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Sultan Ibrahim delivering his royal address at the opening of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the 15th Parliament, yesterday. — **BERNAMAPIC**



Parliament not place for hostility, slander: King

➤ 'August house venue where people's voices are heard, laws enacted, checks and balances done on administration'

KUALA LUMPUR: His Majesty the King of Malaysia Sultan Ibrahim has reminded all members of the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara that Parliament is not a place for hostility, insults or the spread of slander.

His Majesty emphasised that Parliament is a distinguished institution dedicated to debating matters concerning the people's interests and the country's prosperity.

Sultan Ibrahim said Parliament serves as the nation's highest assembly, a meeting place where the voices of the people are heard, laws enacted and checks and balances carried out on the country's administration.

"Honourable members should be a bastion of national unity, not agents of division among the people.

"Stop politicising every issue and prioritising only your party or group's interests," said the King in his royal address at the opening of the First Meeting of the Fourth Session of the 15th Parliament for the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara yesterday.

The opening ceremony took place simultaneously for both the Dewan Rakyat

and Dewan Negara and was broadcast live through official media channels, local television and online platforms.

Sultan Ibrahim also congratulated all members of the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara for demonstrating a respectful demeanour during the previous session.

"I noticed a significant change in the behaviour of the members during the last session, with many displaying a more courteous attitude. Congratulations to all.

"However, some members continue to struggle with shedding old habits.

"I need not enumerate these negative traits as I trust each member is aware of them and understands how to manage his own conduct."

The King expressed gratitude to all political leaders for their efforts in maintaining political stability, which has contributed to the nation's economic prosperity and social well-being.

His Majesty urged the government to be firm in curbing the culture of slander and incitement on social media that could lead to

division and expressed concern over this culture, which has caused confusion and hostility among the people.

"Therefore, the government must be firm in addressing this culture and be proactive in providing accurate and reliable information."

The King also reminded the public to always be cautious and avoid falling victim to cybercrimes such as online financial fraud, scams and identity theft.

Sultan Ibrahim said the government should immediately implement measures to strengthen digital infrastructure and economy, enhance cybersecurity and adopt the latest technologies.

"The government service system should also be upgraded with more efficient and transparent digital technology. This is to combat corruption, abuse of power and the culture of red tape that complicates people's affairs."

The parliamentary sitting will run for 18 days, with the main focus being the debate on the motion of thanks for the royal address, Bernama reported.

The debate will take place over a period of seven days, beginning on Feb 4.

The winding-up sessions by the relevant ministries are scheduled from Feb 19 to 25.

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

Royal call to safeguard sovereignty and interests of nation

KUALA LUMPUR: His Majesty the King of Malaysia Sultan Ibrahim said the government must take firm action through diplomatic, legal and defence channels to safeguard the country's sovereignty and interests.

"Firm action through diplomatic, legal and defence channels must be taken to ensure the protection of the nation's sovereign rights and interests, even if it concerns just a single coral in the middle of the ocean," said His Majesty at the opening of the 15th Parliament yesterday.

The King said the government must be wise in maintaining diplomatic relations with all parties and enhance strategic cooperation to address regional and border issues.

Sultan Ibrahim also emphasised that Malaysia must remain firm in upholding the principles of peace, and opposing terrorism and oppression.

"The war in Gaza must be ended immediately and legal justice must be upheld."

In line with Malaysia's role as Asean chair this year, the King called for the country to demonstrate its capability in leading and determining the direction of the Southeast Asian region.

His Majesty also called on all parties to support the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign, which would showcase the uniqueness of the nation's cultures and values while creating economic opportunities and strengthening the country's image globally.

"Therefore, all parties must work together to make the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign a success, especially by ensuring that our country remains clean and safe. No tourist will want to visit if our country is dirty and has a high crime rate."

Sultan Ibrahim expressed appreciation for the loyalty and dedication shown by all members of the civil service, armed forces, police and government agencies.

"Let us all pray that Malaysia continues to prosper and progress and that all of its people enjoy a perfect, peaceful and prosperous life," he added. - Bernama

Efforts to boost foreign investments in tech, digital sectors lauded

KUALA LUMPUR: His Majesty the King of Malaysia Sultan Ibrahim has commended government efforts to boost foreign investments in the high-tech and digital sectors.

The King said digital infrastructure and economy must be strengthened, cybersecurity enhanced and the latest technologies adopted without delay.

Sultan Ibrahim also urged the government to continue improving the country's economic performance.

Expressing satisfaction with Malaysia's economic and trade growth, he emphasised that the benefits should be enjoyed by everyone and not just certain groups.

"I am grateful to see economic progress,

including stronger domestic growth, rising investments, a recovering ringgit and a low unemployment rate.

"Last year, GDP grew by 5.9% across various sectors while total trade surpassed RM2 trillion in the first nine months," His Majesty said.

The King also urged the government to continue assisting smallholders, farmers, breeders and fishermen by taking proactive measures to strengthen the agriculture sector, commodities and the food supply chain.

Sultan Ibrahim said the agenda to empower the Bumiputera economy through cooperation and support from GLCs must continue to be implemented.

"The government must also remain committed to providing every citizen with the

opportunity to own an affordable home, while basic infrastructure, healthcare and education facilities must continue to be improved."

The King added that government efforts to implement reforms in education, technical and vocational training as well as youth development would produce a more skilled future generation.

Sultan Ibrahim also expressed support for efforts to strengthen family values and community well-being.

"Malaysia will remain strong through the spirit of close cooperation between the federal and state governments. Every action and decision must be made in consensus for the future of the people and the nation." - Bernama

Anwar, Thaksin hold talks on Myanmar

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim held a meeting with former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who chairs the Asean chairman's informal advisory group.

Anwar said various important matters, including the situation in Myanmar as well as the development of cryptocurrencies, were discussed at the meeting on Sunday.

"(Subsequently), we continued the discussion with former Singapore foreign minister George Yeo," he said in a post on his Facebook page.

On Dec 16, Anwar announced the appointment of Thaksin as an informal adviser to assist Malaysia as Asean chair.

Malaysia officially assumed the 2025 Asean chair on Jan 1, the fifth time since the establishment of Asean in 1967. - Bernama

EPF contribution for foreign workers

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has decided to implement a 2% EPF contribution rate for foreign workers, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the rate was lower than the initial proposal of 12%.

"We are keeping it at 2%, which is very minimal," he said during an Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia Chinese New Year reception yesterday.

He added that the Cabinet had considered suggestions from chambers of commerce. - Bernama



ALL SMILES ... The prime minister's wife Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (centre) with (from left) Women, Family and Community Development Deputy Minister Datuk Seri Dr Noraini Ahmad, Finance Deputy Minister Lim Hui Ying, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa and Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh at the opening of the 15th Parliament session yesterday. - **BERNAMAPIC**

Job rotation for civil servants begins in phases

BANGI: The job rotation for civil servants who have served at service counters for more than five years began last month in phases, said Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar. He added that the implementation has already involved many civil servants in this category.

"Since last month, thousands of counter staff have been rotated. We will carefully evaluate the timing because we want to avoid any disruption to services, so this process will be carried out in phases," he said after attending the KSN Unplugged event with the association of former students of Mara Junior Science College 2025 on Sunday.

On Jan 25, Public Service director-general Tan Sri Wan Ahmad Dahlan Abdul Aziz said the rotation was in line with Shamsul Azri's directive on job rotation policies for civil servants who have served at service counters for over five years.

The initiative aims to enhance their knowledge, experience and safety while expanding their professional networks.

On Malaysia's public service sector targets, Shamsul Azri said the country aims to be among the top 20 in the Blavatnik Index of Public Administration by Oxford University in the future.

"Singapore is ranked first. Malaysia aims to be at least on the same level as South Korea within the top 20. I'm confident that Malaysia can move in that direction."

In December, international reports revealed that Singapore ranked first in border services, tax administration and strategy and innovation practices, according to the study, which assessed public administration across 120 countries. —Bernama

Ahmad Fadzli is new Selangor state secretary

SHAH ALAM: Datuk Dr Ahmad Fadzli Ahmad Tajuddin has been appointed as the new Selangor state secretary effective yesterday.

The appointment was announced through the official Facebook page of the Selangor State Secretary's Office on Sunday.

Ahmad Fadzli has previously served at the National Institute of Public Administration as head of management development and innovation cluster.

He was appointed president of the Klang Municipal Council, now the Royal Klang City Council, in April 2020 before becoming state financial officer in December 2021. —Bernama

Experts weigh in on Malaysia's 11-year mandatory schooling

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
newsdesk@thesubdaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's decision to extend mandatory schooling from six to 11 years has sparked discussions among education experts about its implications, benefits and challenges.

Malaysia Institute of Inclusive Development and Advancement deputy director Dr Anuar Ahmad said while the policy offers long-term benefits, structural reforms are needed to ensure its effectiveness.

"Extending mandatory schooling to 11 years is a step in the right direction as it provides long-term advantages for students and national development," he said.

However, Anuar raised concerns about secondary school students who may prefer to enter the workforce rather than continue their education.

"This is further complicated by Malaysia's Children and Young Persons (Employment) Act 1966,

Calls for policy alignment, compulsory preschool and stronger support systems

which allows children aged 15 to work full time and permits light work for those as young as 13," he said.

He noted that this law conflicts with the Education Act 1996, which mandates schooling, and called for harmonisation between the two.

"Education should remain the priority while also considering the economic and social circumstances of students who may need to start working at a young age," he said.

Another key challenge is the high dropout rate among secondary school students with weak academic performance.

"Many struggle due to poor literacy and numeracy skills – commonly referred to as 3M (reading, writing and arithmetic)," he said, attributing the issue to a lack of early childhood education.

Highlighting a World Bank

report from April 2024, he said 24% of Malaysian children entering primary school lacked school-readiness skills, often due to missing preschool education.

"The primary school curriculum assumes that pupils already have basic reading and counting skills but those who skipped preschool often struggle to keep up. As a result, they lose motivation and are at higher risk of dropping out later," he said.

To address this, he proposed making preschool education compulsory.

"If all children start their education with a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy, they will be better prepared for primary and secondary school lessons. This early intervention can significantly reduce dropout rates," he said.

Congress of Unions of Teachers in the Malaysian Education Service secretary-general Mohd Azizee Hasan welcomed the policy stating that it is designed to reduce dropouts and align with the Public Service Department's staffing scheme, which now requires an SPM certificate as a minimum qualification.

"This policy ensures that students are better prepared for future job markets by equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge," he said, adding that it supports Malaysia's long-term goal of developing an industry-ready workforce.

He also noted that the removal of UPSR and PT3 represents a shift towards a more holistic education approach under the Education Ministry.

The new framework emphasises character building, talent development and individual student strengths.

"Education is no longer just about academic achievement. Future job markets demand soft skills such as creativity, teamwork, communication and self-confidence," he said.

Comparing Malaysia's education system to other countries, Mohd Azizee pointed out that an 11-year mandatory schooling period aligns with international standards.

"Countries such as Singapore and the UK have similar education durations ranging from nine to 12 years depending on national needs," he said.

He added that the Education Ministry has actively engaged parents, teachers and education experts in shaping the 2027 School Curriculum which will prioritise fundamental literacy and numeracy skills before advancing to more complex subjects.

With the abolition of UPSR and PT3, Mohd Azizee stressed the crucial role of teachers in assessing student progress. He also highlighted the importance of support from state education departments, district education offices and mentor teachers in guiding educators.

"If implemented effectively, this system could have a positive long-term impact on students' academic and career prospects."



Anuar said extending mandatory schooling to 11 years is a step in the right direction as it provides long-term advantages for students and national development. —AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN

'Govt to maintain stakeholder talks on minimum wage'

GEORGE TOWN: The Human Resources Ministry will continue engaging with key stakeholders, including employers and employees, to refine the implementation of the new minimum wage policy, which took effect on Saturday.

Minister Steven Sim said these engagement sessions would help fine-tune the wage structure by considering various factors, including geographical differences and economic conditions across states.

He gave an assurance the ministry remains open to suggestions and feedback from all parties and will

continue improving the policy through discussions with relevant stakeholders.

"We will take multiple factors into account, including the possibility of implementing different wage levels based on geographical areas and economic conditions. I have already directed a further study on this, which will involve engagement sessions to gather input from all parties.

"We will also examine the feasibility of setting region-specific wage levels to ensure fairness. These considerations will be part of our ongoing efforts to improve the policy," he said during a press

conference on Sunday after attending Penang DAP's Chinese New Year open house at the Penang Chinese Town Hall.

He was responding to concerns raised by the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM), which had outlined four key considerations for ensuring a balanced implementation of the new minimum wage.

Its president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai suggested that the RM1,700 minimum wage should be applied differently based on states and industries while ensuring it does not become a benchmark for starting salaries across

all sectors.

Addressing these concerns, Sim said the wage hike decision had been extensively discussed within the National Wages Consultative Council, which includes representatives from the government, employers and employees.

"This policy was formulated after thorough discussions within the council, where all parties reached a consensus on the new wage level.

"As with any policy, opinions vary. Some say the increase is too little, while others feel it's too much. However, our priority is to strike a fair balance,

particularly for workers. Encouragingly, statements from the Malaysian Employers Federation, FMM and business chambers indicate that they generally support the implementation of this new minimum wage," he said.

Asked about FMM's proposal to implement the wage hike in phases to ease the burden on businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, Sim said while the new wage policy is now in effect, smaller companies have been given a grace period until August to comply. —Bernama



Fungal infections spike linked to nail salon services

➤ Establishments need to strictly follow hygiene protocol, train staff on proper sterilisation to prevent cross-contamination, says dermatologist

BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Dermatologists are raising the alarm over the rising number of fungal and bacterial infection cases caused by unsanitary treatments at nail salons.

Sultan Idris Shah Hospital internal medicine physician and dermatologist Dr Ishvant Kaur Sidhu said many patients develop onychomycosis (fungal nail infection) and paronychia (bacterial infection) after regular manicures and pedicures.

"Fungal nail infections often go unnoticed because the discolouration starts subtly and is masked by nail polish. Since they don't initially cause pain or discomfort, people delay treatment until the infection spreads or worsens."

She highlighted that common mistakes such as wearing closed-toe shoes after pedicures or frequent exposure to damp environments can increase infection risk.

Ishvant said those with diabetes or weakened immune systems are particularly vulnerable as their bodies have a reduced ability to fight off infections.

"Diabetes can cause poor blood circulation and nerve damage in the hands and feet, making it harder to detect early signs of infection. A minor fungal or bacterial infection could progress more rapidly and lead to serious complications, such as foot ulcers or cellulitis," she added.

Similarly, people with conditions that weaken the immune system such as cancer, autoimmune diseases, or those on immunosuppressive medications are at a higher risk of persistent and severe infections that may be harder to treat.

Ishvant warned that gel and acrylic nails can trap moisture, fostering fungal growth, while excessive cuticle trimming creates entry points for infections.

She also cautioned against overusing nail hardeners, as harsh chemicals like formaldehyde can cause brittleness and nail separation.

"It's best to use them sparingly and choose formaldehyde-free options."



Ishvant said untreated fungal infections could lead to permanent nail damage, deformities and in some cases, it can spread to the skin, which may lead to cellulitis. —MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN

She said untreated fungal infections could lead to permanent nail damage, deformities or even nail loss if they affect the nail matrix.

"In some cases, the fungus can spread to the skin, causing athlete's foot, which may lead to bacterial complications like cellulitis."

To reduce risks, Ishvant urged nail salons to strictly follow hygiene protocols and to sterilise all tools between clients. Foot baths should have disposable liners, and staff should be trained on proper sterilisation to prevent cross-contamination.

Ishvant advised those getting manicures and pedicures to maintain good nail hygiene at home, stressing that keeping nails clean and dry can greatly help prevent infections.

Central Dermatology Specialist Clinic consultant dermatologist Dr Meera Kuppusamy said one patient developed a painful abscess after a manicure at an unhygienic salon, requiring drainage and antibiotics.

"Another woman developed human papillomavirus-related warts on her finger after a manicure, which highlights the importance of strict salon hygiene."

Meera warned that bacterial infections like cellulitis can spread beyond the nails, while severe onycholysis (separation of the nail from the nail bed) may lead to permanent nail

deformity or loss.

She said bacterial infections can appear within 24 to 48 hours, showing symptoms like redness, swelling and pus. However, fungal infections progress slowly over weeks or months, often going unnoticed until they worsen.

"By the time people seek treatment, the infection may already be severe and require extensive care," she added.

Meera warned that fungal infections often require long-term treatment, which may include oral antifungals, laser therapy or even nail removal.

"Unlike bacterial infections, which would clear up with antibiotics, fungal infections can persist for months if not properly treated, so early detection is key."

She also warned that DIY manicures pose risks.

"Unsterilised tools and aggressive cuticle trimming at home can lead to infections. Even gel manicures, if improperly removed, can weaken nails, making them vulnerable to fungal growth."

To minimise risks, Meera and Ishvant recommended clients bring their own tools and ensure their nails are dry before applying polish to reduce the likelihood of infections.

Move to add more deep-sea fishing vessels

BATU PAHAT: The Fisheries Development Authority plans to modernise the local fishing industry by increasing the number of Class C and C2 fishing vessels, which will assist in curbing encroachment by foreign fishermen.

Its chairman Muhammad Faiz Fadzil said the limited number of Class C and C2 vessels has resulted in absence of local fishing boats in the country's waters, exposing them to risks of encroachment.

He added that deep-sea fishermen would act as the "eyes and ears" of the authorities to help monitor and address encroachment.

"Without large fishing vessels around, it's much easier for encroachment to happen, and some foreigners take advantage of it."

"Apart from having more fishermen out at sea, we'll also ask the government to boost asset strength for better surveillance and control of the waters," he said after presenting contributions under the "Madani Anak Nelayan Back to School Programme" here on Sunday.

Muhammad Faiz said local fishermen needed to play their part in supporting the industry by taking the bold step of upgrading their vessels through loans, which the authority would help facilitate.

"Agrobank, under the Agriculture and Food Security Ministry, will provide the necessary capital (loans) to help them make this change," Muhammad Faiz said.

Class C and C2 vessels are used by deep-sea fishermen operating 15 nautical miles off the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia (Straits of Malacca) and 30 nautical miles from the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, as well as from Sabah and Sarawak up to the border of the country's exclusive economic zone. — Bernama

687,000 to get power rebate refund

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd has started giving rebate refunds totalling RM10.2 million, credited directly to the registered consumers' electricity bill accounts in stages, beginning last month.

Its CEO Mohd Yaakob Jaafar said the rebate payment, amounting to 2.5% of the total electricity deposit, is in accordance with the Sabah Electricity Supply Enactment 2024.

"A total of 687,031 customers will receive the rebate refund this year," he said in a statement.

He added that customers can obtain more information by visiting any Sabah Electricity branches or by contacting the service line at 15444 or 088-515 000.

"They can also download the Sabah Electricity app on their smartphones to receive the latest updates on Sabah Electricity services," he said. — Bernama

Johor plans to build padel, pickleball courts as tourist draw

JOHOR BAHRU: Johor is exploring the sports of padel and pickleball, which have the potential to be expanded and become a sports tourism attraction in the country.

State Youth and Sports, Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Committee chairman Mohd Hairi Mad Shah said the building of six courts have been planned for the sports, which is becoming increasingly popular.

"There are two locations that have been selected — for padel in Nusa Duta and pickleball near the Johor Hockey Stadium in Taman Daya.

"The tender is expected to be opened either this month or in March, with a completion time of between six and eight months," he said after officiating at the Larkin State Legislative Assembly Back to School event here on Sunday.

He was commenting on the state government's desire to explore the potential of the two sports.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi, when tabling the state Budget 2025, announced an allocation of RM500,000 for the construction of pickleball courts.

Meanwhile, Mohd Hairi said Iskandar Puteri is one of the several sites selected for the opening of the Khabib Gym, with the groundbreaking ceremony expected to be held this year.

"The state government is looking at several locations, but everything is still at a discussion stage involving the Regent of Johor Tunku Mahkota Ismail and former Ultimate Fighting Championship lightweight champion Khabib Nurmagomedov.

"Its design is ready and everything that was

discussed is awaiting the consent of the Regent of Johor, including the business model and how to move forward with the programme with Khabib Gym," he said.

Onn Hafiz was previously quoted as saying that the Johor Sports Council had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Russian mixed martial arts fighter.

He added that the MoU was sealed through a meeting between the state government delegation and Khabib in Abu Dhabi recently. — Bernama

Rahmah cash aid lifeline for low-income group

➤ Recipients grateful as govt initiative helps to cope with rising cost of living, personal expenses

■ BY HARITH KAMAL
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Recipients of the Rahmah Cash Aid (RCA) have thanked the government for providing much-needed financial relief, especially as the cost of living continues to rise.

The RCA is a phased cash assistance programme by the government aimed at easing the financial burden on low-income individuals and households to help them meet their necessities.

Nur Haziqah Qistina, 23, a management trainee who falls under the single category (individuals earning RM2,500 and below), said the aid has been a lifeline as she just joined the employment world.

"I started working about five months ago, and it's been challenging to manage my funds with additional expenses like groceries and rent, but I am lucky to live near an LRT station, which saves me from having to drive."

She said as a trainee, her salary is just enough to break even after covering all her expenses.

"Receiving the RM150 in RCA has been a relief, as it gives me a financial cushion in case something unexpected comes up," she said.

Another recipient in the single category, Afif Zuhairi Alias, 25, an IT support specialist, said the RCA has helped cover his petrol and food expenses.

"I use the money for my petrol since I ride a motorcycle. It's a small saving, but it eases the burden of personal expenses and groceries such as noodles, eggs, and rice."

Afif Zuhairi expressed gratitude for the aid but pointed out that the amount is still insufficient, even for a single person.

"I just received RM150. While I know I'll receive more throughout the year and across phases, with the current cost of living, there's not much that can be purchased with this sum. It may seem like I'm complaining, but that's the reality because rent and other commitments are high."

He also stressed that relying solely on government aid is not enough for single individuals like him.

"For others, I think it's crucial to consider doing extra work or taking on side gigs to earn

more. The cost of living keeps going up, and depending only on aid alone won't cover all expenses."

In addition to single recipients, the RCA also supports families with children with a RM150 payout in the first phase.

Napiaan Abd Rashid, 32, said the RCA helps reduce household costs, particularly for daily essentials. I have two children in school, and with the rising costs of school supplies, the aid is helpful to me and my husband.

"I also use the money to buy groceries and household items, which helps a lot. Though the amount may not cover everything, it certainly eases our burden and I'm deeply grateful for the support."

Napiaan said while the aid may not cover all his expenses, it serves its purpose of helping families cope with the financial strain.

"The RCA is not meant to provide everything, but it's a big help in easing the pressure."

Phase 1 of the RCA payments began on Jan 22, with eligible recipients set to receive the aid throughout the year in four phases.

According to the Finance Ministry, this year's allocation is RM2.3 billion, up from RM2.1 billion last year.

"The RCA will also benefit nearly nine million recipients, representing 60% of Malaysia's adult population," the ministry said in a statement on Jan 21.



The aid will be paid in four phases and will benefit nearly nine million recipients. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

Top accounting student dies in six-vehicle crash

KUALA LUMPUR: An exceptional accounting student, who previously ranked second in the world for the Foundations in Accountancy (FIA) examination of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) was killed in a six-vehicle collision in Jalan Hulu Langat-Ampang on Sunday.

Kajang police chief ACP Naazron Abdul Yusof said Aysar Zahran Saiful Alimin, 20, who was unemployed, died after the motorcycle he was riding was struck by a Perodua Alza that swerved into the opposite lane during the incident at 4.45pm.

The crash also involved three other motorcycles and a Perodua Bezza, all of which were travelling from Hulu Langat to Ampang.

"The victim was pronounced dead at the scene, while five others, including the motorcycle and pillion riders, sustained injuries and were taken to Ampang Hospital for treatment."

"The drivers of both cars were not hurt. It is understood that the victims involved in the accident were aged between 17 and 38," he said in a statement.

He added that the driver of the Perodua Alza, a 27-year-old man, had been arrested, and a remand application would be submitted.

The vehicle was also sent to the Computerised Vehicle Inspection Centre for inspection, while the cause of the incident is

under investigation.

Naazron added that the case is being investigated under Section 41(1) of the Road Transport Act 1987.

He urged anyone with information about the incident to contact the investigating officer Insp Naroahisyam Endi at 019-589 7115.

Meanwhile, Tymba Education Group, in a post on its Instagram account, shared that Aysar Zahran was an exceptional student who had previously secured first place in Malaysia and second place globally for the FIA ACCA Management Information 1 examination in December 2023. The post also mentioned that Aysar Zahran was a former student of the organisation. – Bernama

Two charged with double murder

ALOR SETAR: Two unemployed men were charged in the Magistrate's Court here yesterday with the murders of two individuals, including an elderly man, at a house in Tongkang Yard last month.

No pleas were recorded from Mohd Fitri Saiful Rizuan Musa, 29, and Muhammad Haizan Abdul Rahim, 19, who nodded in acknowledgment as the charges were read before Magistrate Nur Syifa Mohd Hamzah.

The two are jointly accused of the murders of Ibrahim Mydin, 61, and his adopted son, Muhammad Muslim Mohd Zaini, 23, at a house in Lorong Rose, Jalan Kota Tanah, Tongkang Yard, at 3.30am on Jan 21 this year.

The charges are framed under Section 302 of the Penal Code, which carries the death penalty or imprisonment for not less than 30 years, but not exceeding 40 years, along with a mandatory whipping of at least 12 strokes of the cane.

Deputy public prosecutor Nur Huda Dyanah Amir Hamzah appeared for the prosecution, while both accused were unrepresented.

The court denied bail and scheduled the next mention for May 14, pending the completion of the forensic report.

In the incident, Ibrahim and Muhammad Muslim were discovered burnt to death in a house fire in Tongkang Yard. Five suspects were detained to assist in the investigation. – Bernama

Woman held in abandoned baby case

KANGAR: Police have arrested a woman suspected of abandoning a baby girl found in a plastic bag lined with a sarong in front of a house in Jalan Kampung Rama, Kuala Sanglang, Simpang Empat, near here, on Jan 19.

Kangar police chief ACP Yusharifuddin Mohd Yusop said the 29-year-old woman, a restaurant assistant, was detained on Sunday in Simpang Empat.

"The suspect lives with her four young children, and her husband is in a drug rehabilitation centre," Yusharifuddin said in a statement.

"Based on initial findings, the suspect is believed to have given birth unaided in a toilet at a house in Jalan Tok Pulau, Kampung Permatang Kersek, Simpang Empat on Jan 18, at 6.30pm."

"On Jan 19, at 4.30am, she is believed to have gone to a restaurant in Kampung Rama to abandon the baby, travelling in a Myvi car belonging to a friend," he said in a statement.

He added that the woman has been remanded for four days, and the case is being investigated under Section 317 of the Penal Code for concealing a birth with the intention of abandoning the baby. – Bernama

Ornamental plant smuggling bid foiled

KOTA BHARU: The Southeast Brigade of the General Operations Force (GOF) thwarted an attempt to smuggle ornamental plants worth RM125,000 at a roadblock mounted at Lalang Pepuyu near Tanah Merah.

Its commander Datuk Nik Ros Azhan Nik Ab Hamid said the seizure was made after personnel from the GOF 9th Battalion stopped a lorry while on *Ops Taring Wawasan* duty at about 5am on Sunday.

"Upon inspection, various bromeliad saplings, believed to have been smuggled from Thailand, were found inside the lorry driven by a 25-year-old man suspected to be a courier smuggling the plants into the local market," he said.

The case is being investigated under Section 5 of the Plant Quarantine Act 1976 (Act 167).

The suspect and the seized items have been handed to the GOF Command Base at Taman Bakti and the Kota Bharu Agriculture Department, he added. – Bernama



Upgrade for St Paul's Church

Two-storey building costing RM1.75m to be added to main structure at cost of RM1.6m

BY T.C. KHOR
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

GEORGE TOWN: The annex building of the 139-year-old St Paul's Church on Macalister Road is being expanded after the acquisition of an adjacent two-storey shophouse.

"St Paul's Church holds a rich history as the first Anglican Chinese church in Peninsular Malaysia, established in 1886. The building was consecrated in 1951, and a five-storey annex was added in 2001," said Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow at the groundbreaking ceremony on Jan 26.

The project is expected to be completed within a year.

Church building committee chairman Daniel A.B. Soon said the cost of purchasing the shophouse was RM1.75 million, with an additional estimated RM1.6 million for construction.

He said the built-up space after the project would be approximately 12,700sq ft.

"There is still a need to raise funds for the interior fit-out and AV equipment, which is expected to cost an additional RM1 million."

Soon, who is also a member of the Parochial Church Council, said the parish hopes to model a senior citizen activity centre after those founded in Singapore, with a focus on "active ageing".

He outlined the benefits the centre will bring to the community. These include providing a communal space for the elderly to socialise and find support, while offering mental and physical activities.

Soon said some of the programmes for the centre include age-appropriate fitness classes, digital mastery for seniors, lifelong learning, skills development through hobbies, regular health checks and spiritual enrichment through Bible studies.

The centre is slated for operations from Mondays to Fridays from 9am to 5pm, and participation would be voluntary, allowing seniors to choose which programmes they



Chow (centre) with church officials and dignitaries during the groundbreaking ceremony. - T.C. KHOR /THE SUN

wish to engage in.

In addition to the senior citizen activity centre, the church also plans to run other community-focused programmes, including marriage and pre-marriage counselling courses and a youth-centric cafe.

"The cafe will be a safe space for youth to hang out, play board games, do self-studies and attend seminars or talks, including those addressing mental health issues," Soon said.

Meanwhile, St Paul's Church Vicar the Reverend Philip J.E. Ong expressed hope that the Penang government would partner with the church in providing financial and other resources to support the outreach programmes.

St Paul's mission outreach and community

initiatives have been successful, leading to the establishment of other churches in Ayer Itam, Butterworth, Bukit Mertajam and Teluk Kumbar. The church also operates a free hostel for *Orang Asli* students in Gopeng, Perak.

The groundbreaking ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including the Bishop of the Diocese of West Malaysia Right the Reverend Dr Steven Abarrow, Suffragan Bishop of Northern Peninsula Area Diocese Right the Reverend Dr Stephen C.C. Soe, Archdeacon of Upper North Archdeaconry the Venerable Soong Hoe Pin and Rev Ong.

Prior to becoming its own parish 75 years ago in 1950, St Paul's Church was part of the St George's Church Chinese-speaking congregation.

Thaipusam trip for PWD devotees

GEORGE TOWN: The Thaipusam celebration this year holds a special meaning for 25 physically challenged devotees as they visited the Arulmigu Balathandayuthabani Temple in Jalan Kebun Bunga, Penang on Sunday.

The initiative was made possible by NGO Malaysia TAMIL Uthavum Karangkal (MTUK), which is dedicated to helping people with disabilities (PWD) fulfil their spiritual needs.

MTUK founder Dr A. Muraly said 125 volunteers from Kuala Lumpur and Penang took turns to carry the wheelchair-bound devotees up the 513 steps of the temple.

He said since its inception in 1999, this is the first time MTUK have taken physically challenged devotees to the temple, having previously helped them ascend the 272 steps of the Sri Subramaniam Swamy Temple in Batu Caves, Selangor.

"What my team and I are doing is to bring joy to the physically challenged because they too wish to go up to the temple but are unable to do so," he said.

"God has blessed us with a good life, so this is one way we can give back, by doing good deeds for those in need."

Muraly said 10 of the devotees were from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan while the rest were from Penang, adding that the climb started at 4.30pm and when they reached the top, they prayed and made offerings before descending at 5.30pm.

M. Esuari, 50, said it has been 10 years since she last visited the temple after she was paralysed waist-down following a road crash.

"I used to visit the temple every Thaipusam but for the past 10 years, I haven't been able to do so. I feel deeply moved because I went up again today. I prayed that I would be able to walk again for the sake of my children," said the single mother.

Former soldier A. Arumugam, 70, from Ayer Itam, said this was the first time he wanted to visit the temple after his right leg was amputated due to diabetes two years ago.

"I wear a prosthetic, so my movements are limited. But today, I was able to go up the temple with help from the volunteers," he said.

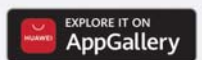
M. Kogulan, 19, a first-time volunteer, expressed joy at being part of the event, saying it was rewarding to help those in need, especially the elderly. - Bernama

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Floods force evacuations in eastern Australia

Power outages across north Queensland

SYDNEY: Fast-moving floodwaters rose yesterday in northeastern Australia after forcing many to flee, blacking out homes and sweeping away a chunk of a critical bridge.

Storms have already dumped more than a metre of rain in two days in parts of Queensland, engulfing homes, businesses and roads in muddy waters, authorities said.

Aerial footage showed rural communities surrounded by the floodwaters, cut off from nearby roads.

"We are going to see widespread rain and storms spread across much of northern Queensland," Premier David Crisafulli told a news conference.

"We remain prepared for the prospect of more rain and the likelihood of more flooding, both flash flooding and riverine flooding,"

Emergency services carried out 11 "swift

water rescues" overnight, the premier said.

Areas of flood-hit Townsville, a popular coastal tourist destination that lies near the Great Barrier Reef, had been declared a "black zone", he said.

"Our advice to residents in the black zone at the moment is to stay out of that zone and stay safe."

The authorities told 2,100 people in the town to evacuate at the weekend, though about 10% refused, emergency services officials said.

One woman in her 60s was killed on Sunday when the rescue boat she was in flipped over in the flood-hit rural town of Ingham, about 100km from Townsville, police said.

Her body was recovered later.

The floods swept away a section of a concrete bridge over a creek, cutting off the state's main coastal road, the Bruce Highway, Crisafulli said.

"It's not every day you see a bridge torn in two. That's what has happened at Ollera Creek, and it is significant," he said.

Almost 11,000 properties remained without power across north Queensland, Ergon Energy said, with no timeframe given for when electricity would be restored.

The heavy rain is expected to continue for 24 hours, with some locations to receive 300mm, before it begins to ease, the national weather agency said.

Townsville acting mayor Ann-Maree Greaney said the floods were expected to peak today.

"The roads are cut off, so communities are isolated," she said.

The town was pressing for power to be restored and working with large supermarket chains to deliver food, the mayor said.

People could expect to see crocodiles moving about in search of calmer waters, the environment department warned this weekend.

One farmer told national broadcaster ABC he saw a "bunch of crocodiles" around his rural property, 140km south of Cairns, sharing a photo of one of the reptiles lit up by a car's headlights as it lurked on a flooded road. – AFP

Police officer killed as polio vaccination drive starts

PESHAWAR: A Pakistan police officer travelling to guard polio vaccinators was shot dead yesterday, police said, on the first day of a nationwide immunisation effort after a year of rising cases.

"A police constable was on his way to join his polio team during an immunisation campaign when two motorcycle riders opened fire on him" in the Jamrud area of northwest Pakistan, said police official Zarmat Khan.

Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan are the only countries where polio is endemic and gunmen have for decades targeted vaccination teams and their security escorts.

Pakistan recorded at least 73 polio infections last year compared with six in 2023. The vaccination campaign which started yesterday is the first of the year and is due to last a week.

"Despite the incident, the vaccination drive continues," Zarmat said.

Abdul Hameed Afridi, another senior police official in the area, also confirmed details of the attack and said officers have "launched an investigation".

No group claimed responsibility for the attack, however Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which neighbours Afghanistan, is a hive of militant activity.

Polio can easily be prevented by the oral administration of a few drops of vaccine, but scores of vaccination workers and their escorts have been killed over the years.

In the past, clerics falsely claimed that the vaccine contained pork or alcohol, declaring it forbidden for Muslims.

In more recent years the attacks have focused on vulnerable police escorts accompanying the vaccinators as they go door-to-door.

Last year, dozens of Pakistani policemen who accompany medical teams on campaigns went on strike after a string of attacks targeting them.

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

Islamabad accuses Kabul's new rulers of failing to rout out armed groups organising on Afghan soil, a charge the Afghan government routinely denies.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on Sunday last year's polio eradication efforts faced "a major setback".

"We must eradicate polio from Pakistan at any cost," he said as he launched the new vaccination drive. – AFP

Court upholds fraud acquittal of Samsung chief

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics Chairman Lee Jae-yong was cleared again yesterday of a raft of charges linked to a controversial 2015 merger which prosecutors claimed was designed to seal his control of the South Korean tech giant.

Lee was originally cleared of the charges in a trial last year, but prosecutors appealed against the verdict.

"The evidence presented was not sufficient to prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt," court documents said.

Lee was cleared of charges including stock price rigging, breach of trust and accounting fraud.

They relate to the 2015 merger between Samsung C&T – a construction and engineering firm – and Cheil Industries.

Lee did not answer any questions as he left the Seoul court, but his lawyers told reporters they "sincerely thank the court for its wise judgment".

"It has been a very long time since the investigation and trial process of this case began," his legal team said.

"We hope that with this ruling, the defendants can now return to their rightful duties and responsibilities."

It was not immediately clear whether the prosecution would appeal the decision to the Supreme Court.

Lee was jailed for 18 months in a separate fraud and embezzlement case following a sweeping investigation that also brought down former president Park Geun-hye in 2017.

The current executive chairman of Samsung Electronics, the crown jewel of South Korea's sprawling Samsung group, was released on parole in August 2021 having served half his sentence.

He returned to management shortly



Lee arrives at the court in Seoul yesterday. – REUTERS/SPIC

afterwards, and was officially named executive chairman in October 2022, two months after South Korea's then president pardoned him for the convictions.

The legal battles have been a distraction for

Lee, who faced growing questions about his ability to lead Samsung Electronics – the world's top memory chip and smartphone maker – as it grapples with competition and lacklustre stock prices. – AFP/Reuters

Bookings open for tours to North Korea border city

SEOUL: A tour operator said yesterday it had opened bookings for trips to a North Korean border city to celebrate former leader Kim Jong Il's birthday, offering foreign tourists the first chance to visit since 2020.

Tour operators said last month that the North would reopen Rason, a city on the border with China, to foreign tourists, five years after

Pyongyang sealed its frontiers in response to public health concerns.

Neither North Korea nor China have commented on the plans.

Koryo Tours said the February tour in Rason would be "the first trip back to North Korea since the borders closed in January 2020".

"This tour will take you to the must-see sites

in Rason, North Korea's Special Economic Zone. Plus, you will travel to North Korea to celebrate one of the biggest holidays, Kim Jong Il's Birthday," the Beijing-based travel agency said on its website.

The birthdays of members of the ruling Kim dynasty are typically feted in the North with large scale public celebrations. – AFP

Report kickbacks promptly, S'pore tells migrant workers

SINGAPORE: The Manpower Ministry here encouraged migrant workers to report kickback practices early, following a recent case where a contracting company collected illegal fees as a condition for work pass renewals.

"Workers with valid claims will be allowed a change of employment if they wish to continue working in Singapore," the ministry said.

The ministry highlighted a case involving Lian Cheng Contracting Pte Ltd, where a former operations manager collected kickbacks totalling S\$396,440 (RM1.3 million) from 57 migrant workers between 2014 and 2020. These payments were required for their continued employment or work pass renewal.

Adrian Quek, divisional director at the ministry's Foreign Manpower Management Division, described this as one of the largest kickback cases investigated by the ministry to date.

Singapore relies on a workforce of more than 1.5 million foreign workers as of last June, according to the ministry's latest data. – Bernama



OpenAI announces new 'deep research' tool

➤ Tech giant promises super fast response times

TOKYO: US tech giant OpenAI yesterday unveiled a ChatGPT tool called "deep research" that can produce detailed reports, as China's DeepSeek chatbot heats up competition in the AI field.

The company made the announcement in Tokyo, where OpenAI chief Sam Altman also trumpeted a new joint venture with tech investor SoftBank Group to offer advanced artificial intelligence services to businesses.

Altman and SoftBank founder Masayoshi Son will meet the Japanese prime minister later and will reportedly announce plans to boost Japan's AI infrastructure.

OpenAI, whose ChatGPT led generative AI's emergence into public consciousness in 2022, said its new tool "accomplishes in tens of minutes what would take a human many hours".

"You give it a prompt, and ChatGPT will

find, analyse and synthesise hundreds of online sources to create a comprehensive report at the level of a research analyst," the company said in a statement.

Altman said deep research, which paid "Pro" ChatGPT users can access 100 times a month, was "slow" and required a lot of computing power.

But he was more bullish on stage at a business forum in Tokyo.

"This is a system that I think can do, this is just an estimate of mine, but I think can do a single-digit percentage of all economically valuable tasks in the world," Altman said.

SoftBank and OpenAI are part of the Stargate drive announced by US President Donald Trump to invest up to US\$500 billion (RM2.2 trillion) in artificial intelligence infrastructure in the United States.

Similar steps to build AI data centres and power plants in Japan could be announced when Altman and Son meet Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, the *Nikkei* newspaper said.

Son announced a new joint venture equally split between the two companies.

Holding a purple crystal ball, the Japanese

tycoon outlined the services of an AI product called Cristal, which can crunch firms' system data, reports, emails and meetings.

A joint statement said SoftBank would "spend US\$3 billion annually to deploy OpenAI's solutions across its group companies".

The venture "will serve as a springboard for introducing AI agents tailored to the unique needs of Japanese enterprises while setting a model for global adoption," it said.

Altman told the *Nikkei* he wanted to develop "a new kind of hardware" using artificial intelligence in partnership with Apple's former chief design officer Jony Ive.

But Altman indicated it would take several years to unveil a prototype, the *Nikkei* said.

Altman also told the newspaper that DeepSeek is "a good model" that highlights the serious competition for AI reasoning technology, but that its "capability level isn't new".

DeepSeek's performance has sparked a wave of accusations that it has reverse-engineered the capabilities of leading US technology. - AFP

Taiwan president calls for talks with China

TAIPEI: Taiwan and China need to talk to each other to achieve peace given the "multifold changes" in the international situation, Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te said yesterday, calling for dialogue instead of confrontation.

Lai, who China detests as a "separatist", has repeatedly called for talks with Beijing, which has stepped up its military and political pressure against the democratically-governed island it sees as sovereign Chinese territory.

But both China and Taiwan face pressure from the new administration of US President Donald Trump, who has imposed tariffs on China and threatened similar measures against imported semiconductors, a sector Taiwan dominates.

Speaking in Taipei to members of the Taiwanese business community who have invested in China, Lai said Taiwan and China's common enemies were natural disasters and their common goal was the well-being of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

"Therefore, we should, especially at a time of multifold changes in the international situation, have a good dialogue and exchanges between the two sides of the strait to achieve the goal of peace," he said.

Taiwan very much welcomes talks with China on the basis of equality without preconditions and dialogue should replace confrontation, but Taiwan's future can only be decided by its people, Lai said.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China says Taiwan must accept that the two sides of the strait are part of "one China", something Lai and his government have refused to do.

Lai said there can be no illusions about peace, and Taiwan should aim for peace through strength by bolstering its defences, and must stand shoulder-to-shoulder with other democracies.

"Only with sovereignty is there the country. Only with Taiwan is there the Republic of China," he said, referring to the island's formal name.

The defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing a civil war with Mao Zedong's communist forces, who set up the People's Republic of China in Beijing. - Reuters



MIGRANT RALLY ... Protesters holding Mexican flags block the Santa Ana Freeway during a demonstration in support of immigrants in Los Angeles on Sunday. The new US administration has ramped up deportations, including by relaxing rules governing enforcement at 'sensitive' locations such as schools, churches and workplaces. - AFP/PPIC

Meteor Garden star Barbie Hsu dies at 48

TAIPEI: Taiwanese star Barbie Hsu (*pic*), who was hugely popular across Asia for her leading role in the 2001 television drama *Meteor Garden*, has died from a respiratory illness. She was 48.

Hsu passed away after developing pneumonia during a family trip to Japan over the Lunar New Year holiday, the younger of her two sisters was quoted as saying.

"My dearest and kindest sister Barbie Hsu sadly left us due to influenza complications that led to pneumonia," the younger Hsu said in a statement.

"I'm grateful to have been her sister in this lifetime, to take care of each other, accompany each other, I will forever be thankful to her and miss her."

Hsu's death was the top trending topic on China's Weibo platform yesterday.

Fans in Taiwan, the Philippines and

elsewhere also paid tribute to her.

Chinese actor Huang Xiaoming, who starred with Hsu in another Taiwanese drama, said he was "in shock and deep grief" over her death.

"I've heard that truly brilliant souls are never dimmed by time, they remain vibrant, like bubbles shining in the sun," Huang said on Weibo.

Filipino fan Edmalyn Canton wrote on Facebook: "Thank you for bringing joy to my childhood. You will always be my favourite version of *Meteor Garden* and will forever be remembered."

Stacy Hsu, a Taiwanese celebrity, posted on Facebook that Hsu's "beauty and intelligence will forever remain in our hearts".

Animal rights group Peta said it was "heartbroken" over Hsu's death, noting she was "one of the first and biggest stars" to support the organisation.

Hsu and her younger sister Dee rose to fame in the 1990s as a pop duo before switching to hosting TV shows and acting.

It was the elder Hsu's role as Dong Shan Cai in Taiwan's popular 2001 television series *Meteor Garden* that made her a star across Asia.

The show about an ordinary girl attending an elite university was originally based on a Japanese manga series.

It was later remade in China and now screens on Netflix.

Hsu's acting career dimmed in recent years but appearances in reality television shows and dramas in her off-screen life kept her in the celebrity gossip pages.

Hsu married Chinese businessman Wang Xiaofei in 2010 and they had two children, Taiwanese media reported.

The couple divorced in 2021, and the following year Hsu tied the knot with an ex-boyfriend, South Korean DJ and singer Koo Jun-yup. - AFP



Taipei told to move Pretoria office

TAIPEI: The South African government has told Taiwan to relocate by the end of March its de facto embassy in Pretoria, the Taiwanese Foreign Ministry said.

South Africa severed official diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1997 and only maintains formal, and very close, relations with China, which views the democratically governed island as Chinese territory with no right to the trappings of a state.

In a statement late on Sunday, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry said South Africa's government had sent a letter in late January demanding the de facto Taiwanese embassy leave Pretoria before the end of March and "even be renamed as a trade office".

The demand "shows China's suppression against us in South Africa is becoming more serious", it said, adding that negotiations between Taiwan and South Africa were ongoing.

The de facto South African embassy in Taipei did not immediately respond to a request for comment, and neither did China's Foreign Ministry.

South Africa had previously made a request last year for what is called the Taipei Liaison Office to leave Pretoria.

China is South Africa's largest trading partner globally and one with which it is looking to expand cooperation in areas such as renewable energy.

Taiwan's government rejects China's sovereignty claims and says it has a right to forge ties with other countries. - Reuters

'West Bank offensive criminal'

➤ Genocidal intent evident, says rapporteur

NEW YORK: The UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories Francesca Albanese slammed Israel's actions in the West Bank as "criminal".

"The genocidal intent is evident in the way Israel targets the totality of the Palestinians," she said on X.

She had warned the UN General Assembly about this in her last report in October.

She said the genocidal intent is evident in the way Israel targets the totality of the Palestinian people and the entirety of the occupied Palestinian territory, which Israel claims is exclusively designated for Jewish self-determination.

The UN official called on the international community to intervene and halt the destruction, which she said has expanded to encompass all occupied territories, not just Gaza.

"It's past the time to intervene to stop it.

In Ramallah, the Israeli military blew up buildings in the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank on Sunday in an operation that the Palestinian news agency, Wafa, said levelled 20 buildings.

TV footage
s h o w e d

simultaneous explosions in the densely populated camp.

Thick clouds of smoke rose above the Palestinian city where Israeli forces have been conducting a major military operation for nearly two weeks that the military says targets gunmen and the seizure of weapons stockpiles.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in a statement urged the United States to end Israel's military operation and requested an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council "to stop the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people".

The Israeli military said 23 structures had been "dismantled" in the northern West Bank after explosives laboratories, weapons and observation posts were uncovered.

In a previous statement on Sunday the military shared images of firearms, ammunition, and what appeared to be gas canisters.

It did not say where exactly those images were taken.

Jenin Government Hospital Director Wisam Baker told Wafa that part of the hospital was damaged in the explosions but that there had been no casualties.

Jenin is home to a crowded refugee camp of descendants of Palestinians who were driven out, or fled their homes, in the 1948 war when the state of Israel was established. The refugee camp has been a centre of political activity for decades and the target of repeated raids by Israeli security forces.

Israeli forces, backed by helicopters and armoured bulldozers, began the assault on the city on Jan 21, two days after a ceasefire in Gaza between Israel and Hamas took effect.

Israel regards the West Bank as one part of a multi-front war against groups around its borders, from Gaza to Lebanon and including the Houthis in Yemen, and it turned its attention to the area immediately after the halt to fighting in Gaza.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees has said that almost all of

the Jenin camp's 20,000 residents have been displaced over the past two months.

Hamas on Sunday called for an "escalation in the resistance" against Israel following the demolition of buildings in Jenin.

The Palestinian Authority, a Hamas rival, exercises limited governance over the West Bank where around three million Palestinians live and over which Israel maintains military control.

Israeli forces have engaged in gun battles since the operation began. Defence Minister Israel Katz on Wednesday said security forces would stay until the operation is complete, without saying when that would be.

At least 25 Palestinians have been killed since the military offensive began in Jenin, including nine members of armed groups, a 73-year-old man and a two-year-old girl, according to Palestinian officials. The Israeli military says it has killed at least 35 gunmen and detained over 100 wanted individuals.

Wafa also said that a 27-year-old man had been killed on Sunday by troops raiding a refugee camp near Hebron. - Bernama/Reuters

Criminal probe launched into Israel PM's wife

TEL AVIV: Israeli police are conducting a criminal investigation into Sara Netanyahu, the wife of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the office of the state attorney said in a letter.

"A criminal investigation was opened" into suspected criminal offences, the office said in a letter to an Israeli opposition lawmaker who had accused Sara Netanyahu of tampering in her husband's corruption trial after the broadcast in December of a television news investigation.

Naama Lazimi, Knesset member for the Democrats, shared the letter on X on Sunday confirming the criminal investigation was launched on Dec 26, adding that her office had contacted the state attorney following the probe by Channel 12's *Uvda* news programme.

The show alleged that Sara Netanyahu had tried to intimidate a key witness.

She organised demonstrations to harass the attorney general, his deputy and other individuals deemed hostile to her husband, according to the programme.

The state attorney's office said the investigation was being "conducted by the police and the cyber department of the state attorney's office".

In December, Benjamin Netanyahu testified in the corruption trial in which he faces charges of bribery, fraud and breach of public trust in three separate cases, calling the charges against him "ridiculous". - AFP



Smoke rises during an Israeli army operation in Jenin on Sunday. - REUTERS/SPIC

Musk shutting down world's largest aid donor

WASHINGTON: Elon Musk, who is heading President Donald Trump's efforts to shrink the federal government, gave an update on the effort early yesterday, saying they are working to shut down the US foreign aid agency USAID.

Musk discussed the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) in a discussion on X, which he owns. Trump has assigned Musk to lead a federal cost-cutting panel.

The conversation, which included former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy and Republican Senator Joni Ernst, began

with Musk saying they were working to shut down the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

"It's beyond repair," Musk said, adding that Trump agrees it should be shut down.

On Sunday Reuters reported the Trump administration removed two top security officials at USAID during the weekend after they tried to stop DOGE representatives from gaining access to restricted parts of the building, three sources said.

USAID is the world's largest single donor. In fiscal year 2023, the US disbursed US\$72 billion (RM323

billion) of assistance worldwide on everything from women's health in conflict zones to access to clean water, HIV/AIDS treatments, energy security and anti-corruption work. It provided 42% of all humanitarian aid tracked by the United Nations last year.

The online chat comes amid concerns about Musk's access to the Treasury system, first reported by the *New York Times*, that sends out more than US\$6 trillion a year in payments on behalf of federal agencies and contains the personal information of millions of Americans who receive

Social Security payments, tax refunds and other monies from the government.

Democrat Peter Welch, a member of the Senate Finance Committee, called for explanations as to why Musk had been handed access to the payment system and taxpayers' sensitive data.

"It's a gross abuse of power by an unelected bureaucrat and it shows money can buy power in the Trump White House," Welch said.

Musk's team have been given access to or take control of numerous government systems. - Reuters

BRIEFS

SYRIA CAR BOMB BLAST KILLS 15

DUBAI: Fourteen women and one man were killed and 15 other women injured yesterday, in a car bomb explosion on a main road on the outskirts of the northern Syrian city of Manbij. All of them were agricultural workers, Syria's civil defence said. There were no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. It was the second blast in three days in the area, after four civilians were killed and nine others, were injured in a car bomb attack in Manbij on Saturday, according to Syria's state news agency SANA. Manbij city is some 30km south of the Turkish border and to the west of the Euphrates river. - Reuters

CHANGES NEEDED, RUBIO TELLS PANAMA

PANAMA CITY: US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino on Sunday that President Donald Trump has determined China's influence threatens the Panama Canal and that immediate changes were needed or the US would act. Panama has denied ceding operation of the canal to China and insists it administers the canal fairly. Though the canal itself is operated by Panama, the two ports on either side are run by Hong Kong company CK Hutchison, while other ports nearby are run by companies from the United States, Singapore and Taiwan. - Reuters

COMMENT by Dr Margarita Peredaryenko and Avyce Heng

HIGH-DENSITY areas such as transport infrastructure, places of worship, tourist attractions, stadiums, shopping centres and commercial streets are prime targets for extremists due to large crowds, especially during events.

Over the past two months, global vehicle-ramming attacks (VRA) on these venues have reignited discussions on public safety related to violent extremism and terrorism (VE&T).

In November, a driver rammed a car into a Zuhai sports centre in China, killing 35. Additionally, a vehicle attack at a German Christmas market in Magdeburg resulted in at least six deaths. On New Year's day, a self-radicalised individual ploughed through crowds in New Orleans, leaving 15 dead and 30 injured.

In recent years, extremists have targeted unprotected civilian locations using methods like stabbing and VRA due to significantly increased security at traditional VE&T targets such as airports.

VE&T attacks are becoming less sophisticated, more unpredictable and quickly planned, with accessible weapons like knives, firearms and vehicles being utilised.

While terrorist organisations like Al-Qaeda and IS have historically endorsed vehicular attacks, recent perpetrators have emerged from diverse backgrounds in ideology, biography and location, further complicating detection and prevention efforts.

Emulation and spread tactics

Research shows that VE&T methods employed in one region can inspire similar attacks elsewhere as extremists often adopt tactics from incidents in different locations, sparking concerns about copycat attacks.

For instance, VRA have spread beyond the Israel-Palestine conflict to Western cities and recently to the Asia-Pacific region.

Miller and Hayward (2019) argue that terrorism patterns exhibit trend-like behaviour, such as the prevalence of skyjacking in the late 1960s and early 1970s, embassy takeovers in the 1970s and the recent surge in school

Prioritise public safety, security

"Integrating new VE&T estimation methods and indicators, grounded in robust data and scientific analysis, into Malaysia's national crime index will enhance the ability to forecast, detect and prepare for potential threats early."

shootings across the United States (US).

Towers et al. (2015) suggest that extensive media coverage of recent VE&T incidents can influence extremists and trigger waves of imitation.

Public security and safety

Lessons can be drawn from China, which saw a hike in mass killings in 2024. These incidents are linked to societal pressures, notably a struggling economy, high youth unemployment and substantial debt.

Apparently, Malaysia faces similar socioeconomic challenges. Additionally, global drivers of VE&T, such as interethnic and interfaith conflicts, inadequate efforts to tackle organised crime and insufficiently robust preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) strategies, are also prominent in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, a quantitative study by Abdul Ghani et al. (2021) revealed that Malaysians do not view public spaces as highly secure, with some feeling vulnerable due to unidentified safety risks.

Mizan, a Malaysian anti-terrorism expert, has warned against underestimating the potential for large-scale VE&T attacks, noting that small-scale incidents, particularly lone-wolf attacks, occur sporadically across the country.

Notable violent attacks on crowded locations in Malaysia include the 2016 Movida pub attack, a foiled bomb plot at a Carlsberg factory and multiple assaults on places of worship in the 2010s.

Although VE&T incidents are violent crimes, they are excluded from Malaysia's official crime statistics,

which cover only 13 types of violent offences and property theft. This omission may distort the nation's security landscape.

Additionally, VE&T threats receive insufficient attention in Malaysia's disaster management plans, being overshadowed by flood-related issues.

Security framework deficiencies

Countries leading in P/CVE like the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia have strategic frameworks to safeguard soft targets in crowded venues from VE&T risks.

In contrast, Malaysia currently lacks such comprehensive measures, highlighting a critical deficiency in its national security infrastructure.

Malaysia's P/CVE national action plan (MyPCVE) does not include preventive security measures for critical infrastructures against VE&T risks, highlighting gaps in public security and disaster management. This underscores the urgent need to enhance Malaysia's preparedness in addressing VE&T dangers.

A systematic review of global P/CVE best practices reveals that advanced countries proactively empower and engage peripheral stakeholders, such as private businesses, community organisations, educational institutions and operators of public places, creating an extensive and effective network for detecting and preventing VE&T threats.

This involves targeted public campaigns and community outreach programmes to cultivate public vigilance and training individuals in responding to VE&T attacks.

Furthermore, countries like the UK

and Singapore provide specialised security advice to owners of crowded venues and event organisers, incorporating VE&T threats into their comprehensive risk management frameworks.

Moreover, front line workers in crowded venues should be trained to understand VE&T threats, conduct venue risk assessments, develop security plans, detect and report suspicious behaviour and inform patrons of potential security risks.

Public safety personnel, community responders and event planners should also receive bystander training as they are often first to assist during mass casualty incidents.

Integrating these initiatives into Malaysia's "Rukun Tetangga Scheme" – which aims to strengthen local community unity, economy, security, education and quality of life – could significantly boost the nation's resilience against VE&T threats.

Professionalising P/CVE efforts is central to a robust counter-VE&T strategy. Enhancing the operational capacity of security personnel, including the police, law enforcement agencies and private security providers, can be achieved by integrating VE&T-related training into Malaysia's Certified Security Guards programmes. This initiative will ensure that security officers are well-equipped to provide essential threat intelligence to public space operators and can effectively respond to VE&T attacks in public spaces.

Implementing robust security and site protection is essential for enhancing asset resilience in public spaces. Measures such as security signage, fencing and bollards help to deter malicious actors from targeting crowded venues and significantly influence attack planning.

For example, the UK funds the national barrier asset, which includes hostile vehicle mitigation equipment, security fences and gates designed to protect against VRA.

Additionally, installing CCTVs in

public spaces like car parks, streets and town centres is crucial for effective surveillance as control room personnel are often the first to detect hostile incidents

Cohesive multiagency P/CVE cooperation requires a centre-out approach underpinned by strong communication and information sharing. The success of MyPCVE is contingent upon its alignment with other national policies such as the National Security Policy, Security and Public Safety Policy and Disaster Management Plan.

All relevant bodies must engage in security planning against VE&T threats through regular joint operations, exercises and continual updates of capabilities and procedures.

Integrating new VE&T estimation methods and indicators, grounded in robust data and scientific analysis, into Malaysia's national crime index will enhance the ability to forecast, detect and prepare for potential threats early.

Real-time tracking of crime and security data will provide an accurate and current reflection of the nation's security landscape while sharing this information with the public will increase awareness and vigilance.

Developing comprehensive contingency plans for VE&T incidents in crowded places is essential for public safety and mitigating impacts.

Therefore, VE&T must be integrated into Malaysia's public security strategy and disaster management plan. This integration will strengthen the nation's preparedness and resilience against VE&T threats, ensuring a coordinated and effective response to improve overall national security.

Dr Margarita Peredaryenko and Avyce Heng are part of the research team at Emir Research, an independent think-tank focused on strategic policy recommendations based on rigorous research. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Solving Mideast problem Trump style

BY ERIC S. MARGOLIS

THE Great White Father in Washington has spoken. Let mere mortals hark and obey.

President Donald Trump has described Gaza as a "mess" that needs to be "cleaned up", stating that 2.1 million human refuse are befouling this potentially prime beachside property.

"We just clean out that whole thing" quoth the "great developer".

Trump said the answer to this thorny problem is to move all these Palestinian refugees to neighbouring Egypt and Jordan. Voila! Problem solved!

Why didn't the world think of this earlier? Small problem: Egypt has 107.5 million people crammed into a fertile area the size of the small US state of Maryland. Overpopulated Egypt is so crowded that its people have taken up camping in cemeteries.

Egypt cannot feed its people without millions in US aid delivered through a network of corrupt suppliers.

Trump had nothing to say about the corrupt former chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Robert Menendez, who took large bribes for decades from the Egyptian government – and possibly from others, such as Ukraine and Israel.

Egypt has one of the world's most rigid dictatorships. However, you never hear about this in the tame Western media.

Cairo worked hand in glove with Israel in keeping Palestinians caged up in the Gaza open air prison. Egypt's military regime rightly feared that Palestinians would infect Egypt with ideas of democracy or Islamic government.

Egypt is the Arab world's most populous country. Cairo's military rulers do not want any revolutionary, trouble-making Palestinians.

The same applies to Jordan's royal regime. Its former prince, El Hassan Talal, was elbowed out of the succession to the Hashemite throne because the US and Israel considered him too pro-Palestinian. The more amenable and charming Abdullah II was made king.

Tiny Jordan, carved out of the Arabian desert by the British imperialists after World War I, has at least 60% Palestinians, ruled over by the crack Jordanian army. Jordan is a decent, well-run nation but it too cannot absorb any more Palestinians. Neighbouring Lebanon faces a similar problem.

All these irksome Palestinians did not come from the moon. They were created when Israel ethnically cleansed what is now Northern Israel and bulldozed flat its former Arab villages. Gaza was created as a giant open-air prison camp for Palestinian refugees, whose existence was denied by Israel.



Trump has described Gaza as a "mess" that needs to be "cleaned up", stating that 2.1 million human refuse are befouling this potentially prime beachside property.

– REUTERS/PIC

Here is an idea, Dear President Trump. Why not move the 2.1 million homeless Palestinian refugees to your Mar-a-Lago estate and its surroundings. Throw in Tampa and Lauderdale. Then, you can green light your son-in-law Jared Kushner to turn

the lovely Gaza coast – now unpopulated – into a new Miami. It is so simple.

Eric S. Margolis is a syndicated columnist. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Humanity at breaking point

COMMENT

By Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Ibrahim

FEW would deny that the world is in poor shape. All those pronouncements about ending poverty and stopping world hunger remain pipe dreams. Instead, we see more conflicts, driven mostly by greed and lust – greed for oil and lust for power. All those talks about fighting for human rights are nothing but broken promises.

Humanity is trampled mercilessly in the power grab. Hypocrite is the right word. Even the rampant killing of other fellow beings is open for all to see on social media.

The root cause of such massacre is the hate feeling that has spread like cancer among our proclaimed civilised society.

Much hatred around the world is based on differences in skin colour, religious belief and ideological embrace. Racism is being exploited for political gains.

In many countries, the rise of the far right is worrying. Groups that champion anti-immigration are winning elections. Is the world reaching a crisis point?

This assertion can be explored from multiple perspectives, which include environmental, social, economic and political, each highlighting interconnected challenges that demand urgent attention.

The environmental crisis, though played down by some leaders, is real. The facts presented by those with credible credentials are indisputable.

The planet is grappling with the devastating effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and resource depletion.

Rising global temperatures, melting ice caps and extreme weather events are creating severe impacts on ecosystems, economies and communities.

At home, we feel the impact of economically devastating floods. Human activities have led to mass extinction rates, disrupting ecological balance and threatening food security.



The facts presented by those with credible credentials are indisputable. The planet is grappling with the devastating effects of climate change, biodiversity loss and resource depletion. – AFP/IC

Our oceans are drowning in plastic while air and water pollution fuel global health crises. Is the world at all concerned?

Despite advances in technology and globalisation, stark inequalities persist. Millions of people lack access to basic needs such as food, water and healthcare, exacerbating global disparities.

Social unrest is common. Protests and movements around the globe reflect growing dissatisfaction with systemic inequities.

Conflicts, climate change and economic instability force millions to flee their homes, creating humanitarian emergencies.

There are economic challenges. The global economy faces unprecedented pressures. The richest 1% hold more wealth than the bottom

half of humanity, fuelling resentment and instability.

Nations are struggling under massive debt burdens, limiting their ability to invest in sustainable development.

All the pledges made to finance climate actions have not materialised. Automation and artificial intelligence (AI) are disrupting traditional job markets, leading to economic uncertainty for workers.

Political instability has become inevitable. Geopolitical tensions and governance failures are hindering collective action.

Ongoing conflicts in various regions have destabilised societies and economies. The Russia-Ukraine war and the seemingly ending massacre in Gaza are clear testaments.

New leadership challenges raise tensions at the helm

THE first annual conference I attended at Sime Darby Berhad was in Penang, an event I had been looking forward to. However, I already suspected there would be some people I would not like and the three days were not going to be a holiday.

In some way, I had not fully settled into the company on the plantations side. I had a few friends who were fine but after joining the group, I sensed some quiet questions about what role I would play and whether I might get in their way in the future.

Few knew what I was doing as I was often working away on projects that planters typically did not handle, with frequent travels to places like Indonesia, where oil palm plantations were a new investment opportunity in 1990.

The heads of units, led by CEO Tunku Ahmad Tunku Yahya, were seated at the main table during dinner at the Equatorial Hotel. The atmosphere was formal, with all present aware of their pecking order, and no one crossed that line.

The next morning, the group broke up into their own units, with Ken Eales heading the plantations division.

He made his keynote address about the value of integrity and stating that while mistakes were acceptable, Sime Darby Plantations would not condone any wrongdoing.

Each department head made their presentation, starting with the director of

estates. The plantations division was doing well, benefiting from favourable selling prices that exceeded production costs.

However, two departments were in trouble. One was the gloves and condom business, which had to struggle to gain entry into the big markets and was currently operating at a loss.

Before the second department that was in trouble gave its briefing, I had the chance during the break to tour the island with a colleague who knew Penang. He took me to see the farms in Balik Pulau, where we passed durian trees in full season, their ripe fruits caught in nets that hung like hammocks to catch those that fell.

When I got back to the hotel, there was still time to see Muhamed Sulaiman, the head of Sime Darby's properties division, organising a durian feast near the car park. He invited everyone to join in, often the centre of activities. He could afford to buy a lot of durians.

I had heard that Muhamed owned stocks in a foreign company that wanted him to be a local shareholder before he left Malacca, where he had worked for Dunlop Estates. Now, he no longer had to rely on his Sime Darby salary to enjoy a good life.

I noticed that the person closest to Muhamed, Tan Tee Yong, a tall, quiet figure and a mill engineer from their Dunlop days, was helping with the work. Although he did not speak much in the group, most people knew

he had Muhamed's ear.

After lunch, I attended the next briefing, which was about the refining business. It was struggling with low margins. The Kempas Edible Oil refinery in Pasir Gudang refined palm kernel oil to make specialty fats for biscuit and bread makers while also processing palm oil for bulk export.

Some of the sales were sent to its sister refinery, Edible Products Limited in Jurong, Singapore, to be packed and branded for the cooking oil market. There, the refinery also refined, packed and branded cooking oils from soya, sunflower, corn and groundnut.

I sat back, and when the profit figures came out on the screen, I could not help but laugh to myself. My consulting department was making more money than they were and with fewer assets. Both refineries had fierce competition, and the margins were slim. It was certainly not a business that I would like to go into.

Finally, weeks later, the announcement was made that Muhamed would succeed Eales, confirming the rumours. At the time, I was away at Oxford University's Templeton College, doing the Advanced Management Programme, a course that went on for several weeks. It was a last gesture by Eales before he retired when he approved my application to join the course.

The course took place during a beautiful summer in 1990, with trees in full foliage around the buildings. The days were packed with case studies and I found myself reading late into the night to prepare for group discussions and presentations the next morning. But in addition to that, I had to cope

with two big news.

The first devastating news was that Iraq had invaded Kuwait oilfields. It grabbed the attention of many in the class. Stock markets plunged around the globe, and those wealthier than me were likely losing sleep over it. I noticed one or two people with bags under their eyes at breakfast the next morning.

The second piece of news was that Mohamed had held his first meeting with the heads of departments. I received reports about it, and it was a grim occasion. He had slammed everyone in the room, demanding they improve their performance, and made it clear he would fire anyone who did not measure up.

Clearly, Mohamed had prepared what he wanted to say and I was told about it word for word. Sitting close to him was a new team member, Tan, who did not say a thing.

After the course, I cancelled spending any more days in Europe. When I returned to work, Muhamed was waiting for me in his office. I already knew what he was going to say, and sure enough, it was a replay. I waited for the lecture to end but he was clearly upset.

"You may not last in that department. I will be watching you and may take you out of it. You are enjoying yourself too much. You are flying everywhere."

I left in silence, knowing someone had put that idea in his head, and I guessed who that might be.

Mahbob Abdullah has extensive experience in the management of oil palm plantations. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

While challenges are daunting, they also present an opportunity to rethink and redesign systems for a more sustainable, equitable and resilient future.

Multilateral cooperation, innovative solutions and a commitment to global solidarity are essential to navigate this critical juncture.

Do we have the leadership needed to guide us through?

Prof Datuk Dr Ahmad Ibrahim is an associate fellow at Ungku Aziz Centre for Development Studies, Universiti Malaya. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com



ESTATE MANAGER WRITES
BY MAHBAB ABDULLAH

Mahbob Abdullah has extensive experience in the management of oil palm plantations. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Teacher shortlisted for Global Prize

➤ Successful teaching involves empowerment and engagement

BY DHARSHINI GANESON

IT is not always Malaysia makes it to the Top 10, but history was made with the selection of Sarawakian teacher Muhammad Nazmi Rosli as one of ten finalists for the 2025 Global Teacher Prize (GTP). The prize, valued at US\$1 million is awarded by the Varkey Foundation for outstanding contribution to the teaching profession globally.

Not only does this accolade pay tribute to the outstanding quality of Nazmi's teaching but it also acknowledges his community driven initiatives in introducing new concepts and ideas to his classroom teaching, one of which is the Filpen Club, where students in SK Luagan (a government school) in Sarawak learnt film making, marketing and financial literacy skills.

Through this programme, his students gained leadership and creativity skills that enabled them to successfully raise enough funds to purchase a boat, a much needed asset in bad weather, so students

could reach their schools during floods. At the same time, Nazmi worked to expand the programme to the rest of Sarawak through the Filpen Festival, which would bring the initiative to other schools in the region.

The GTP aims to elevate the status of teachers globally and acknowledge their role as drivers of future societies. The GTP winner will be announced in Dubai on February 11, 2025.

Nazmi first achieved recognition when he won the Malaysia Teacher Prize in 2023, awarded locally by Pemimpin, (a not-for-profit education organisation) set up in 2017, dedicated to improving teaching outcomes through its programmes and workshops nationwide. To-date, it has successfully reached 1,900 schools and 3,500 teachers, funded by the corporate sector and other foundations.

"I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to represent Malaysia on the global stage. This journey - from winning the Malaysia Teacher Prize 2023 to being named as one of



Nazmi attended leadership programmes at Pemimpin, which empowered him to bring community based programmes to SK Luagan, Sarawak.

the Top 10 Global Teacher Prize Finalists has been an incredibly meaningful and priceless experience.

"I dedicate this achievement entirely to my students, who are the inspiration and driving force behind every effort I make. Their passion for learning and advancing is the heartbeat of all the projects we have successfully executed together," said Nazmi, whose educational journey has been strongly supported by Pemimpin.

Samuel Isaiah, executive director of Pemimpin said, "Cikgu Nazmi

embodies the spirit and commitment that drives every educator in Malaysia. His achievement in reaching the Top 10 finals in the GTP is proof that the passion and hard work of our teachers can bring about significant change. We are incredibly proud and will continue to stand alongside educators that expand their positive impact on education and society."

"From 2021 to 2022, Nazmi was an active participant in the leadership, enrichment and development (LEAD) fellowship, which ran for ten months, aimed at

developing teachers in schools through best practices and evidence-based skills. This has yielded results in the long term," said Samuel, who in 2020 was also selected as finalist in the GTP for his initiatives among the orang asli in SK Runchang, Pahang.

Today Samuel continues his journey through Pemimpin, empowering and giving support to educators such as Nazmi, who chose the path less travelled to motivate and enrich the lives of marginalised communities throughout Malaysia.

EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

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'Malaysian glove, semicon players set to gain from US tariffs move'

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian glove makers and semiconductor players are expected to benefit from the imposition of higher tariffs by the United States on imports of Chinese goods, said Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd.

In a research note yesterday, it said local glove makers would benefit from the broadened average selling price (ASP) discount on Chinese glove imports in 2025 following the US imposition of an additional 10% tariff to the current 50% on China glove exports into the US.

"For illustration purposes, a 50% plus 10% tariff hike is expected to raise Chinese glove producers' ASP to US\$27-US\$29 (RM121-RM130) per 1,000 pieces (from an assumed base case ASP at US\$17-US\$19 per 1,000 pieces)," it said.

Therefore, it said, this positions Malaysian glove makers' ASPs of between US\$18 and US\$20 per 1,000 pieces at a steep 25%-32% discount versus the Chinese alternative. We keep our 2025 forecast ASPs at US\$20-US\$21 in our earnings model for now.

"Any volume loss in non-US markets can be offset by higher demand from the US, which historically commanded higher ASP than non-US markets, and the US had historically accounted for 35%-40% of Malaysia's total glove volume," it said.

The investment bank believes Hartalega Holdings Bhd is the biggest beneficiary because the US market typically accounts for 50% of its sales volume.

Regarding the semiconductor benefit from US tariffs, it said Malaysia, as a key player in outsourced semiconductor assembly and test and back-end semiconductor services, would stand to benefit from supply chain diversification as global technology firms may accelerate the adoption of a more aggressive China+1 strategy to reduce reliance on China.

"Over the medium term, Malaysian firms are well positioned to capitalise on the structural shift in global supply chains," it said.

However, Kenanga Investment Bank said Malaysia may experience varying degrees of impact depending on supply chain realignments, trade policies and broader geopolitical dynamics. — Bernama

ACCCIM cautiously optimistic on outlook for 2025

■ BY JOHN GILBERT
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: While remaining positive about Malaysia's investment prospects, the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (ACCCIM) foresees challenges in 2025, highlighting a sense of cautious optimism for this year's economic outlook and business conditions.

ACCCIM president Datuk Ng Yih Pyng said high operating costs, cash flow problems and increases in raw materials prices are the key factors affecting business performance in Malaysia.

He said preliminary findings of an ACCCIM survey show that more than 30% of respondents anticipate better economic and business prospects for 2025, compared to below 20% for 2024.

"Increasing business cost pressures are due mainly to government policy reforms and regulatory

➤ High operating costs, cash flow issues pose challenges, says Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia

requirements changes. "Domestic businesses, manu-facturers and exporters have to brace for disruptive trade and economic policy in the external business environment.

"The business community hopes the government will adopt pragmatic policies to support businesses, especially micro, small, and medium enterprises in navigating through the challenges. These include providing some forms of export credit scheme to domestic SMEs, reducing import duties on raw materials, assisting in exploring new export markets, and diversifying supply chains," Ng said

at the 2025 ACCCIM Chinese New Year Reception yesterday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was the guest of honour at the event. Other key government ministers, distinguished dignitaries and ambassadors representing foreign missions also attended the gathering.

Ng said the economic and subsidy reforms must be implemented gradually to prevent market disruptions and safeguard businesses.

"Of particular concern is that Tenaga Nasional Bhd base electricity tariff hike for Peninsular Malaysia will be 14.2% between 2025 and 2027 under Regulatory

Period 4 and is proposed to be implemented starting July 1, 2025. The rise in electricity costs will have domino effects on the whole supply chain, potentially passing through to consumer inflation.

"Given the bunching of additional operating costs, we sincerely urge the government to maintain electricity tariffs at current levels throughout 2025-2026 to ease the financial burden on businesses and mitigate inflationary pressures from increased operating costs," Ng said, in expressing concern over the tariff hike that will potentially impact domestic industries.

In response, Anwar said the rise of electricity tariffs is to improve the country's education system and support the poor.

He gave the assurance that the tariff increase would be manageable and is necessary, as prices must adjust over time.

"How do I improve education? How do I assist the poor? How do I upgrade the roads? How do I enhance medical facilities? It is through a small tax increase. A slight increase is acceptable," he added.

Anwar said the development of digital transformation is crucial, requiring substantial funding for new facilities and specialised training.

He said countries such as the United States, China and those in Europe have prioritised centres of excellence in this field, relying on government support and significant private sector investment.

Moving on, Ng said ACCCIM remains positive about Malaysia's investment prospects and will play a key role in fostering economic cooperation, promoting business collaboration and networking between Malaysians and foreign businesses.



Anwar (second, left), Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook (left), Ng (third, left) and Housing and Local Government Nga Kor Ming (right) tossing yee sang at the 2025 ACCCIM Chinese New Year Reception yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

Central Force International charts bold Southeast Asia expansion plans

■ BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Central Force International, a data solutions and market research player, has announced expansion plans and strategic innovations after winning recognition as "Best Small Medium Enterprise" at Talent Corp's Life At Work Awards 2024.

Central Force International chief operating officer Sim Siew Khoo highlighted the importance of balancing artificial intelligence (AI) advancements with human expertise in shaping the future of market research.

"While AI offers incredible efficiencies, over-reliance can create blind spots. Human insights provide the cultural and contextual nuances necessary for actionable strategies, especially in diverse markets like Malaysia," she told *SunBiz*.

Building on its success in Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, she said, the company is set to open a regional sales office in Singapore by the end of this year.

"Over the next five years, operations will expand to Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam, with the aim of becoming a one-stop research hub in Southeast Asia. We are committed to tailoring

our solutions to the unique demands of each local market," Sim stated, adding that the company is developing proprietary AI-powered tools and methodologies set for launch in early 2026.

She said the innovations are designed to complement human expertise, ensuring insights remain both data-driven and culturally relevant.

Sim emphasised that AI, while transformative, must be guided by human oversight. She pointed out risks of over-reliance on AI, such as biases from flawed data, cultural missteps and potential privacy breaches.

"To address this, we employ hybrid approaches that blend AI efficiencies

with traditional qualitative research methods like focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

"For instance, the company's human analysts recently uncovered critical insights into public transport usage in Malaysia, revealing generational preferences that AI alone could not discern. AI might tell us that older commuters favour public transport, but human insights revealed younger generations prefer e-hailing due to time and convenience," she said.

To maintain the company's competitive edge, Central Force International is adopting a "test and validate" approach to integrating emerging technologies.

"Our investment in AI-driven tools is paired with a focus on ethical data practices and sustainability, ensuring solutions meet evolving regulatory and consumer expectations," Sim said.

The company remains optimistic about the industry's future, predicting a greater reliance on AI blended with human insight. "Customisation, localisation, and transparency will define the next wave of market research," she added.

Looking ahead, with a clear roadmap for regional growth and technology adoption, Sim said, Central Force International is poised to shape the future of data solutions in Southeast Asia.

SD Guthrie International deepens presence in Europe

➤ Malaysian company acquires 48% equity interest in Dutch oils and fats player Marvesa Supply Chain Service

PETALING JAYA: SD Guthrie International Ltd (SDGI), formerly known as Sime Darby Oils International Ltd, has acquired 48% equity interest in Netherlands-based Marvesa Supply Chain Services BV.

The €54 million (RM250 million) acquisition enhances SDGI's capabilities in supplying oils and fats to European animal feed and biofuel industries. The 48% stake was purchased from Parcom, a Dutch private equity firm. The remaining 52% stake is held by BGR Beheer BV, which is owned by the current executive management of Marvesa.

SDGI is a wholly owned subsidiary and the downstream arm of SD Guthrie Bhd, formerly known as Sime Darby Plantation Bhd. SD Guthrie is one of the world's largest producers of Certified Sustainable Palm Oil (CSPO), producing about 12% of all CSPO in the world. It is a fully integrated player in the global palm oil value chain with business presence in 12 countries.

Marvesa is a well established name in the

European market, specialising in the sourcing, blending and distribution of oils and fats to the animal feed and biofuel industries. Its diverse customer base, comprising traders, distributors and multinational feed producers, makes it a key partner in the region.

The acquisition of Marvesa strengthens SDGI's presence in Europe, where it serves customers in 11 countries from its Zwijndrecht refinery in the Netherlands, which has a capacity of 300,000 tonnes annually. The refinery produces a variety of oils and fats that are essential for applications such as industrial frying, emulsifiers, bakery and confectionery ingredients, margarine, dairy products, candles and milk substitutes.

"This acquisition positions us for long-term success across emerging markets," said SDGI CEO Dr Shariman Alwani. "To stay ahead of market demands and regulatory changes, it is crucial that we work together with strong, like-minded partners. Our position in Europe is now stronger and we will be able to build more



robust relationships."

The collaboration between SDGI and Marvesa creates powerful synergies. Marvesa's established trading volumes in lecithin, soy and other soft oils align with SDGI's diversification strategy into non-palm sectors. This allows both companies to penetrate high-growth opportunities, including in North and Central Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa, and the Americas.

Marvesa already has a presence in Indonesia and is well positioned for growth in Southeast Asia, which is experiencing high demand for animal feed ingredients.

"As shareholders in Marvesa, we are deeply invested in its growth and long-term success. This partnership with SDGI is a testament to the strength of our business and our shared vision for sustainable value creation. Together, we are well positioned to drive growth and deliver exceptional value to our customers across Europe and beyond," said Marvesa CEO Bart de Bruycker.

MIDF, CIMB positive on O&G sector

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's upstream oil and gas (O&G) sector is expected to sustain a strong supply, with exploration and production (E&P) and development activities staying robust in 2025, according to MIDF Amanah Investment Bank Bhd (MIDF).

In a research note, the investment bank said the upstream will also maintain its efforts in reducing carbon emissions via advanced technology and strategic partnerships.

It said Petroliaam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) will focus on accelerating exploration in new and mature areas while fast-tracking appraisal programmes to replenish resources and sustain production.

"The upstream division is expected to expand its resources to meet these production targets while managing cost effectively with lowered emissions. "Sixty-nine development wells are expected to commence by 2025, signalling the start of the development phase and an eventual slowdown in E&P," it said.

The division would continue its venture in carbon capture and storage (CCS) as part of its energy transition and decarbonisation agenda, ultimately positioning Malaysia as a regional hub for CCS solutions, it added.

MIDF stated that over the next three years, more than 400 wells are anticipated to be drilled, 39 upstream projects executed, 153 wells abandoned, and 38 facilities decommissioned.

Additionally, it said the O&G services and equipment (OGSE) sector would play a crucial role in ensuring sustained competitiveness and project deliveries while encouraging collaboration with other stakeholders in the upstream division.

"We maintain our optimism on the sector, despite the possibility of volatile crude oil prices given the external geopolitical influences and the expected increased productions in North America and the Middle East.

"We believe that Malaysia's OGSE companies would continue to benefit from Petronas's priorities in the upstream and decarbonisation solutions, with a high emphasis on E&P, development and CCS," it said.

Meanwhile, CIMB Securities Sdn Bhd echoed MIDF Amanah IB's view, maintaining its "overweight" stance on the O&G sector while anticipating a strong earnings momentum in 2025, fuelled by robust domestic upstream activity.

"The tight market supply also presents opportunities for new floating production storage and offloading and offshore supply vessel builds in 2025," it said in a separate note. - Bernama



A Falcon 2000 undergoing heavy maintenance at ExecuJet MRO Services Malaysia.

CAAC certifies ExecuJet MRO Services Malaysia for Falcon aircraft

PETALING JAYA: The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) has approved ExecuJet MRO Services Malaysia (ExecuJet MRO Malaysia), a wholly owned subsidiary of France's Dassault Aviation, to do line and base maintenance on China-registered Falcon 7X and Falcon 2000EX EASy aircraft.

The certification approves ExecuJet Malaysia to do base maintenance checks up to and including 4C checks, the heaviest and most comprehensive check for Falcon 7X and 2000EX EASy series aircraft. A 4C check involves detailed inspection of an aircraft's structure and systems.

The CAAC approval is the first time ExecuJet

MRO Services Malaysia has been approved to maintain China-registered Falcon aircraft.

The CAAC also renewed ExecuJet MRO Services Malaysia's certification as an approved maintenance organisation for Bombardier and Gulfstream aircraft. In 2019, the CAAC approved ExecuJet to provide line and heavy maintenance on Gulfstream GIV aircraft and variants of the Bombardier Challenger and Bombardier Globe Express series aircraft.

China is by far the largest market for business aviation in Asia-Pacific with nearly 300 aircraft.

"The fact China is such a big market for business aviation and one that is in close

proximity to Malaysia, means it is an ideal market for us to target," said ExecuJet MRO Services regional vice-president Asia, Ivan Lim.

He added that they are seeing an increasing number of Chinese-registered business jets flying to Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia due to the growing economic ties between China and Asean.

"We are a factory-owned Falcon service centre and with a world-class facility supplemented by a workforce that includes some fluent Mandarin speakers, so we are ideally positioned to serve these Chinese operators," Lim said.

Steel Hawk secures extension to contract

PETALING JAYA: Steel Hawk Engineering Sdn Bhd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Steel Hawk Bhd, has secured a contract extension for the provision of onshore facilities maintenance, construction and modification services from Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd.

In a statement, Sea Hawk's board of directors said the contract will not have any effect on the share capital and shareholding structure of the company.

The contract is not expected to have any material effect on the net assets of Steel Hawk and its subsidiaries for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2025. The contract is expected to contribute positively to the earnings of Steel Hawk Group for the financial year, it said.

DeepSeek not a threat to data centre boom: Juwai IQI

► Msia combines low costs, skilled talent, strong infrastructure, govt aid, and strategic market access for IT facility development

KUALA LUMPUR: DeepSeek led to some initial questions about the durability of Malaysia's data centre boom, but those fears are turning into excitement as the situation becomes more clear, according to analysis released yesterday by Juwai IQI co-founder and group CEO Kashif Ansari.

He said DeepSeek shocked the world with a large language model that seems comparable to those offered by competitors like OpenAI at a fraction of the cost.

"Cheaper AI models like DeepSeek's will most likely drive demand for data centres in Malaysia even higher. That's because cheaper AI would enable widespread use of AI-powered tools that until now have been too expensive to be widely adopted. A survey in November found that financial concerns were the main obstacle keeping businesses from adopting AI," he added.

He said large language models need to become inexpensive before AI can be widely used and DeepSeek seems to have made massive progress in this area.

Its price for tokens, or output, is just one-fifteenth that of more established competitor Anthropic. Now that large language models are cheap enough to be used widely, we will likely see skyrocketing adoption of AI-related tools. You can put it this way: when it costs less to get an AI model to do any one thing, people will ask AI to do more and more things. That growth will create unprecedented demand for data centres, including in Malaysia," Ansari remarked.

"Some prominent analysts support this conclusion. Morgan Stanley calculates that demand for power in Asia-Pacific, excluding China, will climb by 4% if tech companies accelerate their investments as a result of a drop in AI's energy intensity," he said.

For the real estate industry here in Malaysia, Ansari noted that this means that demand for land suitable for data centres will remain strong and could possibly grow.

"Not all data centres are suitable for serving the coming AI boom, but Malaysia is well positioned for a world where AI dominates data centre development. Data centres that were built to support enterprise IT, cloud computing, and general-purpose workloads are not optimised for the higher demands that

AI requires. They can lack the power, cooling, and networking that are needed for AI," he pointed out.

On the other hand, he said Malaysia has a pipeline of billions of dollars of planned data centres that are largely AI-ready. Supportive government initiatives and substantial investments from companies like Nvidia, ByteDance, Google, AWS, and Microsoft have ensured this is the case.

"The Malaysian data centre development pipeline consists of 1.2 GW, which represents 600% growth over the next five years. About 55% of new projects are planned for the KL area, and the other 45% will go into Johor," said Ansari, adding that Blackstone, one of the world's largest financial investors in AI infrastructure, believes the world will need to spend US\$2 trillion (RM8.9 trillion) on data centres over the next five years.

He said Malaysia is well positioned to capture a significant share of this growth, and Johor is the fastest-growing Southeast Asian market.



DeepSeek shocked the world with a large language model that seems comparable to those offered by competitors like OpenAI at a fraction of the cost. — PEXELS PIX

Research houses see 6% loan growth in banking sector

KUALA LUMPUR: Research houses have maintained their "positive" and "overweight" view on the banking sector and are projecting loan growth of 5.5% to 6% for this year.

Maybank Investment Bank Bhd (Maybank IB) said the industry loan growth is estimated at 5.5% in 2025, supported by an expected GDP growth of 4.9%.

"This aligns with industry loan growth of 5.5% in 2024, which met expectations. We anticipate faster non-household loan growth, driven by an expected investment upcycle, to offset a moderation in household loan growth," Maybank IB said in a research note yesterday.

The bank highlighted that higher investment flows in 2023 and 2024 are expected to translate into increased economic activity in 2025.

Additionally, it said rising demand for loans related to land, industrial buildings, factories, and shophouses, as well as a surge in working capital loan applications, indicate a strengthening investment cycle.

"These factors suggest an upturn in Malaysia's investment cycle 2025, benefitting larger banks that are more active in the corporate lending and capital market space such as Maybank, CIMB, AMMB and RHB," it added.

Separately, Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd (Kenanga IB) has maintained an overweight call on the banking sector, forecasting industry loan growth at 6%, driven primarily by Johor-based projects.

However, it expects deposit growth to remain muted at 3%, as banks are less likely to engage in aggressive competition for liquidity in the near term.

"Despite less favourable news flows from the technology sector, we opine that the sector's fundamentals remain intact. This is mainly due to the absence of previously distortive provisions and writebacks from pandemic overlays," Kenanga IB said.

The bank attributes the projected 6% loan growth to ongoing developments in Johor's

"Data centre builders are tailoring their projects for AI applications. Look at YTL Power, whose green data centre park in Johor will incorporate advanced direct-to-chip liquid cooling to enable the highpower densities that AI processing requires," he added.

"Whether or not DeepSeek ends up permanently changing the AI industry, we believe data centre demand will continue to increase. Luckily for Malaysia, the country retains all its advantages in attracting these facilities. The key advantages that make Malaysia a prime location for data centre development include its relatively low-cost land and energy, skilled workforce, strong digital infrastructure, government incentives, and connectivity to major markets like Singapore, Asean, and China," said Ansari.

"Energy is a key component of operating costs, so let's look at that as an example. In Malaysia, industrial power tariffs are about US\$0.10 per kilowatt-hour (kWh). That compares favourably to Singapore's higher rates of approximately US\$0.27 per kWh," he said.

In other ways also, he added Malaysia will be a winner in a world where artificial intelligence is cheaper and more available than it has been.

GamBit in joint venture to bridge traditional-digital assets gap

KUALA LUMPUR: GamBit Group Bhd and Digital Trustees Bhd have combined resources to bridge traditional and digital assets.

In expanding its services to include tokenisation and inheritance planning, GamBit aims to make financial planning accessible to a broader audience while driving financial literacy on digital assets.

As one of only three companies in Malaysia licensed as a Digital Asset Custodian (DAC) by the Securities Commission Malaysia, GamBit Custody, a subsidiary of GamBit Group has positioned itself as a leader in the digital finance ecosystem.

Through the tokenisation of Real World Assets (RWA) including real estate and commodities, they offer a secure, compliant avenue for SMEs and individual investors to diversify their portfolios and participate in a growing digital economy – the first company to do so in Malaysia, and the only one with the licence for the simultaneous management of traditional and digital assets.

This advancement aligns with global fintech trends, where digital asset custodians and tokenised assets are transforming investment landscapes and opening up new opportunities for mass-market investors.

This integration marks GamBit's official foray into the business-to-consumer market. While most DAC companies primarily focus on providing enterprise solutions, the consortium now allows for the expansion of these services into managing RWAs. More specifically, the trustee integration also allows GamBit to pioneer inheritance planning for individual clients who wish to hold their cash and crypto in trust.

Local institutions back Bursa for 15th week

KUALA LUMPUR: Local institutions extended their support for Bursa Malaysia for the 15th consecutive week, recording net purchases of RM149.4 million, MIFD Amanah Investment Bank Bhd (MIDF) said.

This was lower than the previous week's net purchases of RM551.6 million.

In its Fund Flow Report for the week ended Jan 31, MIDF said local institutions ended a 48-day streak of consecutive trading-day inflows, net buying on two out of three trading days last week, with an outflow of RM37.9 million on Friday.

It said local retail investors also extended their buying streak on Bursa Malaysia for the fourth consecutive week, with a net purchase of RM353.9 million in equities, 2.36 times higher than the previous week's inflow.

"The average daily trading volume saw declines across the board last week. Foreign investors saw a decrease of 15.9%, while local institutions and local retailers saw a decline of 25.7% and 15.4%, respectively," it said.

MIDF noted that foreign investors continued to sell equities on the local bourse for the 15th consecutive week, though outflows slowed to RM503.3 million compared to RM701.4 million the previous week.

Foreign investors were net sellers every trading day, with Monday experiencing the largest outflow of RM265.9 million, it said.

On Tuesday and Friday, the outflows amounted to RM196.9 million and RM40.5 million, respectively.

"The top three sectors that recorded net foreign inflows were financial services at RM38.1 million, real estate investment trusts (RM2.3 million) and telecommunication and media (RM1.9 million).

"Meanwhile, the top three sectors that recorded the highest net foreign outflows were utilities (RM256.9 million), property (RM63.3 million), and industrial products and services (RM50.1 million)," it added. — Bernama

China to propose restoring 2020 trade deal with US

WSJ says Beijing's offer will include pledge to not devalue yuan

BEIJING: China's initial proposal to tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump's administration will centre on restoring the "Phase 1" trade deal signed in 2020 during Trump's first term, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, citing sources.

Other parts of China's plan will include a pledge to not devalue the yuan, an offer to make more investments in the US and a commitment to reduce exports of fentanyl precursors, according to the WSJ report.

On Saturday, Trump imposed 25% tariffs on Mexican and most Canadian imports and 10% on goods from China over fentanyl, a deadly opioid, and illegal immigration.

China denounced the imposition of tariffs on its imports and pushed back on fentanyl, but left the door open for talks with the US that could avoid a deepening conflict.

In contrast, Canada, a long-time ally of the US, slapped retaliatory tariffs of 25% on C\$155 billion (RM470 billion) of US goods.

The Phase 1 trade deal Trump signed with Beijing in 2020 ended a nearly two-year tariff war at that time.

The deal required China to increase purchases of US exports by US\$200 billion over two years, but Beijing failed to meet the targets as the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

Reuters reported last month that Trump

had directed the Office of the United States Trade Representative to assess China's performance under that trade deal.

The *Journal* report added that Beijing planned to treat TikTok largely as a "commercial matter", meaning it would let investors in Chinese owner ByteDance negotiate a deal with interested bidders in the US.

Trump has previously said that he was in talks with multiple people over buying TikTok, including Microsoft, and would like to see a bidding war over the app.

The US Department of Commerce did not respond to a request for comment on the WSJ report outside regular business hours.

China's Commerce Ministry was not immediately contactable for comment on the report due to the Lunar New Year holiday.

– Reuters



Trucks driving between cargo containers at Port of Taichung in Taiwan.
– REUTERS/PIC

Taiwan to help companies relocate to America

TAIPEI: Taiwan will support firms that intend to relocate to the United States including helping them find partners on the ground, the Economy Ministry said yesterday, outlining assistance it will offer following US President Donald Trump's new tariffs.

Trump's orders for additional levies of 25% on imports from Mexico and most goods from Canada, as well as 10% on goods from China, were light on detail.

But they kick in today and have jolted markets as investors feared a broader trade war could severely hurt global growth.

Taiwan, whose companies are key producers

of tech products like semiconductors and electronics parts, is vulnerable given that many have factories in both Mexico and China and because Trump has also threatened future tariffs on imported chips.

Taiwan's Economy Ministry, in a statement detailing measures to help companies impacted by the new American tariffs, said it will provide information for firms wanted to relocate, such as possible US states to invest in, local laws and assistance in finding partners.

The government's Industrial Technology Research Institute branches in North America will also actively promote research and

development and manufacturing cooperation between Taiwanese and US companies, it added.

The ministry said it will continue to pay close attention to changes in international trade and maintain communication with companies to provide them with "the most timely support and assistance to ensure that they find the best strategies to cope with the changes".

Shares in Taiwanese tech companies with factories in Mexico fell heavily yesterday, with Foxconn down 8%, Quanta down around 10% and Inventec off 8%. – Reuters

Asian stocks dive while dollar rallies

HONG KONG: Asian stocks tanked and the dollar surged yesterday after Donald Trump signed off huge tariffs on China, Canada and Mexico, and warned the European Union would be hit "pretty soon".

Less than two weeks after moving back into the White House, the US president on Saturday made good on warnings that he would resume his hardball tactics, sparking fears of trade wars that could hammer the global economy.

Analysts at Oxford Economics said the tariffs could see Mexican inflation surge to 6% annually, from 4.2% in December, while the peso sank 7%.

Chief EY economist Gregory Daco said Canada's economy could shrink 2.7% this year and 4.3% next year.

While the tariff decision had been well-flagged, equity markets took a hefty hit, with all three main indexes on Wall Street turning negative at the end of Friday trade after Trump reaffirmed he would impose the tariffs.

In Asia, the Year of the Snake started with a nasty bite.

Tokyo, Seoul and Jakarta each shed more than 2% while Sydney, Bangkok and Wellington were each off more than 1%.

Hong Kong pared early losses but remained in the red along with Singapore and India.

Taipei plunged more than 3%, with chip titan and market-heavyweight TSMC diving 5.7% on the first day of trade since China's DeepSeek unveiled a cheaper artificial intelligence model rivaling those of American tech giants.

"This wasn't a shock – it's been telegraphed for weeks – but investors will still feel the jolt as markets adjust to a move almost universally seen as damaging to global growth and financial stability," said Stephen Innes at SPI Asset Management.

On currency markets, the dollar soared 2.3% against the Mexican peso and more than 1% against the Canadian dollar.

It was also sharply higher against the South Korean won, Australian dollar and South African rand.

"We suspect the path of least resistance for now is for Asian currencies and risk assets to weaken, together with a greater risk premia to account for future meaningful tariff moves beyond what we have seen," said Michael Wan at MUFG.

Gold slipped, having hit a fresh record above US\$2,800 last week, as the stronger dollar made it more expensive to buy the metal for holders of other currencies.

Oil prices jumped as Trump's tariffs on Canada and Mexico include the commodity, while Bitcoin dropped more than 5%. – AFP

Rakuten Group scraps plan to list Rakuten Securities

TOKYO: Japan's Rakuten Group has decided not to seek a listing for Rakuten Securities on the Tokyo Stock Exchange, it said, adding it would instead deepen collaboration with major shareholder Mizuho Securities and other firms within the Mizuho Group.

The struggling e-commerce giant had said in

November that it had temporarily withdrawn its application to have the securities unit go public, but that it planned to reapply at an appropriate time.

In 2023, Mizuho said it would invest ¥87 billion (RM2.5 billion) in Rakuten Securities, lifting the group's stake to 49% from just under 20%.

It agreed to acquire 15% of Rakuten's credit card unit for ¥165 billion last November.

Rakuten has conducted a series of fundraising measures in recent years – including asset sales, the listing of subsidiaries and raising equity – to pay off debt it accumulated to fund its mobile network, which launched in 2020.

At its third-quarter earnings last November, Rakuten reported operating profit of ¥538 million, its first quarter in the black since 2020, as losses at its mobile unit shrunk.

The group has ¥400 billion worth of bonds to redeem by the end of 2025, LSEG data shows. – Reuters

Trump announces talks with Canada and Mexico

➤ President says tariff 'pain' will be 'worth the price'

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said he will discuss the punishing tariffs he has levied on Canada and Mexico with both countries today, after arguing that Americans may feel economic "pain" from the 25% duties but that it will be "worth the price".

Speaking to reporters after he flew back to Washington Sunday evening from a weekend in Florida, Trump said he was "speaking with Prime Minister (Justin) Trudeau, and I'm also speaking with Mexico."

"I don't expect anything very dramatic," he added.

Trump has also hit China with a 10% tariff in addition to levies already in place.

A fervent supporter of tariffs, Trump had always maintained that their impact would be borne by

foreign exporters, without being passed on to American consumers, contradicting the opinion of a broad range of experts.

Earlier on Sunday he acknowledged, in a series of messages on his Truth Social network, that Americans may feel economic "pain" from his tariffs, but argued it would be "worth the price" to secure US interests.

China, Mexico and Canada are the top three US trade partners and all have vowed to retaliate when the tariffs take effect today.

"Will there be some pain? Yes, maybe (and maybe not!)" Trump wrote on Sunday morning in all-caps on his Truth Social media platform.

"But we will Make America Great Again, and it will all be worth the price that must be paid."

Analysts expect the trade war to slow US growth and increase prices, at least in the short term, something the president had resisted acknowledging after frustration over rising costs was seen as a major factor in his 2024 election win.

Seeking to limit a spike in fuel

prices, Trump has put the levy on energy imports from Canada at only 10%.

The president has cited illegal immigration and the trafficking of the deadly opioid fentanyl as reasons for the "emergency" measures.

But on Sunday, he also expressed general outrage at trade deficits, which he has long viewed as signs of unfair treatment against the United States.

"The USA has major deficits with Canada, Mexico, and China (and almost all countries!), owes 36 Trillion Dollars, and we're not going to be the 'Stupid Country' any longer," he wrote.

The tariffs announcements capped an extraordinary second week of Trump's new term, with the president facing the worst US aviation disaster in years - even as his administration moved to drastically overhaul the government in actions decried by critics as illegal.

In a separate social media post, Trump took particular aim at Canada, repeating his call for America's northern neighbour to become a US state.

Claiming the United States pays "hundreds of billions of dollars to SUBSIDIZE Canada," Trump said that "without this massive subsidy, Canada ceases to exist as a viable Country".

"Therefore, Canada should become our Cherished 51st State," he said, reiterating the expansionist threat against one of his country's closest allies.

The US Census Bureau says the 2024 trade deficit in goods with Canada was US\$55 billion (RM246 billion).

Canadian backlash was swift, with video posted to social media showing fans at a Toronto Raptors game on Sunday booing during the US national anthem.

Trudeau vowed Saturday to hit back with 25% levies on select American goods worth C\$155 billion (RM477 billion), with a first round today followed by a second one in three weeks.

Leaders of several Canadian provinces have already announced retaliatory actions as well, such as the immediate halt of US liquor purchases. - AFP

EU to make e-commerce firms liable for 'unsafe' goods

BRUSSELS: The European Union is planning to make e-commerce platforms such as Temu, Shein and Amazon Marketplace liable for dangerous or illegal products sold online, the *Financial Times* reported.

Customs reforms would oblige online platforms to provide data before goods arrive in the EU, allowing officials to better control and inspect packages, according to a draft proposal seen by FT.

Currently anyone who purchases goods online in the EU is treated as the importer for customs purposes, but the new reform will hold the platforms responsible, the newspaper reported.

Online retailers would have to collect the relevant duty and VAT and ensure the goods comply with other EU requirements, the report said.

Customs data from the 27 national authorities will be pooled and a new central EU customs authority (EUCA) set up, according to the FT.

"The EUCA would be able to screen the goods based on this information and to identify potential risks, even prior to the loading of the goods for transport," the report said. - Reuters

US consumer protection chief fired

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has fired the head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, who announced that his term had been "concluded" in the latest move by the Republican president to reshape the American government.

Rohit Chopra, who had been named to head the agency responsible for protecting bank customers in 2021, had been due to serve a five-year term, but in a letter posted on social platform X he said that had been cut short.

"Every day, Americans from across the country shared their ideas and experiences with us. You helped us hold powerful companies & their executives accountable for breaking the law, and you made our work better."

Advocacy group Progressive Change Campaign Committee slammed the dismissal as "a direct giveaway to Wall Street", accusing Trump of having "caved into pressure".

Chopra had engaged in multiple skirmishes with the major US banks, particularly over excessive overdraft fees. - AFP



Trump speaking to reporters after signing Interior Secretary Doug Burghum's commission in the Oval Office in Washington. - AFP/IC

UK to become first country to criminalise AI child abuse tools

LONDON: Britain will become the first country to introduce laws against AI tools used to generate sexual abuse images, the government announced.

The government will make it illegal to possess, create or distribute AI tools designed to generate sexualised images of children, punishable by up to five years in prison, Interior Minister Yvette Cooper revealed.

It will also be illegal to possess AI "paedophile manuals" which teach

people how to use AI to sexually abuse children, punishable by up to three years in prison.

"This is a real disturbing phenomenon. Online child sexual abuse material is growing, but also the grooming of children teenagers online. And what's now happening is that AI is putting this on steroids," Cooper told Sky News.

She said AI tools were making it easier for perpetrators "to groom

children, and it's also meaning that they are manipulating images of children and then using them to draw and to blackmail young people into further abuse".

"It's just the most vile of crimes," she added.

The new law would include banning "some of the AI models being used for child abuse", she said.

"Other countries are not yet doing this, but I hope everyone else

will follow," the minister added.

AI tools are being used to generate child sexual abuse images by "nudeifying" real life images of children or by "stitching the faces of other children onto existing images", said the government.

The new laws will also criminalise "predators who run websites designed for other paedophiles to share vile child sexual abuse content or advice on how to groom children,"

punishable by up to 10 years in prison, said the government.

Cooper told the BBC on Sunday that a recent inquiry had found that around 500,000 children across the UK are victims of child abuse of some form each year, "and the online aspect of that is an increasing and growing part of it".

The measures will be introduced as part of the Crime and Policing Bill when it comes to Parliament. - AFP



India budget opts for economic **sugar rush**

➤ Analysts disappointed by lack of growth strategy and reforms

MUMBAI: India's annual budget announcement was a bigger deal than usual this year: As the first full budget of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term, it will set the tone for how the world's fifth-largest economy confronts slowing growth and sagging markets.

But the year's top economic policy event opted mainly for short-term economic relief through middle-class tax cuts, while passing up a chance to go big on reforms needed to reignite rapid growth – once the envy of the world at more than 8%.

The budget also scaled back the government's emphasis on capital spending and infrastructure, another key driver for India's growth ambitions since the pandemic.

Without a strategy to regain high growth rates and assure jobs for India's young population, the budget disappointed analysts and markets, alarmed in recent months by

weak earnings growth and an exodus of foreign investors.

"India is aspiring for 8% growth but we don't have a path to 8% – a growth strategy is not there," said Madhavi Arora, chief economist at Emkay Global Financial Services.

The government has forecast India's GDP growth will slip to a four-year low of 6.4% in the current financial year to March 31 and stay close to that level next year as well, compared with 8.2% in 2023-24.

While the latest tax cuts may help urban consumers, who took some steam out of the economy as weak wage growth and high living costs curtailed their spending habits, economists see deeper problems that need to be addressed.

"Eight per cent will require far deeper interventions in agricultural markets, human capital and ease of doing business," said Dhiraj Nim, an economist at ANZ Research.

Modi, who returned to power in July of last year with a weaker-than-expected mandate, has turned to appeasing politically important constituencies in the months since the election, analysts said.

His Bharatiya Janata Party has reversed agricultural trade policies to favour farmers, offered cash handouts to women and,

now, cut taxes for the middle class.

Analysts noted that this is not the first time, however, that Modi and his party failed to push economic reforms, which also got brushed aside in his previous two terms when the party had won more decisively and had greater political capital.

"In 2019, the BJP got more than 300 seats and had a window (for reforms)," said Amit Ranjan, research fellow at Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), National University of Singapore.

"But the government gave in to the needs of electoral politics as the government knows reforms do not immediately benefit the large section of voters."

In 2015, Modi let lapse an executive order making it easier for businesses to buy land, after failing to win support from opposition parties in the parliament.

And in 2020, both houses of Parliament approved new labour codes, but they have yet to be implemented across all states.

Plans for large-scale privatisations of state-owned enterprises, aiming to reinvigorate them by reducing government involvement, have also faltered, with the government now opting to put fresh funds into ailing state firms. – Reuters

Thai economy may underperform: Central bank chief

BANGKOK: Thailand's economic growth may falter at under 2.9% this year on the back of a weaker-than-expected fourth quarter where consumption cratered despite a government cash handout aimed at firing up sluggish growth, the central bank chief said.

The Bank of Thailand previously anticipated that the economy could expand by 2.9% this year, lower than Finance Ministry projection of 3% growth.

"I have to say that there is some downside risk to that figure," governor Sethaput Suthiwartnarueput told Reuters in an interview.

He said the economy may have expanded close to 2.7% in 2024, with the final-quarter pace weaker than forecast, at north of 3%.

"The impact of the handouts and the stimulus was less than we had expected."

"The handouts that went out sometimes were used to pay down debt and whatnot, so you didn't see that translation into consumption."

Sethaput's remarks were his first this year on the economic growth outlook and the effectiveness of the government's vaunted \$14 billion handout policy.

Thailand's government is set to roll out the third phase of its signature "digital wallet" programme in April, aiming to spur "very high" growth in the first quarter.

The scheme, the ruling party's core election campaign policy, was launched last September after repeated delays.

The BOT's monetary policy stance remains broadly neutral and inflation will rise to cross to hit 1.1% this year, remaining in the target band of 1% to 3%, but the central bank remains concerned about the volatility of the baht, Sethaput said.

"We feel that at present, when you take it all together, the current policy rate is appropriate for striking the right balance for those things."

"That said, if things change, right, we're prepared to change."

Last month, the central bank left its key interest rate unchanged at 2.25%. – Reuters



India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman posing for a photograph as she leaves the ministry of finance to present the annual budget at the parliament. – AFP/IC

Reliance brings Shein back to India

MUMBAI: Reliance Retail has launched an app in India to sell fashionwear from China's Shein under a licensing deal, almost five years since Shein's app was banned in the country after getting caught up in a diplomatic tussle.

The Shein India Fast Fashion app represents a departure from Reliance's strategy of adding brands to its flagship fashion app Ajo – whose offering includes Superdry and Gap – as it competes with rivals such as Myntra from Walmart's Flipkart.

Shein, founded in China in 2012 and later headquartered in Singapore, offers a vast selection of low-priced Western clothes.

Its app was banned in India in 2020 alongside other Chinese apps such as ByteDance's TikTok due to data security concerns, after a border dispute soured Indo-Chinese relations.

Last year, India's government disclosed to Parliament that Reliance had entered an agreement with Shein under which Indian manufacturers would supply products under the Shein brand.

It did not make any other details public.

"The fashion OG (original) is back," said a message displayed upon opening the app.

Deliveries will initially be limited to a few cities including New Delhi and Mumbai and expanded nationwide soon, it said.

Reliance, owned by billionaire Mukesh Ambani, will pay a licence fee for using Shein's brand name, said the person with direct knowledge of the matter.

There is no equity investment in the partnership, the person said. – Reuters

Indonesia produces record 836m metric tons of coal in 2024

JAKARTA: Indonesia produced a record 836 million metric tons of coal in 2024, nearly 18% above its target of 710 million tons, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Bahilil Lahadalia said yesterday.

The figure beat 2023 output of 775 million tons, the previous record.

Indonesia also set a record for exports, shipping about 555 million tons of coal last year, the ministry data showed.

Indonesia is the world's largest exporter of thermal coal.

In 2025, Indonesia targets to produce 735 million tons of coal, senior ministry official Tri Winamo said. The country's actual production often surpass its annual targets.

Meanwhile, the energy minister told reporters Indonesia would also consider using the domestic coal benchmark price, known locally as HBA, for global transactions, due to the gap between domestic and international prices.

"Our nation must be sovereign in setting our commodity prices ourselves," he said.

The HBA is currently set monthly by the

ministry, based on a few global coal prices, and is used to calculate royalty fees for miners.

"The HBA is planned to be used as minimum price for transactions," Tri said.

Meanwhile, the ministry targets nickel ore output of 220 million tons this year, Tri said, but stopped short from disclosing the production quota that has been approved by the ministry.

Last month, nickel miners association APNI told MPs that the ministry has approved a production quota for nearly 300 million wet metric tons for this year. – Reuters

MARKET ROUND-UP: FEBRUARY 3

Bursa Trade Statistic

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

03 Feb 2025

Participation

Retail (23.01%)	Institution (37.48%)	Foreign (39.51%)
Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)
+21.14	+130.78	-151.92
Bought (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)
414.03	722.66	616.78
Sold (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
392.88	591.89	768.71

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

Need Some Ideas?
Our Monthly Trader's Talk will be held Every 1st Monday of the Month Live webinar with Q&A

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SUNBIZ presents a summary of the day's trading activity on Bursa Malaysia and other markets in an easy to digest format.

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

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	11,866.00 -17.60
FBMKLCI	1,553.63 -3.29
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	522.10 -2.02
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	163.73 -1.64
CONSTRUCTION	269.44 +2.62
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,839.80 -14.50
ENERGY	816.12 -7.20
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	518.92 -1.88
HEALTH CARE	2,216.13 +53.92
TRANSPORTATION	1,043.29 -6.74
PROPERTY	1,045.14 -4.29
PLANTATION	7,345.84 +0.24
FBMSHA	11,721.80 -15.30
FBMACE	5,189.17 -5.90
TECHNOLOGY	57.80 -0.37

TURNOVER: 2.080 bil VALUE: RM1.753 bil

Bursa closes lower on increased risk aversion

BURSA Malaysia finished easier on the first trading day of February yesterday as heightened risk aversion gripped the market following the US President Donald Trump's administration's announcement of new tariffs.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI shed 3.29 points, or 0.21%, to 1,553.63, compared to last Friday's close of 1,556.92.

Losers led gainers 589 to 385, while 429 counters were unchanged, 2,294 untraded, and 15 suspended.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors Sdn Bhd head of investment research, Mohd Sedek Jantan said the White House has yet to release full details of the tariff plan, resulting in uncertainties regarding its scope and duration.

"This lack of clarity has increased investors' concern over how and for how long these tariffs will be enforced. Markets dislike surprises, and such policy uncertainties weigh not only on US equities but also on global capital markets by exacerbating negative sentiments," he said.

He further added that the immediate market reaction has been driven by heightened risk aversion.

"However, we maintain the view that the US will continue to rely on Asia to market its products," he said.

Among the heavyweights, Petronas Chemicals lost 24 sen to RM4.41, YTL Power International reduced eight sen to RM3.05, Maybank was four sen lower at RM10.30, Sime Darby was seven sen lower at RM2.18, and PPB Group gave up 24 sen to RM11.72.

Computages led the list of the most active counters, adding half a-sen to 1.5 sen, followed by Supermax which added 15 sen to RM11.22.

Top Glove rose five sen to RM1.25, MAG improved by half-a-sen to 20.5 sen and Oriental Kopi bagged two sen to 85.5 sen. - Bernama

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-CWA1	0.120	-0.035	-22.58	909,345
COMPUTG	0.015	0.005	50.00	783,117
HSI-PWB3	0.070	-0.010	-12.50	549,580
HSI-CWAW	0.220	-0.060	-21.43	413,327
HSI-PWBW	0.105	0.030	40.00	371,401
SUPERMX	1.220	0.150	14.02	370,286
KAB	0.325	-0.005	-1.52	292,603
TOPGLOV	1.250	0.050	4.17	287,438
HSI-CWAY	0.055	-0.020	-26.67	270,124
YTLPOWR	3.050	-0.080	-2.56	240,141
MAG	0.205	0.005	2.50	237,641
KOPI	0.855	0.020	2.40	229,536
YTL	1.880	-0.030	-1.57	222,412
JFTECH-WA	0.105	-0.015	-12.50	202,448
NATGATE	1.770	-0.020	-1.12	199,472
GOCEAN	0.180	0.005	2.86	193,853
MYEG	0.945	-0.010	-1.05	186,400
YEWLEE-WA	0.280	-	-	183,838
CRHB	0.325	-0.015	-4.41	177,179
TANCO	1.910	0.020	1.06	169,817



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
DLADY	31.000	0.500	174
HSI-PWDP	0.740	0.500	1
GESHEN	4.780	0.330	1,082
LIENHOE	0.520	0.245	65
YTLPLT	30.820	0.220	2,465
HARTA	3.510	0.200	110,386
SUPERMX	1.220	0.150	370,286
ANNUM	0.195	0.145	80
KOSSAN	2.380	0.140	80,270
NSOP	3.950	0.140	171
UWC	2.900	0.140	7,361
PETDAG	19.740	0.120	1,004
SUPERMX-C4L	0.370	0.120	920
GAMUDA	4.140	0.100	148,543
PANAMY	17.500	0.100	341
NIKKEI-HJ	0.915	0.095	300
AMWAY	6.840	0.090	70
GASMSIA	4.190	0.090	8,849
MISC	7.330	0.090	3,551
PENTA	3.540	0.090	27,078

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
ANNUM	0.195	290.00	80
PENTA-C45	0.035	250.00	100
HSI-PWDP	0.740	208.33	1
SUPERMX-C4E	0.100	150.00	102,440
BURSA-C85	0.010	100.00	723
CHEETAH-WA	0.010	100.00	6,328
PHB	0.010	100.00	21,874
YTL-C91	0.010	100.00	16,016
YTL-C92	0.010	100.00	5,451
ZENTECH	0.010	100.00	17,785
LIENHOE	0.520	89.09	65
SUPERMX-C4J	0.075	87.50	16,317
SUPERMX-C4F	0.115	76.92	3,759
SUPERMX-C4M	0.160	60.00	37,950
GAMUDA-C2N	0.170	54.55	149
SUPERMX-C4N	0.245	53.13	59,284
COMPUTG	0.015	50.00	783,117
KOSSAN-C68	0.045	50.00	15,600
NATGATE-CB	0.015	50.00	202
SUNCON-C25	0.015	50.00	2,000

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	-0.50
NASDAQ (US)	19,627.44	-54.31	-0.28
NYSE (US)	19,998.82	-167.40	-0.83
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	5,200.56	-86.31	-1.63
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,558.93	-115.03	-1.33
DAX (GER)	21,373.66	-358.39	-1.65
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	38,520.09	-1052.40	-2.66
TOPIX (JPN)	2,720.39	-68.27	-2.45
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	20,217.26	-7.85	-0.04
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,817.08	-15.78	-0.41
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,250.60	-2.02	-0.06
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,453.95	-63.42	-2.52
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	184.10	-0.11	-0.06
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,379.36	-152.94	-1.79
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,628.42	-161.28	-1.83
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	77,211.00	-294.96	-0.38
FBM KLCI	1,553.63	-3.29	-0.21
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,829.03	-26.79	-0.69
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	73.78	+1.25	+1.72
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	76.28	+0.61	+0.81
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,830.10	-4.90	-0.17
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	32.03	-0.23	-0.71
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	964.52	-18.04	-1.84
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	423.95	-3.95	-0.92
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,048.00	-80.50	-0.88
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	474.25	-7.75	-1.61
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	553.50	-6.00	-1.07
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	47.20	+1.09	+2.36
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	10,855.00	-195.00	-1.76
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	197.00	-2.90	-1.45

As at 5pm, Feb 3

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
FAREAST	2.560	-1.040	90
HSTECH-H13	0.325	-0.350	30
HSI-PWB5	0.845	-0.305	6
HEIM	24.040	-0.290	1,387
ALSREIT	0.120	-0.275	4
CHOOBEE	0.440	-0.260	268
SPSETIA-PC	0.400	-0.250	2
PICHEM	4.410	-0.240	59,561
PPB	11.720	-0.240	3,717
F&N	25.200	-0.220	517
NESTLE	89.800	-0.180	473
HLIND	13.200	-0.160	1,246
D&O	1.620	-0.150	57,061
OSKVI	0.450	-0.150	10
SP500-C48	0.255	-0.150	3,774
MP	22.080	-0.140	591
BURSA	8.220	-0.130	21,216
PIE	4.500	-0.130	2,097
P&O	0.500	-0.115	1,232
MI	2.100	-0.100	14,612

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
SERSOL	0.005	-92.86	101
PDZ	0.005	-87.50	-
YTL-C95	0.005	-75.00	1,200
YTL-C96	0.005	-75.00	310
ALSREIT	0.120	-69.62	4
GENTINGC3I	0.005	-66.67	2,685
NIKKEI-CJ	0.040	-66.67	480
PICHEM-C1A	0.005	-66.67	15,402
HSI-PWDD	0.050	-54.55	300
HSTECH-H13	0.325	-51.85	30
CMSB-C50	0.005	-50.00	1,900
CMSB-C51	0.005	-50.00	6,700
EAH	0.005	-50.00	75,851
HSI-CWA2	0.025	-50.00	240
MPI-C8	0.005	-50.00	16,700
NATGATE-CA	0.005	-50.00	7,840
NATGATE-CD	0.010	-50.00	16,937
PBBANK-C1E	0.005	-50.00	3,501
PICHEM-C1B	0.005	-50.00	5,000
YINSON-C37	0.005	-50.00	1,000

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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January manufacturing PMI up slightly but still in contraction

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) inched up to 48.7 in January from 48.6 posted in December last year but stayed below the neutral level for the eighth straight month.

Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd said the latest reading reflects prolonged manufacturing weakness since June 2024, subdued production, weak orders, and declining purchasing activity and inventories.

The firm said weak production was due to subdued demand, as new orders eased for the seventh month due to weak domestic and external demand.

Notably, export orders fell for a second straight month and the sharpest drop since October 2023.

Further, lower production requirements led firms to scale back purchases and remain cautious with inventory holdings, Kenanga noted.

"Input cost rose slightly but stayed below the long-term average. Firms slashed output prices for the first time since June 2023 to boost sales.

"Employment levels were scaled back for the fourth month due to lower capacity needs.

"Despite weaker confidence, now at a seven-month low, firms remain optimistic about future demand," Kenanga said.

On the outlook, Kenanga said challenges persist, but tech cycle and trade shifts may offer support.

Touching on external factors, Kenanga said the manufacturing sector faces near-term headwinds from US policy shifts.

However, the ongoing global tech upcycle and rising demand for artificial intelligence-related products should provide support.

Ringgit falls as US hikes tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China

THE ringgit weakened against the US dollar yesterday, primarily due to the latest tariff imposition by the US on Canada, Mexico, and China, according to analysts

At 6pm, the ringgit fell to 4.4710/4800 against the greenback from Friday's close of 4.4550/4600.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes said despite the tariff onslaught, there were signs of an olive branch from China, which appeared eager to open trade talks.

Most notable was Beijing's plans to not devalue the yuan, a move that is meant as a peace offering to Washington given the longstanding US perception of China as a currency manipulator, he said.

"While the tariff hit was undeniably sharp, there is growing market sentiment that this round of trade tensions could be far shorter-lived than the last major trade war.

"The prospect of a quicker rollback of tariffs is offering some support, but volatility remains elevated," Innes told Bernama.

Meanwhile, the ringgit was traded mostly higher against other major currencies.

It fell against the Japanese yen to 2.8838/8898 from 2.8798/8832, higher against the euro to 4.5747/5839 from 4.6247/6299, and advanced against the British pound to 5.4966/5077 from 5.5336/5398.

The local note was mostly traded higher against Asean currencies. It strengthened against the Singapore dollar to 3.2709/2777 from 3.2854/2896 and went up against the Thai baht to 13.1345/1687 from 13.2274/2498.

It was higher against the Indonesian rupiah to 271.7/272.5 from 273.2/273.6 and also against the Philippine peso to 7.62/7.64 from 7.63/7.64.

Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5690	4.4330	4.4230
1 Australian Dollar	2.8200	2.7050	2.6890
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3370	3.2380	3.2300
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1050	3.0210	3.0090
1 Euro	4.6830	4.5300	4.5100
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5540	2.4590	2.4430
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3370	3.2380	3.2300
1 Sterling Pound	5.6250	5.4450	5.4250
1 Swiss Franc	5.0230	4.8060	4.7910
100 UAE Dirham	125.8600	119.3200	119.1200
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.8390	3.5740	3.3740
100 Chinese Renminbi	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Danish Krone	64.3400	59.1900	58.9900
100 Hongkong Dollar	59.2400	56.2800	56.0800
100 Indian Rupee	5.3700	5.0400	4.8400
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0290	0.0262	0.0212
100 Japanese Yen	2.9400	2.8450	2.8350
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.9000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	40.9300	37.6400	37.4400
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6700	1.5600	1.3600
100 Philippine Peso	7.9400	7.4800	7.2800
100 Qatar Riyal	126.7100	120.2900	120.0900
100 Saudi Riyal	123.1700	116.9200	116.7200
100 South Africa Rand	25.0100	22.5700	22.3700
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5800	1.4500	1.2500
100 Swedish Krona	41.9700	38.2100	38.0100
100 Thai Baht	14.1300	12.5200	12.1200

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

Banks Overweight

Drivers of system loan growth



Source: Company data, RHB

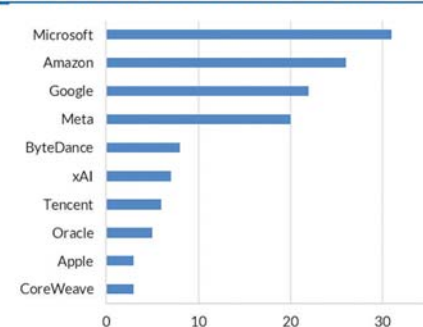
SYSTEM loans grew 5.5% YoY (+2.0% QoQ, +0.8% MoM) in Dec 2024, which came in at the higher end of our 5-5.5% forecast. The YoY strength primarily came from household loans, which rose 6% YoY (QoQ: +2%, MoM: +1%), while non-household loans grew by a more moderate 5% YoY (QoQ: +3%, MoM: +1%). The finance (+21% YoY, +12% QoQ), wholesale & retail trade (+8% YoY, +2% QoQ) and manufacturing (+5% YoY, +3% QoQ) sectors continued to show solid momentum, while auto loans (+9% YoY, +2% QoQ) and residential mortgages (+7% YoY, +2% QoQ) were the main drivers of household loans.

2024 saw a slight moderation in lending indicators, as total system loan applications and approvals growth for the year eased to +3% and +1% YoY (from +9% and +11% in 2023). We think this could lead to a more moderate system loan growth in 2025, especially if the trend keeps up during the year – we anticipate loan growth for 2025 at c.5% YoY. Elsewhere, we observed that the average lending rate (ALR) has been on a downturn, with the Dec 2024 print of 5.1% implying a 2bps decline MoM (YoY: -34bps). However, several banks that we had checked with mentioned that sequential NIM compression in Q4'24 was not as severe as that in Q3'23.

System deposits rose 3% YoY (+2% QoQ, +1% MoM), ie at a softer clip compared to system loan growth. As a result, system LDR inched up 2ppts YoY to 88% (flat vs Sep 2024). Interestingly, CASA deposits growth (+5% YoY, +3% QoQ) outpaced that of fixed deposits (FD); +4% YoY, +1% QoQ, so the system CASA ratio expanded to 31.4% (Dec 2023: 31%, Sept 2024: 31.2%). This follows the 10bps YoY decline in FD rates across multiple tenors, as the banks continue to manage down funding cost to preserve NIMs. – RHB Research, Feb 3

Construction Overweight

Spending for AI DC on servers in 2024 (USDbn)



Source: Omdia

CLAIMS by DeepSeek's large language model costing just US\$5.6 million to train – a fraction of the billion-dollar investments that US companies have made – may reduce the need for data centres (DCs) in the future. However, we envisage DeepSeek's advancement could, in contrast, catalyse the DC industry as a whole, if its claim is proven to be true.

With tech giants staying put on AI investments, we think Gamuda and Sunway Construction's DC orderbook and tenderbook will not face substantial scale-downs, as most of their clients are MNCs from Tier-1 countries (the US, the UK, Netherlands) that are eligible for the universal validated end-user status. If AI adoption continues growing amid democratisation, it may also bode well for contractors aiming to build DCs (eg Kerjaya Prospek), with more DC providers potentially coming to Malaysia and providing more jobs for contractors.

Malaysia remains a magnet for DC investments due to its cost competitiveness in land, labour, electricity and proximity to Singapore. As AI-enabled services may increase in the long run amid better affordability and efficiency, demand for underlying infrastructure is expected to grow in tandem. Hence, DC investments may continue coming on the assumption that Jevons paradox materialises in light of potential AI democratisation. – RHB Research, Feb 3

Public Bank Bhd Buy. Target price: RM5.20



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

PUBLIC Bank's upcoming Q4'24 results (due to be released on Feb 26) will be affected by the goodwill impairment at PFH, but the net impact is likely to be manageable, in our view, buffered in part by ongoing write-backs in management overlays.

To recap, 73.2%-owned Public Financial Holdings (PFH), recently reported an FY24 loss of HK\$999.4 million (RM581 million). Baked into the accounts is a goodwill impairment of HK\$810 million (RM471 million) excluding which, PFH would have made a loss of HK\$189 million. The impairment takes the carrying value of the goodwill at PFH down to HK\$1.96 billion (RM1.12 billion) from HK\$2.77 billion, and was derived after evaluating the cashflow generating capabilities of the subsidiaries. Key assumptions include a pre-tax discount rate of 9.7% and a long-term growth rate of 2.8%. We think that the assumptions are fairly conservative already, especially the discount rate used, and do not think that further impairments are likely, unless there is an acute deterioration in the operating environment in Hong Kong.

Public Bank maintains a progressively higher dividend policy, and we do not expect its dividend payment in FY24 to be impacted, given the adequacy of its capital base (Group CET1 ratio estimated at about 14% post-LPI acquisition. We forecast a DPS of 21 sen for FY24E against 19 sen in FY23, on a dividend payout ratio of 58% (56% in FY23). If it were to maintain its FY23 DPS of 19 sen, the yield on the stock would be 4.4%.

BUY with RM5.20 TP. – Maybank Investment Bank, Feb 3



the Sun **LYFE**

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Editorial
T: 03-7784 6688
F: 03-7785 2625
E: lifestyle@thesundaily.com

Advertising
T: 03-7784 8888
E: advertise@thesundaily.com



French **sophistication**

Experience The Chateau Spa & Wellness Resort - 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

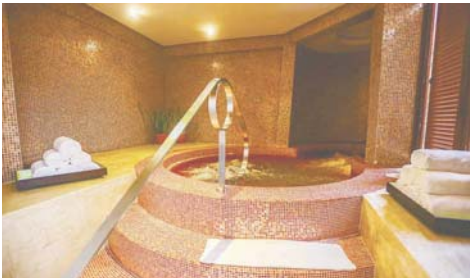
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The outdoor jacuzzi offers scenic views for a relaxing experience.



The three-bedroom suites offer a cosy atmosphere.



The glasshouse is stunning, leaving you in awe with its beauty.

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

If you are searching for a holiday retreat that feels like an enchanting escape from the bustling city, The Chateau Spa & Wellness Resort in Bukit Tinggi, Pahang is just 45 minutes from KL. This hidden gem is a replica of the 18th-century Haut Koenigsbourg castle in Alsace, France.

From the moment you step in, you will be transported to a European dream, with grand architecture, elegant interiors and an atmosphere that radiates sophistication and tranquillity.

theSun had the opportunity to experience this luxurious resort firsthand and every aspect of our stay was nothing short of spectacular.

European escape in Malaysia

With its French-inspired architecture and lush surroundings, the resort feels like a storybook castle. The beautifully maintained pathways, grand hallways, and intricate details exude charm and elegance. But it is not just about looks, the hospitality here is as equally flawless. The staff are always ready to assist with warm smiles and respectful demeanour, ensuring every guest feels like royalty.

The resort features 172 rooms and suites across eight different categories, blending traditional European aesthetics with modern sophistication. From a deluxe room for a romantic getaway to a spacious family suite, there is an option to suit your needs. Families will especially appreciate the kids' club, designed to entertain little ones while parents indulge in some well-deserved relaxation.

La Serre Glasshouse

For couples dreaming of a fairy-tale wedding, the resort offers an exquisite venue — *La Serre*. This European-inspired glasshouse is the pinnacle of romance, adorned with grand chandeliers and ethereal interiors. It provides an enchanting setting for up to 200 guests, making it ideal for weddings and special events. It is also recognised as Malaysia's biggest wedding and event glasshouse by the Malaysia Book of Records.

Ultimate spa and wellness experience

The resort is home to Asia's first European-concept spa, blending European luxury with Asian warmth and hospitality. The spa offers an extensive range of treatments, from therapeutic massages to holistic wellness programmes. Guests can also participate in yoga sessions amid a serene setting, making it a place to unwind and rejuvenate.

Farm-to-table dining

Dining at the resort is an experience in itself, with a strong focus on sustainability. The resort grows its own vegetables in a pesticide-free organic greenhouse, ensuring every ingredient



The French-themed hotel is absolutely magical.
 - ALL PICS BY ADAM HAMZAH/THE SUN

French-inspired luxury retreat

Enjoy world-class hospitality at The Chateau Spa & Wellness Resort

used in its meals is fresh and chemical-free. Guests can soon explore this greenhouse themselves as it is set to open to the public soon.

With its diverse and carefully curated menu, the resort offers something to satisfy every palate. *La Vie* provides all-day dining with a variety of cuisines, while *Lassiette* showcases authentic North Indian cuisine. For a refined afternoon tea experience, guests can visit *Belle Vue* Tea Room, while *Le Rouge & Salon Cigar Lounge* offers a stylish setting with a fine selection of wines, cocktails and other premium beverages.

Adventures await

For adventure seekers, the resort features a park filled with thrilling activities such as flying fox, rock climbing, high rope obstacles, canopy

walks, paintball, archery and target shooting. Safety is a top priority here, with staff stationed at every checkpoint to guide participants through the activities. Clear rules and well-maintained facilities ensure an enjoyable experience for all. For guests who prefer a less intense activity, archery and target shooting provide equally engaging alternatives.

Japanese village

Nestled amid lush greenery, this retreat offers cool weather and breathtaking scenery. Reaching the village requires some effort, there are stairs and hills to climb, but the numerous resting spots and the view at the top make the journey worthwhile.

Guests can experience Japanese culture by renting a traditional *kimono* and participating in

a tea ceremony. The picturesque surroundings provide the beautiful backdrop for memorable photos. Visitors can also dine at *Ryo Zan Tei*, an authentic Japanese restaurant serving fresh and delectable cuisine. The restaurant staff, dressed in traditional *kimono*, enhance the experience with their warm and attentive service.

Beyond these highlights, the resort offers other facilities, including the *Berjaya Hills Golf and Country Club* and more. Adventure, relaxation or a mix of both, this resort is ready to welcome guests.

Recognised for excellence

In January, the resort was honoured with the Asean Spa Services award at the Asean Tourism Standard awards, presented by Malaysia's Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture.

"Berjaya Hills Resort is an ideal place for families, friends and even corporate groups looking for a wholesome and healthy retreat. We encourage visitors to experience this unique French-inspired hotel and create lasting memories," Berjaya Hills Resort Berhad and Berjaya Tioman Resort area general manager Paul Cheah said.

One of the resort's standout features is its dedication to sustainability. With a pesticide-free approach to food, self-sustaining farming practices and a deep connection to nature, the resort offers a wholesome environment for guests to relax and recharge.



Visitors can also participate in a traditional tea ceremony.



This activity challenges your adventure skills and pushes your limits.



Visitors can capture stunning photos surrounding the lush greenery.



Lounge at 1001 Nights Hotel.



Good-for-One room at Lyf Georgetown.



Unwind Lounge with art deco interiors.



Hyatt Centric's facade.

Leisurely good time

Hotels open doors for new experiences in Malaysia

BY VERONICA ELANKOVAN

LONG holidays loom as Ramadan and Hari Raya is coming right up after the end of the Chinese New Year festivities. This unique time frame only means one thing — staycation and here are some options to consider.

Hyatt Centric City Centre Kuala Lumpur

Lifestyle hotel Hyatt Centric recently opened its doors to explorers who want a taste of KL. As your new “local bestie,” it helps you discover the locality of the metropolitan city. The 312-room hotel is designed to embody the country’s colourful history and timeless legacy.

An homage to the city’s mining past, bright pops of colour accentuated by industrial elements reflects its bygone history. Hyatt Centric also collaborated with Malaysian graffiti artist Jefr to ignite the unconventional charm of KL.

Designed by Silverfox Studios, each room is a harmony of modern and traditional motifs, with bold, clean lines sketching the warm colours of the walls to create a synergistic nostalgia.

Truly a melting pot of cultures, Hyatt Centric offers visitors three distinct dining experiences — you can enjoy handmade pizzas at IL Forno, casual dining at TanBuri and craft cocktails at @21.

Lyf Georgetown Penang

A community-driven, co-living space, Lyf prioritises flexibility, collaboration and culture, making it stand distinct in a pool of hotels that

offer leisure within four walls. A platform for creativity and connection, Lyf offers a unique balance between a creative space and a place to stay.

With 114 rooms, the property also include social haven Unwind Lounge, dynamic get-together hub Connect Event Space, meeting room Collab, communal space Bond Kitchen, fitness hub Burn Social Gym, tropical bliss Dip Pool and laundry space Wash & Hang.

The hotel also integrates smart technologies such as mobile key access and app-enabled services via ASR (Ascott Star Rewards) app for a seamless stay.

Adding to its allure is its Door of Cosmic Dreams installation, which truly captures the new wave of hotel concepts that prioritise conscious living via adventure and discovery.

1001 Nights Hotel @ Genting Highlands

1001 Nights Hotel offers a sanctuary to those who breathe and live luxury.

Its Star River Theme Lobby and Sky Theme Pavilion Garden inspire creativity, while its Hall of Human Stories offers an avenue for

discovering and preserving lifetime memories.

Perched 6,000ft above sea level, 1001 Nights Hotel is nestled between mountains and forests that provide a rich view of Genting Highlands. A one-of-kind staycation, its thematic rooms – Rock Starz, Wellness and Fairytale – offer distinct and luxurious experiences for its guests.

Taking it up a notch, it serves Eastern flavours inspired by the tales of the 1001 Nights, crafted with the finest and freshest ingredients.

Dusit Princess Melaka

Situated in the heart of Malacca, Dusit Princess Melaka is a contemporary hotel that caters to business and leisure travellers. Bringing its gracious Thai



@21 Rooftop Bar at Hyatt Centric.

hospitality to the historic city, the hotel occupies the former Ramada Plaza Melaka Building.

Dusit Princess Melaka’s facelift into an upper-midscale hotel reflects its distinctive essence. From Deluxe rooms with city views to an expansive Presidential Suite, the hotel was intentionally designed to give its guests from

different backgrounds a comfortable and relaxing stay.

Featuring a gym and swimming pool, Dusit Princess Melaka also factors in the wellness and health of its guests. They also can treat themselves to a gastronomic journey with Zest, an all-day dining resto, and Long Feng, an authentic Chinese resto, while lounging at the hotel.

A mecca of leisure and business stay, it is also equipped with meeting facilities and a grand ballroom.

With a plethora of hotels launching left and right, you are in for a leisurely good time.



Dusit Princess Melaka’s facade.

MALAYSIAN tourist arrivals in Japan increased 21.9% year-on-year, with a report from Japan National Tourism Organisation Kuala Lumpur (JNTO KL) showing that 506,800 Malaysians visited Japan in 2024 compared to 415,712 in 2023, due to factors such as the rising ringgit against the Japanese yen and Japan's unique appeal to Malaysians.

In December 2024 alone, the year-on-year increase stood at 17.8%, with 71,600 visiting Japan in that period compared to 60,806 visitors in that same period last year.

JNTO also revealed that 2024 total tourist arrivals in Japan had exceeded 36 million people, with 36,869,900 total arrivals last year, the highest number ever recorded.

In fact, Osaka and Toyama ranked among the *New York Times*'s "52 Places to Go in 2025". These destinations were recognised for their unique cultural experiences, culinary excellence and stunning natural landscapes, further solidifying Japan's position as a must-visit destination.

Osaka is set to host Expo 2025 in Kansai from April 13 to Oct 13, 2025 on Yumeshima Island with the theme of "Designing Future Society with Our Lives" and is projected to welcome 28.2 million visitors.

Adding to the rising interest in Japan, chartered flights from Malaysia to the Tohoku region have been introduced since 2022. This limited-time service has significantly

Malaysia's love for Japan soars

➤ Record 506,800 Malaysians visited country in 2024



boosted the region's visibility among Malaysian tourists, showcasing Tohoku's rich history, seasonal beauty and warm hospitality.

JNTO encouraged travellers to

explore the diverse offerings of Osaka, Toyama and Tohoku, as each destination promises unforgettable experiences blending tradition and modernity.

"We are thrilled to witness the continued and growing interest among Malaysian travelers to Japan. This remarkable growth in visitor numbers not only underscores the



Toyama prefecture is renowned for its picturesque landscapes.

strong bilateral ties between Japan and Malaysia but also highlights the evolving preferences of Malaysian tourists who seek authentic cultural experiences, diverse attractions and memorable journeys. We remain committed to offering Malaysian visitors even more opportunities to explore and enjoy all that Japan has to offer.

"With continued efforts to enhance travel experiences and promote Japan's rich culture, scenic beauty and world-class hospitality, JNTO looks forward to welcoming even more Malaysian tourists in the years to come," JNTO KL executive director Kenichiro Ozaki said.

Osaka bans street smoking ahead of Expo 2025 to become more visitor-friendly

THE Japanese city of Osaka has imposed a smoking ban on public streets as part of efforts to become more visitor-friendly ahead of this year's World Expo.

Around 160 countries and regions are participating in Expo 2025, the latest edition of an event held every five years in different global locations.

"The World Expo begins in April. We want to welcome many people from all over the world, so we want to make Osaka a city where people feel safe with smoke-free streets," mayor Hideyuki Yokoyama said in early January.

Before Jan 27, smoking was banned in six zones including the area around Osaka station. This has been expanded to the whole city and violators face a fine of 1,000 yen (RM28).



Local regulations already ban smoking while walking in most places in Japan. - AFPIC

Local regulations already ban smoking while walking in most places in Japan, but opposition from some lawmakers has prevented strict national laws.

From April, the wider Osaka region will prohibit smoking in eateries with seating areas larger than 30 square metres (320 sq ft), although lighting up in a separate space, such as a smoking room, is allowed.

Current national laws ban smoking in establishments with dining areas over 100 square metres.

Expo 2025 has struggled with slow ticket sales and public concern over the construction budget.

About 7.5 million tickets had been sold by early January for the six-

month event - half the organisers' target.

The capital outlawed smoking in all restaurants in 2018, in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics.

Smoking outdoors remains allowed in some Tokyo districts.

Japan's central and local governments earn a yearly total of around two trillion yen in cigarette tax revenue.

The national government also owns a one-third stake in Japan Tobacco, the world's third largest tobacco company.

Tobacco use in Japan has been falling in line with a broader global trend, with the ratio of smokers standing at 15.7% in 2023. - AFP

Jellyfish wonders at Kyoto Aquarium

KYOTO Aquarium is holding the event Jellyfish Luminaries, in which jellyfish lamps are exhibited in the area Jellyfish Wonders until March 21.

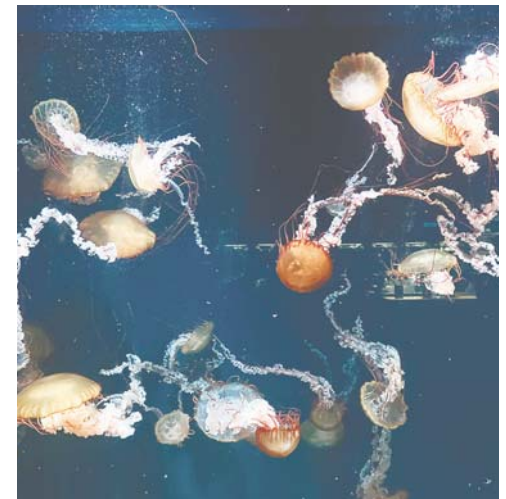
Now in its fifth year, this popular event showcases 60 jellyfish lamps that highlight 20 types of jellyfish.

In particular, when you walk through the Mirror Tunnel, you can enjoy fantastic scenery reflected on the mirror walls. For those lamps, shades that reproduced the appearance of

jellyfish were created by glasswork artisans in Niigata prefecture under the supervision of its breeding staff.

Jellyfish are photogenic, popular creatures that can look as auspicious as a dragon or a phoenix in a photo.

Visit and experience the event at Kyoto Aquarium - an enjoyable attraction during the Chinese New Year holidays and a chance to wish for good luck in the year ahead.



The jellyfish area at Kyoto Aquarium is an immensely popular photography spot. - BUSINESSWIREPIC



From April, the wider Osaka region will prohibit smoking in eateries with seating areas larger than 30 square metres (320 sq ft). - PEXELSPIC

RECENTLY, the Hainan Free Trade Port in southern China has launched various events featuring cultural heritage to celebrate the Spring Festival. Visitors can look forward to abundant sunshine, a rich cultural legacy, verdant rainforests and warm hospitality over the holiday season.

The social practices of the Chinese people in celebration of traditional New Year were inscribed on Unesco's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity last December. This Spring Festival, Hainan has planned 300 programmes to highlight its intangible cultural heritage.

In addition to traditional activities such as the Hainan Opera spear tricks, Lantern Festival flower exchange, carp lantern Spring Festival celebration, *Qionghai Nanzhong* dragon dance, Sanya Phoenix Island Carnival and display of Li brocade craftsmanship, visitors can taste delicacies such as *zhegu* tea, coconut rice and brown sugar rice cakes. With a feast for the eyes and delight for the palate, a journey to the island promises to be unforgettable.

In addition, to make tourists' winter experience delightful and tailored to their specific needs, Hainan has designed eight routes (for example, unwinding at romantic beaches, driving around the island) and 72 packages (for example, ethnic culture, cuisine plus culture).

Since the end of last year, China's 144-hour visa-free transit policy has been extended to 240 hours, and two ports of entry have been added in Hainan, allowing international guests to enter and exit the island via any of its three international airports (Haikou Meilan, Sanya Phoenix and Qionghai Boao).

"*Qilou* (arcaded buildings), food, surfing... I saw a Hainan that is both traditional and modern. Now that there is a 240-hour visa-free policy, I would love to visit Hainan again to explore further!" said Liu Wenxin, a Singaporean tourist who recently returned from a trip to Hainan.

According to the Hainan Tourism, Culture, Radio, TV and Sports Department, the three major



Hainan has planned 300 programmes to highlight its intangible cultural heritage.

China's island paradise

➤ Hainan offers unforgettable cultural immersion, sunny hospitality

airports in the province have resumed operations after Covid-19, with 70 international and regional passenger routes connecting Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, the Middle East, Australia, New

Zealand, Europe, Hong Kong, Macao and beyond. In particular, new routes from Hainan to the US, UAE and New Zealand provide added convenience for overseas visitors.

Moreover, Hainan authorities have introduced multiple payment options to enhance the experience for international sightseers.

"When I buy anything, I can scan to pay or tap to pay. From getting off

the plane to visiting scenic spots, a mobile phone is all I need. This is incredibly easy," said American tourist David, who used Alipay to make a quick purchase of a souvenir on Haikou's *Qilou* Old Street.

Global tourism back to pre-pandemic levels, according to UN Tourism

GLOBAL tourism fully recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic in 2024 with 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals recorded worldwide due to "robust" demand from key markets, said United Nations (UN) Tourism.

"A majority of destinations welcomed more international tourists in 2024 than they did before the pandemic, while visitor spending also continued to grow strongly," the Madrid-based body said in a statement.

The number of international tourist arrivals last year was 11% higher than the 1.3 billion recorded in 2023, reaching the level seen in 2019, the year before the pandemic paralysed travel.

A "robust performance from large source markets and the ongoing recovery of destinations in Asia" drove the results, UN Tourism added.

Receipts from global tourism reached US\$1.6 trillion (RM5.7 trillion) in 2024, about 3% more than the previous year and 4% more than in 2019 when inflation and currency fluctuations are taken into account.

"In 2024, global tourism completed its recovery from the pandemic and, in many places, tourist arrival and especially earnings are already higher than in 2019. Growth is expected to continue throughout 2025, driven by strong demand contributing to

the socio-economic development of both mature and emerging destinations. This recalls our immense responsibility as a sector to accelerate transformation, placing people and planet at the centre of the development of tourism," UN Tourism secretary-general Zurab Pololikashvili said.

The surge in visitor numbers has sparked a backlash in many tourism hotspots, prompting the authorities to take steps to ease the pressure on bursting beaches and gridlocked streets.

Venice, one of the world's top tourist destinations, is trying to limit the influx of tourists into its historic centre by charging day trippers for entry.

Japan has introduced a daily cap on hiker numbers at Mount Fuji while Amsterdam and other port cities have reduced the number of cruise ships allowed to dock.

Europe, the world's most popular destination region, recorded 747 million international arrivals in 2024, a 5% increase over the previous year and 1% above 2019 levels.

All European regions surpassed pre-pandemic levels except Central and Eastern Europe "where many destinations are still suffering from the lingering effects of the Russian aggression on Ukraine," the statement said.

While international arrivals grew by 33% in Asia and the Pacific to reach 316 million in 2024, that represented just 87% of pre-pandemic levels.

The Middle East posted the strongest rebound since 2019 with 95 million arrivals last year, a 32% jump over pre-pandemic levels but just 1% higher than 2023.

Many countries such as Japan and Morocco have set new tourism records following the pandemic and several destinations reported double-digit growth in international arrivals when compared to 2019.

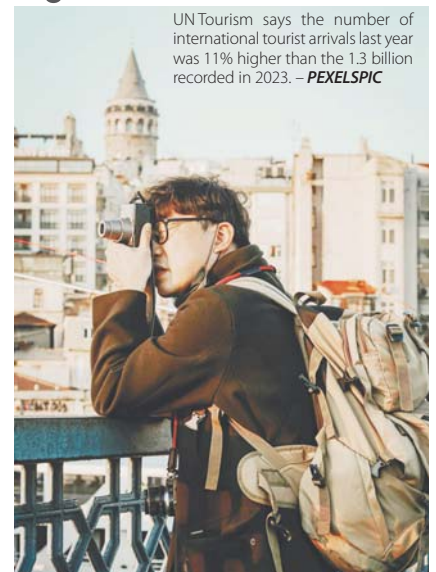
El Salvador, which has successfully cracked down on violent crime, posted an 81% increase in foreign arrivals on 2019 levels.

Saudi Arabia, which only fully opened to tourism in 2019, recorded a 69% jump.

The UN body predicts international arrivals will grow 3% to 5% in 2025 when compared to last year if the rebound in travel in Asia continues, inflation keeps receding and "geopolitical conflicts do not escalate".

High transportation and accommodation costs, volatile oil prices and staff shortages are among the other key challenges the tourism sector will face this year, it added. – AFP

UN Tourism says the number of international tourist arrivals last year was 11% higher than the 1.3 billion recorded in 2023. – PEXELSPIC





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

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

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

“Most of the items I have in my shop are from friends or relatives who sell them to me because they know I sell vintage goods. Such items have their own fans and collectors. Some enjoy just looking at them while others love to collect antiques to use as decorations,” said Khairudin.

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

“I even have an antique telescope like the one used by Jack Sparrow (in the film *Pirates of the Caribbean*) priced at RM1,200. This telescope is made of brass in England... it has high aesthetic value and is rare to find,” he said, adding he obtained the telescope from a friend.

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

“We used to get more visitors those days, now there are fewer maybe because times have changed,” said Cheah, who sells various vintage sewing machines and home decorations at the flea market.

Meanwhile, visitor Nazira Ismail, 38, said the market is not just a trading place but a nostalgic spot for the older generation and a place where the younger generation can get to know



The flea market, which hosts over 20 traders, operates every Sunday from 7am to 1pm.

Finding hidden treasures

➤ Seremban's flea market attracts antique enthusiasts

more about items that were once in use.

“It is exciting to see old items such as antique brass irons that use charcoal to press clothes. Nowadays, you rarely see such things in the market. My children are also thrilled to see these old items that were probably used by our ancestors. These

days, they are hard to come by. But we just look at them as these items are quite costly. We know they are priceless treasures,” said the mother of three.

She hopes more young people will visit the market to catch a glimpse of these old items, thereby appreciating the rich history they represent.

The flea market, which hosts over 20 traders, operates every Sunday from 7am to 1pm. Despite its limited operating hours, it remains a key weekend attraction, especially for antique enthusiasts always on the hunt for unique collectibles. – Bernama



Many of the items on show allow visitors a peek into a bygone era. – PICS BY BERNAMA

Film's hapless 90s singleton Bridget Jones returns

HOLLYWOOD star Renee Zellweger marked the return of Bridget Jones – the Chardonnay-swinging, calorie-counting hapless 1990s singleton – at the recent world premiere of the franchise's film *Mad About the Boy*.

Taking place in London, scene of all Bridget's greatest catastrophes, the red carpet showing was also attended by rising star Leo Woodall, 28, who plays her latest and much younger

love interest.

Texan actor Zellweger famously piled on a few pounds and successfully cultivated a British accent to star as Bridget alongside Hugh Grant and Colin Firth in the original 2001 smash hit *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

In the latest instalment, Bridget – now a 51-year-old widow and single parent – navigates new levels of embarrassment as she grapples with texts, tweets, dating apps and Botox after the death of her husband Mark Darcy.

The fourth and latest instalment comes nearly a decade after the previous one – *Bridget Jones's Baby*.

In that movie, Bridget ended up pregnant and unsure who the father was after flings with a handsome American internet billionaire, played by Patrick Dempsey, and ex Mark Darcy, played by Firth, whom she eventually marries.

Bridget Jones creator Helen Fielding previously said she wrote Darcy out of the series because she did not want Bridget to become smug and married.

Yet in *Mad About the Boy*, Hugh Grant reprises his role as Daniel



The film will release in cinemas globally on Valentine's Day, but will be available to stream a day earlier.



Zellweger plays a 51-year-old widow and single mother in the latest *Bridget Jones* film. – PICS FROM FACEBOOK @BRIDGETJONES

Cleaver, Bridget's former boss and boyfriend, while Emma Thompson also returns as her gynaecologist.

Grant has described the film as “extremely funny, but very sad”.

The *Love Actually* star, 64, told the BBC last year there had been “no obvious role” for him in the film.

But producers had “cramped” him

in and Grant had managed to “make up a good interim story for him” nonetheless.

The London premiere was also attended by Oscar and Golden Globe-nominated actor Chiwetel Ejiofor, who plays another of Jones's love interests, and director Michael Morris.

Jones began life in a newspaper column by Fielding in 1995 before she turned it into a series of bestselling books.

Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy is due to be released via US streaming service Peacock next Thursday and a day later in cinemas internationally. – AFP

India demolish England

INDIA'S Abhishek Sharma hit a brutal 135 to set up a crushing 150-run win over England in the fifth T20 international and seal the series 4-1 yesterday.

Opener Abhishek's incredible 54-ball knock, laced with 13 sixes, fired India, who clinched the series in the fourth T20, to 247-9 after being invited to bat first at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

The tourists were never in the chase despite Phil Salt's 23-ball 55 as India bowled out the tourists for 97 for their second biggest T20 victory by runs.

Abhishek also took two wickets in the only over he bowled with left-arm spin.

"It's a special one, coming for the country, always a great feeling," said the 24-year-old Abhishek.

"When I see it's my day, I always try to go from the first ball. And the way the coach and the captain have treated me from the first day. They've always wanted this intent, they've always backed me."

England slipped to 68-4 as Jos Buttler (7), Harry Brook (2) and Liam Livingstone (9) all failed to make an impact.

Shivam Dube, a batting all-rounder who

Abhishek's brilliant ton helps host seal series

bowls medium pace, removed Salt with the first ball he bowled after he was controversially replaced by fast bowler Harshit Rana as a concussion substitute in the previous match.

The rest of the England batting fell quickly with Jacob Bethell, who made 10, the only batter to reach double figures other than Salt.

Wrist spinner Varun Chakravarthy and Dube also took two each.

Chakravarthy was named player of the series for his 14 wickets in the five matches.

Pace bowler Mohammed Shami finished with three wickets as he wrapped up the England innings in 10.3 overs.

Abhishek dominated a partnership of 115 for the second wicket with Tilak Varma following England's decision to bowl first.

He raced to his fifty in 17 balls with a six and then reached his second T20 century for India in 37 deliveries. Dube was the next highest scorer with 30.

Speedster Mark Wood dismissed Hardik Pandya for nine after earlier removing opener Sanju Samson.

Leg-spinner Adil Rashid had Abhishek caught out in the 18th over as India lost four wickets in the final five overs.

"I've seen a lot of cricket, and I thought Abhishek's innings today was one of the best," said England captain Buttler.

Past bowler Brydon Carse took three wickets including Suryakumar for two, with the Indian captain's batting woes showing no signs of ending - 28 runs in five matches.

"Some of the guys' bowling performances - even today, Brydon Carse and Mark Wood were outstanding," Buttler said of his team's positives.

India won the opening two matches before England came back to keep the series alive in the third game.

India took an unassailable 3-1 lead in the fourth T20 after Rana's inclusion in place of Dube - not a like-for-like replacement - angered England.

The two teams now head into three one-day internationals starting Feb 6 in Nagpur.

The series is a warm-up for the 50-over Champions Trophy starting Feb 19 in Pakistan and Dubai. - AFP



India's Abhishek Sharma. - AFP/IC

302 Jobs

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322 Notices

Pickles Auctions

Bank Repossessed bikes and cars for sale by auction. Auctions are conducted via eBidding on **Wednesday - 5th February** from 9.35am onwards. Viewing inspection on every **Tuesday - 4th February** at 9.30am - 5.30pm. All are invited to join our PUBLIC AUCTION. All unsold bank repossessed vehicles will be re-auctioned on the following Wednesday until the vehicles are sold. Download Pickles Auctions app to view all auction listings or visit www.pickles.my

Reg no	Description	MC92332	2012 PERODUA WVA 1.0 EZ (A)
WRW3394	2008 PROTON SAGA 1.3 (M)	W4323P	2014 PERODUA MYVI 1.3 EZ (A)
SD7477T	2022 MITSUBISHI TRITON 2.4L VGT MS	JPE4146	2012 HONDA ACCORD
BNM4597	2015 PROTON SAGA FL 1.3 (M)	W1928T	FORD RANGER
VCS107	2019 NISSAN ALMERA 1.5VL	W3375W	HONDA CIVIC 1.8
AMT1524	2022 PERODUA BEZZA 1.3 X (A)	MCX5005	2017 NISSAN ALMERA 1.5E
JS05479	2017 MITSUBISHI ASX 4WD	YS323	PERODUA BEZZA
WA1542C	2014 PROTON EXORA FL 1.6L CVT	BNQ3003	2015 TOYOTA VIOS 1.5J (AT)
BPB4592	2016 PROTON SAGA FL 1.3L CVT	W5207Y	2014 PROTON SAGA FL 1.3 CVT
BPF1437	2017 PERODUA AXIA 1.0 G (A)	JTS6527	2019 YAMAHA Y15ZR
BRP8072	2023 PROTON PERSONA 1.6L CVT PREMIUM	JWN7922	2023 YAMAHA 135LC FI STANDARD
VCM6832	2019 WESTSTAR MAXUS G10 (A)	JKX4515	2024 HONDA ADV160 ABS
VDM7772	2017 BMW X5 XDRIVE40E	SK2967E	2023 YAMAHA Y15ZR
WVW3693	2019 PEUGEOT 5008	WVY5448	2021 BRIXTON BX150 R
VF8157	2016 NISSAN ALMERA 1.5E (A)	PPN6297	2020 YAMAHA 135LC AUTO CLUTCH
WM1271	2016 FORD RANGER XLT 2.2 (A)	TCX8107	2024 YAMAHA 135LC FI STANDARD
QP06626	2015 MERCEDES-BENZ C200	TC16710	2023 HONDA RS-X FS150FA ABS
CEM3133	2021 NISSAN NAIRA PRO 4X	SJ1915	2023 YAMAHA Y15ZR
MC1221P	2010 AUDI Q7 SE TFSI 330QUATTRO	PDW7690	2022 SYM VF31 165 (N2)
WAT1220	2001 PROTON PERDANA 2.0L V6	JOV583	2023 YAMAHA 135LC FI STANDARD
WLP9041	2004 PROTON WAJA 1.6 (M)	JLH4526	2008 HONDA CITY 1.5 I-DSI
WH6886	2006 BENTLEY CONTINENTAL FLYING SPUR (A)	JUJ4348	2014 HONDA CITY S 1.5L I-VTEC
NDX3950	2023 YAMAHA Y15ZR	BNP7010	2015 HONDA CITY
QAB2451F	2022 HONDA CBR150R	VE2098	2016 PERODUA BEZZA 1.3 AV
JWU1723	2022 YAMAHA Y16ZR	WB9291X	2015 PROTON IRIZ 1.6L CVT
JWC5149	2023 HONDA RS-X FS150FA ABS	BK79068	2010 PERODUA MYVI 1.3 EZ
POH4984	2022 HONDA RS150R	CDM1605	2014 PROTON SAGA FL 1.3 CVT
CE06152	2022 YAMAHA EGO AWANTIZ	BRU5172	2017 PERODUA BEZZA 1.3 X
BRU4778	2024 HONDA WAVE ALPHA	JOG895	2014 FORD KUGA
JWU8429	2024 YAMAHA 135LC FI STANDARD	WNN535	2012 HONDA CITY 1.5L I-VTEC
JDB5448	2024 YAMAHA 135 LC	WMM907	2011 PERODUA ALZA 1.5 EZ
BRH5712	2024 YAMAHA Y15ZR	JM01670	2010 PROTON EXORA 1.6
VHK1471	2022 YAMAHA YZF-R15	WFX3000	2013 HONDA CIVIC HYBRID
VKS9790	2023 YAMAHA Y16ZR	BHP7606	2005 TOYOTA AMANZA 1.3
WNG9255	2011 PROTON PERSONA 1.6	RK5055	2012 PROTON PERVE 1.6L CVT
WSS8895	2009 PERODUA MYVI 1.3 EZ (A)		

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322 Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT KUALA LUMPUR
DALAM NEGARA SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN, MALAYSIA
COMPANIES (WINDING-UP) PETITION
No. WA-280C-73-01/2023

In the matter of Section 466(1)(a) of the Companies Act 2016:

And

In the matter of Fifty Five Kitchen & Bar Sdn. Bhd. (Company Registration No. 1270134-X)

BETWEEN

ANMTELIFF INSURANCE BERHAD
(No. Syarikat: 19730100222 (15743-P))

... PETITIONER

AND

ROSEGATE SDN BHD
(Dahulunya dikenali sebagai "ROSEGATE INSURANCE BROKERS SDN BHD")
(No. Syarikat: 197600103461 (20462-V))

... RESPONDENT

ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

NOTICE is hereby given that a petition for winding-up of the abovesaid company by the High Court was, on the 15 January 2025, presented by Anmteffff Insurance Berhad, having its address at Level 24, Menara 1 Sentrum, No. 201, Jalan Tun Sambanthan, 50470 Kuala Lumpur. And that the said petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at Kuala Lumpur at 9:00 o'clock in the forenoon, on the **20 May 2025**, and any creditor or contributory of the said company desiring to support or oppose the making of an order on the said petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his counsel for that purpose; and a copy of the petition will be furnished to any creditor or contributory of the said company requiring the same by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is at Level 24, Menara 1 Sentrum, No. 201, Jalan Tun Sambanthan, 50470 Kuala Lumpur.

The Petitioner's solicitors is **WONG LU PEEN & TUNKU ALINA**, 21-6, Block B, The Boulevard, Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra, 59200 Kuala Lumpur.

Signed

"WONG LU PEEN & TUNKU ALINA"

NOTE:
Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the said Petition must serve on or send by post to the abovesaid solicitors, notice in writing of his intention so to do. The notice must state the name and address of the person, or, if a firm, the name and address of the firm, and must be signed by the person or firm, or his or their solicitor (if any) and must be served, or, if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the abovesaid not later than twelve o'clock noon of the 19 May 2025, (the day before the day appointed for the hearing of the Petition).

This Advertisement of Petition is taken out by **WONG LU PEEN & TUNKU ALINA**, 21-6, Block B, The Boulevard, Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra, 59200 Kuala Lumpur, solicitors for the petitioner abovesaid whose address is at Level 24, Menara 1 Sentrum, No. 201, Jalan Tun Sambanthan, 50470 Kuala Lumpur (No. Tel: 03-2201 8379) (Rukun Fals: 13119172) (Email: tan.chonglu@wplpa.com.my) (lanhambah.tarefi@wplpa.com.my) (laglah@wplpa.com.my)

DALAM MAHKAMAH SEYEN DI KAJANG
DALAM NEGARA SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN, MALAYSIA
GUMAMAH SIVIL NO.:
BB-4530C-62-19/2024

ATAWA

1. PARAGARY AP SUBRAMANIAM
(NO. K/P: 740816-05-5164)

2. VASANTHI AP RAMAN
(NO. K/P: 660116-05-5518)

...PLAINTIFF-PLAINTIF

(menyaman sebagai Pentadbir-Pentadbir bagi harta pusaka, MAJLISTERAN AJL MARINUTUHI, si mati)

DAN

AMIE LIZIA BINTI PIADIH
(NO. K/P: 830230-01-6842)

...DEFENDAN

NOTIS PENGIKLANAN

(Dalam Perkarla mengenai Penyampaian Ganti Writ Saman dan Permintaan Tuntutan Berantah 2 Oktober 2024 "Kertas-kertas Kausa tersebut") dan sata Petintah untuk Penyampaian Ganti berantah 16 Disember 2024 ("Perintah tersebut") telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu di Mahkamah Seyen Kajang, dengan menyampaikan selesikan Petintah tersebut di papan notis Mahkamah Seyen Kajang, dengan menyampaikan selesikan Kertas-kertas kausa tersebut dan Petintah tersebut disampaikan ke atas kamu secara penyampaian ganti dengan menyampaikan selesikan Kertas-kertas kausa tersebut beserta dengan selesikan Petintah tersebut di alamat terakhir berdefendan yang diketahui, dan dengan mengiklankan sekali Notis ini dalam akhbar tempatan "The Sun".

DAN BAWAHA penyampaian dan pengiklankan tersebut hendaklah dianggap sebagai penyampaian Writ Saman dan Permintaan Tuntutan yang sempurna dan mencukupi ke atas-defendan empai bolak (14) hari selapas pelaksanaan terakhir tindakan penyampaian-penyampaian dan pengiklankan tersebut.

DAN AMBIL PERHATIAN SELANJUTNYA bahawa Saman tersebut akan didengar di Mahkamah Seyen Kajang pada 7 Februari 2025, pukul 9.00 pagi secara atas talian e-Review, oleh Hakim Mahkamah Seyen Kajang dan Mahkamah telah membolehkan kamu gagal menghadiri diri pada tarikh tersebut, susa pengiklankan ingkar boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu.

Sesalihan Writ Saman dan Permintaan Tuntutan tersebut dan Perintah tersebut boleh dipertika oleh kamu atas permissão di Mahkamah ini.

Berantah pada
4 harbulan Februari, 2025.

+ +

Peguamcara Plaintiff-Plaintif

NOTIS PENGIKLANAN ini telah dikeluarkan oleh "Tuan Lu Peen & Partnern, Peguambela dan Peguamcara, Peguamcara bagi pihak Plaintiff-Plaintif yang menyampaikan selesikan penyampaian di Unit A/01, Tingkat 7 Blok A, Palisade Damansara 1, Seksyen 16, 46350 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan, No. Tel: 03 67315773
Email: lohlu@partners@gmail.com

RORY MCILROY delivered an overwhelming back-nine performance yesterday for a two-stroke victory at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am to capture his 27th career US PGA Tour title.

The 35-year-old four-time major winner from Northern Ireland made three birdies and an eagle after the turn to fire a 6-under 66 and finish on 21-under 267 at the famed oceanside course.

"Some people would argue that the golf courses I've won on are not up to a Pebble Beach or an Augusta or whatever, but to win at one of the cathedrals of golf is really, really cool," McIlroy said.

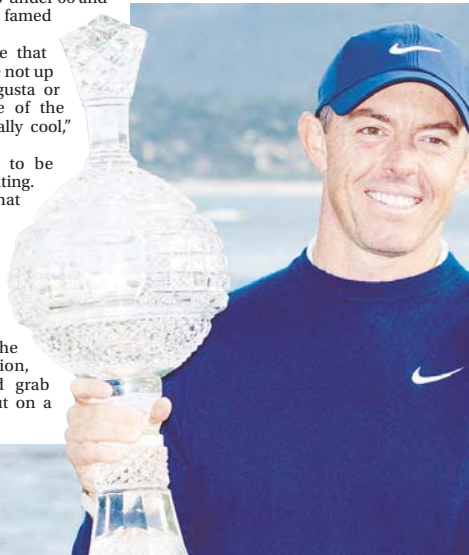
"I knew today was going to be tough. It was going to be exciting. There were so many guys that were around the lead.

"And I guess with it being Pebble Beach, I had to put that to the back of my mind and just go out there and try to shoot a score, which I was able to."

Ireland's Shane Lowry, the 2019 British Open champion, birdied 18 to shoot 68 and grab second on 269 but missed out on a fourth career PGA title.

Sizzling McIlroy

Northern Irishman captures Pebble Beach title after stunning back nine



Rory McIlroy

"I didn't have my best stuff all day," Lowry said. "I just hung in there. I said let's try and make Rory win this, let's not give it to him.

"When players like Rory turn up and have their A-game they're pretty much impossible to beat. It wasn't my day but it has been a good week."

Sharing third were past US Open winners Lucas Glover and England's Justin Rose, who sank a 61-foot eagle putt from off the green at the par-5 18th to shoot 68.

Third-ranked McIlroy took only his second career triumph in California, the other coming at the 2015 WGC Match Play at Harding Park in San Francisco.

"To win in California, a place where I haven't historically played well before, it's really cool and it's obviously a really cool way to start the season," McIlroy said.

"To get this win this early, it means a great deal and

hopefully just keep the momentum going."

McIlroy has ensured an eighth consecutive season with a victory and he hopes to complete a career grand slam at the majors by winning the Masters in April at Augusta National.

"I was really proud of myself," said McIlroy. "I made that bogey on the eighth hole and to play the next few the way I did, that gave me the cushion to make it comfortable coming down the last few."

After reaching the green in two at the par-5 14th, McIlroy had just over 26 feet for eagle and curled in the putt to claim a four-stroke edge.

"I've hit three really good tee shots off 14," McIlroy said. "The previous two times this week I didn't take advantage of them and I was determined to take advantage of it today.

"I hit a perfect 7-iron after that drive and to hole a putt like that across that green it's a bit of a bonus. But that really gave me a cushion to play the last four holes." - AFP

Kim claims Tournament of Champions

A LIM KIM held off a late charge by Nelly Korda to win the 2025 Hilton Grand Vacations Tournament of Champions at Lake Nona Golf & Country Club.

Korean Kim birdied three of her closing four holes for a 20-under 268 (65-69-67-67) total, two shots ahead of World No. 1 Korda on 270 (71-67-67-65).

Sweden's Linn Grant was third on 15-under 273, while Korean Jin Young Ko and Australia's Minjee Lee tied for fourth on 14-under 274 while 2024 champion Lydia Ko of New Zealand was sixth a stroke further back.

Taking a three-shot lead into the final round, Kim was caught by Korda when the American birdied the par-five 15th hole.

Playing in the final group behind Korda, Kim responded with birdies on 15, 16 and 18 to seal her third career LPGA victory.

"Today, overall the game was good. I think what I was trying to pull off today, I got it done," said Kim, who won the 2020 US Women's Open and the 2024 Lotte Championship.

In the off-season, Kim had been working on

changing her stock shot shape from a draw to a fade.

"All my career, I've used a draw. I'm a really good draw player. But 130 yards and inside, my game is not too good, so I wanted to change my shape and then worked on it and then make it," noted the 29-year-old.

Chasing her 16th LPGA title, Korda rued a few missed putts over the week.

"I wish I had a couple of those putts back this week. I three-putted 9 times for par, and when you think about it that way, you're never going to be happy with the outcome.

"But I think first week back, get into contention and play well, there is never anything bad about it."

The LPGA Tour remains in Florida this week for the US\$2 million (RM9m) Founders Cup at Bradenton Country Club in the US Virgin Islands before heading east for its early season Asian swing of three events - the Honda LPGA Thailand (from Feb 20-23, HSBC Women's World Championship (Feb 27-Mar 2) in Singapore and the Blue Bay LPGA (Mar 6-9) in Hainan, China). - lpga.com

Ferrari have major decision to make

FERRARI are reportedly set to wait until a few races into the season before deciding who will be the No. 1e and No. 2 drivers this year.

While maybe not in name, but certainly in nature, Charles Leclerc was perceived as the premier Scuderia driver during Ferrari's previous partnership between the Monaco-born ace and the recently departed Carlos Sainz.

However, that standing has been thrown into doubt following the arrival of seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who began work with the Italian constructor earlier this year.

With less than two months until the 2025 season gets underway, reports coming out of Italy suggest Ferrari are willing to play the patient game when it comes to deciding their strategy for the new campaign.

La Gazzetta dello Sport have reported that Ferrari don't intend to decide their hierarchy until both drivers can get a feel for the new campaign during the season's first couple of races.

It could present an immediate problem for their chances of success in both the Drivers' and Constructors' Championships, given any hesitation could hand Red Bull or McLaren an early advantage.

But Ferrari believe, according to the report, this approach will set them up in the best manner for the

season as a whole.

Leclerc could take some convincing though, with the 27-year-old reportedly unwilling to play second fiddle, given he's approaching the prime years of his career.

Should Ferrari establish a clear No. 1 and No. 2 in their ranks, it would be a departure from the philosophy implemented by Fred Vasseur when he was ushered in as team principal in 2023.

He's previously said: "There is a clear situation, it's the same everywhere - we have two very good drivers (Leclerc and Sainz) and both of them are able to do a job.

"We will have the capacity to provide them with the same car, the same structure and the same support.

"What is clear is that the target is to win with Ferrari - and for Ferrari. There will be no No. 1 and No. 2, but if at one stage we have to take action then we will take action.

"It doesn't matter if it's for one or the other, but if at one stage in the season we have to do something, then I will do it."

But given for the first time in a long time Ferrari now have Championship winning experience within their ranks, the Prancing Horse could be forced into a rethink. - Express Newspapers

SHORTS

Bergs scores accidental knockout for Belgium

BELGIUM secured a controversial victory in Davis Cup qualifying when Chile's Cristian Garin refused to continue in the decisive rubber after being painfully knocked down by his opponent, Zizou Bergs, on Sunday.

Elsewhere Spain made light of the absence of Carlos Alcaraz as they swept past Switzerland. France also advanced and Hungary survived a second-day fightback by Canada.

In Hasselt, after Belgium won the day's opening doubles to lead 2-1, Bergs then faced Garin in the first reverse singles.

After holding serve in a marathon 11th game in the third set, an excited Bergs galloped round the court in celebration and raced past the net towards his chair, colliding with Garin and sending him flying.

"It's truly unintentional," Bergs said. "I wanted to go fast to the bench, but I made a completely wrong decision to not wait for the opponent."

An independent doctor ruled Garin was fit to continue and serve to stay in the match, but he refused. Bergs was awarded the deciding game to win 6-3, 4-6, 7-5.

"It feels really bad to end this way," Bergs told the Davis Cup website. "It's obviously not what you want, to hurt an opponent."

Bergs said he also apologised to Chile captain Nicolas Massu.

"Terrible situation," said Massu. "We're here to play tennis, to support our country. Garin is the player hit in the eye, who couldn't continue and now we're out."

Collins delivers on vacation promise

AMERICAN tennis firebrand Danielle Collins delivered on her pledge to take a vacation in the Bahamas with her Australian Open prizemoney in a final shot at fans who booed her at the Grand Slam.

The world No. 12 was given a hostile reception as she knocked out home favourite Destanee Aiava in the second round at Melbourne Park and responded by saying the hecklers were funding her next holiday.

Collins posted video on social media yesterday showing her enjoying a "five star vacay" at a Bahamas resort with friends.

Collins, the 2022 Australian Open runnerup to local hero Ash Barty, was also jeered during her third round defeat to compatriot and eventual winner Madison Keys.

The 31-year-old said after the match she did not care what the fans thought and that people needed to lighten up a bit.

"The biggest thing is nobody got hurt. Maybe some feelings got hurt or things were taken personally. They probably shouldn't have been," said Collins, who earned A\$290,000 (RM812,000) for her run to the third round in Australia.

Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND

IN THE MATTER OF BINA GOODYEAR BERHAD (IN LIQUIDATION) [REGISTRATION NO. 197401001541 (18645-H)]

SECTION 525

NOTICE TO ALL CREDITORS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN

that the creditors of Bina Goodyear Berhad (in Liquidation) ("the Company") having a claim present or future, certain or contingent, that:

If you have not submitted your claim yet, you are required to submit an affidavit verifying debt together with all documents to substantiate your claim to the Liquidator of the Company at the following address not later than 5.00 p.m., Tuesday, 25th day of February 2025:

Address: The Liquidator
Bina Goodyear Berhad
(In Liquidation)
c/o Messrs
Rodgers Reidy & Co. (NF 2243)
K-3A-09, No. 2,
Jalan Solaris,
Solaris Mont'
Kuala Lumpur
50480

Telephone No.: (03) 6204 0928
Fax No.: (03) 6204 0428

Failure to submit your abovementioned affidavit to the Liquidator by the stipulated date can result in your claim being excluded from the benefit of any distributions made before the debt or claims are proved and from objecting to the distributions.

By Order of the Liquidator

LIM TIAN HUAT

Liquidator

Dated this 4 February 2025

Note:

- Please do not submit an affidavit if you have submitted once before.
- If you have submitted an affidavit but have not received any response from the Liquidator, please contact them at the above address.
- Creditors who have not responded to the Liquidator's request for further documents and/or particulars relating to their claims are reminded to submit the further documents and/or particulars without delay or risk having their claims rejected.

SIDENETTING

Henrique fires Marseille past Lyon

MARSEILLE strengthened their grip on second place in Ligue 1 as Luis Henrique's late strike sealed a dramatic 3-2 win over Lyon at the Stade Velodrome yesterday. Roberto De Zerbi's men have a six-point lead over fifth-placed Nice in the battle for the four Champions League places after bouncing back from the previous weekend's loss at Nice. Lyon took the lead eight minutes after the restart as Corentin Tolisso burst into the box to score. Marseille responded just after the hour, as Mason Greenwood tapped home his 13th Ligue 1 goal of the season. OM took the lead in the 64th minute when Adrien Rabiot headed in after Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg nodded the ball in his direction. But Rabiot turned villain a few minutes later as his handball conceded a penalty, which was converted by Alexandre Lacazette. Marseille were not to be denied, though, and Henrique volleyed in the winner with five minutes remaining.

Morata completes loan move to Galatasaray

ALVARO MORATA has joined Galatasaray on loan from AC Milan, the Turkish champions announced yesterday. "An agreement has been reached with AC Milan," Galatasaray announced on their website. The Istanbul club said that the loan would last until Jan 20, 2026 when they would have an option to buy or extend it. It added that they had paid Milan a "temporary transfer fee" of €6m (RM27m) and that the player would receive €3m (RM13.5m) for the rest of this season. Morata was shown wearing the club's yellow and red halved shirt. "I will do my best as long as I wear the Galatasaray jersey. It is a very nice jersey," he said. I can promise that I will give my all on the field and fight for the jersey." Spain captain Morata left Milan after disappointing since signing from Atletico Madrid in the summer as a replacement for fan favourite Olivier Giroud.

Rudiger sidelined with injury

REAL MADRID defender Antonio Rudiger is set for a spell on the sidelines after suffering a hamstring injury in a 1-0 defeat by Espanyol on Sunday, the La Liga club said ahead of a crucial week in their season. The team did not provide a timeline for the return of the centreback, who left the pitch in the 15th minute of the match. Spanish newspaper Diario AS reported that Rudiger would be out of action for at least 17 days, ruling him out of a Copa del Rey quarterfinal against Leganes, a league clash with rivals Atletico Madrid and the first leg of a Champions League knockout phase playoff against Manchester City. "Following tests carried out on Antonio Rudiger by Real Madrid's medical services, the player has been diagnosed with an injury to the biceps femoris in his right leg. His progress will be monitored," Real said in a statement yesterday.

Late derby drama in Milan

INTER MILAN were given a let off yesterday when they snatched a late 1-1 derby draw with AC Milan while league leaders Napoli were held by a late goal at Roma.

Reigning champions Inter remain three points behind Napoli who looked to be heading five clear as they led in Rome until Angelino volleyed in a stunning leveller in the first minute of added time to make the score 1-1.

Angelino's strike gave even more significance to Stefan de Vrij's last-gasp equaliser at the San Siro. The defender forced home Nicola Zalewski's knock-down just as it looked like Tijjani Reijnders' opener would be enough for Milan.

"I can only applaud my team for the way they played, unfortunately they weren't able to get that bit of luck," said Inter coach Simone Inzaghi, who believed his team should have had a

penalty in the second half for a foul on Marcus Thuram.

"I can understand the referee not seeing it... but those who are sat down (in the VAR booth) can't not call the referee.

"It's the third or fourth time it's happened and it's starting to annoy me."

Inter dominated but Milan hung on to stay eighth, five points behind Juventus, who beat Empoli 4-1 in the day's early game.

For Milan, Netherlands midfielder Reijnders netted his 11th goal of the season on the rebound at the end of a lightning counterattack after Yann Sommer palmed out Rafael Leao's low cross.

To lose to that goal would have been a sucker-punch for dominant Inter who had three goals chalked off while Yann Bissecq, Thuram and Denzel Dumfries all hit the post in the

second half.

But another Dutchman in De Vrij pounced at the death to silence a packed San Siro.

"I don't think we played very well in possession, we had to be more calm on the ball because there were some opportunities," said Reijnders to DAZN.

"If we stay more cool in these kinds of situations we can control the game more, unfortunately that didn't happen tonight."

Napoli were on course for an eighth straight win after Roma old boy Leonardo Spinazzola looped home his first goal of the season in the 29th minute in Rome.

But Roma, who are ninth, nine points behind Juve, fought back against their fierce rivals and Angelino brought the house down when he crashed home Alexis Saelemaekers' beautifully floated cross. - AFP



Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski (centre) shoots at goal. - REUTERS/PIC

Barca preserve title hopes

Lewandowski on target as Catalans keep Real Madrid in sight

ROBERT LEWANDOWSKI'S second-half strike helped Barcelona beat Alaves 1-0 yesterday to cut the gap on La Liga leaders Real Madrid down to four points.

The Catalans, third, capitalised with a narrow victory after the champions slipped up across town at Espanyol on Sunday.

Barcelona trail second place Atletico by three points before the *Rojiblancos* face Real Madrid in a tasty derby clash this weekend, which could allow Hansi Flick's side to make up more ground.

Lewandowski netted from a Lamine Yamal cross to settle a hard-fought match in which Alaves largely frustrated the hosts.

"Before the game we knew we had to win," Lewandowski told *Movistar*. "For us it's a moment in which we have less points than Atletico and Real Madrid, (but) first it's important that we win and later we can think about their points.

"We have to play well, win and then we can look at the league table and see how many points we have exactly."

Flick's team struggled to get going in the early afternoon sunlight at the Olympic stadium.

The Catalans created barely anything of note in the first half as Alaves resisted stubbornly.

One mazy Lamine Yamal dribble got home fans excited but there was little else to raise the pulse.

Barcelona's Gavi and Tomas Conechny of Alaves were both taken off after an ugly collision of heads.

Flick later confirmed Gavi was healthy. "He's on the way home and everything is good, nothing happened," explained the coach.

Lewandowski scuffed a shot narrowly wide and a low Pedri effort was comfortably fielded by Alaves goalkeeper Jesus Owono.

Flick brought on Frenkie de Jong and Eric Garcia at half-time to try and speed up Barcelona's game in possession and the team looked sharper as a result.

Lewandowski sent a glancing header agonisingly wide of the far post soon before he broke the deadlock.

The veteran Polish forward produced a poacher's finish from close range after Yamal sent a cross-shot spinning towards him at the back post after 61 minutes.

It was Lewandowski's 18th goal of the league campaign, stretching his lead on Real Madrid's

Kylian Mbappe as the division's top scorer to three.

Flick hailed the 36-year-old striker after his match-winning contribution.

"This is the job of Lewy, he's the best number nine in the box," Flick told reporters.

"In this difficult match it was important for us he was there."

Barca substitute Ferran Torres's curling effort was pushed away by Owono at full stretch as the Catalans tried to make the game safe.

Flick's team could not produce a second but Alaves, who barely threatened Wojciech Szczesny's goal throughout, were not able to mount a comeback.

"A game like today is very important," said Lewandowski.

"We can't always win with four, five or six goals, sometimes teams like this come along who defend deep and well, but we have a chance if we play with patience, and in the end we scored one more goal than them so we're very happy."

In other matches, Athletic Bilbao came from behind twice to earn a 2-2 draw at Real Betis while Ante Budimir netted twice to earn Osasuna a 2-1 win over Real Sociedad. - AFP

Boniface helps dominant Leverkusen cut Bayern lead

BAYER LEVERKUSEN beat Hoffenheim 3-1 yesterday to move within six points of Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich, with Victor Boniface scoring a goal just days after his move to Saudi Arabia collapsed.

The 24-year-old was stood down from training last week as he explored a transfer to play alongside Cristiano Ronaldo at Saudi side Al-Nassr.

The deal fell through on Wednesday and Boniface was given a surprise start by coach Xabi Alonso.

Boniface, who had not played for Leverkusen since injuring his thigh on international duty with Nigeria in November, opened the scoring in the 15th minute.

Collecting a ball from Alex Grimaldo to the right of goal, Boniface blasted a powerful left-foot shot through the hands of visiting goalkeeper Luca Philipp.

Just four minutes later, Jeremie Frimpong doubled Leverkusen's lead. The Dutchman flew down the right flank, took one touch and superbly found the far corner.

Leverkusen looked set to stretch their lead in the 24th minute when Nathan Tella was felled in the box, but the decision was overturned by VAR.

Boniface made way for Patrik Schick at half-time and the Czech striker scored six minutes later.

Leverkusen were made to sweat when they lost Grimaldo to a second yellow card and conceded a goal to Gift Orban inside two minutes.

Alonso's men however held on to stay in touch with Bayern, who visit Leverkusen's BayArena in two weeks.

Praising his side's "total control", Alonso said the successful return would do Boniface good and admitted his side have "some good competition in the striker position".

"It was important for Boni to feel like a part of the team again. It was important to play at home and feel the love from the fans.

"There were two games today: 60 minutes with 11 players and 30 minutes with 10. We played well in both. Even when we were down to 10 men, we controlled the game," Alonso told reporters. - AFP/Agencies



Joining Villans easy decision, says Rashford

MARCUS RASHFORD'S loan move to Aston Villa was confirmed 24 hours before the January transfer window closed – and he says it was an easy decision to move to Villa Park.

The England forward leaves Manchester United to join Villa on loan until the end of the season after completing a medical on Sunday afternoon.

Rashford said in a statement on Instagram: "I would like to thank Manchester United and Aston Villa for making this loan deal happen.

"I was lucky to have a few clubs approach me but Aston Villa was an easy decision – I really admire the way that Aston Villa have been playing this season, and the manager's ambitions.

"I just want to play football and am excited to get started. I wish everyone at Manchester United all the best for the rest of the season."

Rashford fell out of favour at Old Trafford under Ruben Amorim and had not played for the Red Devils since a win over Viktoria Plzen in the Europa League on Dec 12.

The 27-year-old was reportedly holding out hope of joining Barcelona but has instead headed to United's Premier League rivals. Villa are eight points ahead of Amorim's team in the English top flight.

Rashford could make his debut for Villa in the FA Cup on Monday (1.35am Malaysian time). They host Tottenham in the fourth round at Villa Park.

Maresca happy for window to close

BY ROBERT O'CONNOR

CHELSEA head coach Enzo Maresca is looking forward to the "relief" of arriving for work today knowing the transfer window has closed.

A run of one win in seven Premier League matches has coincided with a period of speculation linking a number of his squad with moves, something Maresca had previously said has affected the players' focus as they have dropped out of the top four.

"For sure you have a feeling of relief," said Maresca, who had previously described January as "a disaster" due to the amount of speculation surrounding the squad.

"The players you are going to see, they are going to be here until the end, so there is not any noise about some of the players that are there.

"The word is relief. From now on until the end, we go on with these players and no more.

"In the small part I think all transfer windows are similar. Last year when I was at Leicester (in the Championship) in January, players arriving, players to leave – it's the same situation you live everywhere."

Asked about the higher stakes in transfer dealings at Chelsea compared with life in the Championship, the 44-year-old said the disruption is the same.

"It doesn't change," he said. "Just because we speak about one player who is big and the other is not big.

"For me it's not about how important is the player or the name of the player, it's more about the noise that can be my name or your name or his name. It's something that is not good." – The Independent

Salah believes Liverpool's title challenge 'feels different'

BY ROBERT O'CONNOR

MOHAMED SALAH said Liverpool's title challenge "feels different" to previous seasons after they beat in-form Bournemouth to make a step closer to winning the Premier League.

Salah scored both goals in the 2-0 win at the Vitality Stadium to move onto 21 for the season in the League.

Arne Slot's side were made to work for their 17th victory in 23 games, with a number of marginal decisions going in their favour while Bournemouth also struck the woodwork twice.

"Yeah, I think (it feels) slightly different but last season we were also very close but again, as I've said before we need to stay humble and just take

it each game at a time," said Salah.

"Focus on each game. We don't have to think further, just think about each game."

Liverpool led the way going into the final straight last season but fell away badly, winning only three of their final eight games to eventually finish third.

Key to their charge this season has been Salah, who after Saturday has now hit the 20-goal mark in five of his eight campaigns at Anfield.

"It feels good to be fair, scoring goals, the team winning, it's an incredible feeling," said Salah. "But I said it many times before that my main target this season is to win the Premier League with the team.

"We are going in the right direction so

hopefully we can keep going like this."

Also crucial to victory on the south coast was goalkeeper Alisson who made a wonderful close-range stop from Bournemouth's Antoine Semenyo with the score 1-0 early in the second half.

With 21 goals conceded, Liverpool have the joint-best defensive record in the division so far this season, alongside Arsenal.

"Incredible, incredible," said Salah of his goalkeeper. "He knows how important he is for us. We have been together six or seven years here, I've been with him for two years in Rome as well.

"We know each other very well. He works very hard, also the defensive line works very hard so I am happy for them." – The Independent

Eagles soar at Old Trafford

Amorim insists Man Utd are 'trying everything' to improve squad

BY SIMON PEACH

RUBEN AMORIM says Manchester United are "trying everything" to improve the squad before the transfer deadline having suffered a damaging defeat to Crystal Palace and losing Lisandro Martinez to injury.

The Red Devils' run of three wins in all competitions came to an abrupt end yesterday as Jean-Philippe Mateta's brace helped the Eagles soar to a fourth Old Trafford triumph in their last six visits.

The 2-0 defeat was United's 11th League loss of the season, underlining the rebuild required at a club that has so far this window brought in Lecce leftback Patrick Dorgu, 20, and unproven 18-year-old Arsenal defender Ayden Heaven.

The pair were introduced before kickoff and Amorim hopes further new blood arrives by today morning's (7am Malaysian time) deadline as Marcus Rashford follows Antony out of the club by joining Aston Villa on an initial loan.

"We are trying everything to improve the team without doing mistakes of the past, and trying to balance the urgency of the moment," the United head coach said.

"So, we know all of the aspects of our club in the moment, but we are trying everything."

Asked if Rashford leaving helps in that respect, Amorim said: "We'll see."

Rashford underwent a medical on Sunday ahead of joining Villa, who are understood to be covering at least 75% of his £300,000-plus (RM1.65m) weekly salary.

That figure could reach up to 90% depending on performance-based bonuses and the option to make the move permanent is reported to be £40 million (RM220m).

Put to Amorim it could look humiliating if Rashford is scoring goals at Villa if United struggle in front of goal, he said: "Humiliating? It's not embarrassing.

"When you loan a player – and I don't think it's official – you expect him to play and to improve, so there is nothing humiliating there.

"I understand the question, but I am just focused on my players, that's all.

"When the window closes, I will be really focused on just our team and to improve our team."

The need for upgrades was clear as Palace inflicted a loss that was compounded by Martinez leaving the field on a stretcher in tears after his left knee buckled.

"Licha is really important for us, not just as a football player but the character he has, especially in this hard moment," Amorim said.

"Now it's time for us to help Licha.

"I think it's a bad situation. Let's wait to assess things with the doctor, but I think it's a serious situation."

As United reel from this "hard day", Palace return to the capital buoyed by a third straight away win on the road.

"For me personally, it was my first game here at Old Trafford. It feels very special," Eagles boss Oliver Glasner said.

"It's an amazing stadium. Very historical, traditional stadium and great atmosphere today.

"What I was delighted with

was there were moments when I could hear our supporters because I think they could feel we are close to winning the game.

"I think what is very important for all of us is a goal, a win should never be normal because this is why we started playing football as children.

"We always encourage them to celebrate, in every training game, having these emotions. You can buy a lot of things but you can't buy these emotions of scoring a goal here at Old Trafford, celebrating in front of your fans.

"This is something special and this should always be something special wherever we play." – The Independent



Crystal Palace's Jean-Philippe Mateta. – REUTERS/PIC

Tottenham lifted by reinforcements

BY REUBEN ROSSO-POWELL

ANGE POSTECOGLU said the prospect of injured players returning has lifted Tottenham after they ended a winless run of seven Premier League matches with a 2-0 victory over Brentford at Gtech Community Stadium.

Captain Son Heung-min was in the thick of the action in west London, with his corner turned in by Vitaly Janelt for an own goal in the 29th minute before he also assisted substitute Pape Sarr for Spurs' second.

Micky van de Ven was involved in

the Europa League win over Elfsborg on Thursday and while he was absent against Brentford, the Dutchman is "likely" to feature in Spurs' Carabao Cup second leg against Liverpool on Thursday (Fri 4am Malaysian time).

Djed Spence returned with an impressive performance against the Bees and Postecoglou, whose side came into the game on a run of four straight League losses and seven without a win, said: "It's great for the supporters and the players, they are all hurting.

"They don't want to see their team (losing), it's not where we want to be (14th in the table) and we need

to rectify that, but it's great to see us enjoy the game and get the rewards for it.

"It's the same group of players who have to play Thursday and Sunday and you can't get away from the fact that playing Thursday and Sunday consistently without being able to rotate takes a toll.

"The Premier League is relentless and you've meeting teams who've had seven days' break and we've had 48 hours.

"From that perspective the pleasing thing is that we had Micky back on Thursday, Djed in today and we've signed Kevin (Danso), the

group now are getting encouragement and energy from getting some help and I have no doubt they'll assist us in addressing our position in the league."

Brentford were a shadow of their usual selves on a day where the threat of 14-goal Bryan Mbeumo was mitigated by a quality showing from Spence at left-back.

"It felt like a missed opportunity," Bees boss Thomas Frank said.

"It was a good battle (between Spence and Mbeumo), a battle I think Spence will enjoy more than Bryan and he defended him well." – The Independent

RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Manchester United 0 Crystal Palace 2 (Mateta 64, 89), **Brentford 0 Tottenham 2** (Janelt 29-og, Sarr 87), **Arsenal 5** (Odegaard 2, Partey 56, Lewis-Skelly 62, Havertz 76, Nwaneri 90+3) **Manchester City 1** (Haaland 55).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	23	17	5	1	56	21	56
Arsenal	24	14	8	2	49	22	50
Forest	24	14	5	5	40	27	47
Man City	24	12	5	7	48	35	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	24	9	4	11	42	42	31
Crystal Palace	24	7	9	8	28	30	30
Man United	24	8	5	11	28	34	29
Tottenham	24	8	3	13	48	37	27
West Ham	23	7	6	10	28	44	27
Everton	23	6	8	9	23	28	26
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

LA LIGA: Barcelona 1 (Lewandowski 61) **Alaves 0, Valencia 2** (Riyoja 44, Guerra 68) **Celta Vigo 1** (Duran 65), **Osasuna 2** (Budimir 34, 74) **Real Sociedad 1** (Oskarsson 90+4), **Real Betis 2** (Isco 15, Perraud 45+2) **Athletic Bilbao 2** (Paredes 33, Sancet 69).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	22	15	4	3	50	21	49
Athletic	22	14	6	2	37	14	48
Barcelona	22	14	3	5	60	24	45
A. Bilbao	22	11	8	3	33	20	41
Villarreal	22	10	7	5	44	33	37
R. Valleciano	22	8	8	6	26	24	32

SERIE A: Juventus 4 (Kolo Muani 61, 64, Vlahovic 90, Conceicao 90+2) **Empoli 1** (De Sciglio 4), **Fiorentina 2** (Kean 9, Gudmundsson 30) **Genoa 1** (De Winter 55), **AC Milan 1** (Reijnders 45) **Inter Milan 1** (De Vrij 90+3), **Roma 1** (Angelino 90+1) **Napoli 1** (Spinazzola 29).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli	23	17	3	3	38	16	54
Inter Milan	22	15	6	1	56	19	51
Atalanta	23	14	5	4	49	26	47
Juventus	23	9	13	1	39	20	40
Fiorentina	22	11	6	5	37	33	39
Lazio	22	12	3	7	38	30	39

BUNDESLIGA: Leverkusen 3 Hoffenheim 1, E. Frankfurt 1 Wolfsburg 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	20	16	3	1	62	19	51
B. Leverkusen	20	13	6	1	49	27	45
E. Frankfurt	20	11	5	4	45	27	38
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: Toulouse 1 Nice 1, Rennes 1 Strasbourg 0, Reims 1 Nantes 2, Angers 1 Le Havre 1, Marseille 3 Lyon 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	20	15	5	0	54	19	50
Marseille	20	12	4	4	43	25	40
Monaco	20	11	4	5	36	24	37
Lille	20	9	8	3	33	20	35
Nice	20	9	7	4	39	26	34
Lens	20	9	6	5	25	18	33

Sri Pahang end 10-year wait

Strategy key to victory, says coach Fandi as Elephants book place in M'sia Cup final

FOUR-TIME CHAMPIONS Sri Pahang FC ended a decade-long wait to book a ticket to the 2024/2025 Malaysia Cup final with a 3-2 aggregate victory over Sabah FC at the Temerloh Municipal Council Stadium on Sunday night.

Skipper Kpah Sherman's extratime goal gave Sri Pahang FC a 2-1 victory in the second leg semifinal to advance to the final and face defending champions Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) on April 26.

The two teams were tied 1-1 in the first semifinal at the Likas Stadium, Kota Kinabalu on Jan 18.

In Sunday's action, Sri Pahang FC, who kicked off the match with an aggressive approach from the start, missed the opportunity to take the lead as early as the 15th minute when Sherman's dangerous attempt with a powerful kick from outside the penalty box, slightly exceeded the Sabah goal.

The home team, also known as "the Elephants", finally broke the deadlock in the 72nd minute when Sabah defender Park Tae Su headed

Muhammad Baquiddin Shamsuddin's pass into his own goal.

Undaunted by the setback, Sabah quickly equalised through S. Kumaahran in the 77th minute to drag the match into extratime with the aggregate tied at 2-2 until the final whistle.

However, Liberian import Sherman emerged as the hero for the home team when he managed to strike the winning goal after beating Damien Khai Lim in the Sabah goal in the 106th minute.

The last time Sri Pahang played in the Malaysia Cup final was in 2014, when they emerged champions by beating JDT 5-3 on penalties after the two teams were tied 2-2.

Sri Pahang coach Fandi Ahmad said three formations were devised for his players to check the visitors' advance towards their defence.

"Our initial plan was to pressure the opposing players in their territory, which is why we used a 4-4-2 formation when attacking, a 4-3-3 formation in midfield and a 4-5-1 formation when defending.

"This made it difficult for them to enter our

area in the first half, but the situation changed when we made player substitutions and they began to play long passes," he said during a post-match press conference.

The Singapore legend praised his players for demonstrating high discipline and fighting hard to achieve victory, even when faced with extratime.

"I am very happy that all the players gave their best, and before that, I told them we cannot lose in front of our supporters. We also tried to avoid playing in extratime because there could be injuries or cramps," Fandi said.

Sabah's head coach, Martin Stano, acknowledged the prowess of the East Coast giants but said his team played well throughout the 120 minutes of the match.

"Even though Sri Pahang scored early, we managed to come back and equalise, forcing the match into extratime.

"It was a very tough match away from home with their supporters filling the stands.

"I certainly cannot complain about the players' performance as they played very well until the final whistle," he said. - Bernama

Tan Cheong Min.
- BERNAMAPIC



Wushu queen Cheong Min to up ante

NATIONAL wushu queen Tan Cheong Min is focusing on increasing the difficulty level and refining routine combinations to maintain her dominance on the international stage.

The two-time world champion is unwilling to rest on her past achievements and said minor changes in wushu regulations – expected to take effect this year – have driven her to prioritise the degree of difficulty and maturity in her performances.

"My main focus now is to increase the difficulty level and ensure more polished routine combinations.

"The new rules this year might introduce slight adjustments in difficulty level and combinations, so I am fully concentrating on these aspects.

"Actually, my previous difficulty level was still sufficient, but with some modifications in combinations, I am now making certain adjustments to my routine," she told Bernama.

The 26-year-old athlete emphasised that stability is the key to executing her new routine with precision.

"This change is not a big challenge for me because I have trained with these new combinations before, just not in competitions. Now, I need to ensure my stability is at 100%," said the 2019/2020 National Sportswoman.

Cheong Min, who won gold in the *nangun* event at the 2024 Taolu World Cup in Yokohama, Japan, last October, noted that there has been a slight modification in landing techniques, allowing athletes to combine two difficulty elements simultaneously.

"The landing technique hasn't changed much, but there's a slight addition. We are now allowed to integrate two difficulty elements, so this is something I need to adapt to," she added.

Among the tournaments Cheong Min is almost certain to compete in this year are the Taolu Asian Cup in Jilin, China, this July and the World Games in Chengdu, China, in August, as she has already qualified.

Her participation in the World Wushu Championships in Brazil this September and the SEA Games in Thailand this December will depend on the selection process to be held later.

Cheong Min first claimed the world title in 2017 *induilian* at Kazan, Russia, before securing her second title in *nandao* at the 2019 edition in Shanghai, China.

She continued to build her international success, clinching double gold at the 2023 SEA Games in Cambodia, a silver medal at the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, and a gold medal at the 2024 Asian Wushu Championships in Macau last September. - Bernama

India retain U-19 Women's T20 World Cup

INDIA retained the U-19 Women's T20 Cricket World Cup for second edition running as they stumped South Africa by nine wickets at the Bayuemas Oval, in Klang on Sunday.

Despite losing the toss and being sent to field, India had no problems to display their A-game of spin bowling that left the young Proteas tangled up and restricted them to 82 runs in 20 overs.

In the second innings, India batted with finesse and sealed the title when Sanika Chalke smashed the ball to the fence as her team raced

through 84 runs in 11.2 overs to keep the trophy they had won during the first edition in South Africa, two years ago.

Trisha Gongadi stole the show once again as she was named the player of the final by scalping three wickets and scoring 44 runs.

The 19-year-old was also awarded the player of the tournament award, amassing a staggering 309 runs and seven wickets in total.

Speaking after the match, India's team captain, Niki Prasad was pleased to just keep

their cool in the final and got the job done to win the tournament.

"I am very proud with my team for the way they have played today. Credit to South Africa as well for their performance and it was nice to compete with them," she said.

Even though they crumbled in the final today, South African skipper Kayla Reneke said there were still lots of positives to take from the tournament especially stepping into their maiden World Cup final.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Cricket Association's Mohammed Iqbal Ali Kassim Ali thanked the International Cricket Council for entrusting them to host the prestigious tournament in the country which opened the door for sports diplomacy through cricket.

"Malaysian Cricket will continue to bid to host more high-profile events, including bilateral tournaments and future World Cups," he said.

The 2027 edition is scheduled to be held in Bangladesh and Nepal. - Bernama



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Blazing Gunners

Arteta warns against gloating after rampant Arsenal humble City

BY GEORGE SESSIONS

MIKEL ARTETA warned Arsenal to focus on themselves after they ruthlessly dismantled Manchester City 5-1 and rubbed it in the face of Erling Haaland in the process.

The Gunners scored four times in an outstanding second-half display at the Emirates to inflict more pain on Pep Guardiola's fragile Premier League champions.

Haaland's actions in the 2-2 draw between the clubs in September dominated the pre-match discourse, with the Norwegian throwing a ball at Gabriel Magalhaes' head following John Stones' stoppage-time leveller, while he also told Arteta to "stay humble" during fiery fulltime scenes.

A dose of humble pie was served to Haaland in north London with Gabriel shouting in the face of the City striker after Martin Odegaard's early opener before Arsenal fullback Myles Lewis-Skelly copied the Norwegian's celebration after he made it 3-1.

City folded following Haaland's 55th-minute equaliser with Thomas Partey, Lewis-Skelly, Kai Havertz and Ethan Nwaneri on target to move the Gunners six points behind leaders Liverpool, but Arteta let slip a tinge of disappointment.

"I don't know, I haven't seen that and there's nothing that I want to discuss about that," Arteta said when quizzed about Lewis-Skelly's celebration.

"Down to the players, but they know my view

on it and we have to focus on us.

"We have to focus on us and leave anything that happens. It's part of the game on the pitch.

"Whatever happens there, I think we've been in football a long time, just leave it, there's nothing there to do."

That was the only gripe Arteta could really have with his players after a memorable day, which started in perfect fashion when Odegaard slotted home to punish Manuel Akanji's mistake at the back.

Arsenal squandered further first-half chances, with Havertz firing wide with only Stefan Ortega to beat, and were punished 10 minutes after the break when Haaland silenced the home crowd.

But one minute and 45 seconds later the Gunners were back ahead through Partey's deflected strike in a moment which knocked Guardiola's faltering side, who were unable to recover.

Arteta said: "Emotionally, I think that was a turning point. We reacted so quickly, had a bit of luck in that action and that set the tone for the team in the stadium as well to go and win the game.

"Then after that, I think the team took a different level, growing confidence, they started to control the game much better and dominate certain areas much better and we went and won it from there.

"It's a great day for us, for the result, for the manner that we've done it and especially against the level of their position that we played."

Arsenal posted a picture of Lewis-Skelly doing Haaland's celebration on X after the game, which drew a response from the Norwegian's dad Alfie in which he appeared to reference the Gunners' lack of trophies.

Guardiola required a moment of reflection when asked about the Arsenal players mimicking Haaland.

"Oh I didn't see. That's good, that's good. So he did Haaland's celebration? They have done it? Ah, that's good. That's good," Guardiola smiled.

Guardiola acknowledged the fragility in the group after they collapsed in a similar fashion against Feyenoord, Manchester United and Paris St Germain in recent months.

"You can lose two, three or four but the last 30 minutes, what we have done for 60 to 65, we have not done it and we don't have a defence," Guardiola said.

"We had a plan and we didn't do it because they have pride and they want to solve it, but that's not the way.

"Always at that level and you have to stick with what we talk. Unfortunately it happened and we can hopefully learn the lesson for the future.

"If you tell me we equalise 1-1 and the next 15 to 20 minutes have been a disaster, we defend deep and we are not good, you are right.

"They can be fragile, it happen many times they can be fragile, but they have a duty to do what they have to do and they didn't do it." - The Independent



Sizzling McIlroy

Story on page 28



Barça preserve title hopes

Story on page 29



Eagles soar at Old Trafford

Story on page 30



Arsenal's Ethan Nwaneri (right) celebrates scoring their fifth goal with teammates. - REUTERS/PIC