN**  
DuitGPT by DahReply

Rank	Username	Score	PTS
1	JasXX	9230	PTS
2	jevXXX	5390	PTS
3	Tan XXX XXXXX	1530	PTS
4	wanXXX	990	PTS
5	TehXXXXXXX	950	PTS

**AI Fortune Teller**  
What information do you want to know about the dragon zodiac sign in your 2025?  
It can be career, wealth, relationship, etc.  
wealth

**In the Year of the Snake 2025, as a Dragon, your wealth luck is rated at three stars. This year marks a new beginning for you, especially after the changes and fluctuations you experienced in the previous year.**

**With the influence of the auspicious star "Mayue," there is potential for an increase in income, particularly for those who are self-employed or in business. However, be mindful of the "Prison" star, which may bring about some gossip or misunderstandings that could affect your financial dealings.**

**Overall, while there are opportunities for financial growth, it is essential to stay cautious and manage your resources wisely. After May 6, 2025, you may start to see**

DuitGPT's AI Fortune Teller provides users holistic forecast about their financial prospects, love and career.

## Meta tests ads on Threads, its alternative to X

FACEBOOK parent Meta has begun testing ads on its newest social network Threads, an executive recently announced, as the company continues to grow its alternative to Elon Musk's X.

Launched in summer 2023, its debut came eight months after Musk's acquisition of Twitter (now, X) when changes such as paid subscriptions and reduced content moderation were driving away users and advertisers.

The introduction of advertising on Threads was expected, given that Meta derives most of its revenue from ads across its free platforms.

"We are starting a small test for ads on Threads with a handful of brands in the US and Japan," Instagram and Threads chief Adam Mosseri said.

He added that his team would closely monitor feedback to ensure the content would be relevant and interesting to its audiences.

The ads come as Meta is facing heightened scrutiny after CEO Mark Zuckerberg ended the company's US fact-checking program, a key tool in fighting online misinformation, and relaxed content moderation rules to allow more controversial speech, similar

to X's policies.

The decision was widely seen as an attempt to appease President Donald Trump, whose conservative support base has long complained that third-party fact-checking on tech platforms was a way to curtail free speech and censor right-wing content.

"The launch of Threads ads just weeks after Meta's content moderation makeover will raise advertiser eyebrows," Emarketer analyst Jasmine Enberg said, predicting negative reactions from users already skeptical of Meta.

Enberg explained brands are seeking

alternatives due to the volatility at TikTok and Meta is not going to pass up an opportunity to throw Threads into the mix.

TikTok, the popular China-based video sharing app, faces an uncertain future in the US. While a law banning the app took effect Jan 19, over concerns the Chinese government could exploit it to spy on Americans or covertly influence US public opinion, Trump has suspended its implementation for two and a half months, seeking a solution with Beijing.

Meta claims Threads has 300 million monthly users, though these numbers



Meta claims Threads has 300 million monthly users. —AFFPIC

face scrutiny.

Critics pointed out Instagram users are frequently redirected to Threads without explicitly choosing to visit the platform, potentially inflating user statistics. —AFP



## BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO ...



(From left) Joan Baez has helped launch Dylan's career. - PICS FROM FACEBOOK @BOBDYLAN

## Mythical status

➤ Folk-rock legend behind recent Oscar-nominated biopic

■ BY R.BALA

**T**HERE is substantial Oscar buzz surrounding *A Complete Unknown*, not least the performance of Timothée Chalamet as a young Bob Dylan. His acting chops not only extended to his getting Dylan's speech and many other nuances spot on but also learning to sing in that unique Bobster croak as well as playing guitar the way Dylan does.

So his Oscar nomination for Best Actor, alongside seven others for the biopic, is well deserved. Dylan himself has remarked that Chalamet is a "damn talented actor". But, just who is the man born Robert Zimmerman and what is the legend behind the hype?

Here are a few choice nuggets to pique your interest and make you sound like a complete Dylanologist.

### Not first film

This is not a the first film on Dylan with



Dylan has received the Presidential Medal of Honour in 2012.



Chalamet is odds-on favourite to win the Oscar for Best Actor for his portrayal of Dylan. - PIC FROM FACEBOOK @ACOMLETEUNKNOWN

documentaries aplenty, not least *Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story* (2009) by famed director Martin Scorsese. There was also unique take by director Todd Haynes, *I'm Not There* (2007), which had no less than six thespians play Dylan, including actress Cate Blanchett.

### Recognition from academia

Dylan is famed for his lyrical ability, crafting songs whose words hold deep and profound meaning, resonating with generations of music fans. His lyrics go beyond the "la la la I love you variety" and is treated with the reverence often associated with poets and literary giants. This is reflected in the number of universities that offer studies on the

subject. This include University of Cambridge's "Bob Dylan's Lyrics: a Literary Exploration" and the University of Tulsa's Institute of Bob Dylan Studies.

### Honours galore

On May 29, 2012, Dylan received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, US's highest civilian honour, from President Barack Obama. No biggie then as Dylan has received numerous honorary titles and doctorates including being the first musician to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. How is that for category busting?

### Die with your boots on

Despite being 83 years old, Dylan shows no signs of slowing down, continuing to produce new music with his last album *Rough and Ready* released in 2020. Incredibly, he continues to be active on the live circuit and has just announced tour dates for 2025! You get the feeling that Dylan will keep on rolling till the very end as the life of a working musician is all he has ever known (though he has also dabbled as an author and actor).

### Career highlights

Take your pick. With a recording career stretching back to 1962 when he released his eponymus debut, there have been 40 studio albums, 21 live albums, 17 volumes of *The Bootleg Series*, 44 compilation albums and contributions to various soundtracks.

Highlights include *Blood on the Tracks* (1975), *Slow Train Coming* (1979) and *Time Out of Mind* (1997). The film's title refers to a line off the track *Like a Rolling Stone*, from the seminal long player *Highway 61 Re-visited* (1965)

### Live in KL

It is very unlikely Malaysian audiences will see Dylan on his latest trek but once upon a time, in 1994 to be exact, a few thousand were privy to that experience at the Putra World Trade Centre. Dylan's concert in KL was part of his Never Ending Tour and many saw him belt out classics such as *All Along the Watchtower* and *Jokerman*.

In the meantime, enjoy the film and hopefully it will inspire you to dive headlong into the huge pit of Dylan docu, tomes and tunes.

## AI generating one song in 10 on Deezer

**MUSIC** streaming site Deezer has revealed one in 10 tracks uploaded to the streaming service each day is either fake or just noise created by artificial intelligence (AI) programmes.

The company's fraud detection technologies, rolled out in 2023, discovered around 10,000 tracks, completely generated by AI, are uploaded to the platform every day, representing around 10% of the total, the Paris-based firm said.

The success of its technologies, which can identify AI content without the need for extensive training on specific databases, had led it to seek last month two patents.

Deezer said it aims to better pay genuine musicians by weeding out fake songs that are streamed by fraudulent accounts created in order to remunerate the "artists".

Many fake tracks can clone the voices of existing artists, which currently cannot be copyrighted, or copycat popular songs.

Deezer is now focusing on a system to label AI-generated content that would be excluded from its recommended listening lists.

"AI is continuing to disrupt the music ecosystem more and more," CEO Alexis Lantier said.

Deezer said in January it would tweak its remuneration model in an effort to better pay artists whose songs get fewer downloads but have a more diverse base of listeners. - AFP



Deezer is now focusing on a system to label AI-generated content that would be excluded from its recommended listening lists. - AFPIC





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Kurosaki and his group of friends take a backseat in the latest season. — PICS BY TV TOKYO

# Bleach War saga escalates

BY MARK MAHEN VICTOR

**F**OLLOWING the explosive, black ink-blotted finale to *Bleach: Thousand Year Blood War's* (TYBW) second cour (season) in 2023, the anime's latest instalment continues the escalation of events. Principally, the main villain of the series, Yhwach reversing Ichibe Hyosube's killing blow and the former's Schutzstaffel cohorts overwhelm the remaining Squad Zero members.

The final stage for this season and the undated final season is now set, with Yhwach breaching the Soul Palace and turning it into Wahrwelt, a new stronghold from which he would recreate all three worlds with him as a god.

A lot takes place in this season, subtitled *The Conflict*, but this penultimate series of events is much more contained than the previous two seasons. Instead of the constant back-and-forth between the human, the Soul Society and Hueco Mundo worlds, everything is mostly set in Wahrwelt, with a few exceptions such as the flashbacks.

It is also much easier to follow, as the protagonists and other main characters are split into small groups with their own "paths" to take as they attempt to reach Yhwach. As the anime is adapted verbatim from creator Tite Kubo's manga, everything is streamlined.

Each episode has no lull nor are there pacing issues as plotting follows a rather rigid formula of groups finding their way around Wahrwelt, them coming across one of the Schutzstaffel members, a lengthy fight ensues, the group initially wins but then the latter pulls a reverse Uno card to become a bigger threat.

It is certainly formulaic but the animation by Pierrot Films is at such a high quality that it is impossible to notice an otherwise minor problem. The art direction, action sequences and even the sound production is impeccable, like the two episode-long fight between Shunsui Kyoraku and Lille Barro.

If a complaint is to be made, it is likely how the main protagonist Ichigo Kurosaki does very little or has limited screen time this season, especially compared with how much the previous seasons and the series as a whole has always been about him.

Even this criticism is negligible as The

➤ Third season sets stage for epic finale



Yhwach's fate will be sealed in the final season.

The Visored and other supporting characters will be joining the fray for the finale.

*Conflict* is something of an impressive balancing act in between progressing the main conflict and side conflicts while expanding certain parts of the story, particularly the lore and character backstories.

At the same time, Tite Kubo's heavy involvement in the anime's production means this creative choice is intentional, with Kubo even expanding aspects that were either not present or had little development in his original source material.

With two of the powerful Schutzstaffel members defeated, the next season will see the final showdown between the surviving main characters and Gerard Valkyrie, Askin Nakk Le Vaar, Jugram Haschwalth and Yhwach himself.

The final season, which will wrap a combined 20-year long anime, is speculated to premiere either at the end of the year or early next year.

*Bleach: Thousand Year Blood War* is streaming on Netflix.



Shye is a self-taught musician.

## Singaporean singer Shye drops new single *Cecilia*

**SINGAPOREAN** sensation Shye (Trinity Shye-Anne Brown) has released a new single titled *Cecilia*, exploring the concept of identity and the longing to find one's place in the world.

Through its tender lyrics and intricate guitar riffs, the song invites listeners to reflect on their journeys and find beauty in the mundane.

"With *Cecilia*, I wanted to create an atmosphere that feels like falling into water in slow motion, a dreamlike descent where time stretches and emotions take over.

"The song carries a sense of surrender as if you are watching the light fade away while simultaneously feeling a deep sense of safety in the darkness," noted Shye.

Before the song's release, Shye had wanted to explore a new sound, something different from her usual indie-pop and electronic-influenced tracks.

*Cecilia*, therefore, explores her early musical influences as a teenager, which includes a mix of soft grunge, post-hardcore and shoegaze bands.

"With this single, it was important to me to build a wall of sound, one that eventually gently engulfs the listener," Shye shared.

Shye is an independent singer-songwriter and music producer who began her journey at 16 upon winning a music competition, which then led to the debut of her EP *Augustine*.

She followed it up with her debut album *Days to Morning Glory* in 2020 and her live album *9LVES* in 2023.

Shye has also performed for international acts such as Daniel Caesar, Clairo, Superorganism, Tiger Den SXSW and Urbanscapes.





302 Jobs



1 MEDIA SALES Executive / Specialist Job Description: Building and sustaining strong working relationship with advertising agencies and clients. New business development and business retention. Conceptualize, plan, and execute creative and innovative marketing campaigns to enhance brand visibility and engagement. Create, develop and continuously improve marketing material, presentations and proposals that showcase our products/services effectively. Requirement: SPM Level with at least 2 years of experience. Diploma or Bachelor's degree in business, marketing or other related fields. Fresh graduates are encouraged to apply, training will be provided. Good communication, presentation, problem-solving and organisational skills. Passionate in client servicing. Possess own transport and willing to travel. Able to start work immediately. Office based in Petaling Jaya (5 days a week)

2 MEDIA SALES Representative / Agent (Freelance) Requirement: Minimum 1 year sales experience in classified ad, print and digital advertising. Those without sales experience but with media advertising knowledge can apply. Attractive commission package and incentive. Able to start immediately. Central, Northern, Southern, East Coast and Sabah/Sarawak. Send in your CV with your photo via email to: thesun.hr2@gmail.com

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF HERALD SPARKLE SDN. BHD. 199501032976 (662178-A) (In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up) NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING THAT pursuant to Section 459(2) of the Companies Act, 2016, that the Final Meeting of the Company will be held at 41, Jalan Medan Ipoh 6, Bandar Baru Medan Ipoh 6, 31400 Ipoh, Perak on Monday, 10 March 2025 at 3.00 p.m. for the following purposes:- 1. To receive the Liquidator's Statement of Accounts showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and to hear any explanations that may be given by the Liquidators. 2. To resolve that under Section 518(3)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016, the books, accounts and documents of the Company and of the Liquidators be destroyed after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of the Final Meeting.

CHONG YUN FOO TAN HOCK WAH Liquidators Dated this 3rd day of February, 2025 NOTE: A member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the Meeting may appoint a proxy to attend and vote instead of him. A proxy may but need not be a member of the Company.

322 Notices

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 DATALYST PTL 202204001088 (LLP0031364-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.

CALL TO PLACE CLASSIFIED ADS MS. SHOBA / MS. BALQISH 03 7784 8888 018 261 6626 advertise@thesundaily.com

322 Notices

PA-38-1386-12/2024 PERISYHARAN JUALAN DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG PERMOHONAN UNTUK PERLAKSANAAN NO: PA-38-1386-12/2024 Dalam perkara mengenai Seksyen 256 dan 257 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965 Dan Dalam perkara mengenai Gajian Perserahan No: 07995C2023027011 (bertarikh 21/06/2023) ke atas semua bahagian tanah yang dipanggil di bawah MAHKAMILK STRATA NO. HAKMILK PAJAKAN NESERI 8622/17/3292, LOT 2728, Mukim BANDAR TANGKAPING, SEKSYEN 1, Daerah TIMOR LAUT, Pulau Pinang Dalam perkara mengenai Aturan 83 Kaedah-Kaedah Mahkamah, 2012

ANTARA ... PLAINTIF DAN ... DEFENDAN PUBLIC BANK BERHAD (No. Syarikat: 196501000672) ... PLAINTIF KHOR WEI KIANG (No. Kad Pengalangan: ES1003075741) ... DEFENDAN

Menurut Perintah Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia di PULAU PINANG mengenai Perintah Jualan dan Perintah bertarikh 29 April 2024 dan 21 Januari 2025, adalah dengan ini dipublikasikan bahawa Timbalan Pendaftar/Penolong Kanan Pendaftar Pusat Operasi e-Lelong di Kuantan

AKAN MENJUAL SECARA LELONG AWAM Pada Hari Khamis, 6 Mac 2025, Pada Jam 11:00 pagi, SECARA ELEKTRONIK DI LAMAN WEB e-LELONG, PUSAT OPERASI e-LELONG, KOMPLEKS MAHKAMAH KUANTAN, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

NOTA: Bakal pembeli adalah dinasihatkan agar membuat carian Hakmilik secara rasmi di Pejabat Tanah dan memeriksa semua langganan, bebanan serta mengenai paksi dengan tepat hartanah tersebut sebelum jualan lelongan dijalankan.

Sila layari https://lelong.hakmilik.com.my/bidderweb BUTIR-BUTIR HAKMILIK: No. Hakmilik: Hakmilik Strata No. RAKMIS Pajakan Negeri 8622/17/3292 No. Lot: Lot 2728 Mukim/Daerah/Negeri: Bandar Tangkap Ping, Seksyen 1 / Timor Laut / Pulau Pinang Pegangan: Hakmilik Pajakan No. Petak/No. Tingkat/No. Bangunan: 292 / 13 / M1 Keluasan Tanah: 657.0000000000 kaki persegi No. Bangunan: 61.0000000000 meter persegi Pemilik Berdaftar: KHOR WEI KIANG Syarat Nyata: Petak ini hendaklah dipisahkan untuk tujuan rumah pangsa sahaja Sekatan Keperluan: Tanah yang dibetulkan ini tidak boleh dipindah milik, cagar, pajak, pajakan kecil atau melupuskan tanpa kebenaran Pihak Berkuasa Negeri terlebih dahulu. Behanan / Lain-Lain: Dihadangkan Kepada Public Bank Berhad Melalui Gajian Perserahan No. 07995C2023027011 ditandatangani pada 21-06-2023 Kawasan Rizab: Kawat Persendirian Atas Petak Oleh Public Bank Berhad Melalui Nombor Maklumat Pendaftaran No. 07995C20030788 yang ditandatangani pada 31-03-2023

LOKASI DAN PERHAL HARTAHAN: Hartanah tersebut adalah sebuah unit rumah pangsa bertingkat tiga yang berlamat pos di 7A-12A, Jalan Seri Tanjung Pinang, 10470, Georgetown, Pulau Pinang. HARGA RIZAB: Hartanah tersebut akan dijual atas "seperitimana sedia ada" bertakrib kepada satu harga rizab sebanyak RM 270,000.00 (RINGGIT MALAYSIA: DUA RATUS TUJUH PULUH RIBU SARAJAJ) dan kepada syarat-syarat jualan yang diumumkan. Pembida yang bermatit hendaklah mengemukakan 10% daripada harga rizab dalam bentuk Bank Draft di atas nama PUBLIC BANK BERHAD 1 HARI BEKELAJ sebelum tarikh lelong awam. Saki barga belian hendaklah dibayar oleh pembida yang berjaya kepada PUBLIC BANK BERHAD dalam tempoh seratus dua puluh (120) hari dari tarikh jualan. Untuk buti-butir selanjutnya, sila berhubung dengan:-

Firma Guaman : WONG & LOH Alamat : NO. 44, CANTONMENT ROAD, 10350, PG, MY No. Telefon : 04-2268989 No. Faks : 04-2267989 No. Rujukan : 67LYK/PHK/PPBL/2024/003

322 Notices

PERISYHARAN JUALAN DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG PERMOHONAN UNTUK PERLAKSANAAN NO: PA-38-1310-11/2024 Dalam perkara mengenai Seksyen 256 dan 257 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965 Dan Dalam perkara mengenai Gajian Perserahan No: 07995C2013012400 (bertarikh 15/04/2023) ke atas semua bahagian tanah yang dipanggil di bawah GERAN NO. HAKMILIK 151961, LOT 4010, Mukim 13, Daerah Seberang Perai Tengah, Pulau Pinang Dan Dalam perkara mengenai Aturan 83 Kaedah-Kaedah Mahkamah, 2012

ANTARA ... PLAINTIF DAN ... DEFENDAN OCBK AL-AMIN BANK BERHAD (No. Syarikat: 818444-1) ... PLAINTIF NUR AZREEN LEE BINTI ABDULLAH (No. Kad Pengalangan: 76071075614) TING HING MING (No. Kad Pengalangan: 760421075169) ... DEFENDAN

Menurut Perintah Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia di PULAU PINANG mengenai Perintah Jualan dan Perintah bertarikh 30 Julai 2024 dan 9 Januari 2025, adalah dengan ini dipublikasikan bahawa Timbalan Pendaftar/Penolong Kanan Pendaftar Pusat Operasi e-Lelong di Kuantan

AKAN MENJUAL SECARA LELONG AWAM Pada Hari Khamis, 27 Februari 2025, Pada Jam 11:00 pagi, SECARA ELEKTRONIK DI LAMAN WEB e-LELONG, PUSAT OPERASI e-LELONG, KOMPLEKS MAHKAMAH KUANTAN, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

NOTA: Bakal pembeli adalah dinasihatkan agar membuat carian Hakmilik secara rasmi di Pejabat Tanah dan memeriksa semua langganan, bebanan serta mengenai paksi dengan tepat hartanah tersebut sebelum jualan lelongan dijalankan.

Sila layari https://lelong.hakmilik.com.my/bidderweb BUTIR-BUTIR HAKMILIK: No. Hakmilik: Geran No. Hakmilik 151961 No. Lot: Lot 4010 Mukim/Daerah/Negeri: 13 / Seberang Perai Tengah / Pulau Pinang Keluasan Tanah: Hakmilik Kekal No. Petak/No. Tingkat/No. Bangunan: 2551.0000000000 kaki persegi Keluasan Tanah: 237.0000000000 meter persegi Pemilik Berdaftar: NUR AZREEN LEE BINTI ABDULLAH, TING HING MING Syarat Nyata: The Land comprised in this title - (a) shall not be affected by any provision of the National Land Code limiting the compensation payable etc; (b) subject to the implied condition that land is liable to be reentered if it is abandoned for more than 3 yrs, shall revert to the state only if the proprietor for the time being dies without heirs etc. Sekatan Keperluan: Tidak Behanan / Lain-Lain: Dihadangkan kepada OCBK Al-Amin Bank Berhad melalui Perserahan No. 07995C2013012400 yang ditandatangani pada 15/4/2023 Kawasan Rizab: Kawat Persendirian Atas Petak Oleh Public Bank Berhad Melalui Nombor Maklumat Pendaftaran No. 07995C20030788 yang ditandatangani pada 31-03-2023

LOKASI DAN PERHAL HARTAHAN: Hartanah tersebut adalah sebuah rumah berkeratan 2 tingkat yang berlamat pos di No. 37, Jalan Bukit Minyak 1, Taman Bukit Minyak Indah, 14000, Bukit Mertajam, Pulau Pinang.

Firma Guaman : GHAZI & LIM Alamat : 19TH FLOOR, PLAZA MWE NO 8, LEBUHAN FAROUHAR, 10200, PG, MY No. Telefon : 04-2633688 No. Faks : 04-2633188/2627433 No. Rujukan : 05/24/38/LJ/LU/23

PERISYHARAN JUALAN DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG PERMOHONAN UNTUK PERLAKSANAAN NO: PA-38-1351-12/2024 Dalam perkara mengenai Seksyen 256 dan 257 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965 Dan Dalam perkara mengenai Gajian Perserahan No: 07995C2013043356 (bertarikh 28/11/2013) ke atas semua bahagian tanah yang dipanggil di bawah MAHKAMILK STRATA NO. HAKMILK GERAN PW 2206/M6/S1/09, LOT 9115, Mukim 13, Daerah Timor Laut, Pulau Pinang

ANTARA ... PLAINTIF DAN ... DEFENDAN OCBK BANK (MALAYSIA) BERHAD (No. Syarikat: 295400-W) ... PLAINTIF NORHAZIZAH BINTI JAMALUDIN (No. Kad Pengalangan : 770619125562) ... DEFENDAN

Menurut Perintah Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia di PULAU PINANG mengenai Perintah Jualan dan Perintah bertarikh 26 September dan 8 Januari 2025, adalah dengan ini dipublikasikan bahawa Timbalan Pendaftar/Penolong Kanan Pendaftar Pusat Operasi e-Lelong di Kuantan

AKAN MENJUAL SECARA LELONG AWAM Pada Hari Khamis, 27 Februari 2025, Pada Jam 11:00 pagi, SECARA ELEKTRONIK DI LAMAN WEB e-LELONG, PUSAT OPERASI e-LELONG, KOMPLEKS MAHKAMAH KUANTAN, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

NOTA: Bakal pembeli adalah dinasihatkan agar membuat carian Hakmilik secara rasmi di Pejabat Tanah dan memeriksa semua langganan, bebanan serta mengenai paksi dengan tepat hartanah tersebut sebelum jualan lelongan dijalankan.

Sila layari https://lelong.hakmilik.com.my/bidderweb BUTIR-BUTIR HAKMILIK: No. Hakmilik: Hakmilik Strata No. HAKMILK GERAN PW 2206/M6/S1/09 No. Lot: Lot 9115 Mukim/Daerah/Negeri: 13 / Timor Laut / Pulau Pinang Pegangan: Hakmilik Pajakan No. Petak/No. Tingkat/No. Bangunan: 1309 / 5 / M8 Keluasan Tanah: 570.0000000000 kaki persegi No. Bangunan: 53.0000000000 meter persegi Pemilik Berdaftar: NORHAZIZAH BINTI JAMALUDIN Syarat Nyata: RUMAH PANGSA KOS RENDAH- Petak ini hendaklah dipisahkan untuk tujuan rumah pangsa sahaja. Sekatan Keperluan: Tanah yang dibetulkan ini tidak boleh dipindah milik, dicagar, dipajak, pajakan kecil atau dilupuskan tanpa kebenaran daripada Pihak Berkuasa Negeri. Behanan / Lain-Lain: Kawat Kawasan Rizab: Kawat Persendirian Atas Petak Oleh Public Bank Berhad Melalui Nombor Maklumat Pendaftaran No. 07995C20030788 yang ditandatangani pada 31-03-2023

LOKASI DAN PERHAL HARTAHAN: Hartanah tersebut adalah Rumah Pangsa Kos Rendah yang berlamat pos di J-4-1, Blok 4, Desa Permal Indah, Lorong Helang 1, Sungai Dua, 11700, Gelugor, Pulau Pinang.

HARGA RIZAB: Hartanah tersebut akan dijual atas "seperitimana sedia ada" bertakrib kepada satu harga rizab sebanyak RM 122,000.00 (RINGGIT MALAYSIA: SATU RATUS DUA PULUH DUA RIBU SARAJAJ) dan kepada syarat-syarat jualan yang diumumkan. Pembida yang bermatit hendaklah mengemukakan 10% daripada harga rizab dalam bentuk Bank Draft di atas nama OCBK BANK (MALAYSIA) BERHAD 1 HARI BEKELAJ sebelum tarikh lelong awam. Saki barga belian hendaklah dibayar oleh pembida yang berjaya kepada PUBLIC BANK BERHAD dalam tempoh seratus dua puluh (120) hari dari tarikh jualan. Untuk buti-butir selanjutnya, sila berhubung dengan:-

Firma Guaman : GHAZI & LIM Alamat : 19TH FLOOR, PLAZA MWE NO 8, LEBUHAN FAROUHAR, 10200, PG, MY No. Telefon : 04-2633688 No. Faks : 04-2633188/2627433 No. Rujukan : 02/23/38/LJ/LU/23

DALAM PERKARA AKTA SYARIKAT 2016 DAN DALAM PERKARA HANDELED WITH CARE SDN BHD 201801012320 (Syarikat No : 1274336-D) (PENGLIUNGAN SYARIKAT SECARA SUKARELA AHLI)

NOTIS adalah diberikan bahawa ANGGOTA-ANGGOTA HANDELED WITH CARE SDN BHD 201801012320 (Co no 1274336-D) telah meluluskan Resolusi Khas seperti yang berikut di Mesyuarat Agung Syarikat bertempat di A-3-9, 8 Avenue Business Centre, Jln 9/1, 46050 Petaling Jaya, pada 3 FEBRUARI 2025:-

BAHAWA Syarikat ini digugurkan menurut Seksyen 439 (1) (b) Akta Syarikat 2016, dan Tim Wei Yee diangkat sebagai Penyelias untuk tujuan pengungkapan harta dan melepaskan aset Syarikat mengikut kuasa dan hak yang diberi.

BAHAWA buku, akaun, dokumen Syarikat dan Pelikudasi telah dimusnahkan selepas tamat masa bagi pengungkapan harta dan melepaskan aset Syarikat mengikut kuasa dan hak yang diberi.

DENGAN INI DIMAHKUMKAN bahawa pemegang-pemegang HANDELED WITH CARE SDN BHD 201801012320 (Co no 1274336-D) yang sedang digugurkan sekiranya diminta menghantar nama dan alamat dengan budihsan hutang atau tuntutan kepada Penyelias di bawah ini di alamat A-3-9, 8 Avenue Business Centre, Jln 9/1, 46050 Petaling Jaya sebelum 5 MARCH 2025. Sekiranya notis secara bertulis daripada Penyelias diperlukan, pemegang-pemegang hendaklah memulau dan membuktikan hutang atau tuntutan mereka seperti yang ditanyakan dalam notis sedemikian, atau secara lalainya, mereka akan dikesekukan daripada faedah pengungkapan yang dibuat sebelum hutang dan tuntutan dibuktikan.

NOTIS MESYUARAT AKHIR DISAMPARKAN BAHAWA menurut Seksyen 459 (2) Akta Syarikat 2016, dan Tim Wei Yee diangkat sebagai Penyelias yang dinamakan di atas akan diadakan bertempat di A-3-9, 8 Avenue Business Centre, Jln 9/1, 46050 Petaling Jaya pada 10 pagi 5 MARCH 2025. Untuk buti-butir selanjutnya, sila berhubung dengan:-

Untuk menerima penyerta akaun ahli Penyelias yang menunjukkan bagaimana pengungkapan harta dan melepaskan aset Syarikat akan dijalankan dan menerima apa apa penjelasan mengenyainya.

Then Wei Yee Penyelias Tarikh 3 FEBRUARI 2025

PA-38-1346-12/2024 PERISYHARAN JUALAN DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG PERMOHONAN UNTUK PERLAKSANAAN NO: PA-38-1346-12/2024 Dalam perkara mengenai Seksyen 256 dan 257 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965 Dan Dalam perkara mengenai Gajian Perserahan No: 15682/2008 (bertarikh 14/05/2008) ke atas semua bahagian tanah yang dipanggil di bawah GERAN 21330, LOT 615 SEKSYEN 2, Mukim Bandar Batu Ferriqgah, Daerah Timor Laut, Pulau Pinang

ANTARA ... PLAINTIF DAN ... DEFENDAN PUBLIC BANK BERHAD (No. Syarikat: 84621-1) ... PLAINTIF WAKI PERSENDIRIAN BAGI HARTA PUSAKA MUK KOOI YU, SIMATI (Lain-lain: 0) ... DEFENDAN

Menurut Perintah Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia di PULAU PINANG mengenai Perintah Jualan dan Perintah bertarikh 14 Ogos 2014 dan 14 Ogos 2014, adalah dengan ini dipublikasikan bahawa Timbalan Pendaftar/Penolong Kanan Pendaftar Pusat Operasi e-Lelong di Kuantan

AKAN MENJUAL SECARA LELONG AWAM Pada Hari Rabu, 5 Mac 2025, Pada Jam 11:00 pagi, SECARA ELEKTRONIK DI LAMAN WEB e-LELONG, PUSAT OPERASI e-LELONG, KOMPLEKS MAHKAMAH KUANTAN, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

NOTA: Bakal pembeli adalah dinasihatkan agar membuat carian Hakmilik secara rasmi di Pejabat Tanah dan memeriksa semua langganan, bebanan serta mengenai paksi dengan tepat hartanah tersebut sebelum jualan lelongan dijalankan.

Sila layari https://lelong.hakmilik.com.my/bidderweb BUTIR-BUTIR HAKMILIK: No. Hakmilik: GERAN 21330 No. Lot: Lot 615 Seksyen 2 Mukim/Daerah/Negeri: Mukim Kuantan, Daerah Timor Laut / Pulau Pinang Keluasan Tanah: Hakmilik Kekal No. Petak/No. Tingkat/No. Bangunan: 1890.0000000000 kaki persegi Keluasan Tanah: 184.0000000000 meter persegi Pemilik Berdaftar: WAKI PERSENDIRIAN BAGI HARTA PUSAKA MUK KOOI YU, SIMATI Syarat Nyata: The land comprised in this title shall not be affected by any provision of the National Land Code or any other written law prohibiting mining or the removal of specified materials within the boundaries of the land; shall not be affected by any provision of the National Land Code limiting compensation payable on the creation of a collector's right of way to compensation for damage in respect of trees, crops or buildings

Sekatan Keperluan: Tidak Behanan / Lain-Lain: Dihadangkan kepada Public Bank Berhad Melalui Gajian Perserahan No. 15682/2008 Kawasan Rizab: Kawat

LOKASI DAN PERHAL HARTAHAN: Hartanah tersebut adalah sebuah rumah teras intermedia bertingkat tiga (3 storey intermediate terrace house) yang berlamat pos di No. 18, Puncak Nira, Pantan Miah, 11100, Batu Ferriqgah, Pulau Pinang.

HARGA RIZAB: Hartanah tersebut akan dijual atas "seperitimana sedia ada" bertakrib kepada satu harga rizab sebanyak RM 766,500.00 (RINGGIT MALAYSIA: TUJUH RATUS ENAM PULUH SEMBILAN RIBU RATUS SARAJAJ) dan kepada syarat-syarat jualan yang diumumkan. Pembida yang bermatit hendaklah mengemukakan 10% daripada harga rizab dalam bentuk Bank Draft di atas nama PUBLIC BANK BERHAD 1 HARI BEKELAJ sebelum tarikh lelong awam. Saki barga belian hendaklah dibayar oleh pembida yang berjaya kepada PUBLIC BANK BERHAD dalam tempoh seratus dua puluh (120) hari dari tarikh jualan. Untuk buti-butir selanjutnya, sila berhubung dengan:-

Firma Guaman : WONG & LOH Alamat : 10200, PG, MY No. Telefon : 04-2268989 No. Faks : 04-2267989 No. Rujukan : 67LYK/PHK/PPBL/2022/009

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF ZUBLIN INTERNATIONAL (M) SDN. BHD. (Registration No. 197801004223 (41444-W)) (In Creditors' Voluntary Winding Up)

NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Section 439 of the Companies Act, 2016 that the resolutions set out below were duly passed by the Members of the above-mentioned company at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 28th January 2025:-

"THAT it has been proved to the satisfaction of this meeting that the Company cannot by reason of its liabilities continue its business and that it is advisable to wind up the Company and accordingly the Company be wound up voluntarily.

THAT Mr. Lee Ewe Hock of Wisma Golden Eagle Realty, 11th Floor, South Block, 142-A Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia be and is hereby appointed Liquidator to act for the purpose of such winding-up of the Company and that he shall be indemnified by the Company against all costs, charges, losses, expenses and liabilities incurred or sustained by him in the execution and discharge of his duties in relation thereto."

Lee Ewe Hock Chairman Date: 3rd February 2025

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF ZUBLIN INTERNATIONAL (M) SDN. BHD. (Registration No. 197801004223 (41444-W)) (In Creditors' Voluntary Winding Up)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above-mentioned Company, which is being wound up voluntarily, are required on or before 3rd March 2025, to send in their names and addresses with particulars of their debts or claims and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned, the Liquidator of the said Company; and if so required by notice in writing from the said Liquidator, or by their solicitors or personally, to come and prove their debts or claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice, or in default thereof they will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts or claims are proved.

LEE EWE HOCK Liquidator Wisma Golden Eagle Realty, 11th Floor, South Block, No.142-A, Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur. Dated this 3rd day of February 2025.





## Villa boss Emery eyes 'two or three' signings before window closes

BY JONATHAN VEAL

**ASTON VILLA** boss Unai Emery hopes to sign two or three players before tomorrow's (7am Malaysian time) transfer deadline.

Emery watched his depleted side lose 2-0 at Wolves yesterday to continue their theme of suffering Champions League hangovers.

It was the seventh time Villa have failed to win in the Premier League after a midweek European adventure and they were deservedly beaten by goals from Jean-Ricner Bellegarde and Matheus Cunha at Molineux.

There was more bad news as Ollie Watkins

limped off at halftime with a groin injury, which could not have come at a worse time for Emery as he is the only recognised striker at the club following the sale of Jhon Duran to Saudi Arabian side Al Nassr.

Villa are desperately trying to add players before the transfer deadline, with a deal for Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford almost complete and a medical expected to take place overnight, and their need for reinforcements intensified yesterday.

"We are working to try and get some players to join us because we have to replace Diego Carlos, we have to replace (Emi) Buendia, we

have to replace Jhon Duran," Emery said.

"It is not easy because we don't want to replace with players that will not help us like I want. We are being very demanding in it, we have to be intelligent.

"In case we can find a player to help us in the level we want, we will do, but we have versatile players... I think we will be adding two or three more players."

Wolves were excellent value for their victory, arresting a four-match losing streak to move out of the relegation zone.

Bellegarde's 12th-minute opener put them on the right track and then Cunha secured a

vital three points with a clinical finish at the death.

Boss Vitor Pereira saw enough from his side in the win over Villa to suggest they can beat the drop this season.

"My opinion was that we played a very good game tactically, doing what we should do, and in the end I think we deserved it," he said.

"It is a long way, a tough fight, but with this spirit I really believe, with the energy of the supporters, the energy I felt today, with the spirit of the team I saw today, we can do it." – The Independent

## Juric not giving up hope on Saints

BY GEORGE SESSIONS

**IVAN JURIC** has not given up hope of Southampton still being a Premier League club next season after they revived their faint survival prospects with a late 2-1 win at Ipswich.

This bottom-of-the-table clash looked destined to finish all square after Ipswich hitman Liam Delap struck after 31 minutes to cancel out Joe Aribo's opener at Portman Road.

A point did little for either team and as the seconds ticked away Kieran McKenna's men looked more likely to claim a late winner, but they were stunned when Paul Onuachu fired in after Arjanet Muric spilled Kamaldeen Sulemana's low effort three minutes from time.

"It is important for the players, for the fans and I think we deserve it. Before we did some really good games against Manchester (United) and West Ham, but we didn't do the points," Juric said.

"Today we suffered a little bit more but great character and quality in the final and we won the game.

"I told them tomorrow morning we have training and we have to believe that we are not so bad as it seems and try to win other games.

"We have to believe. We have to play every time like this and working hard during the week and then we'll see.

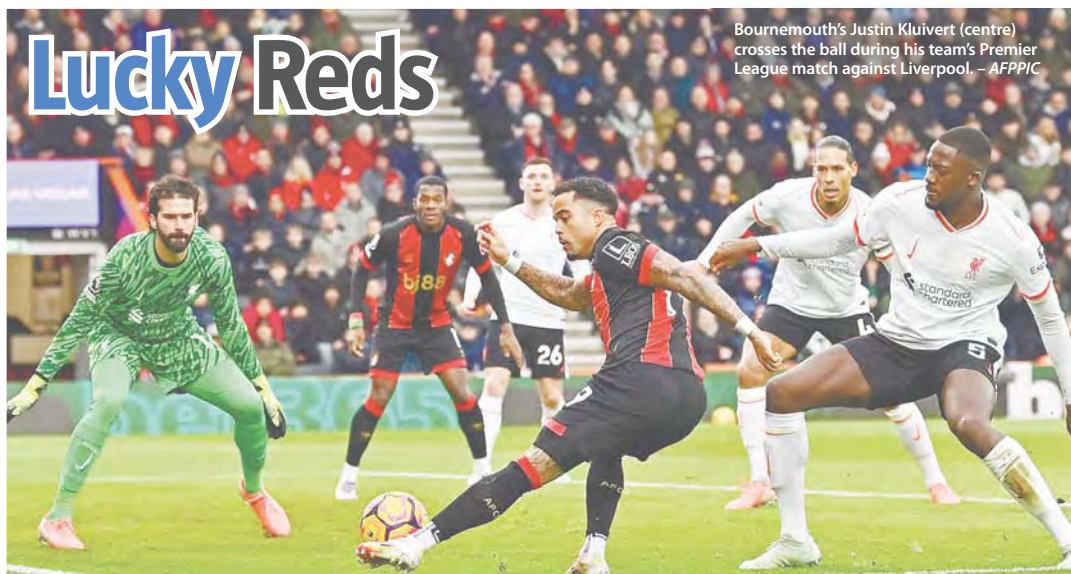
"As you see today we are fighting. We don't want to give up and we have character. We want to play like we did today."

Hosts Ipswich were left to reflect on a missed opportunity with a victory set to take them out of the bottom three.

"Yes, it's a really poor result for us, no doubt about it, especially on the balance of play and the feel of the game," McKenna acknowledged.

"It felt like it was definitely a game that was there for us to win. I thought we were the better team, but it's not really any consolation at this moment.

"There were some good things in the game, but I think they get lost in the result today and we're very frustrated." – The Independent



Bournemouth's Justin Kluivert (centre) crosses the ball during his team's Premier League match against Liverpool. – AFP/PIC

## Slot admits Liverpool fortunate to win at Bournemouth

**LIVERPOOL** head coach Arne Slot admitted his side were lucky as they ended Bournemouth's 11-game unbeaten run to go nine points clear at the top of the Premier League.

Mohamed Salah's goals helped the leaders to a 2-0 win at the Vitality Stadium, the first time Andoni Iraola's side had been defeated since Nov 23, but the game turned on a number of borderline decisions in the first half.

Cody Gakpo was judged to have been fractionally onside as he raced onto a long ball before being fouled in the box by Lewis Cook, with Liverpool perhaps fortunate to be awarded a penalty with replays suggesting Gakpo may have tripped himself up.

After Salah had converted from 12 yards, Bournemouth's David Brooks was denied by an equally tight offside given against Milos Kerkez in the build-up to what would have been a fine equaliser.

"If you want to win here maybe you need a bit of luck because the margins are so small,"

said Slot.

"Our penalty was just not offside, their goal on 1-1 was on the margin offside, they hit the post twice.

"We had our chances as well but it was a close call for us to win this game. We weren't unlucky, let's put it that way."

Bournemouth had already beaten three of the current top four at home this season and put up a real fight for the win that would have carried them into the Champions League places.

Antoine Semenyo hit the post at 0-0, Marcus Tavernier did the same as the hosts chased the game at a goal down whilst there was a wonderful save made by Allison also from Semenyo.

The game turned on the penalty decision just before the half-hour mark just as Bournemouth were looking the more likely side to break through.

"I haven't seen it back but one of my players is on a clear one v one with the goalkeeper and he's fallen down," said Slot. "So either he makes

a dive or they touch him. If they touch him that for me is a penalty.

"I can come up with three, four, five examples (this season) where we didn't have the luck or the decision we deserved.

"That's always the difficult thing in football, people will always say there's that luck for Liverpool or for the one that is the one that is number one at the moment.

"This one is nothing to do with luck, it's a clear one vs one."

Bournemouth boss Andoni Iraola reflected on a game lost by fine margins.

"We didn't get the result obviously, but I think we gave us a chance," he said. "I think we played a high-level game.

"I think the quality of the game has been quite high but against these top teams I think you need the small details to happen to your side sometimes

"We hit the post. We hit the post again. The goal, just millimetres disallowed." – The Independent

## Howe confident Magpies will step up against Gunners

BY DAMIAN SPELLMAN

**EDDIE HOWE** is confident Newcastle will step up for their Carabao Cup semifinal showdown with Arsenal after suffering a second-successive Premier League horror show at St James' Park.

Two weeks after being humbled 4-1 on their own pitch by Bournemouth, the Magpies squandered a lead to lose 2-1 to Fulham, the worst possible preparation for Wednesday night's (Thurs 4am Malaysian time) second leg against the Gunners, into which they will take a 2-0 lead.

Asked if he was concerned by a second hugely-frustrating performance on Tyneside, just days before arguably the biggest game of the season to date, head coach Howe said: "I think Wednesday night is a totally different game.

"I don't think there'll be too many parallels from today's game.

"I just think there were similarities in the two home games we've just had. I didn't think we were as bad today as we were against Bournemouth and we had our moments.

"At 1-1, I thought it was our best period of

the game. If we score there, the game is very different.

"But we didn't, of course. It's hugely frustrating because I know how much better we are than that performance. We just looked a little flat for whatever reason."

For the visitors, who had won only one of their previous five League games, the victory was as welcome as it was deserved.

Head coach Marco Silva, who was disappointed with his side's lack of precision before the break, said: "First half, I think they were much more aggressive than us. We made

a big impact second half and what a reaction from us.

"The first 30 minutes of the second half, the team reacted really well, we took control of the game.

"(We scored a) great goal on a great offensive transition from us, our first goal; a really sharp move from Rodrigo on the second goal, a well-prepared wide free-kick from ourselves.

"Overall, I think we deserved the three points for the reaction of the players." – The Independent

**R**EAL MADRID stumbled to a shock 1-0 defeat at struggling Espanyol yesterday which left them leading La Liga by a single point.

Carlos Romero's 85th minute strike snatched victory for the relegation-battling hosts, provisionally 17th.

Atletico Madrid pulled within a point of Los Blancos with a 2-0 win against Mallorca earlier, ahead of this weekend's crunch derby clash at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Real Madrid were left furious after Romero was only booked for a cynical foul on Kylian Mbappe before going on to net the winner.

However, Carlo Ancelotti's side played far within themselves and did not do enough to take anything from what seemed on paper an inviting fixture.

"Espanyol played a very good game in my opinion,

# Real shocker

## Madrid fall at Espanyol as Atletico cut Liga gap

they defended very well, they did what they had to do. Could we have done more? Yes," Ancelotti told reporters.

The Italian coach was angry about the decision not to send off Romero.

"This foul, the decision the referee and VAR took was inexplicable, everyone saw it," continued the coach.

"It's important to protect the players. It was a clear foul, a very ugly tackle, lucky there's no serious injury. To us it's inexplicable that they didn't send him off."

Romero admitted he felt bad about scything down the French superstar.

"I knew Kylian is impossible to stop when he's running, I stopped him how I could, it was a bit ugly," Romero told DAZN.

"I didn't like doing it and I said sorry. That's it and there's no more to it."

The visitors were shocked by a swift Espanyol counterattack which led to the breakthrough, with Omar El Hilali crossing for Romero to volley home at the back post.

Los Blancos did not create much danger in seven minutes of added time and Espanyol's fans celebrated with abandon when Mbappe lashed over a late effort to end the game.

"This win is so important for us, we had to

suffer... we knew we had to do it in front of our fans," added Romero.

Atletico Madrid secured a comfortable win over Mallorca to put the pressure on, ahead of Real's match.

Samuel Lino slid home in the 26th minute after a strong driving run by Giuliano Simeone, son of Atletico's coach Diego Simeone.

Antoine Griezmann, who started the game on the bench, produced a superb lobbed finish to net the second in stoppage time and delight the Metropolitan stadium.

Atletico coach Simeone was able to celebrate his 500th La Liga match with the three points.

"I'm very happy for this journey, no doubt... it makes me very happy," he told reporters.

The *Rojiblancos* dominated the first half with Julian Alvarez impressing and Alexander Sorloth going close before Lino sent them ahead.

Mallorca, seventh, forged some chances of their own after the break in a tighter second period which was finally settled when Griezmann struck with a delightful chip. - AFP



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe (right) is tugged by Espanyol's Pol Lozano during their La Liga match. - AFP/PPIC

### SHORTS

#### Bayern survive late Kiel fightback

**BAYERN MUNICH** stretched their lead at the top of the Bundesliga to nine points yesterday with an extraordinary 4-3 victory over Holstein Kiel.

Bayern led 4-0 as Harry Kane scored twice, but Finn Porath replied for Kiel before Steven Skrzybski's stoppage-time double threatened to steal an unlikely point.

The fulltime whistle was met with relief around the Allianz Arena.

"None of us are happy that we won 4-3 here," Jamal Musiala, scorer of Bayern's first goal, told Sky Sports. "We have to have the mentality to work for 90 minutes and avoid conceding goals."

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany was also irritated with the manner in which his team ended the game.

"It was a pretty complete game until the 80th minute. But we also played against a team that was fighting for every moment," Kompany told reporters.

"I thought we started the second half really well, but in terms of how we finished the game, that's something we'll have to review with the players."

#### Dembele hits hattrick again

**OUSMANE DEMBELE** scored a hattrick for the second time in five days as Paris Saint-Germain hammered Brest 5-2 yesterday in a dress rehearsal of the upcoming Champions League clash between the two sides.

Dembele followed up his three-goal haul in Wednesday's 4-1 win at VfB Stuttgart which saw PSG secure a place in the knockout phase playoffs of Europe's elite club competition.

The France winger opened the scoring in the first half, and netted two more after Romain Del Castillo had briefly brought Brest level.

Ludovic Ajorque pulled another one back for the home side to set up a grandstand finale, but substitute Goncalo Ramos wrapped up the win for PSG with a late double.

"I am well positioned in the number nine role. I owe it to myself to score goals," Dembele told broadcaster *beIN Sports*. "It was important to win today to keep our good run going and now we will see what happens in the Champions League."

#### Atalanta held by Torino

**ATALANTA'S** faltering Serie A title bid took another hit yesterday with a 1-1 draw against Torino after their star striker fluffed his chance from the penalty spot.

Italy striker Mateo Retegui's weak effort from the spot in the 74th minute was pushed aside by Torino goalkeeper Vanja Milinkovic-Savic, who has saved all three of the penalties he has faced this season.

Seven points from their last six league fixtures have left Atalanta off the pace in the *Scudetto* race just as Napoli and Inter have hit top form.

The hosts looked on their way to victory when Berat Djimsiti forced home Raoul Bellanova's corner 10 minutes before halftime, but Guillermo Maripan levelled five minutes later.

Atalanta struggled to break down dogged Torino and kept the giant Milinkovic-Savic in the opposition at bay, and even goaded livid home fans after keeping out Retegui's penalty.

Torino are comfortably placed in 11th after their fifth draw in an unbeaten run of six matches.

### SPORTS TOTO RESULTS

DRAW NO: 5920/2025 DATE: 02/02/2025 (SUN)

STM LOTTERY SDN. BHD.  
19691000990 (84203)

#### TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

1st Prize	3262	
2nd Prize	0869	
3rd Prize	0369	
Special	9421 5963	1631 0024
	2450 7745	1638 6518
	2962 0164	7377 5113
	8273 6385	1956 2480
	9938 0178	1046 7500
Consolation		

#### 4D JACKPOT

Jackpot 1 **RM 5,679,575.52**

3262 0869	0869 3262
3262 0369	0369 3262
0869 0369	0369 0869

Jackpot 2 **RM 206,771.29**

Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

#### 4D Zodiac

1st Prize	3262	+	RAT
2nd Prize	0869	+	
3rd Prize	0369	+	
4th Prize	Special Prize	+	
5th Prize	Consolation Prize	+	
6th Prize	Any 4D drawn number	+	

#### TOTO 5D & 6D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

5D	1ST	1 2 7 8 4	
	4TH	2 7 8 4	
2ND	2 9 2 7 3	5TH	7 8 4
3RD	5 8 8 7 7	6TH	8 4
6D	1ST	8 0 3 9 5 8	
2ND	8 0 3 9 5	or	0 3 9 5 8
3RD	8 0 3 9	or	3 9 5 8
4TH	8 0 3	or	9 5 8
5TH	8 0	or	5 8

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<b>SUPREME</b> 7/36	5 18 25 26 30 36
Jackpot	<b>RM 19,659,319.83</b>
<b>POWER</b> 7/36	2 3 10 12 32 37
Jackpot	<b>RM 7,839,660.25</b>
<b>STAR</b> 7/36	5 9 13 16 23 41 + 6
Jackpot 1	<b>RM 3,236,449.78</b>
Jackpot 2	<b>RM 375,733.02</b>

#### Toto 6D

**RM 1,100,000**  
Toto 4D Jackpot 2  
**RM 348,766**  
Toto 4D Jackpot 2 (i-System)  
**RM 73,424** won on 01/02/2025!



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### WINNING NUMBERS da macai

Draw Date: 02/02/25 (Sun) Draw No: 5867/25 Venue: WISMA GENTING, KL

<b>1-3D SUPER1+3D</b>	
1st Prize	3184
2nd Prize	4006
3rd Prize	3606
Starters	Consolation
7728 6642	9215 8008
7239 9479	7157 7825
8290 6008	0256 1756
6683 2287	7499 4331
5169 9999	2114 7152

Jackpot 1	<b>RM14,077,747.10</b>
3184 + 4006	4006 + 3184
3184 + 3606	3606 + 3184
4006 + 3606	3606 + 4006

Jackpot 2 **RM456,460.30**

Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
013 184 +	RAT	<b>RM200,000.00</b>
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
534 006 +	TIGER	<b>RM1,195,904.60</b>
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
683 606 +	SNAKE	<b>RM1,691,506.00</b>
Starters	Consolation	
637 728 136 642	369 215 348 008	
197 239 839 479	077 157 697 825	
158 290 756 008	250 256 591 756	
656 683 102 287	067 499 714 331	
005 169 979 999	672 114 547 152	

1st Prize	184
2nd Prize	006
3rd Prize	606

Jackpot	<b>RM684,696.30</b>
184 + 006 + 606	006 + 606 + 184
184 + 606 + 006	606 + 184 + 006
006 + 184 + 606	606 + 006 + 184

Winning combination matches the Top 3 Prizes in any order.

**HSSB 1+3D Jackpot 2 RM104,601.30 won on 1/2/2025!**

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RESULTS & STANDINGS

**ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE:**  
**Bournemouth 0 Liverpool 2** (Salah 30-pen, 75), **Everton 4** (Doucoure 1, Beto 6, 45+2, Ndoye 90) **Leicester 0, Ipswich 1** (Delap 31) **Southampton 2** (Aribo 21, Onuachu 87), **Newcastle 1** (Murphy 37) **Fulham 2** (Jimenez 61, Muniz 82), **Nottingham Forest 7** (Dunk 12-og, Gibbs-White 25, Wood 32, 64, 69-pen, Williams 89, Jota 90+2) **Brighton 0, Wolves 2** (Bellegarde 12, Cunha 90+7) **Aston Villa 0.**

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	23	17	5	1	56	21	56
Arsenal	23	13	8	2	44	21	47
Nottm Forest	24	14	5	5	40	27	47
Man City	23	12	5	6	47	30	41
Newcastle	24	12	5	7	42	29	41
Chelsea	23	11	7	5	45	30	40
Bournemouth	24	11	7	6	41	28	40
Aston Villa	24	10	7	7	34	37	37
Fulham	24	9	9	6	36	32	36
Brighton	24	8	10	6	35	38	34
Brentford	23	9	4	10	42	40	31
Man Utd	23	8	5	10	28	32	29
Crystal Palace	23	6	9	8	26	30	27
West Ham	23	7	6	10	28	44	27
Everton	23	6	8	9	23	28	26
Tottenham	23	7	3	13	46	37	24
Wolves	24	5	4	15	34	52	19
Leicester	24	4	5	15	25	53	17
Ipswich	24	3	7	14	22	49	16
Southampton	24	2	3	19	18	54	9

**CHAMPIONSHIP:** Derby 0 Sheffield Utd 1, Hull 1 Stoke 2, Leeds 7 Cardiff 0, Millwall 2 QPR 1, Oxford 1 Bristol City 1, Plymouth 2 West Brom 1, Portsmouth 0 Burnley 0, Sheffield Wednesday 1 Luton 1, Swansea 0 Coventry 2, Watford 0 Norwich 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	30	18	9	3	60	19	63
Sheff Utd	30	19	6	5	41	21	61
Burnley	30	15	13	2	36	9	58
Sunderland	29	15	10	4	42	24	55
Blackburn	30	13	6	11	34	29	45
West Brom	30	10	14	6	39	27	44

**LA LIGA: Getafe 0 Sevilla 0, Villarreal 5** (Perez 42, Gueye 64, Comesana 70, Barry 86, Suarez 90+1) **Valladolid 1** (Amallah 90+4), **Atletico Madrid 2** (Lino 26, Griezmann 90+3) **Mallorca 0, Espanyol 1** (Romero 85) **Real Madrid 0.**

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	22	15	4	3	50	21	49
Atletico	22	14	6	2	37	14	48
Barcelona	21	13	3	5	59	24	42
A. Bilbao	21	11	7	3	31	18	40
Villarreal	22	10	7	5	44	33	37
R. Vallecana	22	8	8	6	26	24	32

**Serie A:** Atalanta 1 Torino 1, Monza 0 Verona 1, Udinese 3 Venezia 2, Bologna 2 Como 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli	22	17	2	3	37	15	53
Inter Milan	21	15	5	1	55	18	50
Atalanta	23	14	5	4	49	26	47
Lazio	22	12	3	7	38	30	39
Juventus	22	8	13	1	35	19	37
Bologna	22	9	10	3	35	27	37

**BUNDESLIGA:** St Pauli 1 vAugsburg 1, Bayern Munich 4 Holstein Kiel 3, Bochum 0 Freiburg 1, Stuttgart 1 Borussia Monchengladbach 2, Heidenheim 1 Borussia Dortmund 2, Union Berlin 0 RB Leipzig 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	20	16	3	1	62	19	51
B. Leverkusen	19	12	6	1	46	26	42
E. Frankfurt	19	11	4	4	44	26	37
RB Leipzig	20	9	6	5	34	29	33
Stuttgart	20	9	5	6	37	30	32
Mainz	20	9	4	7	33	24	31

**FRENCH LIGUE 1:** Brest 2 Paris Saint-Germain 5, Monaco 4 Auxerre 2, Lille 4 Saint-Etienne 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	20	15	5	0	54	19	50
Marseille	19	11	4	4	40	23	37
Monaco	20	11	4	5	36	24	37
Lille	20	9	8	3	33	20	35
Nice	19	9	6	4	38	25	33
Lens	20	9	6	5	25	18	33

# Herry needs time to boost world junior champs Khai Xing, Aaron's performance

**NEW** national men's doubles head coach Herry Iman Pierngadi believes he will need time to elevate the performance of 2024 World Junior Badminton Championship (WJC) boys' doubles champions Kang Khai Xing and Aaron Tai.

Following his initial assessment, Herry, better known as Herry IP, noted that the duo possesses commendable playing quality despite their recent second-round exit at the 2025 Thailand Masters.

"They are still young, and their progress has been promising. However, we will have to see how things unfold in the future," he told reporters after officially beginning his tenure at the Malaysian Badminton Academy in Bukit Kiara on Saturday.

Last Thursday, Khai Xing and Aaron's hopes of advancing further in the Super 300 tournament at Bangkok's Nimibutr Arena were dashed after they fell 21-19, 16-21, 14-21 to Indonesia's Shohibul Fitri-Daniel Marthin in the second round.

Herry also refrained from making any predictions about the fate of the world No. 58 pair, acknowledging that only time will determine whether they will continue as partners.

In December last year, the talented duo ended Malaysia's 13-year title drought in the boys' doubles category at the WJC in Nanchang, China, by defeating home pair Hu Ke Yuan and Lin Xiang Yi 21-18, 15-21, 21-18.

Malaysia's last triumph in the boys' doubles at the WJC was in 2011, when Nelson Heg Wei Keat and Teo Ee Yi clinched the title.

Herry, who has been offered a four-year contract by BAM, is a renowned coach with a proven track record of shaping world-class Indonesian pairs.

Nicknamed the "Fire Dragon," Herry boasts an illustrious career that includes guiding Olympic champions Candra Wijaya and Tony Gunawan (Sydney 2000) as well as Hendra Setiawan and Markis Kido (Beijing 2008).

This marks the first time the 62-year-old coach has taken his expertise abroad after dedicating 31 years to the Indonesian badminton squad. - Bernama

## No fear JDT ready to face any team in Cup final, says coach

**J**OHOR DARUL TA'ZIM (JDT) coach Hector Bidoglio is not thinking too much about the opponent in the Malaysia Cup final as the team always give their best in every game.

The Southern Tigers look likely to lift the Malaysia Cup for a fifth time after beating Terengganu FC on 6-1 aggregate at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium in Iskandar Puteri on Saturday night.

"We must be a possession team, we need to improve our dynamics, our intensity."

"Previously we knew that the semifinals are always difficult but the performance of the team at the semifinal was very good and we need to continue growing," he said at the Malaysia Cup semifinal second leg post-match press conference.

He added that as a big team, JDT needed to be ready to play against any team in the final of the Malaysia Cup.

Meanwhile, Terengganu FC (TFC) head coach Badrul Afzan Razali was proud of the commitment of his

players who were able to compete against powerhouse JDT despite losing 1-2 in their second leg Malaysia Cup semi-final match.

"We know it's difficult to play at JDT's stadium, plus we were 0-4 behind, but I express my satisfaction to the players who showed great fighting spirit in the first and second half of the game."

"Although we managed to tie 1-1 in the second half, but in the last minute of the game we lost our concentration and opened up space for the JDT players to score a goal which was their winning goal. It's painful because we expected the match to end in a draw," he said.

In the action, JDT opened scoring in the 31st minute thanks to Heberty Fernandes' goal but TFC came back to equalise with Ismaheel Akidane finding the net in the 49th minute and just when the Turdes seemed headed for a draw, Heberty destroyed the East Coast club's dreams after scoring the winning goal for JDT in the 92nd minute of extratime. - Bernama



**MALAYSIA'S** top female track cyclist Nurul Izzah Izzati Mohd Asri is willing to mentor rising athlete Nur Alyssa Farid towards greater achievements.

While her journey to becoming a top national track cyclist is ongoing, she hopes others will challenge her competitively so that Malaysia can produce more outstanding cyclists on the international stage.

"When talking about Alyssa's performance, I hope more athletes challenge me. When there is competition, I won't remain in my comfort zone, and Alyssa can fight alongside me and (we) improve together."

"I am prepared to support Alyssa in every way possible. I can provide motivation, and give her 100% support. When it comes to competition, we fight together," she told

reporters recently.

Nur Alyssa has been gaining attention as a rising star in the sport since joining the national elite squad at 19. She garnered several medals at the President's Cup, including a silver medal in the sprint event and two bronze medals, in keirin and individual sprint.

The Muar-born cyclist was previously part of the national backup squad. However, after setting a new personal record in the 200m "flying" sprint with a time of under 11 seconds - 10.953s - she earned the opportunity to join the elite podium camp.

The record time also made her the second-fastest female cyclist in the country, trailing national track cycling star Nurul Izzah by just 2.10s. - Bernama

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8096	6053	9683	4535
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8948 + 6154	8948 + 9814
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Jackpot 2 **RM217,747.51**

Jackpot 2 - Group 2 + Golden Number

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<b>GROUP 2</b>	5 4 4 8 1 OR 4 4 8 1 4
<b>GROUP 3</b>	5 4 4 8 OR 4 8 1 4
<b>GROUP 4</b>	5 4 4 OR 8 1 4
<b>GROUP 5</b>	5 4 OR 8 1 4
	OR 4 8
<b>GOLDEN NUMBER</b>	1 1

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SCAN ME

Nottingham Forest's Chris Wood celebrates after scoring their third goal against Brighton. - AFP/IC



# Forest on fire

*Nuno admits Nottingham were ruthless in their demolition of Brighton*

**NUNO** ESPIRITO SANTO said Nottingham Forest's 7-0 victory over Brighton was beyond his expectations as they bounced back from the previous week's heavy defeat to get their European hopes back on track.

Morgan Gibbs-White was a class above in the first period and his menacing ball into the box was inadvertently turned into his own goal by Lewis Dunk to get the rout under way.

The hosts had two more before the break, Gibbs-White turned from creator to provider to nod home Anthony Elanga's corner before Chris Wood inevitably got himself on the scoresheet and give them a 3-0 lead at the halfway point.

Forest showed no signs of letting up after the interval, Wood scored twice in five second-half minutes for his third Premier League hat-trick and Brighton's disconsolate afternoon was rubber stamped when Neco Williams and Jota Silva added goals late on.

"We were looking for a response and our responsibility to do much better.

Last week was not good enough and the response of the players was beyond our expectations," Nuno said.

"I'm always looking forward to what I have and I'm hoping it continues. You cannot judge whether it's the best one or not.

"We were very fortunate and lucky to score first, an own goal but it was a good movement from Morgan (Gibbs-White).

"He stepped into the box, had a good delivery and Brighton reacted immediately. After that, it is always difficult.

"They were ruthless in their desire, they wanted to show their talent. Morgan was amazing. More than anything, it is the way he works for the team, the way he helps.

"Three assists from Anthony (Elanga) also - a hat-trick of assists so more delight... so overall very good all the players."

Forest arguably put on their best performance of the season and any lasting damage from their 5-0 defeat to Bournemouth the previous week were totally wiped out by half-time.

"It shows desire, but we have to realise these

results are not normal in the Premier League what happened last week and this week," Nuno added.

"It becomes really difficult when you are on the other side, we felt it last week when your opponents are ruthless like we were today, so we wanted to respond.

"Fantastic day, what more can you ask? It was so different to what happened last week and what happened today. I'd rather be in the middle of it, not so high and not so low."

On the Forest fans, Nuno said: "Their support is great and we cannot thank them enough. It was beautiful to see the atmosphere at the City Ground, seeing our fans happy is what we work for.

"At the same time, seeing our players and the way they celebrate the other players' goals, is important.

"It's important for us that we keep this team spirit and try to build. We are confident going forwards."

Goalscorer Elanga encouraged the Forest fans to get excited about the potential of watching Champions League football next year.

Speaking to *TNT Sports*, Elanga said: "It is all about taking it game by game. We can't be complacent.

"We have to keep working hard and continue to let our football do the talking and let the fans continue to believe."

Brighton suffered their heaviest league defeat since losing 9-0 to Middlesbrough back in the 1958-59 season.

Manager Fabian Hurlzeler apologised to the fans and insisted everyone has to take the blame.

He said: "It's not an easy one to take but it's football and is part of the business to deal with these days and keep staying positive, and finding solutions and take responsibility for that result and performance.

"We have to look in the mirror and say this is not how we want to play football. We have to apologise for this result.

"When you lose 7-0 there won't be many positives. I'm new in the Premier League, I'm sure we will find solutions, getting bad losses is part of the process. Being successful is not a comfortable journey." - *The Independent/Agencies*

