



No camping rule on PD beaches sparks debate

While local council cites environmental preservation for ban, tourism experts say it could deter visitors and harm local businesses.

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Transit home not permanent solution to teen pregnancies

Academic lauds setting up of Dawn Hope but says efforts should be focused on comprehensive sex education, parental guidance and community awareness.

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New breath of life for traditional Indian art forms

Community regains interest in *Silambam* (martial art) and *Bharatanatyam* (classical dance), thanks to efforts of two organisations.

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Malaysia deems any plan to expel Palestinians from the enclave a violation of international law and multiple UN resolutions. – AFP/IC

M'sia against forced displacement of Gazans

Only path to lasting peace, stability in Middle East is through establishment of independent and sovereign Palestine state based on pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as capital: Wisma Putra

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Malaysia rejects forced resettlement of Palestinians

➤ Unilateral attempt to undermine self-determination of Gaza unacceptable and would prolong conflict: Ministry

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia has strongly rejected plans that could lead to the forced displacement of Palestinians, calling it a violation of international law and multiple United Nations (UN) resolutions, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement yesterday.

It said any unilateral attempt, direct or indirect, to undermine Palestinian self-determination is unacceptable and would only prolong the conflict.

"Malaysia continues to stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine. The only viable path to lasting peace and stability in the Middle East is through the establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital," it said.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan said the announcement to expel the Palestinian people is regrettable.

"The Palestinian people themselves have stated that they will not leave their homeland. Malaysia's support for Palestine is not temporary. We have long supported their struggle for an independent state, and so (this proposal) directly contradicts our longstanding position," he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

The ministry said Malaysia supports the resolution of the Extraordinary Arab-Islamic Summit on Nov 11, 2024 urging all nations that have yet to back the two-state solution for the State of Palestine and its full membership in the UN to do so.

Malaysia has also reaffirmed its commitment to diplomatic and multilateral efforts, including initiatives by the Global Alliance and The Hague Group, in pursuing a lasting peace based on establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian state.

On Wednesday, international media reported that United States (US) President Donald Trump had suggested that Washington should "take over" Gaza and redevelop it, a proposal widely condemned as violating international law and disregarding Palestinian rights.

In the Dewan Rakyat on Wednesday, most MPs participating in the debate on the motion of thanks for the royal address expressed concern over Trump's actions, which they feared could trigger a global trade war.

Datuk Seri Doris Sophia Brodi (GPS-Sri Aman) said Malaysia should leverage its role as Asean chair to strengthen political unity and coordinate the bloc's economic policies in response to Trump's policies.

"The universal tariff policy and trade restrictions imposed on China, Mexico and Canada not only disrupt global supply chain stability but also directly impact Asean nations.

"Malaysia, as an export-dependent economy, cannot remain a mere observer. We must push Asean to act as a more integrated bloc to safeguard regional economic stability and avoid becoming victims of a trade war that benefits no one."

Doris Sophia added that the region must continue to uphold free trade and reject protectionist policies.

She said Malaysia must not be overly reliant on the US and should strengthen ties with other global players such as the European Union (EU), China and BRICS nations to ensure economic stability.

Tanjong Karang MP Datuk Dr Zulkafperi Hanapi suggested that Malaysia explore new opportunities, particularly in manufacturing and technology, in light of global policy shifts.

"Overall, Trump's policies towards China, the EU and other nations should be viewed from a dual perspective.

"While there are challenges, there are also

new opportunities. Therefore, we must capitalise on these global policy changes."

He said while the country should formulate plans to counter the negative impacts of Trump's policies, Malaysia must also continue attracting foreign investments and expanding its export potential, Bernama reported.

Datuk Seri Saifuddin Abdullah (PN-Indera Mahkota) said Perikatan Nasional is calling for a special Dewan Rakyat session under Standing Order 18(1) to discuss the Palestine issue, following Trump's announcement regarding the Gaza Strip.

He described Trump's move, along with his proposal to relocate Palestinians outside their territory, as a declaration of war against Muslims and all advocates of humanity.

Dr Halimah Ali (PN-Kapar) urged the government to take precautionary measures to ensure that supply chains of medicines and vaccines are not disrupted following the US decision to withdraw from the World Health Organisation, adding that the US had been a major financial contributor to it.

She said the government must recognise the risks posed by "domino capitalism", in which decisions are driven purely by profit motives without regard for their impact on other nations.

Asean chairmanship to benefit all segments of society

KUALA LUMPUR: Various programmes have been planned for all segments of society, including rural communities, persons with disabilities, senior citizens and children, during Malaysia's Asean chairmanship this year, said the Foreign Ministry.

Among the planned initiatives are a campaign to promote locally made products and the Asean Plus Three Forum aimed at empowering rural women, it said in a written reply uploaded on the Parliament website.

It said the Asean Youth Summit, a special edition of the Malaysia International Halal Showcase and programmes for school students and higher education institutions are also set to take place.

"Malaysia's chairmanship will also focus on cooperation in addressing issues such as poverty, public health and social well-being, which will directly benefit not only urban populations but also rural communities and underprivileged groups.

"Emphasis will be placed on leveraging advancements in science, technology and innovation as well as digital transformation and new technologies."

The ministry was responding to a question from Tan Sri Abdul Hadi Awang (PN-Marang) on how Malaysia's Asean chairmanship would benefit grassroots communities and indirectly aid the country's economic recovery.

The ministry said digital infrastructure development programmes would create opportunities, particularly for rural populations, to access better technological facilities and engage in remote learning.

Additionally, souvenirs presented to guests and foreign delegates would be sourced from local industries to boost the tourism sector and MSMEs. - Bernama



SHOW OF ARMS ... Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Dr Zaliha Mustafa and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar viewing exhibits after launching Putrajaya Open Day at Dewan Seri Siantan in Presint 3 yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

Applications open for King's scholarship

PUTRAJAYA: Applications for the 2025 Yang di-Pertuan Agong Scholarship will be open from Feb 3 to 28, said the Public Service Department.

The prestigious scholarship is available to full-time master's and PhD students at both local and international universities, it said in a statement.

Fields eligible for the scholarship include science, technology, engineering and mathematics, economics, law, Islamic finance and artificial intelligence.

Candidates wishing to apply must demonstrate strong potential to become leaders in both academic and professional fields.

Those wishing to apply can access further information and submit their applications online at btmpenajaan.jpa.gov.my. - Bernama

New rules still under review for Muslims at events of other faiths

KUALA LUMPUR: Proposed guidelines for Muslims attending events at non-Muslim houses of worship are still under discussion by the authorities, said Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Datuk Dr Mohd Na'im Mokhtar.

He said engagement sessions on the matter involved state Islamic religious councils, and the proposed guidelines would be comprehensively discussed during the 126th Meeting of the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs Muzakarah Committee.

He added that the committee's decision

would be presented at the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs meeting chaired by the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin.

Mohd Na'im urged all parties to refrain from creating misunderstandings or polemics concerning the guidelines, which could result in public unrest, as their purpose is to ensure that religious activities are conducted in an orderly manner and contribute to national harmony.

In a written reply uploaded on the Parliament website, Mohd Na'im said the government would introduce new guidelines

for Muslims attending events at non-Muslim houses of worship.

The guidelines include a requirement to obtain permission from religious authorities if the event involves Muslims, as well as ensuring that the event does not contain elements that could offend the sensitivities of Muslims.

Mohd Na'im said the guidelines were developed to promote harmonious social and cultural relations among Malaysia's diverse religious communities.

He said the guidelines would allow Muslims to attend celebrations or ceremonies of other

religions in a respectful manner, observe proper decorum and uphold the principles of Islamic faith.

Mohd Na'im added that once finalised, the guidelines would support government efforts to foster unity and mutual respect among the people, without raising concerns or misunderstandings from an Islamic perspective.

"It will ensure that the participation of Muslims in these activities will not spark controversy or touch on the sensitivities of different religious groups." - Bernama

One-session school system nationwide within five years

KLUANG: The Education Ministry aims to complete the nationwide implementation of the one-session school system within five years, according to minister Fadhlina Sidek.

She noted that, to date, more than 9,000 out of over 10,000 schools nationwide have adopted the one-session system, with the remaining schools yet to do so due to high student density.

"The development of education in this country is progressing very well and there are more than 9,000 schools that have already achieved the one-session school system," she said.

Speaking at the Intan Minister's Conversation: Education Instills Leadership, Shaping the Future Generation held at the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan) Southern Region yesterday, she highlighted the challenges affecting the system's full implementation.

Also present were Education Director-General Azman Adnan and Deputy Director-General of Public Services (Development) Datuk Anes Ibrahim.

Fadhlina said factors influencing the transition include the construction of new schools and the repair of dilapidated ones.

"The ministry also needs to consider several constraints, such as the location, premises and management of the schools themselves," she added. — Bernama

Transit homes for teen mothers not a long-term solution

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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PETALING JAYA: Of the 44,263 cases of teenage pregnancies recorded in Malaysia over the past five years, 17,646 involved unmarried girls.

However, while having a transit home for them is a positive move, it is not a permanent solution, said Universiti Teknologi Mara Social and Policy Studies lecturer Prof Dr Yarina Ahmad.

She was commenting on Dawn Hope, the country's first transit home in Kuching, Sarawak, which offers protection, healthcare, mental health services, counselling and parenting guidance for young girls.

"It is praiseworthy to have such a home, but it should not be a permanent solution. Efforts should instead focus on comprehensive sex education, parental guidance and community awareness.

"Providing such services at the home serves as a crucial support system, but real change requires a broader societal shift in education and awareness. If the number of cases continues to rise, will we keep building more transit homes? That

➤ Experts urge better sex education, parental guidance and community awareness to address rising cases

would indicate deeper social problems," she said.

Yarina stressed that ensuring the home is a safe and non-judgmental space for teenagers requires strict privacy protection and proper policies.

She added that clear regulations must uphold residents' confidentiality and staff must receive specialised training to handle sensitive situations with care, focusing on supporting them.

"Societal stigma remains a major challenge, making teenage pregnancy a taboo subject. The strong culture of blame and shame often isolates pregnant girls, making it harder for them to seek help.

"To address this, education is key — not to normalise teenage pregnancy but to encourage understanding. If society refuses to help, where else can these girls go?"

She also pointed out that schools

play a key role in early intervention by identifying cases and preventing escalation.

Students facing issues related to inappropriate sexual activity should feel safe reporting them to teachers to ensure proper guidance.

"In 2010, a politician suggested that teenage pregnancies could be resolved through marriage, but this is not a viable solution. Forcing unprepared individuals into marriage could lead to more problems, which is why comprehensive sex education should be introduced early as a preventive measure."

Yarina noted that a transit home can benefit parents who are unable to care for their pregnant children.

For teenagers, being surrounded by others in similar situations can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation.

Sarawak Women for Women

Society president Dr Angie Garett described the transit home as a support initiative that helps pregnant teens receive comprehensive assistance, including counselling, parenting education and coping strategies to manage stress, mental health challenges and relationships.

"The home is set to begin operations next month, and pregnant teens seeking refuge there will undergo an interview and screening by Pertubuhan Pergerakan Insan Sarawak, which will manage the facility.

"It is specifically for those who have no one to care for them, and provides a safe space free of charge until they give birth, helping them transition into life after leaving the home," she said.

Garett emphasised that confidentiality is a priority to ensure the transit home remains a safe and non-judgmental space for pregnant teenagers.

She highlighted that the long-term goal of the initiative is to support young mothers while also reducing cases of abandoned babies and baby dumping by providing a safe space for those in need.

RON97, RON95 and diesel prices unchanged

KUALA LUMPUR: The retail prices of RON97 and RON95 petrol across the country will remain unchanged at RM3.43 and RM2.05 per litre respectively from yesterday until 12 Feb.

The Finance Ministry, in a statement, announced that the retail price of diesel in the peninsula will remain at RM3.18 per litre, while in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan, it will also be unchanged at RM2.15 per litre during the same period.

According to the ministry, the prices were set based on the weekly retail pricing of petroleum products using the Automatic Pricing Mechanism formula.

"The government will continue to monitor global crude oil price trends and take appropriate measures to ensure the continued welfare and well-being of the people," it stated. — Bernama



QUALITY CHECKS ... A technician on supervising duty at Malaysia's first highly automated ammunition factory, owned by Ketchek Asia Sdn Bhd in Lipis, Pahang. — **BERNAMAPIC**

Putrajaya, three states eradicate hardcore poverty

KUALA LUMPUR: The *Madani* government's efforts to eliminate hardcore poverty have made significant strides, with three states and one federal territory successfully recording zero cases last year.

According to the Economy Ministry, data from the National Poverty Data Bank up to Dec 31 shows that the Federal Territory of Putrajaya, Negeri Sembilan, Malacca and Perlis have achieved zero hardcore poverty, with 1,793 households nationwide still classified as hardcore poor.

"Currently, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur has the highest number of hardcore poor households, with 507, followed by Kedah with 314, Johor with 298, Selangor with 168 and Terengganu with 124," the ministry said in a written reply on the Parliament portal. — Bernama

MYCC probes 13 bid-rigging cartel cases involving RM2.3b

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Competition Commission (MyCC) is actively investigating 13 cases of alleged bid-rigging cartels involving 561 enterprises, with a total value of up to RM2.3 billion, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday.

Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Minister Datuk Armizan Mohd Ali disclosed that since the beginning of 2024, MyCC has been implementing a targeted strategy to strengthen enforcement against bid-rigging cartels, a long-standing form of cartel activity.

He stressed efforts to curb such practices were crucial to ensure they did not undermine the government's commitment to transparent procurement governance, in line with the *Madani* administration's goal of strengthening public service delivery.

"The actions taken against companies engaging in anti-competitive practices reflect the government's commitment to creating a healthy competitive ecosystem in the market.

"This will contribute to economic growth, improve quality, provide

consumers with more choices and ensure reasonable pricing of goods and services," he said during a question-and-answer session at the Dewan Rakyat.

Armizan was responding to a question from William Leong Jee Keen (PH-Selayang) on the effectiveness of MyCC in enforcing the Competition Act 2010 (Act 712) and the number of investigations that have led to successful prosecutions and convictions between 2014 and 2024.

Among the sectors implicated in bid-rigging are services, utilities,

construction, food and beverage, and information technology.

Armizan highlighted that since Act 712 came into effect, MyCC, as an independent and quasi-judicial body, has conducted investigations into 339 enterprises across various industries, including transport, manufacturing, food, services, education, insurance, agriculture and public procurement.

Findings from these investigations led MyCC to issue findings of violations under Section 40 of the Act, covering 14 cases involving 259 enterprises.

"A total of 257 enterprises were found to be involved in cartel activities, while two enterprises were found to have abused their monopoly position. These decisions have resulted in financial penalties amounting to RM571.5 million."

In response to a supplementary question from Leong on the steps taken to strengthen the Act, Armizan confirmed that the ministry is in the process of amending the legislation, particularly to streamline enforcement procedures and introduce a merger control regime. — Bernama

Keeping interest in traditional Indian art forms alive

➤ Enthusiasts aim to make *Silambam* and *Bharatanatyam* more accessible to community as well as create awareness of cultural significance

BY KIRTINEE RAMESH newsdesk@thesunday.com

PETALING JAYA: As of July 2024, ethnic Indians made up 6.5%, or 2.2 million, of Malaysia's multiracial and multicultural population, but traditional Indian practices have generally declined.

However, two organisations have dedicated themselves to helping the community regain interest in their traditional art forms - *Silambam* and *Bharatanatyam*.

Malaysia *Silambam* Association president Dr Suraess Muthusamy said interest in *Silambam* grew after its official inclusion in the Malaysian Games in 2020 but more needs to be done.

"*Silambam* is not just a martial art. It carries deep historical, spiritual, and cultural significance. By practising it, younger generations stay connected to their roots and keep traditions alive.

"Beyond self-defence, *Silambam* integrates Tamil philosophy, discipline, and physical fitness. We are making *Silambam* more accessible through school programmes, workshops, and competitions," he said.

Public interactions through storytelling, historical references, and lessons on ancient warriors help students gain a deeper appreciation for *Silambam*.

Although the martial art has deep Indian roots, the association promotes it as an inclusive art form that anyone can learn, regardless of ethnicity.

"To combat the belief that traditional arts are outdated, we modernised training by incorporating fitness, sports elements, and self-defence techniques.

For 15-year-old Lenasshree Kamalakannan, her *Silambam* journey began at age six when her mother introduced her to it.

Lenasshree has spent over nine years training and transforming from a beginner to a gold medalist at the Asian Open *Silambam* Championship 2024 held in Doha, Qatar.

"Martial arts do not just shape the body but also the mind. The patience, focus, and



Suraess said *Silambam* is not just a martial art but carries deep historical, spiritual and cultural significance. - ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THE SUN

resilience I've learnt through *Silambam* have helped me in all areas of my life," she said, adding that she believes the martial art is a reflection of Indian culture, a heritage that must be preserved and passed on.

Lenasshree actively contributes by training her younger sisters, ensuring that they too become part of this legacy.

"If we start young, we can build not just great fighters, but great individuals who carry our culture forward with pride," she said.

Mahavidya Dance Theatre founder and acclaimed dancer Sheela Raghavan has dedicated her life to teaching *Bharatanatyam* and preserving Indian culture through the classical dance form.

Over the years, she has seen fluctuations in student enrolment, especially due to challenges like the Covid-19 pandemic. However, while interest in this classical dance remains strong, Sheela noted that transport issues and financial constraints often impact student attendance.

"We offer free lessons as a non-profit organisation, but financial struggles can be a hurdle. One student, who was learning the dance for six years, faced difficulties due to a parent's illness. However, she kept practising on her own and we provided online classes to support her.

"Despite the dedication of our many students, awareness of *Bharatanatyam's* cultural significance still needs to be strengthened, and one major barrier is their Tamil proficiency, which causes them to struggle to understand the deeper meanings within the dance."

Sheela believes *Bharatanatyam* plays a vital role in preserving Indian culture, especially in Malaysia, where the community is shrinking in numbers.

Beyond the performance, she said *Bharatanatyam* helps individuals develop a stronger sense of self-identity and well-being, which is crucial in today's fast-paced world.

"By staying connected to our roots and growing with time, we can keep our ancestors' spirit alive and inspire future generations. Just as importantly, I have always believed dance can unify the people and build their self-confidence and pride."

The Mahavidya Dance Theatre is unique in Malaysia as Sheela teaches the *Vazhuvoor* style, which is one of the four original styles of *Bharatanatyam*.

Her senior students are being trained to teach as they have vast experience, having performed in Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand and other countries.

'98 Sabah education projects approved for 13th M'sia Plan'

KOTA KINABALU: Ninety-eight out of 108 projects submitted by the Sabah State Education Department to the Education Ministry have successfully passed the screening process for the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP).

Sabah department director Datuk Raisin Saidin said applications for the projects, including those for the replacement of dilapidated schools, were presented to the ministry in December last year.

"These approved projects will be presented to the Economy Ministry in May for budget approval, which will be announced during the tabling of the National Budget in October," he said while delivering the department New Year address at the Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (C) Chung Hwa hall on Wednesday.

Raisin said under the 12th Malaysia Plan, a total of 273 project applications were submitted, covering the construction of replacement schools, new schools, district education office buildings, building extensions, and land acquisition.

He said 214 of these projects, with values ranging from RM10 million to RM300 million, have been approved by the Economy Ministry.

However, to ensure the smooth progression of these projects, several challenges must be addressed promptly, particularly issues related to the status of school land sites and building safety certification.

"To enhance long-term efforts in addressing the issue of dilapidated schools in Sabah, strong collaboration with relevant stakeholders is crucial," he added. - Bernama

Simpang Ampat folk to face water cut

GEORGE TOWN: Some 4,000 Penang Water Supply Corporation consumers in the Simpang Ampat area on the mainland will experience a scheduled water supply disruption from today until tomorrow.

The corporation said in a statement that the disruption is due to final pipe connection works involving a 300mm MS X 300mm MS pipe in Jalan Merak 5, Taman Merak, South Seberang Perai.

According to a statement on its official Facebook page, the water supply disruption will begin at 10pm today and is expected to last until 6am tomorrow, affecting 3,950 user accounts in Taman Idaman, Taman Tambun Jaya, Taman Merak, and Taman Merak Jaya.

The corporation advises affected users to store sufficient water for use throughout the disruption period. - Bernama

Review electricity tariff hike implementation, govt urged

KUALA LUMPUR: Industry players and consumer associations have called on the government to carry out a comprehensive and thorough study on the method of implementing the electricity tariff hike and its potential impact on the public.

Those contacted by Bernama have voiced concerns that the electricity tariff hike might lead to higher prices of goods and services, affecting consumers.

Malaysian Budget and Business Hotel Association president Dr Sri Ganesh Michiel said hotel operators would have no option but to raise room prices to offset the higher operating costs resulting from an increase in the electricity tariff rate.

He said it would have an indirect effect on the B40 group, who mostly stayed in budget hotels when travelling for work or holidays.

"Budget hotels mainly cater to the B40 group.

"When operating costs rise, room prices will have to go up to cover those costs.

"It's the people who will be affected. If the hotel doesn't increase prices, it will eventually close down due to losses," he said.

Ganesh hoped that the government would help small and medium enterprises, such as budget hotels, by introducing a special incentive mechanism or special tariffs to lessen the impact of the tariff hike.

He also urged Tenaga Nasional Berhad to be

fair to budget hotel operators by imposing a commercial tax on short-term residential accommodation (STRA) service providers in the country.

"It's unfair that STRA uses house tariffs, enabling them to sell rooms at lower prices.

"On the other hand, licensed hotels that pay taxes have much higher operating costs.

"As a result, the only option is to raise prices to cover those costs," he said.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) urged the government to plan and review any tariff adjustments or subsidy reforms more carefully to avoid sudden market shocks.

Fomca chief executive officer Dr Saravanan

Thambirajah said the shift from blanket to targeted subsidies must be carried out in a clear, transparent and phased manner to avoid negative impacts, including higher inflation and increased costs for consumers.

"We call on the government to involve all stakeholders, including consumer associations and industry players, to ensure that decisions on electricity tariffs are in line with the current economic situation and do not overly burden businesses and consumers.

"For long-term measures, we encourage consumers to switch to green energy, such as using solar panels, and to adopt energy conservation and efficiency practices," Saravanan said.

No-camping regulation sparks public debate

➤ While authorities cite environmental preservation issue, ban could result in tourists seeking alternative locations, affecting local economy: Academic

■ BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM
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PETALING JAYA: The recent enforcement of a no-camping policy on Port Dickson beaches has ignited public debate about its implications on tourism and the local economy.

While the Port Dickson Municipal Council emphasised environmental preservation, citing issues such as littering, improper waste disposal and habitat destruction caused by unregulated camping, tourism experts argued that the ban could deter tourists and harm local businesses.

Universiti Teknologi Mara tourism economics expert Prof Dr Mohd Hafiz Hanafiah said the outright prohibition prioritises environmental preservation at the expense of tourism flexibility.

"Such strict bans may not strike the best balance. Other destinations have adopted regulated camping to allow for environmental preservation while still accommodating tourists," he said.

Hafiz warned that the policy could hurt Port Dickson's reputation as a family and budget-friendly beach destination.

"If the rule remains rigid, tourists may seek alternative locations with more relaxed regulations.

"Malaysia risks losing its competitiveness

as a coastal tourism destination compared with neighbours like Thailand and Indonesia. Over time, this could shift economic benefits elsewhere."

Hafiz said local businesses, including food vendors, tent rental operators and accommodation providers are already feeling the pinch. The expected lower foot traffic from budget travellers due to the decision can impact sales and occupancy rates, causing financial losses for local entrepreneurs.

He said backlash on social media, with some calling for a boycott of Port Dickson, further threatens its tourism appeal.

"Viral campaigns in today's digital era can significantly impact visitor numbers. This sentiment could push potential tourists to other destinations."

Hafiz suggested the authorities consider alternatives, such as designated camping zones with proper waste management and permit systems to balance tourism and sustainability.

YouTube channel FWFamily Camping content creator Norshazwani Nasaruddin said the no-camping enforcement could discourage first-timers from experiencing outdoor activities.

"Without accessible and welcoming options such as beach camping, many might miss the chance to explore Malaysia's beautiful natural landscapes."

Norshazwani said there is a surge of interest in camping among Malaysians, which is fuelled by several factors, including social media.

"Platforms such as YouTube and Instagram inspire more people to explore outdoor activities. Camping is also an affordable alternative to conventional vacations, especially for families on a budget."

She said the rise in affordable camping gear has made it easier for Malaysians to enjoy outdoor adventures without high costs, and that such affordability is the reason more families are now turning to camping as an alternative to expensive vacations.

Norshazwani said camping allows families to bond while connecting with nature, making it a popular choice.

As an active member of the Naturehike Outdoor Camping Malaysia community, she has witnessed the enthusiasm for camping firsthand.

"It's one of the biggest camping communities in the country. We organise camp meets and share experiences, making camping a collective and supportive activity."

She also said the camping community provides a sense of belonging. Being part of such a group allows enthusiasts to share knowledge, learn from one another, and make the experience more enriching.

However, she said with the ban at Port Dickson, the camping community might also feel sidelined, especially since responsible campers often advocate sustainability, so engaging with such groups could help the authorities craft more balanced policies.

She advised beginners to choose friendly campsites with basic facilities and follow the "Leave No Trace" principle.



Hafiz suggested authorities consider alternatives such as designated camping zones with proper waste management and permit systems to balance tourism and sustainability. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN

Johor cops bust 25 large-scale drug rings

JOHOR BAHRU: Johor police busted 25 large-scale drug trafficking syndicates with the arrest of 99 members and the seizure of various assets worth RM17.23 million last year.

State police chief Datuk M. Kumar said among the biggest successes of the Johor police contingent Narcotics Crime Investigation Department was the seizure of drugs worth RM12.62 million.

The seizure was achieved through Ops Jaring 12 by busting an international drug trafficking syndicate involving the arrest of 14 foreigners on May 29.

He said the department had also conducted 21,093 raids involving the inspection of 46,878 individuals.

"A total of 25,065 individuals have been arrested for various drug-related offences, which is the third highest achievement in the country, with the seizure of 7.3 tonnes of drugs worth RM99.76 million.

The amount of the drugs seized can be used for 3,653,081 doses, he added.

"We are always committed and aggressive in carrying out continuous operations to eradicate drug smuggling and trafficking syndicates, especially in Johor."

Kumar said police are focusing on hotspots, including at Felda areas, private farms, fishermen jetties, people's housing projects, low-cost houses, bus and taxi terminals as well as addict haunts to curb drug abuse activities, through Ops Bleaching

and Ops Tapis conducted in each district.

"Following that, we succeeded in crippling a local drug trafficking syndicate through Ops Neting, with the largest seizure worth RM28.58 million and the arrest of seven syndicate members on Oct 15.

"In addition, 739 individuals were arrested for cases of repeat offences under Section 39C of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952, while 139 individuals were arrested under the Special Preventive Measures provision of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1985," he said.

The public can continue to channel information about illegal activities like drug abuse and trafficking in their respective areas by contacting the hotline at 012-208 7222. — Bernama

Ground crew staff killed in helicopter fire

KUALA LUMPUR: A ground crew staff was killed when a Bell 206 L4 helicopter caught fire while landing to refuel in Bentong, Pahang, yesterday morning.

State Fire and Rescue Department public relations officer Zulfadli Zakaria confirmed the incident, adding that the helicopter pilot survived the fire.

The incident occurred near a hot spring pool along the old Kuala Lumpur-Bentong road.

The victim's body has been taken to Bentong Hospital for further procedures.

In a statement yesterday, the Pahang Fire and Rescue Department Operations Centre reported that upon receiving an emergency call, five personnel and an officer from the Bentong Fire and Rescue station were despatched, along with a Fire Rescue Tender vehicle, arriving at the scene at 10.52am.

"Witnesses said the helicopter lost control and overturned during the landing process. The ground crew member, an Indonesian engineer, was fatally injured by the helicopter rotor blades," the statement read.

The pilot, also an Indonesian national, escaped unharmed.

Meanwhile, the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia confirmed that the ill-fated helicopter, leased and operated by MHS Aviation Berhad, was conducting a work flight.

"Further investigations will be carried out by the Air Accident Investigation Bureau under the Transport Ministry, in accordance with Part XXVI of the Civil Aviation Regulations 2016," the statement added. — Bernama

Pensioner loses RM220,000 in scam

KUANTAN: A pensioner lost RM229,600 to a fraud syndicate scheme in which the perpetrators impersonated representatives of the Health Ministry and a police officer.

State police chief Datuk Seri Yahaya Othman said the 58-year-old man received a call from an individual claiming to be a representative from the ministry headquarters in Putrajaya.

The caller informed the victim that he had taken an extra supply of medication in November last year.

The individual then transferred the victim to an "Inspector Hakim", who told the victim that he was involved in two criminal activities.

The victim was subsequently instructed to transfer all his savings to one account for audit and investigation purposes, and further ordered to leave his ATM card in a small box on a garbage bin opposite a convenience store in Pekan, claiming it was for the police to collect.

The victim only realised he had been duped the following day when he visited the bank and found 85 unauthorised transactions. — Bernama

Nabbed for having homemade weapons

IPOH: A man was arrested for allegedly possessing homemade weapons, namely slingshots resembling rifles as well as crossbows during a raid on a house in Jalan Tambun.

Perak acting police chief DCP Zulkafli Sariaat said the 34-year-old man was arrested by the Special Investigation Division of the Bukit Aman Criminal Investigation Department at 12.30am on Wednesday.

During the raid, police seized seven slingshots, four crossbows, six arrows and 300 ball bearings, along with a mobile phone, he added.

"We have opened an investigation under Section 8(a) of the Weapons Act 1960 and Section 7(1) of the Corrosive Explosives and Dangerous Weapons Act 1958.

"The suspect has been remanded for two days to assist in the investigation." — Bernama

Senior trio on haj journey by bicycle

PADANG BESAR (Thailand): Former Bernama stringer Che Saad Nordin, 75, has embarked on a journey by bicycle to Mecca to perform the haj.

After an unsuccessful attempt in 2023 when he was forced to turn back in Pakistan due to extreme weather, he is determined to complete the 12,000km ride this year.

Accompanied by siblings Rami Osman, 72, and Azmi Osman, 56, Che Saad expects to take about five months to reach Mecca.

"I've been planning this journey for the past four months. It was important to find the right companions who can offer and accept constructive feedback," he said before they departed from the Padang Besar Customs House in Thailand on Jan 29.

The trio was seen off by Perlis Infrastructure, Transport and Border Relations Committee chairman Izizam Ibrahim and Consul-General of Malaysia in Songkhla, Ahmad Fahmi Ahmad Sarkawi.

"The driving force behind this bike ride is my longing to return to Mecca," he said.

In preparation for the ride, Che Saad and his companions adhered to a strict fitness regimen to ensure they were physically in top condition.

A private haj travel agency has pledged to assist them with their pilgrimage arrangements once they reach Mecca.

"The agency will help us with the logistics, but we're expected to arrive within a specific time frame. I hope to get there at least 20 days before the Day of Arafah," Che Saad added.

The group has received support from donors to help cover some of their expenses, as their journey takes them through Thailand, India, Pakistan, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

Izizam expressed backing for the trio and assured them that he would be monitoring their progress throughout the journey. - Bernama



The black-bellied whistling duck enclosure is among the main attractions at the Colours of Amazon exhibition. - TAIPING ZOO FACEBOOK PIC

School holiday draw at Taiping Zoo

➤ New exhibits include snakes, amphibians and lizards from Amazonian region

IPOH: The House of Reptiles & Amphibians and the Colours of Amazon exhibition, with 10 reptile pens and a dedicated amphibian section are among the latest attractions for the school holidays at the Taiping Zoo & Night Safari.

Taiping Municipal Council president Khairul Amir Mohamad Zubir said the new exhibits feature a diverse collection of reptiles and amphibians from various habitats.

"The new exhibits allow visitors

to get a closer look at the unique characteristics of these species."

Species featured are the boa, vine, cobras, reticulated python, temple viper, Asian river toad and Weber's sailfin lizard.

Meanwhile, the Colours of Amazon exhibition immerses visitors in the beauty and biodiversity of the Amazon rainforest, showcasing species such as the capybara (hydrochoerus hydrochaeris), orange-winged

Amazon parrot (*Amazona amazonica*), black-bellied whistling duck (*dendrocygna autumnalis*) and scarlet ibis (*eudocimus ruber*).

He said the new attractions are part of efforts to raise awareness about the importance of protecting endangered reptiles, amphibians as well as tropical wildlife species.

"This initiative also aims to cultivate interest in biodiversity and the significance of preserving the ecosystem," he added.

On a separate matter, he said the Bukit Larut Hill Resort in Taiping is set to reopen on April 1 after being closed since November 2019 due to landslides, Bernama reported.

The reopening follows the

completion of repair and upgrading works on four bungalows atop Bukit Larut last year, which was funded by the Housing and Local Government Ministry. During the closure, the Public Works Department carried out repairs on landslide affected slopes and roads in stages.

"The reopening of the resort, with several operational improvements, aligns with preparations for Visit Malaysia Year 2026. The council does not want to be left behind in efforts to boost the tourism sector, especially in Taiping," he said.

Three bungalows, Beringin, Angkasa and Tempinis will be available for overnight stays, with rental rates ranging from RM500 to RM1,000 per night.

Visitors can choose to rent the entire bungalow or one of the rooms at RM150 to RM500 per night.

For adventure seekers, a campsite at Bukit Larut will begin operating starting Feb 17. Visitors are required to fill out an indemnity form and scan a QR code provided upon entering and exiting the resort area.

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S'pore readies to counter manipulation during polls

SINGAPORE: The city-state will use its Foreign Interference (Countermeasures) Act 2021 (Fica) to address manipulation of social media algorithms by foreign actors to affect the country's political landscape.

Minister of State for Home Affairs Sun Xueling told Parliament on Wednesday that provisions under the Act may be used to act against algorithmically driven online foreign interference, particularly hostile information campaigns driven by foreign actors to influence elections.

"If algorithms are deliberately manipulated by foreign persons or entities, including social media companies, to affect our domestic politics, that would constitute foreign interference.

"The government will engage with social media companies ahead of the general election to remind them of the need to comply with applicable laws, especially those concerning foreign interference," she said in response to questions from Jurong GRC Member of Parliament Dr Tan Wu Meng.

According to the Home Affairs Ministry website, under Fica, directions can be issued to an internet intermediary, such as a social media service, to take down their content, or suspend or disable the account, such that the content is not viewable by end-users in Singapore. Non-compliance with such directions is an offence.

Sun said the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act 2019 (Pofma) could be used to address falsehoods on online platforms during the election period.

Under the Act, the government may issue directions requiring the publication of correct facts.

"Additionally, all online election advertising during that period must comply with rules in the Parliamentary Elections Act 1954, ensuring transparency and accountability," she said.

Under the law, the returning officer can direct social media platforms to disable access to or remove any online election advertising that violates these rules.

Tan, in his questions, asked whether the government has assessed the potential impact of a foreign-based social media platform manipulating its algorithms to either privilege or disadvantage the social media reach of a particular candidate or group of candidates during a general election period or the lead-up to it.

He also inquired whether laws, such as Pofma and Fica, are sufficient to address the issue. – Bernama

China rolls out red carpet for Thai prime minister

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping met Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra in Beijing yesterday, as the two countries eye closer ties amid growing global uncertainties.

Paetongtarn is on an official visit to China, marking her first visit to Beijing since taking office in August.

The four-day visit coincides with the 50th anniversary of China-Thailand diplomatic relations, which are overshadowed by issues such as online fraud and safety concerns.

The recent high-profile case of Chinese actor Wang Xing, who went to Thailand for what he thought was an acting job but was abducted and later rescued from a scam centre in Myanmar, has sparked heated discussion in China about cross-border telecom scams.

Thailand, concerned about the impact on its vital tourism sector, has sought to allay safety concerns among Chinese, who constitute the largest group of visitors to the

Southeast Asian nation.

On Tuesday, the Thai government said it would cut electricity supply to some border areas with Myanmar to curb illegal scam centres.

Southeast Asia, especially border towns in Thailand, Myanmar and Laos, has become a hub for online fraud, according to the United Nations, which says hundreds of thousands of people have been trafficked to work in scam centres.

The talks between Xi and

Paetongtarn come as Beijing is navigating a trade war with the United States, triggered by President Donald Trump's 10% tariffs on all Chinese imports.

Thai Commerce Minister Pichai Nariphaphan said in November the country had a good balance between the US and China and expects to benefit from the trade war as Thai exports to the US would increase because the US would cut imports from China. – Reuters

Philippine VP impeachment trial 'likely' in June

MANILA: The impeachment trial of Philippine Vice-President Sara Duterte would likely take place after mid-term elections in May and could be decided by a new group of lawmakers, the Senate president said yesterday.

Whether the trial moves forward in a special session, when the Senate reconvenes on June 2, or even later, is now up to the country's 24 sitting senators, Francis Escudero told a press briefing, without offering a timeline for the decision.

Duterte was impeached by the House of Representatives on Wednesday for "violation of the constitution, betrayal of public

trust, graft and corruption and other high crimes."

➤ **Allegations include financial fraud, assassination plot against president and links to drug war murders**

trust, graft and corruption and other high crimes."

If convicted, she will be removed from the vice-presidency and barred from public office.

"Her Senate trial, however, will likely extend into the 20th Congress. That's almost a sure thing now," Escudero told reporters yesterday.

"The start date will depend on the rules we approve. But I feel the

trial has to take place when the Senate is in session. The impeachment court does not have a separate life."

He went on to explain that even if the trial begins on the watch of current senators, it could be taken over the finish line by the incoming class.

President Ferdinand Marcos, who was previously dismissive of

the move to impeach, could also legally call for a special session, although senators would have to accede to that in a vote.

Wednesday's impeachment vote, which drew eyes from 215 of the body's 306 members, spelled out allegations, including financial fraud, an assassination plot against Marcos and ties to "drug war" murders in Davao.

Speaking at a concurrent press conference yesterday, House Deputy Majority Leader Lorenz Defensor agreed the trial "may cross over to the next Congress", whose members will be determined by elections on May 12 and begin their terms in late July.

"We leave it up to the Senate as a separate body and as an impartial body to adjudicate how they will proceed with the impeachment process."

Duterte, who has yet to publicly comment on her impeachment, was widely tipped to succeed her father Rodrigo as president in 2022 elections but stepped aside to back Marcos and later ran for vice-president on his ticket.

But the alliance has since imploded. In November, she delivered an explosive-laden speech saying she had ordered someone to kill Marcos if she herself was assassinated.

She later denied that her comments constituted a death threat, saying she had only been expressing "consternation" with the administration's failures.

The alleged assassination threat was among a raft of allegations included in three separate complaints filed against Duterte in December.

She was already the subject of a House investigation into her spending habits. – AFP



Protesters rally in front of the House of Representatives in Manila on Wednesday. – AFP/PPIC

US health programmes in Indonesia put on hold, says minister

JAKARTA: Indonesia's health partnerships with the US Agency for International Development (Usaid) are on hold and it remains unclear whether they will be permanently suspended.

The United States is considering merging Usaid, Washington's primary humanitarian agency, into the State Department in a major revamp that would shrink its workforce and align its spending with President Donald

Trump's "America First" policy.

A freeze on foreign aid for Indonesia could strain the Asian country's efforts to fight against HIV and tuberculosis (TB).

"That is on hold. Not stopped," said Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin, referring to its projects with Usaid.

Usaid has invested US\$800 million (RM3.5 billion) in Indonesia since 2020, the US embassy said. The Southeast Asian country's

projects with the agency have involved HIV and tuberculosis.

Budi said Indonesia also receives drugs from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which counts Washington as its biggest donor.

The US embassy in Jakarta and Usaid did not respond to requests for comment.

Indonesia has seen TB cases spike in the past few years, with the Health

Ministry estimating more than one million cases in 2023, versus around 820,000 in 2020.

Non-profit group Centre for Indonesia's Strategic Development Initiatives health analyst Olivia Herlinda said the Usaid pause would have a big impact.

"The impact is huge because Usaid supports many health issues in Indonesia, including maternal and child health, TB and HIV," she said.

Separately, Budi said Indonesia will provide a free health screening for its citizens from Monday, with a budget of about 3 trillion rupiah (RM816 million) to prevent early deaths. The initial target for the screening is 220 million people this year.

Top causes of death in the world's fourth most populous nation include stroke, heart disease and TB, data from the World Health Organisation showed. – Reuters



Uproar over mistreatment of Indian deportees

➤ Opposition Congress party demands discussion in parliament

AMRITSAR: Indian opposition lawmakers questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government and demanded a discussion in parliament yesterday over what they said was ill-treatment of 104 Indian immigrants deported by the US.

A US military plane carrying the immigrants landed on Wednesday in Amritsar, Punjab state, part of President Donald Trump's immigration agenda.

The deportation came a week before Trump is expected to meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington.

All immigrants, barring children, were handcuffed during the flight, *The Times of India* and the *Indian Express* newspapers reported, quoting unnamed officials in Punjab who said they had spoken to the deportees.

The deportees underwent hours of scrutiny at Amritsar airport before police escorted them out in small groups in police vehicles.

Reuters was unable to speak to the immigrants.

Some of them were flown on a regular flight to Ahmedabad in Gujarat state yesterday, closer to their homes, said a police official, who did not want to be identified as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

They were escorted out of the Ahmedabad airport by security personnel, according to a witness. Most of the others are from Punjab or the neighbouring state of Haryana, police said.

"Reports have surfaced of these individuals being shackled and treated in a degrading manner during their deportation process, raising serious concerns about their human dignity and rights," opposition Congress party lawmaker Gogoi said in a notice to the secretary-general of the lower house of parliament.

In a separate notice by another Congress party lawmaker, Manickam Tagore urged Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar to make an immediate statement in parliament



Security personnel escorting deportees at the airport in Ahmedabad yesterday. – REUTERS/SPIC

clarifying the Modi government's stand and steps taken to address the issue.

The Indian Foreign Ministry and the US embassy did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Both houses of parliament were adjourned yesterday as opposition lawmakers shouted slogans demanding a government response.

Migration has been among the key issues discussed by India and the US since Trump assumed office last month, and is also expected to come up during Trump's talks with Modi.

Although Indian immigrants have been deported by previous US administrations, it was the first time Washington used a military

aircraft to do so. It was also the farthest destination for such flights using a military aircraft.

The Trump administration has increasingly turned to the military to help carry out its immigration agenda, using military aircraft to deport migrants and opening military bases to house them.

New Delhi has said it will take back such illegal immigrants after verifying their details.

The US is India's largest trading partner and the two countries are forging deeper strategic ties as they look to counter China. India is also keen to work with the US to make it easier for its citizens to get skilled workers visas. – Reuters

Instal bird detection cameras, South Korean airports told

SEOUL: South Korean authorities said yesterday all airports across the country will be ordered to install bird detection cameras and radars after the Jeju Air crash that left 179 people dead.

The Boeing 737-800 was flying from Thailand to Muam in South Korea on Dec 29 carrying 181 passengers and crew when it belly-landed at Muam airport and exploded in a fireball after slamming into a concrete barrier.

The pilot had warned of a bird strike before pulling out of a first landing attempt. The plane crashed on its second attempt when the landing gear did not emerge.

South Korean and US investigators are still investigating the cause of the crash.

The new plans were announced as part of a special safety inspection of airports along with a survey of facilities that attract birds.

"All airports will be equipped with at least one thermal imaging camera," said the Land Ministry in a statement, adding that they aim to begin the rollout next year.

Mobile sonic devices will also be used to deal with "medium and large-sized birds".

"Bird detection radars will be installed at all airports to enhance early detection of distant birds and improve response capabilities for aircraft," the ministry said.

The radar will detect the size of the bird and its movement paths, and this information will be relayed to air traffic controllers.

Ministry officials said they will "establish legal basis" to relocate facilities that attract birds – such as food waste treatment facilities and orchards – away from airports, and impose new distance restrictions on new facilities.

"The priority is to establish comprehensive reform measures on aviation safety to prevent the recurrence of aircraft accidents," said Deputy Minister for Civil Aviation Joo Jong-wan. – AFP

Licensed rifles found at mass shooting site

OREBRO: Swedish police found several rifles in the adult education centre in Orebro where a gunman killed 11 people and wounded several others this week in the country's deadliest mass shooting.

Police believe the suspected killer – identified by a Reuters source and Swedish media as Rickard Andersson, a 35-year-old unemployed recluse – acted alone.

"We have found several weapons in the school. They are so-called long guns, rifles," a police spokesperson said yesterday.

"They are licensed guns and can be linked to the suspected perpetrator."

The attack occurred on Tuesday at the Risbergska adult education centre in Orebro, a city of more than 100,000 people about 200km west of Stockholm.

Swedish authorities have said there was no evidence that the shooter, whose body was discovered at the scene, had "ideological motives".

The police have not confirmed the name of the suspect and the number of wounded remains unclear, two days after the attack at the school, which offers adult courses and Swedish language classes for immigrants.

While Sweden has suffered a wave of gun violence in recent years related to gang crime, the nation has been shocked by the brutality of Tuesday's crime.

Survivors barricaded themselves in classrooms and hid under beds to escape the killer. When they were released by police they spoke of seeing pools of blood where victims had been shot. Police are still working to formally identify the dead.

"There is still a lot of work to be done and not everyone has been definitively identified," the police spokesperson said. – Reuters

Seoul ministries block DeepSeek over security risks

SEOUL: South Korea's Industry Ministry has temporarily blocked employee access to Chinese artificial intelligence startup DeepSeek due to security concerns, a ministry official said on Wednesday, as the government urges caution on generative AI services.

The government issued a notice on Tuesday calling for ministries and agencies to exercise caution about using AI services including DeepSeek and ChatGPT at work, officials said.

State-run Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power said it had blocked use of AI services including DeepSeek earlier this month.

The Defence Ministry has also blocked access to DeepSeek on its computers that are for military use, officials said yesterday.

The Foreign Ministry has restricted access to DeepSeek in computers that connect to external networks, Yonhap News Agency said. The ministry said it cannot confirm specific security measures.

DeepSeek did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

It was not immediately clear if the ministries had taken any actions against ChatGPT.

The ban makes South Korea the latest government to warn about or place restrictions on DeepSeek.

Australia and Taiwan have banned DeepSeek this week from all government devices over concerns that the Chinese artificial intelligence startup poses security risks.

Italy's data protection authority ordered DeepSeek in January to block its chatbot in the country after the Chinese startup failed to address the regulator's concerns over its privacy policy.

Some other governments in Europe, the US and India are also examining implications of using DeepSeek.

South Korea's information privacy watchdog plans to ask DeepSeek about how

the personal information of users is managed.

DeepSeek's launch of its latest AI models last month sent shockwaves through the tech world. The company says its models are on par with or better than products developed in the United States and are produced at a fraction of the cost.

South Korean chat app operator Kakao Corp has told its employees to refrain from using DeepSeek due to security fears, a spokesperson said on Wednesday, a day after the company announced its partnership with OpenAI.

Korean tech companies are now more careful about using generative AI. SK Hynix, a maker of AI chips, has restricted access to generative AI services, and allowed limited use when necessary, a spokesperson said.

Naver, a major South Korean web portal, said it had asked employees not to use generative AI services that store data outside the company. – Reuters

Kremlin fires space agency boss

MOSCOW: The Kremlin yesterday removed the head of Russia's space agency after a tenure of less than three years that was scarred by the failure of Russia's first mission to the moon in 47 years.

The Kremlin said Yuri Borisov, who had headed Roscosmos since July 2022, had been relieved of his post.

He was replaced by Deputy Transport Minister Dmitry Bakanov, who before joining the government had been in charge of a satellite company.

Ever since Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin became the first man to go into space in 1961, Russia has prided itself as a leading power in space exploration.

But its ambitions suffered a massive blow in August 2023 when its uncrewed Luna-25 mission smashed into the surface of the moon while attempting to land.

Borisov, despite that failure, had laid out ambitious plans as Russia prepares to launch its own orbital space station.

The new project will replace the ageing International Space Station (ISS) where Russia has collaborated with the United States even after relations were plunged into crisis because of the war in Ukraine.

Last year Borisov approved a schedule under which the first two modules of the new Russian station would launch in 2027.

Russia has said it plans to maintain a continuous crewed presence in space and conduct scientific, economic and security-related projects that were not possible in the Russian segment of the ISS.

World powers are competing not only to explore space but also potentially to deploy weapons.

Borisov, the outgoing boss, formerly served as a deputy defence minister under Sergei Shoigu. – Reuter

BRIEFS

CHINA NAMES SENIOR ENVOY FOR EUROPE

BEIJING: China named its former ambassador to France, Lu Shaye, as Special Representative for European Affairs. Lu, 60, will promote dialogue and cooperation with Europe and "contribute to the stable and healthy development of China-EU relations", said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun. Lu replaces Wu Hongbo, 72, who was appointed to the role in 2019 when it was first created. The veteran French-speaking diplomat previously served as ambassador to Canada and Senegal. – Reuters

RUSSIA KICKS OUT LE MONDE JOURNALIST

MOSCOW: Russia said it had withdrawn accreditation from *Le Monde's* Moscow correspondent due to Paris' refusal to issue a visa to a Russian reporter, leaving the paper without a correspondent here for the first time since the 1950s. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Moscow had taken retaliatory measures after warnings to Paris over its refusal to give a visa to the Russian journalist. *Le Monde* criticised what it said was "the covert expulsion of its journalist". – Reuters

CHILDREN AMONG FIVE DEAD IN SHIPWRECK

SAN JOSE: A boat carrying 17 migrants heading for the United States sank off Nicaragua, leaving at least five people dead, including two children. A Nicaraguan army spokesperson said the vessel had left the Colombian island of San Andres on Tuesday with migrants from India, Iran, Egypt and Vietnam on board. The boat capsized near the Corn Islands off Nicaragua's Caribbean coast. Two Egyptian children were among the dead. – AFP



Displaced Palestinians sheltering in a heavily damaged building in Jabalia in the northern Gaza Strip. – AFP/IC

Israeli army told to prepare 'voluntary departure' plan

➤ Forced or coerced displacement a war crime

TEL AVIV: Israel's defence minister ordered the army yesterday to prepare a plan to allow the "voluntary departure" of residents from Gaza, after US President Donald Trump drew widespread condemnation for announcing plans to take over the strip.

Defence Minister Israel Katz hailed Trump's announcement that the United States would aim to take control of Gaza, resettle the more than 2 million Palestinians and transform the territory into the "Riviera of the Middle East".

"Gaza residents should be allowed the freedom to leave and emigrate, as is the norm around the world," Katz said on X.

Katz said his plan would include exit options via land crossings, as well as special arrangements for departure by sea and air.

Displacement of Palestinians is one of the most sensitive and explosive issues in the Middle East. Forced or coerced displacement of a population under military occupation is a war crime, banned under the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

Israeli strikes which killed tens of thousands of people over the past 16 months have forced

Palestinians to repeatedly move around within Gaza, seeking safety.

But many say they will never leave the enclave because they fear permanent displacement, like the "Nakba", or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands were dispossessed from homes in the war at the birth of the state of Israel in 1948.

Many were driven out or fled to Gaza, the West Bank and neighbouring Arab states including Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where their descendants still live in refugee camps.

Katz said countries who have opposed Israel's military operations in Gaza should take in the Palestinians.

"Countries like Spain, Ireland, Norway, and others, which have levelled accusations against Israel, are legally obligated to allow any Gaza resident to enter their territories," he said.

"Their hypocrisy will be exposed if they refuse to do so. There are countries like Canada, which has a structured immigration programme, that have previously expressed a willingness to accept Gaza residents."

His remarks drew quick criticism from Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares.

"Gazans' land is Gaza and Gaza must be part of the future Palestinian state," Albares said in an interview with Spanish radio station RNE.

Katz accused Hamas of holding Palestinians hostage in Gaza, preventing their departure and

extorting money from them through the humanitarian aid system. He did not elaborate.

Trump's announcement, which has sparked anger around the Middle East, came as Israel and Hamas were expected to begin talks on the second round of a fragile ceasefire plan to end almost 16 months of fighting in Gaza.

Trump drew rebukes on Wednesday over his plan for Gaza from world powers Russia, China and Germany, which said it would foster "new suffering and new hatred".

Egypt and other Arab nations strongly oppose any attempt to push Palestinians over the border. They fear any mass movement would further undermine prospects for a "two-state solution" – the idea of creating a state of Palestine next to Israel – and leave Arab nations dealing with the consequences.

Regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia rejected the proposal outright and Jordan's King Abdullah said he rejected any attempts to annex land and displace Palestinians.

Iran's Foreign Ministry said Trump's plan was part of Israel's attempt to "completely wipe out the Palestinian people".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he did not believe Trump suggested sending US troops to fight Hamas, or that Washington would finance rebuilding efforts.

Hamas said Trump's proposal was "ridiculous and absurd". – Reuters

West Bank healthcare in dire state, says report

GENEVA: The healthcare system in the occupied West Bank has been in "a state of perpetual emergency" since October 2023, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said in a new report published yesterday.

"A dramatic escalation in violence, marked by prolonged military incursions and stricter movement restrictions ... have severely hindered access to essential services, particularly healthcare, exacerbating already dire living conditions for many Palestinians," it said.

"The West Bank has seen a dramatic escalation in violence, marked by prolonged military incursions and stricter movement restrictions," it said.

The report examined "the attacks and the obstructions of healthcare in a context of what has been described by the ICJ (International Criminal Court) as segregation and apartheid" and revealed "a pattern of systematic

interference by Israeli forces and settlers in emergency healthcare delivery".

The Palestinian Health Ministry says Israeli troops and settlers have killed at least 884 Palestinians in the West Bank since the Gaza war began.

Over the same period, at least 32 Israelis have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military raids in the territory.

Preventing Palestinians from accessing healthcare was "part of a wider system of collective punishment imposed by Israel, under the guise of its crackdown on armed men", MSF said.

"The already-strained Palestinian healthcare system in the West Bank has been further weakened since October 2023 and is facing significant budget constraints," it said.

Nearly half of essential medications are out of stock and health workers have not been paid in

a year, the report said, adding that "most clinics and hospitals are running at significantly reduced levels".

"Access to healthcare is severely impeded by a sprawling system of checkpoints and roadblocks that obstruct ambulance movements, compounded by the escalation of violent military raids involving the use of disproportionate tactics".

This is compounded by "frequent attacks on medical personnel and facilities ... hospitals and healthcare structures are often encircled by military forces, with troops sometimes occupying the buildings, compounding the risks to both patients and staff".

Violence from settlers often exacerbates these dire conditions, it said.

MSF called on Israel to stop its "disproportionate use of force" in the West Bank. – AFP



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Keeping love alive needs daily effort

Under One Roof

Q: My wife and I have been married for a few years, and lately, our relationship feels a bit stale. Is that normal? It bothers both of us but we are not sure how to fix it.

Focus on the Family Malaysia: We understand. When Jean and Jim first started dating, Jim lived in Kuala Lumpur, and she lived in Malacca.

Without a second thought, Jim would often drive two hours just to have dinner with her. During their courtship, he was more than willing to inconvenience himself to show his interest and commitment. But fast forward to the early years of their marriage, and something had changed: running an errand for her in town seemed too inconvenient, and he was often too busy with work to have dinner together.

Most couples do this. Once they are married, they stop pursuing their spouse the way they did when they were dating. It is human nature. But this is also one of the reasons couples fall "out of love" – they stop listening to each other and serving one another.

It is as if saying "I love you" once should last forever. The truth is, love has a shelf life. It needs to be renewed every single day – not once a month or once a year. You cannot rely on that big holiday from last year or that romantic gesture from last month. You need to actively show your love to each other every day.

If your marriage is not what it used to be, rekindle the love by treating each other with the same dedication you had when you were first dating.

Give attention to each other, truly listen and

Most couples stop pursuing their spouse the way they did when they were dating and this is one of the reasons couples fall out of love.



make each other a priority in life again. Restore the passion you had when your relationship was new and watch your feelings of love for each other grow once more.

Q: I am ashamed to admit that I occasionally lose my temper with my young children. It is usually not too severe, and we tend to move past it quickly. However, I am wondering –

is this something I should be concerned about?

Focus on the Family Malaysia: We are sure you love your children, and if you are like most parents, those outbursts may not be about your children.

Stress and frustration can build up, and sometimes something minor – like a spilled

glass of milk or repeated questions – can set us off.

Sometimes, it may feel like our children believe the world revolves around them. Believe it or not, they actually do think that, but it is not due to a lack of discipline; it is a normal part of their development.

A young child's brain is not yet capable of understanding perspectives beyond his own. This is why anger directed at children can be damaging.

When a parent screams, children are not able to process the situation rationally and think: "My parent may be angry, but this is not my fault". Instead, children will immediately feel that they are to blame. If this message is reinforced consistently in the home, the child's sense of self-worth can deteriorate.

A child who grows up in a loving environment will understand that they are valuable and loved, even when they make mistakes.

In contrast, children raised in an environment of anger and harshness may begin to see themselves as a mistake – feeling unlovable and without value.

Almost every parent loses their temper at some point. Fortunately, children can bounce back from occasional outbursts. However, frequent anger can be damaging.

This article is contributed by Focus on the Family Malaysia, a non-profit organisation dedicated to supporting and strengthening the family unit. It provides a myriad of programmes and resources, including professional counselling services, to the community. For more information, visit family.org.my. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Protecting pensioners: Call for justice and dignity

LETTERS letters@thesundaily.com

AS chairman of Majlis Gagasan Malaysia, I earnestly call upon Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to intervene and withdraw the government's appeal against the High Court's ruling on pension adjustments.

This appeal not only undermines the principle of legitimate expectation but also disregards the moral and legal obligations owed to retired civil servants who have dedicated their lives to public service.

The government's failure to honour its commitments to pensioners is a stark betrayal of trust and a violation of the nation's core values.

The principle of legitimate expectation, a cornerstone of administrative law, ensures that individuals can rely on promises made by the government.

In this case, judicial decisions have repeatedly affirmed the rights of pensioners to fair adjustments under the Pensions Adjustment Act 1980.

By appealing the High Court's ruling, the government is defying legal precedent and perpetuating systemic injustice against those who have served the nation with unwavering dedication.

Legal battle

In January 2024, Aminah Ahmad, a former Foreign Ministry staff member, filed a judicial review application on behalf of herself and 56 other government pensioners. They sought an injunction to compel the government to expedite pension adjustments based on the formula outlined in Sections 3 and 6 of the Pensions Adjustment Act 1980, prior to its 2013 amendments.

Additionally, they demanded payment of

arrears within 14 days and a declaration that non-payment constitutes a breach of the Federal Constitution.

This legal action followed the Federal Court's landmark ruling in June 2023, which declared the 2013 amendments to the Pensions Adjustment Act void.

The court found that the amendments were detrimental to pensioners and violated Article 147 of the Federal Constitution, which safeguards pension rights.

Under the old system, a pensioner's pension was adjusted based on the current salary of civil servants in that grade, ensuring that retirees' benefits remained aligned with the cost of living and economic conditions.

However, the 2013 amendments replaced this equitable system with a flat rate of 2% annual increase, significantly eroding the financial security of pensioners.

Despite this clear judicial directive, the government's decision on Jan 23, 2025 to appeal the High Court's ruling is legally untenable and morally indefensible.

Glaring double standard

The government's stance reveals a troubling double standard. While retired judges have received pension adjustments based on their final salaries, other civil servants continue to be denied the same consideration.

In January 2022, 35 retired judges, including several senior figures, successfully sued the government for failing to adequately

increase their pensions and benefits since 2015. They secured not only the correct adjustments but also arrears amounting to RM200,000. This disparity highlights systemic inequity as ex-judges who retired before July 2015 have received their due while other retirees remain neglected.

Moral imperative

Beyond the legal arguments, the government's appeal disregards the financial hardships faced by retirees.

With the rising cost of living, delayed pension adjustments will exacerbate the economic strain on former civil servants, many of whom depend solely on their pensions for survival.

The shift from a salary linked adjustment system to a flat 2% annual increase under the 2013 amendments has left pensioners struggling to cope with inflation and escalating living expenses. Denying them their rightful entitlements is not only unjust but also inhumane.

Mobilising for justice

In response to this injustice, a coalition of government pensioners is mobilising to demand accountability.

Thousands of affected individuals plan to gather at Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur on April 19, calling on the government to implement the High Court's ruling and honour rightful pension adjustments.

This rally underscores the growing frustration among retirees who feel

abandoned by the very institution they served.

Such a gathering could be avoided if the government heeds the call to withdraw its appeal and treats pensioners with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Call to action

I reiterate my call for the government to withdraw its appeal and uphold the rights of pensioners. This is not merely a legal obligation but a moral imperative that reflects the nation's commitment to justice, dignity and respect for its citizens.

I also urge civil society organisations to stand in solidarity with retirees, amplifying their voices and ensuring their contributions are acknowledged.

The government must recognise that respecting pensioners' rights is not just about fulfilling legal obligations; it is about affirming the values of compassion, fairness and gratitude that define a just society.

By withdrawing the appeal and implementing the High Court's ruling, the administration can demonstrate its commitment to these principles and uphold its credibility as a responsible government.

**Ts Dr Manivannan Rethinam
Chairman
Majlis Gagasan Malaysia**

Ts Dr Manivannan Rethinam is a distinguished professional technologist and holds a doctorate in Business Administration, specialising in marketing and technology management. He is a passionate advocate for civil liberties, interfaith harmony and social justice. His work is driven by a commitment to fostering compassion, unity and inclusivity as the foundation for a more equitable society. Through dialogue and collaboration, he strives to bridge divides and create a better future for all Malaysians.

"With the rising cost of living, delayed pension adjustments will exacerbate the economic strain on former civil servants, many of whom depend solely on their pensions for survival."



Brinjal bonanza

Asian-inspired eggplant recipes - P12



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Brinjal delights

➤ Five Asian-inspired eggplant recipes

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

BRINJAL, also known as eggplant, is a vegetable that has found its place in many Asian cuisines. Its rich, tender flesh absorbs beautifully, making it an ideal base for a variety of dishes.

Here are five mouth-watering brinjal recipes, each inspired by different Asian culinary traditions, that are sure to satisfy your taste buds.



Masala brinjal curry is an aromatic Indian dish, in which the brinjal absorbs a blend of fragrant spices. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @MASALAWALI

Masala brinjal curry

This Indian curry is rich in spices, with brinjal simmered in a tangy tomato-based gravy. The depth of flavours comes from a blend of *masala* spices, creating a comforting dish.

Ingredients

- 2 medium brinjals, cubed
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, pureed
- 1 teaspoon of cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon of turmeric powder
- 1 teaspoon of garam masala
- 1 teaspoon of coriander powder
- 1 tablespoon of ginger-garlic paste
- 2 tablespoons of oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves for garnish

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a pan and add cumin seeds. Let them splutter.
2. Add chopped onions and saute until golden brown.
3. Stir in the ginger-garlic paste and cook for two minutes.
4. Add the pureed tomatoes and cook until the oil separates from the mixture.
5. Stir in turmeric, *garam masala*, coriander powder and salt. Cook for three minutes.
6. Add brinjal cubes and mix well to coat in the spices.
7. Pour in some water, cover and simmer for 15–20 minutes, until the brinjal softens.
8. Garnish with fresh coriander leaves and serve with *naan* or rice.



A fiery Malaysian stir-fry with brinjal and spicy sambal that packs a punch of flavour. – PICS FROM PINTEREST

Brinjal sambal

This fiery Malaysian dish combines brinjal with *sambal*, a spicy chilli paste, making it an irresistible accompaniment to rice. The heat from the sambal balances the mildness of the vegetable, creating a great explosion of flavours.

Ingredients

- 2 medium brinjals, sliced
- 2 tablespoons of *sambal oelek*
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon of soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 2 tablespoons of oil
- Salt to taste

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a pan and saute onions and garlic until fragrant.
2. Add *sambal oelek* and cook for another two minutes.
3. Add the brinjal slices and stir to coat in the *sambal*.
4. Add soy sauce, sugar and salt. Stir-fry for 10 minutes until the brinjal softens.
5. Serve hot with steamed rice.



Stuffed brinjal are slow-cooked to make a comforting dish. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @ARCHANA KITCHEN

Stuffed brinjal

This dish features brinjal stuffed with a mixture of spices and herbs. A popular dish in Indian cuisine, it is a great way to enjoy brinjal in a satisfying form.

Ingredients

- 4 small brinjals
- 2 tablespoons of peanut powder
- 2 tablespoons of cumin seeds
- 1 tablespoon of coriander powder
- 1 tablespoon of tamarind paste
- 2 green chillies, chopped
- 1 tablespoon of mustard seeds
- 2 tablespoons of oil
- Salt to taste
- Fresh cilantro for garnish



Thai brinjal stir-fry delivers a balance of sweet and salty flavours.

Instructions

1. Make a cross incision at the top of each brinjal and carefully scoop out the flesh.
2. In a bowl, mix the peanut powder, cumin, coriander, tamarind paste and salt.
3. Stuff the brinjals with the spice mixture.
4. Heat oil in a pan. Add mustard seeds and cumin seeds. Let them pop.
5. Place the stuffed brinjals in the pan and cook on medium heat for 15–20 minutes, turning occasionally, until soft and golden.
6. Garnish with fresh cilantro and serve with bread or rice.

- 1 teaspoon of baking powder
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- Oil for deep frying
- Soy sauce or dipping sauce

Ingredients

1. Mix flour, cornflour, baking powder and salt in a bowl.
2. Add the egg and cold water, whisking until smooth to form the batter.
3. Heat oil in a pan or deep fryer to 175°C.
4. Dip each brinjal slice into the batter and fry until golden and crispy, about three–four minutes.
5. Drain on paper towels and serve hot with soy sauce or dipping sauce.

Thai brinjal stir-fry

This stir-fry creates a balanced dish that is savoury and aromatic. A quick and easy meal with a Thai twist.

Ingredients

- 2 medium brinjals, sliced
- 2 tablespoons of soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon of oyster sauce
- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- ½ teaspoon of ground black pepper
- ¼ cup Thai basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons of oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 small onion, sliced

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a pan and saute garlic and onion until soft.
2. Add the brinjal slices and stir-fry for five–seven minutes until tender.
3. Stir in soy sauce, oyster sauce, sugar and black pepper.
4. Add the basil leaves and cook for another two minutes, allowing the basil to wilt.
5. Serve with steamed jasmine rice or noodles.

Brinjal, with its ability to absorb bold and aromatic flavours, is a true gem in Asian cuisine. It can easily become the star of your next meal. Try these recipes and enjoy the textures they bring to your table.



Japanese-style battered brinjal tempura slices make for a crunchy, delicious snack. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @NINIKBECKER

Brinjal tempura

This Japanese dish offers a crispy and light texture, with thin slices of brinjal coated in a light batter and deep-fried until golden. It is convenient as an appetiser or snack.

Ingredients

- 2 medium brinjals, sliced into ¼-inch rounds
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup cornflour
- ¼ cup cold water
- 1 egg



Rising medical inflation cause of insurance premium hike: Amir Hamzah

KUALA LUMPUR: The continuous rise in medical inflation has led to an increase in the claims rate for medical and health insurance and takaful (MHIT), Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan said.

He said Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) has taken several interim measures to curb the impact of rising MHIT premiums on policyholders, which took effect on Jan 15.

The interim measures include the distribution of premium adjustments due to medical claims inflation over a period of at least three years until the end of 2026, and a one-year delay in premium adjustments due to medical claims inflation for policyholders aged 60 and above who are covered under the minimum plan for the MHIT products purchased.

"Additionally, policyholders whose policies have expired in 2024 due to the premium reset can contact their respective life insurers and family takaful operators to request their policies be reactivated based on the adjusted premiums," he said during the question-and-answer session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Amir Hamzah was responding to a question from Lim Guan Eng (PH-Bagan) regarding the profits of life insurance companies since 2018 and the resolution of the controversy over premium increases for medical insurance, which have surged by as much as 70%, as well as steps to prevent arbitrary hikes in private healthcare costs.

Through the interim measures, 80% of policyholders are expected to face annual premium adjustments of less than 10% due to medical claims inflation, he said. - Bernama

Trump tariff hikes – minimal impact on Malaysia for now

KUALA LUMPUR: The risk of negative impact on semiconductor export performance to the United States following the implementation of tariff hikes by US President Donald Trump is seen as minimal for the time being, said the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI).

Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said this is because Malaysia was excluded from the recent tariff increase imposed on several countries.

"Additionally, investment records show that investments from the US remain strong, as the country is among the largest investors, totalling RM5.1 billion in the third quarter of 2024," he said during Minister's Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Tengku Zafrul was responding to Datuk Ku Abd Rahman Ku Ismail (PN-Kubang Pasu), who asked MITI to outline the government's steps in addressing geopolitical issues and global trade uncertainties, particularly the possibility of tariff increases that would affect Malaysia's exports, especially to the US.

The minister said Malaysia signed a memorandum of co-operation on semiconductor supply chain resilience with the US on May 10, 2022. This agreement, he added, reflects the ongoing commitment of

▶ We're excluded from recent duty increases imposed on several countries and investments from US remain strong: Tengku Zafrul

both countries to ensure a strong and resilient semiconductor supply chain and strengthen economic and strategic ties between Malaysia and the US.

"Therefore, the ministry is confident that existing investors from the US will remain in Malaysia and continue to grow to strengthen their global supply chain," he said.

Tengku Zafrul said the US is Malaysia's third-largest trading partner in 2024, with a trading volume of RM324.9 billion, accounting for 11.3% of Malaysia's total trade.

"Exports to the United States amounted to RM198.6 billion, equivalent to 13.2% of Malaysia's total exports, while imports from the United States reached RM126.3 billion, equivalent to 9.2% of Malaysia's total imports. In terms of investment, the US is among the largest investors, and so far, Malaysia has become the preferred investment destination for more than 600 American companies."

In this regard, Tengku Zafrul said, the government is proactively

trying to maintain and strengthen the good and dynamic bilateral trade and investment relations with the US to avoid tariff increases such as those imposed on China, Canada, and Mexico.

The government will ensure that Malaysia remains a reliable trading and investment partner for all its partners, including the US. "This includes through a conducive and investor-friendly investment ecosystem, effective export control regulations and strategic trade management, as well as compliance with international standards that reassure investors," he said.

On another issue, Tengku Zafrul said the rise of different types of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies such as DeepSeek can reduce Malaysia's reliance on a single product.

The emergence of diverse AI technologies also enables Malaysia to become a neutral centre for AI companies from the west as well as those from the east, such as China, he added.

"Although this more efficient (type of) AI technology reduces the need for large data centres, its lower cost is expected to drive more widespread use, driving demand for data centre services," Tengku Zafrul said when responding to Datuk Seri Wee Jeeck Seng's (BN-Tanjong Piai) question on the impact of the rise of new AI technologies from China on data centre investors in Johor.

Tengku Zafrul said increasing AI efficiency does not reduce demand for data centres. Instead, they may increase AI use, stimulating investment concerning data. "The semiconductor supply chain will be diversified. If we look at Johor, Penang and Kedah, these strategic locations for AI infrastructure and data centres will not be affected."

Hence, the next step is to ensure that Malaysia's data centres have the cutting edge by introducing more enticing green investment incentives.

"We want to further encourage the AI and digital workforce and raise Malaysia's competitiveness as an AI processing centre by attracting more investment from AI companies, not only from the west but also from other countries. We also need to maintain diplomatic relations with the United States (US) and China to ensure our position as a neutral technology investment hub," Tengku Zafrul said. - Bernama

NAIO Lab expected to create over 450 high-skilled AI engineering jobs

BY HAYATUN RAZAK
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KUALA LUMPUR: NAIIO Lab, an initiative between the National AI Office (NAIO) and the Global AI Village (GAV), is expected to create more than 450 high-skilled artificial intelligence engineering jobs over the next three to five years, reflecting Malaysia's ambition to become a regional leader in AI innovation.

Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo said the initiative will attract global talent, nurture local talent, and ensure Malaysians are at the forefront of AI innovation.

"We want to build a generation of AI leaders who can compete on the global stage," he said in his speech at the launch of NAIIO Lab yesterday.

Gobind highlighted that NAIIO Lab will focus on citizen-centric AI applications, particularly agriculture, healthcare, and transportation. "These sectors directly impact the daily lives of Malaysians. AI can enhance productivity, improve service delivery, and unlock new growth opportunities," he said.

The first project under NAIIO Lab, Rakan Tani, will be piloted in

Terengganu and will focus on rice farmers. Designed with inclusivity in mind, it features a farmer-focused AI service accessible through WhatsApp. The pilot project will assess AI-driven solutions such as e-marketplaces, farming input recommendations and credit scoring.

"We aim to roll out the first phase within three to four months. Once the pilot is successful, we will work with GAV and other partners to scale these solutions nationwide," Gobind said.

"While agriculture is our starting point, NAIIO Lab will soon expand to healthcare and transportation. This is just the beginning. Other ministries can follow this model, and funding can be sourced through GAV and The Hive to scale these initiatives," he added.

According to the ministry, the launch of NAIIO Lab marks a pivotal step in Malaysia's AI journey. It will lay the groundwork for a future where AI-driven solutions drive sustainable growth and societal progress.

By fostering strategic partnerships among government, industry leaders, academia and startups, NAIIO Lab will continue to accelerate AI innovation, ensuring Malaysia remains at the forefront of tech-



Gobind (second from left) officiating at the launch of NAIIO Lab yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

nological advancement.

As a key partner in NAIIO Lab, GAV serves as an AI engineering, innovation, and talent hub in Malaysia.

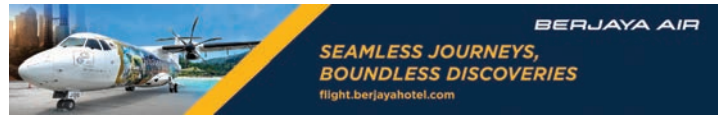
Co-created by the US-based investor The Hive Global AI Fund in collaboration with 500 Global's Khailee Ng, GAV plays a pivotal role in accelerating AI-driven entrepreneurship in the country.

GAV provides funding, mentor-

ship and strategic guidance to AI startups, ensuring they have the necessary support to develop and scale impactful solutions.

"Through its commitment to fostering AI innovation, GAV strengthens the foundation for Malaysia's AI ecosystem, helping to drive the adoption of transformative technologies across various industries," Gobind said.

"As AI solutions expand beyond agriculture into healthcare, transportation, and education, the opportunities for impact are boundless. "NAIO Lab remains committed to empowering AI startups and developers with the resources, funding, and collaborative ecosystem needed to scale their innovations and create lasting economic and social benefits," said Gobind.



AI, trade shifts to drive M'sian industrial sector growth: Knight Frank

PETALING JAYA: The industrial sector in Malaysia is poised for sustained growth in 2025, backed by strong government initiatives, infrastructure advancements and emerging industrial parks integrating artificial intelligence (AI).

According to Knight Frank Asia-Pacific's latest outlook report, global trade tensions, particularly tariff increases under the Trump administration, will prompt manufacturers to diversify their production bases, reinforcing Malaysia's appeal as a strategic industrial hub.

With geopolitical uncertainty and trade tensions expected to take centre stage in 2025, manufacturers are expected to focus on limiting risks, managing costs and seeking alternative production markets. Malaysia is well-positioned to benefit from this shift due to its strategic location, strong government incentives and evolving industrial ecosystem.

Knight Frank Malaysia land and industrial solutions executive director Allan Sim said: "With trade tensions likely to take centre stage in 2025, primarily in response to Trump's planned tariff increase against other countries, manufacturers will strive to limit risks, manage costs, and explore new markets for production. Malaysia's industrial sector growth, driven by supportive government initiatives promoting industrialisation, infrastructure improvement and the establishment of new planned industrial parks integrating AI elements, will set to further transform the country's industrial landscape."

The Knight Frank Asia-Pacific outlook report highlights the increasing role of AI and automation in shaping the industrial sector, particularly in logistics, warehousing, and advanced manufacturing.

The integration of AI-powered industrial parks is expected to enhance operational efficiencies, predictive maintenance, and sustainability efforts, making Malaysia an attractive destination for local and foreign investors.

"As Malaysia transitions into a high-tech, high-value manufacturing hub, we are witnessing a shift towards more sophisticated industrial facilities that align with global supply chain trends," said Knight Frank Malaysia managing director Keith Ooi.

He added that AI-integrated industrial parks will be a game-changer, offering enhanced operational efficiencies, predictive maintenance capabilities, and optimised resource management, ultimately attracting both domestic and foreign direct investments.

Despite global economic uncertainties, Malaysia's industrial sector is expected to maintain resilience, fuelled by strong investor interest in logistics, warehousing and advanced manufacturing.

Measat seals partnership with Shanghai Spacesail

➤ Companies in MoU to explore collaboration, advance LEO satellite services across their markets

PETALING JAYA: Measat Global Bhd, Malaysia's premier satellite solutions provider, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Shanghai Spacesail Technologies Co Ltd, formerly known as Shanghai Spacecom Satellite Technology.

The MoU is aimed at facilitating potential collaboration between the two companies - including provision of Spacesail's low earth orbit (LEO) broadband services and solutions with its Thousand Sails megaconstellation (also known as Qianfan), emerging technologies such as direct-to-device (D2D) communications, satellite-based

Internet of Things (IoT) capabilities and Earth observation services - in Malaysia and markets in Asia where Measat is present, and additionally a joint rain fade study on Q and V band high frequency transmission.

An MoU exchange ceremony was held recently in Shanghai, where Measat was represented by chief operating officer Yau Chyong Lim and Spacesail by president Dr Jason Zheng.

Commenting on the MoU, Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said, "In 2024, Malaysia marked the 50th anniversary of our diplomatic relations with the People's Republic

of China, celebrating the many positive outcomes of this cordial friendship.

"Looking forward, there are abundant opportunities for deeper collaboration, especially in harnessing advanced technologies to enhance people's lives. These innovations have the potential to drive a wide array of benefits, from improving the delivery of government services to fostering economic growth through industrial and commercial applications.

"Additionally, with Malaysia serving as Chair of Asean this year, we hope to showcase the country's technological capabilities and explore new opportunities across the region."

Yau said: "Measat is excited to begin this partnership with Spacesail to advance LEO satellite services across our markets. We firmly believe in a multi-orbit satellite network to achieve progress in

society and are pleased to have the opportunity to integrate the capabilities of Spacesail's Thousand Sails megaconstellation with Measat's fleet of Geostationary Orbit satellites. In regions where Measat operates, satellites have immense potential in further bridging the digital divide and overcoming geographical challenges. We look forward to realising this multi-orbit potential - from expanding the reach of established use-cases like satellite broadband in remote areas to advancing cutting-edge satellite solutions such as D2D connectivity and satellite-based IoT."

Spacesail's Zheng said the partnership with Measat is another milestone in delivering global broadband connectivity and driving innovation in the satellite industry by synergising their respective strengths.

"China and Malaysia are two nations that value the role of technology in improving lives, and I look forward to achieving technological progress by tapping on Measat's local expertise while strengthening bilateral ties - including in upcoming fields like the integration of terrestrial and non-terrestrial network communications.

"I thank the Government of Malaysia, particularly the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission for welcoming Spacesail's interest to offer our services in the country in collaboration with local industry leaders such as Measat," he added.

Spacesail's Thousand Sails megaconstellation, which has already launched 72 satellites to date, seeks to provide low-latency, high-speed and ultra-reliable satellite broadband internet services worldwide. The megaconstellation is targeted to consist of more than 15,000 satellites in the future.



Zheng (second, left) and Yau (second, right) at the MoU exchange ceremony in Shanghai.

Northern Solar plans expansion, eyes Penang and Johor

BY AMIE SHAZRI
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KUALA LUMPUR: Northern Solar Holdings Bhd is setting its sights on expansion following its listing on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia, with plans to establish branches in Penang and Johor Bahru.

Managing director Lew Shooing Kai (pic) said the expansion is expected to be concluded within the next 12 months, strengthening its presence in Malaysia's growing solar energy sector.

The solar renewable energy specialist, which focuses on engineering, procurement, construction, and commissioning (EPC) of solar systems, renewable energy generation, and operations and maintenance (O&M), is targeting a 20% growth in its rooftop solar segment, which offers the highest profit margins.

Lew said Northern Solar ranks among Malaysia's top 10 rooftop solar

players, though precise market share data is limited due to policy-driven regulations.

"The company currently has a tender book of 380 projects, which includes industrial parks and residential developments. Northern Solar will actively work on converting these tenders into secured contracts," he said in a press conference following the company's listing yesterday.

Lew said the company is currently examining its participation in the Large Scale Solar 5 (LSS 5) programme.

"We are currently conducting an in-depth analysis. Based on the study of all LSS 5 schemes, the first phase is expected to involve a capacity of two gigawatts, making it a strategic step to consider.

"The government has extended



this initiative to LSS 5+, with an additional two gigawatts. The estimated project value over the next three years is between US\$15 billion and US\$20 billion (RM66.5 billion and RM87 billion)," he added.

Lew noted that China's oversupply of solar modules has lowered material costs, benefiting Northern

Solar's procurement strategy. "The US import tariff hike on Chinese solar panels does not affect the company, as it sources directly from China," he said.

While competition in the solar EPC business has intensified, Lew remains optimistic, noting that project values and demand have increased proportionally, particularly with the extension of the Net Energy Metering Scheme and the lifting of

the self-consumption limit.

Northern Solar debuted on the ACE Market at 90 sen, a 42.86% premium over its initial public offering (IPO) price of 63 sen per share.

Lew said the IPO marks a major milestone and positions the company for further expansion. "This listing is a strong vote of confidence from the market. With the funds raised, we are committed to scaling up operations and capitalising on Malaysia's growing demand for renewable energy."

Northern Solar raised RM42.4 million from the IPO. A total of RM3.2 million (7.4% from the proceeds will be used to set up a new corporate office.

The company plans to allocate RM29.2 million (68.8% of the proceeds to finance the expansion of its photovoltaic (PV) solar system business. The remaining funds will be used to repay bank borrowings amounting to RM5.5 million (13%) and to cover estimated listing expenses of RM4.6 million (10.8%).

Services PPI maintains upward trend with 0.5% increase in Q4'24

PUTRAJAYA: The services producer price index (SPPI) continued its upward trend, rising by 0.5% in the fourth quarter of 2024 (Q4'24), as compared to 0.3% in the previous quarter, reflecting a rise in services sector pricing.

The Chief Statistician Malaysia Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said: "The arts, entertainment & recreation index increased by 6.1% as compared to a 5.4% rise in the previous quarter, driven by other entertainment & recreation activities (1.9%). Meanwhile, the accommodation and food & beverage service activities index continued to increase by 3.1% (Q3'24: 2.4%), supported by increases in restaurants and mobile food service activities (3.4%) and beverage service activities (3.2%) indices. The education index rose by 0.8%, maintaining the same pace as in the previous quarter, due to secondary education (1.7%).

Additionally, both health and professional indices saw an incline of 0.4%."

Conversely, he added the transportation index posted a decrease of 2.4% (Q3'24: -2%), mainly due to the air passenger transportation index (-9.5%).

Similarly, he said the real estate activities index recorded a slight decrease of 0.2%, while the information & communication index edged down by 0.1%, influenced by a decline in the wireless telecommunications activities (-0.2%).

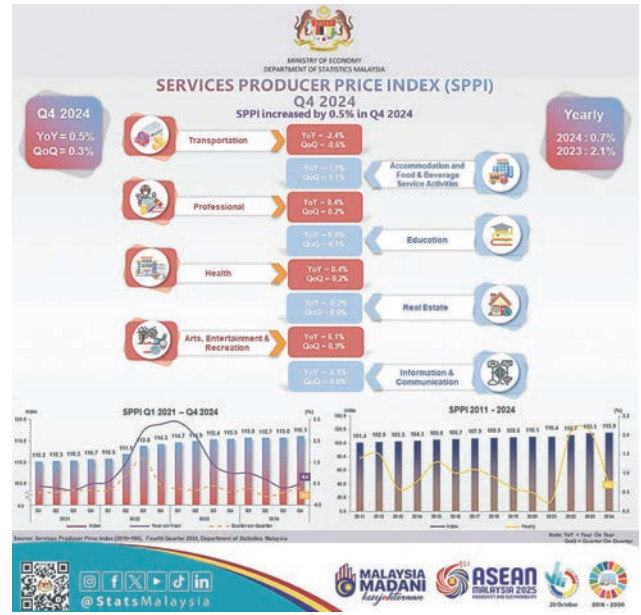
"On a quarter-on-quarter basis, SPPI increased by 0.3%, as compared to 0.1% in the third quarter of 2024. This was driven by increases in accommodation and food & beverage service activities (1.1%) and arts, entertainment & recreation (0.9%) indices. Additionally, both professional and health indices saw a modest rise of 0.2%, while the education

index edged up by 0.1%. Meanwhile, information & communication and real estate activities indices remained unchanged. However, the transportation index experienced a decline of 0.6%," said Mohd Uzir.

He also summarised that the SPPI posted a marginal increase of 0.7% in 2024, as compared to a 2.1% rise in 2023.

The increase was primarily driven by the arts, entertainment & recreation index (6.7%), followed by accommodation and food & beverage service activities (2.6%) and education (0.8%) indices.

Other subsectors that recorded an increase included health and real estate indices, both rising by 0.3%, while the professional index rose by 0.2%. In contrast, the transportation index declined by 1.4%, whereas the information & communication index remained unchanged.



KLCCP posts solid fourth-quarter results

➤ Group announces dividend of 17.1 sen per stapled security

KUALA LUMPUR: KLCCP Stapled Group delivered a strong performance in quarter four 2024 (Q4'24), with higher revenue of RM459.1 million from RM442.6 million in quarter four of the previous year.

Profit Before Tax (PBT) (including fair value adjustments) rose from RM470.4 million to RM476.4 million for the quarter ended Dec 31, 2024. The PBT growth was further enhanced by a notable RM234.7 million fair value gain, attributed to the increased market value for the retail asset.

Building on this solid performance, the group in a statement announced a dividend of 17.1 sen per stapled security for the quarter, bringing the

total dividend for the year to 44.5 sen per stapled security, a 9.9% increase from 2023.

Suria KLCC and the retail podium of Menara 3 Petronas - representing the retail segment - recorded higher revenue of RM139.6 million compared to RM137.1 million in the previous quarter, while PBT stood at RM107.7 million, reflecting a 3.5% increase from the same quarter last year.

This improved performance is primarily due to higher base rent from an upward revision in rental rates for existing and new tenants, along with improved occupancy of 99% compared to 97%.

The hotel segment, represented

by Mandarin Oriental Kuala Lumpur, saw its revenue rise to RM67.9 million from RM65.2 million in quarter four 2023 with PBT of RM5.4 million, driven by the robust growth in group stays and banqueting events. Group stays grew to 28%, up from 17% in quarter four 2023 and the banqueting revenue hit a record high since the hotel's opening. The hotel's Revenue Per Available Room (RevPar) for the quarter saw a 3.7% increase compared to 2023.

The office segment, comprising the Petronas Twin Towers, Menara 3 Petronas, Menara ExxonMobil, and Menara Dayabumi, recorded a revenue of RM146.3 million compared to RM146.5 million in Q4'23, while PBT rose to RM120.1 million from RM114.5 million in the same quarter last year.

The group's improved performance was supported by the strong results in

the management services segment with revenue reaching RM125.5 million and PBT at RM24 million, driven by higher maintenance service activities undertaken.

KLCCP Stapled Group closed the financial year 2024 with a robust performance, achieving a record RM1.7 billion in revenue - the highest since its listing in 2013, underscoring its strong market performance and strategic focus. This represents a 5.7% growth compared to RM1.6 billion in 2023, with PBT of RM1.2 billion.

KLCCP Stapled Group declared a dividend of 44.5 sen for the year, the highest since its listing.

CEO Datuk Mohd Salem Kailany commented, "The group's overall performance in 2024 reflects solid growth across all our businesses, enabling us to deliver the highest dividend payout since the group's listing. With robust customer

spending and a recovering tourism industry, we remain steadfast in our continued growth while staying committed to our strategic focus in delivering value and excellence to our shareholders."

The group remains cautiously optimistic as it navigates economic challenges that could affect consumers' confidence. Nevertheless, the outlook remains favourable, with the economy expected to maintain steady growth in 2025.

KLCCP Stapled Group is Malaysia's largest Real Estate Investment Trust and the country's only Stapled Security. Comprising KLCC Property Holdings Bhd and KLCC REIT, KLCCP Stapled Group represents a diversified office-focused REIT comprising five Grade-A offices which include the nation's iconic landmark, the Petronas Twin Towers, a premier retail mall and a luxury hotel.

EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

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JACCS acquires 49% stake in Carsome Capital

➤ Japan Consumer Credit Service, a member of Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, makes strategic entry into Malaysia via partnership

PETALING JAYA: Carsome Group Inc, Southeast Asia's largest integrated car e-commerce platform, and JACCS Co Ltd (Japan Consumer Credit Service), a global consumer finance company and member of the Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, has partnered via Carsome Capital Sdn Bhd, the financing arm of Carsome.

As part of this strategic partnership, JACCS will invest into Carsome Capital and will own a 49% stake.

Carsome Group will continue to hold a majority 51% stake.

The partnership will combine JACCS' longstanding expertise and international resources with Carsome Capital's ecosystem and local know-how, in order to introduce tailored financing solutions in Malaysia, with an emphasis on underserved segments.

The partnership will also facilitate knowledge transfer to optimise risk assessments, enhance credit governance, and

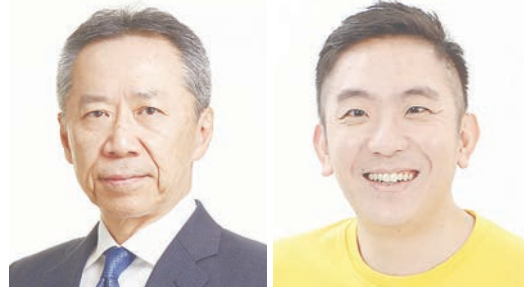
implement best practices that strengthen financial sustainability and portfolio performance.

"Carsome is honoured to partner with JACCS, a global consumer finance company. They mark their strategic entry into Malaysia through our partnership," said Carsome Group co-founder and CEO Eric Cheng.

"By combining JACCS's extensive expertise with Carsome's ecosystem, we aim to redefine the mobility financing experience, empowering communities and driving economic growth across the region."

"We have carefully evaluated the automotive and financing landscape across Southeast Asia, and are excited about the long-term growth potential in this region," said JACCS president and representative director Ryo Murakami.

"We believe Carsome is an ideal partner for us with the potential to drive growth and transformation in the region, starting with Malaysia, and



Ryo (left) and Cheng.

then to other Southeast Asian markets.

"Our investment in Carsome Capital underscores our confidence in this partnership and our commitment to creating long-term value in the automotive financing industry."

Carsome Capital Malaysia managing director Nicholas Wong said: "This collaboration allows us to continue serving unserved and underserved markets here in Malaysia, a segment that has always been at the heart of what we do."

"We are excited to work with JACCS to introduce additional capabilities and technologies, such as artificial intelligence-driven

credit assessments, to expand access to financing to dealers who purchase wholesale inventory from us to sustain their business, as well as end-customers who put their trust in our vehicles."

Founded in Hakodate, Japan, in 1954, JACCS is a trusted name in consumer finance Japan and globally, offering a wide range of solutions ranging from credit cards to auto and housing loans.

A member of the Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), JACCS has established a strong presence in Japan and Asean growth markets, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

Malaysia to become important fresh durian exporter to China: BMI

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is expected to become an important exporter of fresh durian to China following an agreement cemented last year between the two countries, said BMI in a statement.

BMI, a unit of Fitch Solutions, said yesterday the agreement signed in June 2024 allowed Malaysia to export fresh durian to China.

It said that before this, Malaysia only exported frozen pulp and whole frozen fruits.

Citing data from the International Trade Center, BMI said Malaysian fresh durian exports to China totalled US\$4 million (RM17.7 million) in August, September, and October 2024.

"We forecast continued strong demand for durian fruit from China and therefore expect investment in the sector to increase over the short to medium term while highlighting risks associated with overreliance on one import market."

BMI opined that Malaysia and Vietnam are expected to give Thailand a "run for their money", with both countries experiencing significant growth in durian exports.

"Over recent years, exports of durian fruit have become an increasingly important source of export revenue for producing countries in the (Southeast Asian) region.

"We expect growing competition in the durian market, with significant growth in exports from Vietnam and Malaysia, which we expect will increasingly challenge Thailand's status as the largest global exporter," it said.

Thailand is currently the world's largest exporter of fresh "king of fruits", accounting for 63.8% of all exports between 2013 and 2023.

"Thailand's durian exports have grown at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22.8% over the past ten years and 8.6% over the past five years, indicative of the strong momentum in the industry," said BMI.

Therefore, it expects market concentration to decrease in the near term with growth in production and exports from alternative markets.

BMI unit also pointed out that the increasing significance of durian production in Vietnam has also posed a risk to the country's coffee industry.

To date, Vietnam is the world's leading producer of robusta coffee beans.

"To the downside, some farmers choose to plant durians instead of coffee. To the upside, increased intercropping can increase farm resilience," BMI said. - Bernama

'Gamuda order book could hit RM41b with water deal'

KUALA LUMPUR: Gamuda Bhd's participation in the Sungai Perak Raw Water Transfer Scheme (SPRWTS) development project could potentially bump up Gamuda's outstanding order book by about 11% to RM41.1 billion.

In a research note yesterday, CIMB Securities Sdn Bhd said the expectation is well within Gamuda's end-2025 target of RM40 billion to RM45 billion.

It said participation in the SPRWTS project would account for 20% of the research house's forecast for the financial year 2026 new order book assumptions for Gamuda.

"Additionally, we believe that the group is well-positioned to secure water-related infrastructure

works worth RM3 billion to RM4 billion for the Ulu Padas Hydroelectric Dam by end-Feb 2025, having already clinched a 75% share in the construction of the 188 megawatt (MW) Ulu Padas hydroelectric power plant (with the remaining 25% held by Conlay Construction)," it said.

CIMB Securities also highlighted that aside from addressing the region's domestic water supply needs, the SPRWTS project is expected to support development within the Kerian Integrated Green Industrial Park and enhance irrigation in the district upon its completion by 2029.

"Additionally, our channel checks indicate that the SPRWTS will eventually be expanded to

facilitate the supply of treated water to Penang.

"Penang needs a second major water resource (apart from Sg Muda), especially within the fast-growing southern Seberang Prai region. This aligns with the Penang Water Supply Initiative 2050."

CIMB estimated that the project could cost up to RM4 billion.

In terms of its projected capacity, up to 1,500 megalitres (mld) of water could be extracted from Sungai Perak to meet the daily water requirements of northern Perak and Penang.

"We expect Gamuda and Perak State Development Corporation to finalise the exclusive agreement by end-2025 before construction works start in 2026.

"As a key rakyat-centric initiative under Budget 2025, we believe that Gamuda will emerge as the main contender to undertake construction works for the SPRWTS, while Perak Water Board, the sole service licensee for the state's water supply management, is expected to manage the water facility when it is completed," CIMB Securities added.

Meanwhile, on the funding of the project, CIMB Securities said that the Ministry of Finance's wholly owned entity, Pengurusan Aset Air Bhd, which financed the 80 mld Kerian Water Supply Scheme in Perak, is likely to be roped in to fund the project.

It maintained its "buy" rating on Gamuda with an unchanged target price of RM6. - Bernama

AmlInvestment Bank projects strong growth for technology sector

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's technology sector is projected to see a strong 58% year-on-year (y-o-y) earnings growth for the fourth quarter of 2024, with an 87% quarter-on-quarter growth, according to consensus estimates.

In a research note yesterday, AmlInvestment Bank Bhd highlighted that the risk-reward outlook for Malaysian technology sub-segments is most favourable for equipment makers, given their reasonable earnings estimates, recovering order

books, and ongoing supply chain relocation activities.

It noted that estimates for equipment makers are particularly reasonable.

"Order books for equipment makers have stabilised and in certain cases, resumed an upward growth trajectory.

"With certainty following the United States elections, customer capital expenditure plans have resumed. We expect this segment to

benefit from tariff-driven supply chain relocation activities, supporting our 'buy' calls on Vitrox Corporation Bhd and Greattech Technology Bhd," it said.

In comparison, the bank pointed out that earnings expectations for electronics manufacturing services, outsourced semiconductor assembly and test (OSAT), and precision engineering firms are much higher.

"Concerns over export controls, have raised the risks of stockpiling, casting doubt on demand sustainability.

"OSAT companies are also dependent on smartphone shipments, where artificial intelligence (AI) features have yet to boost revenues. For example, in its first quarter 2025 results, Apple Inc reported a one per cent y-o-y decline in iPhone revenues."

AmlInvestment Bank maintained an "overweight" rating on Malaysia's technology sector.

low weighting in investor portfolios and positive long-term structural prospects.

"As the AI and data centre trade unwinds, interest could eventually return to the sector as investors seek to rebalance their portfolio," it added.

Their top picks are Vitrox (buy, target price (TP): RM4.75) and VS Industry Bhd (buy, TP: RM1.45), based on preference for stocks with a clear strategy and long-term vision and earnings certainty. - Bernama

SINGAPORE: The Economic Development Board (EDB) said yesterday geopolitical and economic uncertainties would pose challenges in 2025 as it reported a rise in investment commitments in Singapore last year.

Fixed asset investment (FAI) commitments rose by S\$0.8 billion to S\$13.5 billion (RM44 billion), while total business expenditure commitments fell by S\$0.5 billion to S\$8.4 billion, the EDB said in a statement.

The manufacturing sector accounted for S\$11.1 billion of the FAI commitments, led by investments in semiconductors and biomedical manufacturing, while total business expenditure investment was driven by investment in headquarters and professional services.

"We anticipate significant headwinds from geopolitical and macroeconomic uncertainty," the

Singapore says investment commitments up in 2024

➤ Economic Development Board sees headwinds from geopolitical and economic uncertainties this year

EDB said of the investment environment this year.

"Protectionist policies stemming from economic nationalism and trade frictions will weigh on

companies' investment decisions."

The EDB said artificial intelligence was a growth area last year for investment, including through industry partnerships with Oracle

and Amazon that will help train the local workforce in generative AI.

Board chairman Png Cheong Boon told a media briefing that Singapore's strategy was to remain nimble and diversify its sources of investment, both in terms of sectors and countries.

"That way, if there are restrictions on one market by one source or one product, then others will compensate for it and that will allow us to ensure that the industry

continues to grow," he said.

The EDB said as the 2024 investment commitments are realised over the coming five years, they were expected to create 18,700 jobs.

Singapore would also benefit from its position in Asia, the EDB said, with the regional economy projected to grow to around 60% of global gross domestic product by 2030 from about 50% currently. – AFP

China's box office hits record, spending jumps during Lunar New Year

SHANGHAI: China's box office raked in record takings over the Lunar New Year holiday while domestic spending jumped, data showed, marking a bright showing for Chinese policymakers as they work to spur domestic demand.

The Chinese film market took in 9.5 billion yuan (RM5.7 billion) over the eight-day Lunar New Year period that ended on Tuesday, 18.8% higher than the same period last year, as moviegoers flocked to cinemas to watch movies such as *Nezha 2*, data from ticketing platform Maoyan showed.

The box office figure surpassed last year's record of eight billion yuan for the same eight-day period.

A total of 187 million tickets were sold, also

a record, during the Lunar New Year period.

Domestic travel spending hit 677 billion yuan, up 7% compared with the previous year, while the number of domestic trips rose 5.9% to 501 million, China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism reported.

State-owned news agency Xinhua said multiple indicators, including total expenditure, reached record highs.

The ministry did not give a breakdown of the tourism spending per trip but, according to Reuters calculations based on the data, average spending per trip during the holiday this year reached 1,351 yuan, up from last year's 1,335 yuan.

However, data from air travel platform VariFlight revealed a mixed trend in flight activity,

While the number of domestic passenger flights dipped by 0.7% compared with the same period last year, international and regional routes saw a surge, with passenger flights increasing by 21.4% compared with 2024.

"China had a solid start to the Year of the Snake," Citi analysts said in a note.

"Consumers seemed to have favoured services including culture consumption, with movie ticket sales hitting a record high.

"Expanded trade-in programmes boosted durables sales.

"Cross-border travel gained momentum, especially for inbound tourism.

"Domestic policy is now the main thing to watch after China's tariff responses." – Reuters

Nomura doubles Q3 profit on revived markets

TOKYO: Nomura Holdings doubled quarterly profit, helped by a surge in trading revenue and deals advisory fees as Japan's top brokerage and investment bank pushes ahead with its strategy of diversifying revenue streams and cutting costs to boost growth.

Nomura posted its seventh consecutive quarter of income growth in the three months ended December as its wholesale division, made up of investment banking and global markets units, reinforced its comeback after several years of underperformance.

Income in the October-December period was its highest since the first quarter of 2020, coming in at ¥101.44 billion (RM2.9 billion) compared with ¥50.55 billion a year earlier.

"We are seeing the results of our medium to long-term strategy by growing our stable revenues and diversifying our revenue streams, while effectively controlling costs and capital," Nomura CEO Kentaro Okada said in a statement.

"This reinforces our confidence in our current direction".

The results underline Nomura's dominant position among Japanese securities firms this year as it widens the income gap with its competitors.

Smaller rivals Daiwa Securities and Mizuho Securities last week posted robust quarterly income growth of 64% and 340% respectively, but still trail Nomura's profit over the quarter by a factor of more than two.

The global markets unit clocked a 39% rise in net revenue compared to the same period in the previous year on growth in all overseas regions, and especially in equity derivatives products in the Americas.

The unit's performance indicates customers outside Japan were undeterred by a bond trading scandal that saw Nomura temporarily stripped of its status as a primary dealer of government bonds and fined ¥21.8 million by Japan's securities watchdog last year.

Nomura won several major cross-border M&A advisory deals while its equity capital markets business captured fees from companies' disposals of their cross shareholdings and IPOs of Japan firms such as Tokyo Metro, Rigaku and Kioxia.

The wealth management division booked a slight drop in revenue on fewer Japanese stock and bond transactions, but pre-tax income grew 2% on the previous quarter and 45% on the previous year thanks to cost-cutting initiatives. – Reuters



Swiggy gig workers talking to each other during a promotional event in Mumbai. – REUTERS/SPIC

Swiggy reports wider loss as competition fuels expenses surge

MUMBAI: India's Swiggy reported a wider quarterly loss on Wednesday, as the online platform poured money into its quick commerce business to compete with rivals Zomato and Zepto.

The company reported a consolidated loss of 7.99 billion rupees (RM405 million) for the third quarter ended Dec 31, compared to a loss of 5.74 billion rupees a year earlier.

Companies such as Swiggy and Zomato are doubling down on quick commerce, aiming to deliver goods ranging from groceries to electronics in 10 minutes or less, by opening more warehouses or so-called "dark stores" to fulfil such orders.

Zomato, which owns Blinkit, plans to double its warehouse count to 2,000 by the end of 2025, while Swiggy has plans to close the financial year with twice as many fulfilment centres for its Instamart business from 523 a year ago.

Swiggy's quarterly expenses jumped about 32% to 48.98 billion rupees.

"Instamart growth ramp-up continues amidst significant investments to expand the (quick delivery) market," the firm said in a press release.

The company added 96 new dark stores in the quarter, bringing its total to 705.

The rapid expansion in quick commerce and steady food delivery demand led to its revenue

climbing about 31% to 39.93 billion rupees.

Food delivery revenue grew 24%, while quick commerce revenue more than doubled.

Instamart's gross order value – the total monetary value of orders including delivery and packaging charges – rose 88% on higher consumer spending and expansion into new cities.

Meanwhile, the gross order value in its food business grew about 3% sequentially, as per Reuters calculations, led by the launch of a 10-minute delivery service called Bolt, but the growth slowed from the 5.6% increase last quarter. – Reuters



NEW YORK: Walt Disney sharply outperformed Wall Street's quarterly earnings estimates on Wednesday, with results buoyed by the strong holiday box office performance of animated sequel *Moana 2* and higher profits at the company's streaming business.

The strength in entertainment helped offset a decline at Disney's domestic theme parks, which were impacted by hurricanes Helene and Milton in Florida.

The parks-led Experiences group also incurred US\$75 million (RM332 million) in expenses associated with the December launch of the Disney Treasure cruise ship.

Disney reported a 44% jump in adjusted per-share earnings of US\$1.76 for the quarter that ended in December, exceeding the US\$1.45 per share earnings consensus estimate of 24 analysts surveyed by LSEG.

Revenue for the quarter rose 5% to US\$24.69 billion, slightly ahead of analysts' projections of US\$24.62 billion.

Operating income rose 31% from a year earlier to US\$5.1 billion.

"Overall, this quarter proved to be a strong start to the fiscal year, and we remain confident in our strategy for continued growth," Disney CEO Bob Iger said in a statement.

Looking ahead, Disney forecast "high single digit" adjusted earnings-per-share growth in fiscal 2025 compared with the prior year and an increase of approximately US\$875 million in operating income at the streaming entertainment unit.

The company said it would incur US\$50 million in costs associated with exiting its Venu Sports joint venture with Warner Bros Discovery and Fox.

Walt Disney beats earnings targets

▶ Streaming service sheds one million subscribers following price increase

The media firms abandoned their plans for a sports streaming service in January, after it ran into substantial legal opposition.

Operating income at Disney's Entertainment unit, which includes film, television and streaming, increased to US\$1.7 billion in the quarter, nearly double the results from a year earlier, thanks in part to the strong performance of *Moana 2*.

The animated sequel topped US\$1 billion in box office proceeds over the Martin Luther King Jr Day weekend in January, becoming the fourth Walt Disney Animation film to reach that financial milestone.

Disney's traditional television business continued to erode.

Operating income at so-called linear networks fell 11% to US\$1.1 billion.

Subscribers for the company's flagship streaming video service, Disney+, slipped 1% from the prior quarter to 124.6 million.

The company had warned of a modest drop in subscribers because of a price increase that took effect in October.

It also forecast a modest decline in Disney+ subscribers in the second quarter, compared to the first.

Disney+, Hulu and ESPN+ produced an operating profit of US\$293 million in the quarter, marking the third straight quarter of profitability and a turnaround from the year-ago loss of US\$138 million.

In the Experiences segment, which includes consumer products and the cruise line, as well as parks, operating income was roughly flat at US\$3.1 billion.

Profit declined 5% at domestic parks because the hurricanes and cruise ship costs, while operating income at international parks rose 28% from a year ago.

At the Sports unit, which includes the ESPN network and Star India business, operating income was US\$247 million, compared with a year-ago loss. – Reuters

Uber tops revenue estimates

SAN FRANCISCO: Uber Technologies surpassed market expectations for fourth-quarter revenue on Wednesday, as more people used the ride-hailing platform for office commutes and its delivery business benefited from strong holiday-season demand.

But the company joined a chorus of US technology firms in warning that a strong dollar would weigh on current-quarter results, and forecast quarterly bookings largely below Wall Street estimates.

Already the dominant ride-hailing service in North America, Uber has been trying to convince investors that it has more room for growth by attracting more businesses and teens to its platform, as well as expanding to less saturated markets.

Uber's business-focused service reported a 50% surge in bookings for the last three months of 2024, thanks to return-to-office mandates, while Uber for Teens posted a similar jump, and is now available in about 50 countries.

Overall, the company's ride-hailing revenue jumped 25% and delivery revenue rose 21%, both above estimates.

Its total revenue of US\$11.96 billion surpassed analysts' average estimate of US\$11.77 billion, according to data compiled by LSEG.

Gross bookings of US\$44.2 billion were also higher than expectations, while net profit totalled US\$6.88 billion, buoyed by a US\$6.4 billion benefit from a tax valuation release.

CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said Uber planned to drive growth in 2025 by offering customers better rates, in part by slowing hikes in insurance charges, a major expense for ride-hailing firms. – Reuters

Estee Lauder to cut 7,000 jobs

NEW YORK: Estee Lauder forecast third-quarter profit well below estimates, citing persistent weak demand at airports and travel destinations such as Korea and China, while also expanding its restructuring plan to include up to 7,000 job cuts.

Estee Lauder expects to take restructuring and other charges of between US\$1.2 billion and US\$1.6 billion.

The company estimates a net reduction of 5,800 to 7,000 jobs by the end of fiscal 2026 as part of an expanded plan to help the cosmetics giant return to sales growth and restore a solid double-digit adjusted operating margin over the next few years.

As of June 30, 2024, the New York-based company had about 62,000 employees worldwide.

Estee Lauder said the plan aims to "manage external volatility, such as potential tariff increases globally".

For the third quarter, Estee Lauder expects adjusted earnings per share between 24 cents and 34 cents, below analysts' estimates of 63 cents per share, according to data compiled by LSEG.

"For the third quarter, we expect overall soft retail trends to persist in Asia travel retail, significantly pressuring our organic net sales," new CEO Stephane de La Faverie, who took over at the start of the year, said in a statement.

In October, the parent company of Clinique and MAC lipstick withdrew its annual sales and profit forecasts while reducing its dividend as part of a turnaround plan after facing declining sales. – Reuters



Wind turbines outside the American resort city of Palm Springs. – REUTERS/SPIC

Vestas 2024 profit soars, fanned by record orders for wind turbines

COPENHAGEN: Vestas, the world's biggest wind energy company, said on Wednesday its net profit soared sixfold in 2024 as it logged a record number of orders for its turbines.

The Danish group's after-tax profit jumped from €77 million in 2023 to €499 million (RM2.3 billion) last year.

Revenue grew 12% to €17.3 billion.

"Vestas continued its positive trajectory in 2024 and achieved its outlook for the year," chief

executive Henrik Andersen said in a statement.

He added that "the year didn't evolve as expected" but "Vestas leaves 2024 stronger than we entered it" thanks to all-time high orders and an "extraordinary turnaround" in its power solutions division.

The value of its order backlog reached €68.4 billion last year, representing 21.7 gigawatts of onshore wind power and 7.5 GW of offshore energy.

Vestas is banking on growth in offshore wind.

The company secured its first offshore wind project in the United States last year and saw expansions in Europe along with the emergence of new markets such as Japan and South Korea.

Vestas is forecast revenue of between €18 billion and €20 billion in 2025.

"The need for energy security has become ever more apparent, and the need to build resilience by scaling renewables continues." – AFP

MARKET ROUND-UP: FEBRUARY 6

Bursa Trade Statistic

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

06 Feb 2025

Participation

Retail (20.39%)

Net (in RM mil.)

-8.14

Bought (in RM mil.)

425.89

Institution (44.26%)

Net (in RM mil.)

+35.27

Bought (in RM mil.)

950.89

Sold (in RM mil.)

915.62

Foreign (35.35%)

Net (in RM mil.)

-27.13

Bought (in RM mil.)

731.86

Sold (in RM mil.)

758.99

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



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

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Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE	
FBMEMAS	12,091.40	+67.66
FBMKLCI	1,585.17	+10.66
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	526.54	+0.42
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	166.45	+1.24
CONSTRUCTION	282.09	+2.32
FINANCIAL SERVICES	19,149.70	+88.01
ENERGY	827.48	+5.94
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	526.12	+1.49
HEALTH CARE	2,219.09	+5.39
TRANSPORTATION	1,072.91	+12.86
PROPERTY	1,077.49	+7.17
PLANTATION	7,468.34	+37.09
FBMSHA	11,941.10	+70.15
FBMACE	5,264.51	-23.00
TECHNOLOGY	59.06	+0.26

TURNOVER: 2.934 bil **VALUE: RM2,108 bil**

Bursa closes higher, powered by energy stocks

BURSA Malaysia closed higher yesterday on broad-based buying during the late session, with the market bellwether ending at an intraday high, driven by energy stocks, said an analyst.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI rose 0.67%, or 10.66 points, to 1,585.17, compared with Wednesday's close of 1,574.51.

The benchmark index opened 1.92 points firmer at 1,576.43 and hit a low of 1,573.90 in the early session before trending steadily upwards in the afternoon session.

On the broader market, gainers led decliners 485 to 391, while 511 counters were unchanged, 914 untraded and 12 suspended. Turnover advanced to 2.93 billion units valued at RM2.1 billion versus 2.86 billion units worth RM2.32 billion on Wednesday.

Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd equity research vice-president Thong Pak Leng said the key regional indices were also upbeat, thanks to strong buying in technology and electric vehicle stocks.

The resilience of China's artificial intelligence (AI) sector has bolstered investor confidence, despite the 10% tariffs imposed on Chinese goods by the US President Donald Trump administration. Meanwhile, UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors Sdn Bhd head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan said investors in the region adopted a risk-on stance after observing that the US-China trade tariffs did not trigger broader market contagion.

Among the heavyweights, Maybank rose 8 sen to RM10.42, Petronas Gas soared 44 sen to RM17.80, CelcomDigi rose 6 sen to RM3.82, Tenaga Nasional jumped 10 sen to RM13.72, and Petronas Chemicals gained 7 sen to RM4.40.

For most active stocks, Borneo Oil was flat at 1 sen, ACE Market debutant Northern Solar put on 16 sen to 79 sen, MYEG climbed 1.5 sen to 98.5 sen, Ingenieur Gudang added 1 sen to 5.5 sen, and Velesto Energy was unchanged at 19 sen. - Bernama

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
BORNOIL	0.010	-	-	1,984,741
HSI-CWCC	0.145	+0.025	+20.83	1,398,406
HSI-CWA1	0.155	+0.020	+14.82	1,382,120
NORTHERN	0.790	+0.160	+25.40	1,336,139
HSI-PWDC	0.125	-0.025	-16.67	1,295,888
HSI-PWBZ	0.055	-0.025	-31.25	916,416
MYEG	0.985	+0.015	+1.55	725,315
HSI-PWBW	0.040	-0.025	-38.46	611,680
HSI-CWAW	0.320	+0.060	+23.08	545,342
INGENIEU	0.055	+0.010	+22.22	518,785
VELESTO	0.190	-	-	514,497
KAB	0.305	-0.015	-4.69	432,741
YTL-CIF	0.035	-	-	427,149
VINVEST	0.065	-0.015	-18.75	377,761
HM	0.195	-	-	375,543
INGENIEU-WB	0.015	-	-	344,290
MYEG-CBE	0.105	+0.005	+5.00	249,907
ASIAPLY	0.110	+0.015	+15.79	237,568
GAMUDA	4.470	+0.090	+2.06	224,395
KOPI	0.865	-0.030	-3.35	221,530



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	90.700	+1.320	359
PETGAS	17.800	+0.440	4,168
LPI	13.740	+0.380	2,489
HEIM	24.400	+0.360	1,912
HSI-CWCC	0.910	+0.300	50
NORTHERN	0.790	+0.160	1,336,139
CANONE	2.450	+0.150	11
BONIA	1.370	+0.120	2,407
KLK	20.320	+0.120	1,119
PENTA	3.690	+0.120	2,619
BYD-C30	0.285	+0.100	500
MPI	22.500	+0.100	642
TENAGA	13.720	+0.100	74,750
BYD-C29	0.235	+0.095	2,100
BYD-C32	0.220	+0.095	20,000
GAMUDA	4.470	+0.090	224,395
KSENG	5.990	+0.090	670
KEYFIELD	2.360	+0.090	20,020
MSM	1.290	+0.090	52,571
PIE	4.800	+0.090	5,379

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
CMSB-C50	0.010	+100.00	2,200
CFM-WA	0.010	+100.00	26,680
FBMKLCI-CQS	0.010	+100.00	800
MISC-C52	0.010	+100.00	500
MSM-CX	0.010	+100.00	13,251
OCR-WE	0.010	+100.00	12,155
BYD-C33	0.100	+81.82	7,500
BYD-C32	0.220	+76.00	20,000
BYD-C29	0.235	+67.86	2,100
HSI-CWCC	0.235	+56.67	800
BYD-C30	0.285	+54.05	500
IOIPG-C30	0.090	+50.00	5,490
MNC-WC	0.030	+50.00	16
MAXLAND-WB	0.015	+50.00	5,349
NATGATE-CB	0.030	+50.00	1,798
TENAGA-C2M	0.015	+50.00	103
TEDESG-CG	0.045	+50.00	3,603
TXCD-PA	0.030	+50.00	50
VS-C91	0.060	+50.00	2,501
YTL-C97	0.015	+50.00	1,900

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA [US]	44,873.28	317.24	0.71
S&P 500 [US]	6,061.48	23.6	0.39
NASDAQ [US]	19,692.33	38.31	0.19
NYSE [US]	20,128.89	164.28	0.82
EURO STOXX 50 [EUR]	5,307.49	36.37	0.69
FTSE 100 [UK]	8,720.02	96.73	1.12
DAX [GER]	21,761.24	175.31	0.81
NIKKEI 225 [JPN]	39,066.53	235.05	0.61
TOPIX INDEX [JPN]	2,752.20	6.79	0.25
HANG SENG INDEX [HK]	20,891.62	294.53	1.43
CSI 300 [CHN]	3,842.83	47.75	1.26
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	184.22	1.61	0.88
SHANGHAI SE COM [CHN]	3,270.66	41.17	1.27
KOSPI INDEX [SK]	2,536.75	27.48	1.1
SENSEX INDEX [IND]	77,911.91	-359.37	-0.46
ASX 200 [AUS]	8,520.71	103.84	1.23
ALL ORDINARIES INDX [AUS]	8,785.10	101.7	1.17
FBM KLCI	1,585.17	10.66	0.68
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,829.62	14.25	0.37
WTI [US\$/BBL]	71.5	0.47	0.66
BRENT [US\$/BBL]	74.97	0.36	0.48
GOLD [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	2,878.50	-14.5	-0.5
SILVER [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	32.57	-0.41	-1.25
PLATINUM [US\$/T OZ]	986.54	2.34	0.24
COPPER [COMEX] [US CENTS/LB.]	449.2	4.8	1.08
COPPER 3MO [LME] [US\$/MT]	9,240.00	89.5	0.98
CORN [US CENTS/BU.]	495.25	2	0.41
WHEAT [US CENTS/BU.]	574.75	2.5	0.44
SOYBEAN OIL [CBOT] [US CENTS/LB.]	45.49	0.4	0.89
COCOA [ICE] [US\$/MT]	10,517.00	-348	-3.2
RUBBER [S'PORE] [US CENTS/KG]	196	3.5	1.82

As at 5pm, Feb 6

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
ALLIANZ-PA	19.380	-0.300	15
HSI-PWBK	0.265	-0.135	100
NSOP	4.920	-0.130	150
ALLIANZ	18.960	-0.120	732
MBMR	5.870	-0.120	3,086
ARMADA-C99	0.050	-0.100	400
KESM	3.600	-0.100	96
AEON-C36	0.055	-0.095	5,001
HSI-PWBX	0.355	-0.090	10,634
BURSA	8.260	-0.080	15,019
CIHLG	2.570	-0.080	35
KLUANG	5.900	-0.080	155
MYEG-C8C	0.070	-0.080	2,000
PLENITU	1.430	-0.070	40
FBMKLCI-HA6	0.435	-0.060	480
PANAMY	17.240	-0.060	133
VARIA	0.745	-0.055	1
BAT	7.290	-0.050	1,156
SIGN	1.540	-0.050	16,983
MAHSING-C60	0.175	-0.045	4,220

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
ARMADA-C99	0.050	-66.67	400
HSI-PWBV	0.015	-66.67	1,200
AEON-C36	0.055	-63.33	5,001
MYEG-C8C	0.070	-53.33	2,000
99SMART-CE	0.010	-50.00	30
CMSB-C51	0.005	-50.00	3,000
FBMKLCI-CQ0	0.005	-50.00	1
HONGSENG	0.005	-50.00	2,828
HSI-PWB1	0.005	-50.00	31,548
KANGER-WB	0.005	-50.00	2,000
VS-C87	0.005	-50.00	24,118
YTLPOWER-C61	0.005	-50.00	4,021
HSI-PWBW	0.040	-38.46	611,680
MNRB-CG	0.040	-38.46	250
HSI-PWBK	0.265	-33.33	100
BAIDU-C2	0.010	-33.33	780
EIB-WA	0.020	-33.33	2,000
PBBANK-C1H	0.010	-33.33	1,500
TM-C1N	0.010	-33.33	100
TOPGLOV-C4I	0.020	-33.33	1,009

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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Fixed 2% EPF for foreign workers seen as positive for plantations

KUALA LUMPUR: The fixed 2% EPF contribution for foreign workers is positive for the plantation sector.

RHB Research said that while this would negatively impact earnings, the research firm's estimates indicate that the extent would not be substantial.

"Recently, the government proposed a fixed mandatory 2% EPF contribution for foreign workers, which is lower than the initial proposed figure of 12%.

"There are no details yet on the implementation timeline, which is expected to be discussed at the Cabinet level this week – although we believe this will be implemented in phases.

"We also note that there was no segregation (regarding this new percentage) between foreign workers under new or existing contracts," the bank-backed research firm said.

RHB Research said that assuming the latest 2% EPF contribution applies to both existing and new contracts, the research firm is positive about this development as the rate will be lower than the statutory rate of 12% for both employees and employers.

As such, foreign workers would take home RM1,666 (2%, or RM34 per month) based on the revised RM1,700 minimum wage.

RHB Research noted that plantation companies would also need to pay an additional cost of at least RM34 per month for each worker, assuming a minimum wage of RM1,700.

"We believe the proposed contribution would be some relief to planters as it is much lower than the previously mentioned 12% contribution.

"While there would be a slight negative impact on earnings, the impact is not that significant," RHB Research said.

Ringgit slips against dollar as US seeks lower Treasury yields

THE ringgit turned lower against the US dollar at the close yesterday amid improved demand for the greenback following the US administration seeking ways to reduce the 10-year US Treasury yield rather than bringing down the Fed Fund Rate, said an analyst.

At 6pm, the ringgit eased to 4.4320/4385 against the US dollar from Wednesday's close of 4200/4260.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid also believed that risk appetite among traders and investors remained guarded in light of the US tariff and geopolitical measures, especially concerning Gaza, where US President Donald Trump mentioned his desire to take over Palestinian soil.

"How this would translate into global peace remains unsure, but it certainly would elevate the geopolitical temperature in the Middle East," he added.

Meanwhile, the ringgit was traded mostly higher against other major currencies.

It fell against the Japanese yen to 2.9036/9080 from 2.8930/8972 on Wednesday, rose against the euro to 4.5920/5987 from 4.5990/6053, and appreciated against the British pound to 5.5090/5171 from 5.5321/5396.

The local note was mixed against Asean currencies. It was slightly higher against the Singapore dollar to 3.2742/2793 from 3.2746/2792 and increased against the Thai baht to 13.1175/1433 from 13.1602/1844.

The ringgit was little changed against the Indonesian rupiah to 271.2/271.7 from 271.2/271.8 and fell against the Philippine peso to 7.62/7.63 from Wednesday's close of 7.61/7.63. – Bernama

Exchange Rates			
FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.4890	4.3560	4.3460
1 Australian Dollar	2.8360	2.7230	2.7070
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3270	3.2300	3.2220
1 Canadian Dollar	1.3130	1.30480	1.30360
1 Euro	4.6740	4.5230	4.5030
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5630	2.4690	2.4530
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3270	3.2300	3.2220
1 Sterling Pound	5.6200	5.4420	5.4220
1 Swiss Franc	5.0130	4.8010	4.7860
100 UAE Dirham	123.6300	117.2700	117.0700
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7710	3.5130	3.3130
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.1400	59.5300	N/A
100 Danish Krone	64.2200	59.1100	58.9100
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.2600	55.3800	55.1800
100 Indian Rupee	5.2200	4.9000	4.7000
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0285	0.0258	0.0208
100 Japanese Yen	2.9470	2.8530	2.8430
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.0600	37.7700	37.5700
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6400	1.5300	1.3300
100 Philippine Peso	7.8700	7.4200	7.2200
100 Qatar Riyal	124.5000	118.1900	117.9900
100 Saudi Riyal	121.0200	114.8800	114.6800
100 South Africa Rand	25.1000	22.6600	22.4600
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5400	1.4200	1.2200
100 Swedish Krona	42.4200	38.6400	38.4400
100 Thai Baht	13.9700	12.3900	11.9900

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

Gamuda Bhd Buy. Target price: RM5.83



Source: Bloomberg

GAMUDA has signed an exclusive arrangement with Perbadanan Kemajuan Negeri Perak (PKNPK) to develop infrastructure that addresses the issue of critical water storage in north Perak. This scheme involves facilitating the transfer of raw water from Sungai Perak to Bukit Merah, and developing the requisite infrastructure for treated water distribution, ensuring long-term water sustainability for the region.

PKNPK and GAM will jointly manage all components of this development including overseeing the design, civil and structural engineering, utilities, risk mitigation and the implementation of local workforce and technology training programmes. We foresee minimal execution risks due to GAM's track record in water projects – namely the Sungai Selangor Water Supply Scheme Phase 3, including the water treatment plants in Rasa and Bukit Badong together with the Stormwater Management and Road Tunnel (SMART). Note that GAM is currently involved in the Sungai Rasau Water Supply Scheme Stage 1 and the EPCC contract of the Ulu Padas Hydroelectric project. These projects have a cumulative value of at least RM6 billion.

All in, we envisage Gamuda as an emerging key water infrastructure player in Malaysia – putting it in a strategic position to clinch other water-related projects. Some of the projects include the Selangor state government's proposal to build an underground tunnel system to manage rain overflow from Kuala Lumpur to prevent flooding (estimated at RM6 billion) and Stage 2 of Sungai Rasau Water Supply Scheme (estimated at RM2 billion).

Gamuda's earnings are underpinned by construction orders and property sales.
BUY with RM5.83 TP. – **RHB Research, Feb 6**

KLCCP Stapled Group Neutral. Target price: RM8.52



Source: Bloomberg

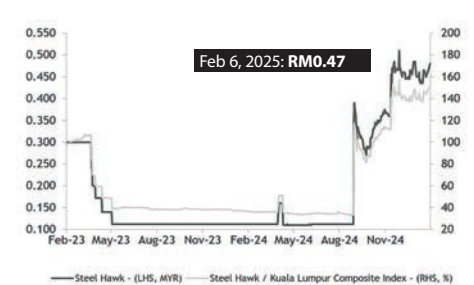
Q4'24 core profit of RM196.2 million (-5% QoQ, +21% YoY) was in line, at 98-97% of our and Street full-year forecasts. YoY earnings grew by 21% from a lower charge-out in minority interest earnings after the acquisition of the remaining stake in Suria KLCC, and higher revenue from the retail and hospitality segments. Average cost of debt fell to 4.01% (FY23: 4.55%) after it refinanced RM1.05 billion of sukuk during the year. The stapled security announced a dividend of 44.5 sen for the year (FY23: 40.5 sen).

Suria KLCC's higher occupancy rate (FY24: 99%, FY23: 96%), and single-digit rental reversions helped to record 7% higher revenue and 9% higher PBT in FY24. Despite increased competition from the opening of new malls in the city centre, Suria KLCC still recorded a 4% increase in footfall YoY, although moving annual turnover (MAT) tenant sales fell 7% off a high base in FY23. The group remains proactive in refreshing its offerings with the introduction of 28 new tenants, including five first-to-market tenants to the mall. The office segment, backed by its long-term triple net lease, recorded a marginal 0.2% and 1.5% revenue and PBT growth YoY, but we expect higher growth for the segment following the positive rental reversion achieved for Petronas Twin Towers in Oct 2024.

Mandarin Oriental (MO). MO's PBT for FY24 quadrupled to RM12 million (FY23: RM3 million) on the back of a 14% increase in revenue. While occupancy rates remained broadly stable (FY24: 56%, FY23: 58%), the revenue per available room (RevPar) grew by 21% to RM610 in FY24 driven by robust growth in group stays and banqueting events. The group has revitalised some of the space in the hotel such as its meetings and recreational areas, and will continue to refurbish the hotel in FY25.

NEUTRAL with RM8.52 TP. – **RHB Research, Feb 6**

Steel Hawk Bhd Not Rated



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

STEEL Hawk is a Petronas-licensed OGSE company which is principally involved in the provision of onshore and offshore support services for the O&G industry. The group's business activities provide support to the upstream, midstream and downstream segments of the value chain. Listed on the ACE market since Sept 5, 2024, Steel Hawk is trading at 15.1x annualised 9M FY12/24 core EPS of 3.1 sen.

Steel Hawk, via its subsidiaries has three core business segments, namely: i) EPCC services for chemical injection skids and facilities improvement/maintenance of topside O&G facilities; ii) installation & maintenance of oilfield equipment; and iii) supply of oilfield equipment. EPCC services was its largest segment in 9M24, representing 83.1% to its revenue, followed by installation & maintenance (12.4%) and supply of oilfield equipment (4.6%).

While we had indicated that there could be possible reduction to Petronas' capex which could affect OGSE companies, in the PAO report released on Jan 28, 2025, the downstream onshore, plant turnaround is expected to see more activities. This would imply that Steel Hawk could benefit from this. On Nov 12, 2024, Steel Hawk was appointed as a panel contractor by Petronas in providing construction & modification works (CWM) as and when required for 5 packages across key regions in Malaysia for 3+1+1 years. These packages entail 27 of Petronas' Downstream Operating Plant Units. This may be Steel Hawk's biggest job win since its inception and the group should be recognising meaningful contributions from this major development beginning Q1'25 onwards. – **Maybank Investment Bank, Feb 6**

BY JOHN TAN

THE local dining scene is an exciting field as new offerings are constantly introduced. Whether it be new eateries or menus, local food enthusiasts have many options to pick from. Those looking for something fresh should set their sights on these new eateries to fulfil their culinary cravings.

Para Thai Signature @OKA Signature Place

Located at the heart of Johor Bahru, OKA Signature Place's very own Para Thai Signature introduces a unique dining experience, blending cuisine with the beauty of nature.

Set within a rainforest-inspired environment, the Johor outlet strikes the ideal balance between culinary excellence and a cosy ambience. While savouring delicious meals, you can be surrounded by lush greenery.

There are over 50 dishes to savour. Local food enthusiasts can look forward to savouring authentic Thai flavours such as *tom yum goong*, green curry chicken, *mieng kam*, homemade Thai pandan leaf served with Thai chilli sauce and crispy papaya salad with dried shrimp.

Its signature beverages are served with creative flair. The creamy Thai Iced Tea, Zesty Butterfly Pea Lemonade and Sparkling Passion Fruit Pavlova Fizz are drinks to look out for.



Para Thai Signature's rainforest aesthetic adds to the cozy and relaxing atmosphere.

Kool Grill @Genting Skyworlds

Open-flame meals can now be enjoyed 6,000ft above sea level at Genting Skyworlds's Kool Grill.

As the name suggests, the outlet's offerings are predominantly barbecue or grill-based, modernising local flavours and dishes. Its highlights include eight delicious, casual dining confluence of East and West fusion menu items.

This includes signature items such as *nasi lemak* BBQ chicken pizza, BBQ *satay* sausage chicken, smoky cayenne pulled beef on black brioche and wok-fried honey BBQ chicken drumettes.

Kool Grill's trendy and relaxing atmosphere further elevates the dining experience. With its calming

Flavourful discoveries

➤ Indulge in exciting culinary experiences with these five new eateries

interiors and furnishings, it makes for a cosy and relaxing atmosphere to enjoy the outlet's innovative culinary menu.

Luckin Coffee outlets

Premium coffee brand Luckin Coffee recently opened five of its outlets.



Tom yum goong is among Para Thai's signature items.



Kool Grill at Genting Skyworlds offers a blend of Eastern and Western cuisine.

Last month, two of its outlets were launched at Sunway Pyramid and Menara EcoWorld, Bukit Bintang City Centre (BBCC).

Coinciding with the soft opening, the Luckin Coffee app was introduced to offer customers a seamless and tech-driven way to order their favourite beverages. The app is available for download on

Google Play and the Apple App Store.

Through the app, customers can make convenient pre-ordering and cashless payments. The app provides a user-friendly interface for browsing the menu and customising drinks, enabling a hassle-free coffee journey.

According to Hextar Industries Bhd major shareholder Datuk Eddie Ong, the openings serve as the company's initiative to expand Luckin Coffee's mission of serving premium coffee.

"With a robust plan for expansion, we are rapidly growing our presence across the country. We believe premium coffee should be accessible to everyone and we look forward to bringing Luckin Coffee's offerings to more Malaysians in the near future," said Ong.

Salad Atelier @Permata Sapura Tower

Salad Atelier recently launched its 31st outlet at Permata Sapura Tower, Kuala Lumpur in conjunction with its 10th anniversary.

Bestselling items from the menu are up for grabs at a cheaper price. On the 10th, 20th and 30th of every month, items such as chicken aglio olio, spicy Korean pasta, Power Tautu Bowl, avocado smoothie and



Customers can customise their drinks through the Luckin Coffee app.



There are special discounts on selected items at Salad Atelier as it marks its 10th anniversary.

cold-pressed juices are available for only RM10.

If you are looking for something more personalised, be sure to check out the store's very first Stanley cup.

Hock Kee @Bukit Bintang City Centre

Local food flavours have a new home as Hock Kee Group has opened its 10th outlet at BBCC.

Known for its unique blend of modernity and culture, the BBCC outlet is the ideal setting for Hock Kee lovers to savour authentic Malaysian flavours.

Favourite local delights such as *nasi lemak banjir*, Hock Kee's signature *laksa*, *satay* fried *kuey teow* and Hock Kee's signature *lontong* with chicken meat are up for grabs.

The newly launched crispy fish skin snack is also one to savour. But if you are looking for some festive joy, be sure to check out the Hock Kee Chinese New Year Gift Box.

Available at all outlets, the gift box is designed with blessings in detail, containing festive *ang pau* packets, pineapple cakes, five-grain harvest snacks and your pick of four premium festive cookies.



Luckin Coffee at BBCC.



ARIES
Mar 21 – Apr 19
This weekend calls for some social interaction! It is time to increase your interaction with friends and family. Be it through calls or in-person meetups, interactions with loved ones will boost your happiness. Be sure to plan and strategise goals for your career, especially things you aim to achieve in the short and long run.



TAURUS
Apr 20 – May 20
This may be the right time to go all out. If you are looking to achieve something, go after it head-on as the odds are in your favour. This is especially true if you are looking to realise your goals at work as conversations with authority figures are likely to go your way. So, be sure to make the most of this and remember that fortune favours the bold.



GEMINI
May 21 – June 20
You may feel a strong desire to travel and explore this weekend. Give in to your wanderlust and grab the opportunity to be a tourist wherever you choose. You never know what you will find and who you will meet. Your discovery may transform your life for the better. Aside from travel, take the opportunity to learn something new.



CANCER
June 21 – July 22
Your romantic life looks promising. If you are single, there is a high possibility for you to meet someone new and special this weekend. This person may just be the one you have been looking for! So, do not be shy, put yourself out there. If you have a romantic partner, your relationship may reach new heights if you put more effort into it.



LEO
July 23 – Aug 22
Respect your need for more sleep and naps. Your body may be in dire need of rest after a long, stressful period. After all, all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. In terms of personal relationships, take time to focus on your partners, close friends and family members. Bonding with them may enrich your weekend and mark a new milestone in your relationship.



VIRGO
Aug 23 – Sept 22
This weekend is looking to be a productive one. You will likely find yourself working harder, but do not forget to take care of your health. You may feel a strong desire to work on your fitness goals. Let the strong motivation lead you closer to attaining your desired physique. But, do not be demotivated if the results are not immediate. Good things take time.

Your weekend horoscope

Savour scrumptious Italian fruit

➤ Dori kiwi stands out for its organoleptic characteristics, vibrant yellow colour

THE Italian kiwi Dori, known for its bright yellow flesh, is now available for purchase in supermarkets across Malaysia. Born in the sunny orchards of Italy and cultivated with a commitment to sustainable agriculture and quality, the Dori kiwi is as deeply rooted in its origins as it is in its nutritional profile.

This kiwi, known for its sweetness, texture and maturation characteristics, is managed by Dori International and marketed in Asia by fresh produce group Origine Group.

Beyond its delicious, sweet flavour, the Dori kiwi is rich in vitamin C, which helps strengthen the immune system. Its high fibre content supports digestive health and provides antioxidant properties to protect cells and skin.

Dori also provides a natural and lasting energy boost, making it an excellent snack for mornings and afternoons. This kiwi stands out with its bright yellow flesh, novel taste and uniform ripening. Compared with the green-fleshed Hayward variety, it has an earlier harvest time of about 35-40 days. Its sweetness is ensured by a high sugar content and it has an average size of over 100g with a lower acidity level.

Dori is the commercial name for the kiwifruit variety known as AC 1536, which was developed more than 25 years ago through Italian research by the University of Udine and the University of



The Dori kiwi is available at Aeon, Lotus's, TF Value, Star Grocer, Whole Fruits and other outlets in East Malaysia.

Bologna. It was selected for its organoleptic qualities, which means it is pleasing in odour, taste, texture and appearance.

Today, there are over 950ha of Dori cultivation worldwide. Italy remains the most important production area with around 450ha, but orchards are also located in other countries in Europe (France, Spain, Portugal and Greece) and in the Southern Hemisphere (Chile, Australia, South Africa) to meet the demand for the fruit throughout the year.

Moreover, with a 300% increase in volumes marketed during the last overseas season, Dori is increasingly expanding into new markets in Asia, North America and South America.

Dori International ensures every grower of the fruit adheres to predefined standards for quality. Additionally, the company tracks every step of the supply chain to ensure controlled distribution.

Netflix planning reboot of Little House on the Prairie

AFTER reboots of *Magnum PI*, *Hawaii Five-0* and *MacGyver*, it is now time for *Little House on the Prairie* to return to the spotlight. Best known for its TV adaptation starring Michael Landon, the Laura Ingalls Wilder book saga is getting a new lease of life from Netflix.

"*Little House on the Prairie* has captured the hearts and imaginations of so many fans around the world and we are excited to share its enduring themes of hope and optimism with a fresh take on this iconic story," said Netflix drama series vice president Jinny Howe.

At the helm of the new series, Rebecca Sonnenshine (*The Boys*, *The Vampire Diaries*) will take the reins as showrunner.

"I fell deeply in love with these books when I was five years old. They inspired me to become a writer and filmmaker, and I am honoured and thrilled to be adapting these stories for a new audience," she said.

The original series, launched in 1974 on NBC, ran for over 200 episodes, ending in 1983. The show is about the Ingalls, a family of 19th-century farmers and pioneers who settled in the small Minnesota town of Plum Creek.

The programme became one of the most popular TV shows in the world, firing up the careers of Landon who played Charles Ingalls, and Melissa Gilbert who played Laura.

More than 50 years after its arrival on television, the drama series is still among the most watched



The series is still among the most watched streaming dramas worldwide. – **PIC FROM FACEBOOK @LITTLEHOUSEONTHEPRAIRIE**

streaming dramas worldwide. According to the latest Nielsen study, *Little House on the Prairie* established itself as the most-watched long-running "legacy" series in 2024, totalling 13.25 billion minutes viewed on the Peacock streaming platform.

The new adaptation of Wilder's semi-autobiographical books will be part family drama, part epic survival tale and part origin story of the American West, according to Netflix. – **ETX Studio**



LIBRA
Sept 23 – Oct 22
This is a lovely time for vacations, fun activities and anything to do with the entertainment world. You have worked hard this whole week and you deserve to indulge in some pleasure, enjoyment and good company. So, call up your best pals and loved ones for a dinner, movie or even party. The more, the merrier.



SCORPIO
Oct 23 – Nov 21
You are focused on your home, family and private life. Family discussions are important to maintain harmony and strengthen bonds for the future. Acknowledge your duties and obligations at home. Do not shy away from what you can contribute if others have been doing their share. Physical home repairs may also be taking place. Some items at home may require fixing.



SAGITTARIUS
Nov 22 – Dec 21
This may be a busy and fast-paced weekend for you as it may be filled with short trips, errands, appointments or increased studying. But, the stress it may bring will not last for long. Your hard work and determination may finally pay off, giving you the rewards you have been waiting for. Hang in there as something huge is coming your way.



CAPRICORN
Dec 22 – Jan 19
You may feel a strong need for control in your life. Something in you longs for more possessions and the things you value. This is the right time to ponder on your relationship to material objects. Do you own them or do they own you? Relations with parents and family members will improve. Be sure to put in the effort to build a stronger bond.



AQUARIUS
Jan 20 – Feb 18
If you have a project in the works, be sure to pitch and present it to others. You may find someone who resonates with it and can help you further your goals. Financial ventures are looking promising this weekend. Be open to expanding your financial knowledge and growing your investments. This may drastically improve your earnings.



PISCES
Feb 19 – Mar 20
Self-care is calling for your attention this weekend. Set some time for yourself. Indulge in your favourite hobbies and activities, and feel free to soak in the pleasure and enjoyment that comes with it. Your emotional and mental states are not to be neglected too. Be sure to sit down with yourself, reflect on your past week and see how you can do better. Find peace within yourself and good things will come.

CLIMATE change, political headwinds and diverging market dynamics around the world have pushed coffee prices to fresh records, jacking up the cost of your everyday brew or a barista's signature macchiato.

While the current hot streak may calm down in the coming months, experts and industry insiders expect volatility will remain the watchword, giving little visibility for producers — two-thirds of whom farm parcels of less than one hectare.

Meteoric rise

The price of arabica beans listed in New York surged by 90% last year, smashing on Dec 10, 2024 a record dating from 1977 — US\$3.48 (RM15.40) per pound. Robusta prices have seen similar growth, though prices are lower for the less premium coffee variety.

Fears of poor harvests after droughts in key producers Brazil and Vietnam, the biggest and second-biggest sources of the beans, respectively, fuelled the price hike.

Demand has outstripped supply for several years now, prompting a flurry of speculative buying that further drove up market prices.

"And then you have the disruption of the Red Sea, which means from Southeast Asia especially towards Europe, it takes much longer because you need to circumnavigate Africa and often you have very long delays in the ports," said Rabobank coffee analyst Carlos Mera.

Traders were also anticipating the implementation of an EU law that would ban imports of products driving deforestation — though lawmakers recently delayed its coming into force until Dec 30 this year.

US President Donald Trump's threat of punishing trade tariffs on a range of goods adds another level of uncertainty — last December, a top adviser to his predecessor Joe Biden warned food items such as coffee would likely be affected.

Nonetheless, given the recent run, Mera said: "I am thinking prices are likely or more likely to go lower than higher. But it is a market with very low stock, so we have to expect volatility in either way."

Climate threats

Arabica beans, grown at higher altitudes, are at greater risk from climate change since only a few countries, notably Brazil, can move farms further uphill as the world gets hotter.

Robusta can thrive in a wider range of growing conditions but is less prized by consumers. In the 2024–2025 growing season, around 175 million bags are expected to be produced (56% arabica and 44% robusta), according to the US Agriculture Department.

Guillaume David at France's Cirad agricultural research and international cooperation agency said both varieties are



Demand for coffee has expanded beyond the traditional markets of Europe and the Americas to make inroads with tea-drinking Chinese.

Expensive brew

► Droughts, politics send coffee prices skyward

right? There is also much more visibility because there are so many more stores and not only in the big cities, but those in second-tier cities," he said.

Meanwhile, demand in Europe slipped last year, with Germany, for example, seeing a 1% decrease.

"I think in Europe, the drop in demand was mainly related to the cost of living crisis," Mera said.

The industry is also keeping an eye on the growing use of weight-loss drugs such as Ozempic, as some doctors caution against drinking caffeine while on the treatment.

Small producers, big processors

Despite the recent price surge, millions of growers cultivating coffee on small farms still live in poverty in developing countries.

They have little leeway to set prices in a global commodity market dominated by a handful of multinational processors and distributors.

Even fair trade programmes to guarantee a living wage affect just 5% of the market — 80% of the world's coffee is bought by heavyweight brokerage firms.

Experts said wild price shifts in recent years make ensuring better prices for growers, many of whom are in developing countries, even more urgent.

A sharp drop in prices could lead growers to abandon their plants, jeopardising their future revenues, said French food cooperative Ethiqueable representative Nicolas Eberhart.

In October 2024, the Group of Seven nations endorsed a Global Coffee Sustainability and Resilience Fund aimed at spurring private investments to improve productivity and get more money into growers' pockets. — AFP



Despite the recent price surge, millions of growers cultivating coffee on small farms still live in poverty in developing countries. — ALL PICS BY PEXELS

exposed to new risks in their inter-tropical growing zones such as late-season frosts, rains at the wrong time and beetle infestations.

"This year, we saw these risks in Brazil and Vietnam, whereas before it would be in one or the other," David said.

Brazil grows 40% of the world's coffee, followed by Vietnam (17%), Colombia (7%), Indonesia (6%) and Ethiopia (5%). After come Uganda, India, Honduras, Peru and Mexico.

Climate change could make other regions a possibility. David added that in Africa, Togo or Ivory Coast could again start growing coffee after it was largely replaced by cocoa or Kenya could replace part of their avocado plantations.

Wherever it is grown, experts said growing practices need to adopt what a forest plant requires, which is sufficient canopy cover to protect from sun and storms as well as multi-crop farming to protect against pests and diversify revenues.

New customers

Demand has expanded beyond the traditional markets of Europe and the Americas to make inroads with tea-drinking Chinese.

Mera said about 4.3 million bags were imported in the 2023–2024 season, up from 1.5 million just four years earlier.

"I would expect China to continue to grow in the future. Coffee in the end is addictive,



Arctic blue variant comes with glistening ripple lamp and follow me home headlights.

A testament to performance

BYD Seal can put some supercars to shame

BY TIMOTHY PRAKASH

BYD'S presence in Malaysia is stronger than ever with multiple options in their lineup for buyers. From electric hatchbacks to sedans and SUVs, they have it all.

Recently, Sime Motors, the official distributor of BYD vehicles in Malaysia, marked a milestone by expanding its comprehensive aftersales network to 21 service centres nationwide.

BYD announced a surge in sales for 2024, reflecting its growing dominance in both domestic and international markets. The company reported a 41.3% year-on-year increase, selling 4,272,145 vehicles compared to 3,024,417 units in 2023.



Double-U floating LED headlights.



Electronic hidden door handles.



Boundless LED Tail Light.



19 inch alloy rims.

Sedans are fast becoming the most common type of cars seen around and are experiencing a resurgence in the automotive market, driven by a blend of innovation and evolving consumer preference.

Automakers in return are introducing sleeker designs, enhanced fuel efficiency, and advanced technology to appeal to modern buyers.

However, with the rise of electric and hybrid powertrains, sedans now offer eco-friendly options alongside traditional combustion engines.

Their balanced performance, comfort, and affordability make them a practical choice for families and urbanites alike.

This renewed focus on sedans, coupled with competitive pricing, is contributing to steady growth in both established and emerging markets.

But what makes BYD so good? Are their offerings better than their competitor sedans out there? Well, we tested out the BYD Seal Performance variant and we can see why many have invested and are interested in what BYD has to offer.

Sleek and menacing looks

Designed by (former Audi designer)

Wolfgang Egger, there is no doubt that the Seal looks good from every angle. Every line and curve blends to give it a masculine and dominating look on the road.

The LED headlights, daytime running lights and LED tail lights enhance its appearance and are meticulously designed with intricate details that come alive at night.

The Seal Performance and the Tesla Model 3 share similar dimensions, but with some notable differences.

Measuring 4,800mm in length with a 2,920mm wheelbase, the Seal Performance is 80mm longer and has a 45mm longer wheelbase than the Tesla Model 3, which measures 4,720mm in length with a 2,875mm wheelbase.



10.5 inch LCD instrumentation.



12 Dynaudio speakers.

This slightly larger footprint contributes to better rear legroom in the Seal. In terms of cargo capacity, the Seal offers a 400-litre boot and a 50-litre frunk, while the Tesla Model 3 provides a slightly larger 425-litre boot and a more spacious 88-litre frunk.

Although the Seal's narrow boot opening might pose challenges for loading bulkier items, it still offers a practical amount of storage.

Interior: A tech sanctuary

Inside, the Seal Performance exudes luxury and innovation. The cabin is wrapped in premium leather, with ventilated and heated seats ensuring comfort in all conditions.

The centrepiece is the 15.6-inch rotating touchscreen, which adds a futuristic flair to the infotainment system.

Whether in portrait or landscape mode, the display is crisp and responsive, offering seamless access to navigation, entertainment, and vehicle settings.

A 10.25-inch digital instrument cluster provides all essential driving information at a glance, while a 12-speaker Dynaudio sound system delivers crystal-clear audio.

Dual-zone climate control with a PM2.5 air filtration system ensures a fresh and comfortable environment.

However, the climate controls are rather annoying as they can only be accessed through the touchscreen which is an inconvenience. Simple things such as knobs and vent controls should just be left the traditional way.

On the plus side, there are physical buttons for your preferred drive mode and volume control and the crystal gear shifter adds a touch of finesse.



Rotating touch screen.

It also comes with wireless charging pads along with wired Apple CarPlay and wireless Android Auto connectivity which is easy to connect to so there are no complications for the less tech-savvy users.

The panoramic roof has UV-resistant glass and does a commendable job of keeping the cabin cool. We were driving around Sepang under the noon sun and did not really feel the heat.

Performance: Unleashing electrified fury

At the core of the BYD Seal Performance lies its dual-motor, all-wheel-drive system, which generates an impressive 523hp and 670Nm of torque.

This setup shoots the car from 0 to 100kph in a mere 3.8 seconds, a figure that rivals some of the most iconic performance cars on the market.

The instant torque delivery from the electric motors ensures that every press of the



Genuine leather wrapped steering wheel.



Wireless phone charger.

accelerator is met with a surge of adrenaline, making overtaking and highway merging an absolute breeze. Despite its substantial 2,185kg weight, the Seal Performance feels remarkably agile.

The suspension is finely tuned to balance comfort and dynamic handling, allowing the car to glide over imperfections while remaining composed during spirited driving.

However, the regenerative braking system, while efficient, lacks the immediate feedback of traditional setups, requiring a slight adjustment in driving style.

However, there is an issue about the "Performance" variant that bugs me; a 180kph electronic speed limiter. Yes, we know it is to preserve the battery life but shouldn't a performance variant have a higher speed limit?

This was a little frustrating as we were being overtaken by other cars which do not cost as much as the Seal Performance.

Range and charging: Power without compromise

Equipped with an 82.5 kWh BYD Blade battery, the Seal Performance offers a 520km WLTP-rated range, ensuring that its exhilarating performance doesn't come at the cost of practicality.

Charging is equally impressive. A 7kW AC charger fully replenishes the battery in 15.2 hours, while a 150 kW DC fast charger can take the battery from 10% to 80% in just 37 minutes, making long-distance travel a stress-free affair.

We travelled from Bamboo Hills KL to Putrajaya then to Sepang where we did at least eight rounds of a gymkhana challenge, then headed back to Bamboo Hills, all this with one charge! We still had 14% of battery remaining, which to me, is quite impressive.

Safety: Confidence on the road

The Seal Performance is packed with

advanced safety features, including nine airbags for comprehensive protection and a suite of driver-assistance systems such as adaptive cruise control, automatic emergency braking, and lane-keeping assist. A 360° camera provides a bird's-eye view for easier manoeuvring.

These features are not as sensitive as other EVs out there, so it does not "take over" your steering wheel but rather helps you keep your car in the lane.

If you feel like a certain feature is not what you need, you can simply turn it off through the touchscreen.

Priced at RM203,300, the BYD Seal Performance AWD is a game-changer in the premium EV segment.

It combines jaw-dropping acceleration, a luxurious interior, and a design that's both striking and functional.

While there are minor drawbacks, this is an exceptional package. For those seeking an electric vehicle that delivers heart-pounding performance without sacrificing everyday usability, the BYD Seal Performance is a compelling choice. It's not just a car - it's a statement.

Specifications

Motors: Squirrel cage induction asynchronous motor (Front) Permanent magnet synchronous motor (Rear)

Battery: 82.56kWh BYD Blade

Power: 530PS

Torque: 670Nm

Charging: 7kW AC (15.2 hours) 150kW DC (37 minutes)

Range: 520km

0-100kph: 3.8 seconds

Price (as tested): RM203,300

We like: The 0-100kph dash.

We don't like: The 180kph speed limit and climate controls.



Genuine leather wrapped seats.

Family-oriented electric SUV

Volvo launches 2025 EX90 to rival competition



AFTER a relatively quiet period in its electric vehicle lineup, Volvo is preparing to make a significant impact in 2025 with the launch of a new family-friendly EV.

The Volvo EX90 is a three-row electric SUV designed to elevate the brand's presence in a competitive and growing market.

The SUV offers two distinct powertrain options, both paired with all-wheel drive and an impressive 111kWh battery capable of achieving up to 498km on a single charge.

When connected to a DC fast charger, the vehicle can recharge from 10% to 80% in just 30 minutes, making it a practical option for long-distance travel.

The base trim features dual electric motors that deliver 402hp and 770Nm of torque, enabling the EX90 to reach 100kph in just 5.7 seconds.

For those seeking enhanced performance, an upgrade to the twin motor performance powertrain boosts output to 510hp and 909Nm of torque, slashing the 0-100kph time to 4.7 seconds.

This performance enhancement comes at an additional cost of US\$5,000 (RM22,000).

The Volvo EX90 is available in two trims: the Plus, starting at US\$79,995 (RM354,000), and the Ultra model, priced from US\$84,345 (RM373,500).

Designed with families in mind, the Volvo EX90 boasts a roomy interior with seating for up to seven passengers.

The SUV also provides ample cargo space, offering up to 1,914 litres when the rear seats are folded flat.

This makes it one of the most spacious electric SUVs available, providing the flexibility to carry both passengers and cargo with ease.

For those who prefer a more open seating arrangement, Volvo offers an option to remove the centre seat in the second row, converting the vehicle into a six-passenger configuration for an extra US\$500 (RM2,250). While the third-row seats can comfortably accommodate two passengers, it's recommended that those sitting in the back be under 1.7m tall for optimal comfort.

To enhance the driving experience, the 2025 Volvo EX90 is equipped with a range of connectivity features.

Standard offerings include a wireless smartphone charging pad, six USB-C ports (two per row), and wireless Apple CarPlay.

For added convenience, a 12V power outlet is included in the cargo area, ensuring that all your devices stay powered while on the go.

As one of the few electric SUVs offering a standard third-row option, the EX90 is set to carve out its niche in a market where such configurations are still relatively rare.

While some electric vehicles offer a third-row upgrade as an option, the EX90 provides it as a standard feature, making it a standout choice for families seeking both space and sustainability in their next vehicle.

With the 2025 EX90, Volvo is poised to challenge the competition and offer an exceptional family-oriented electric SUV that combines performance, space, and modern connectivity.

Audi's revolutionary electric off-roader

Audi has introduced the Q6 e-tron offroad concept, a groundbreaking prototype designed to push the boundaries of electric off-road vehicles.

Featuring twin electric motors delivering a combined output of 509hp, the concept boasts remarkable capabilities, including the ability to conquer gradients of up to 100% thanks to newly developed portal axles.

The Q6 e-tron offroad concept stands out with its bold design. An increased ride height of 160mm and a wider track of 250mm give it

a striking and commanding presence.

Traditional portal axles typically boost torque at the wheels by 20-30%, but Audi's innovative design achieves a 50% increase, resulting in combined torque at all wheels peaking at 13,400Nm for short bursts.

This innovation enhances climbing power while maintaining a top speed of 175kph, ideal for off-road performance.

Audi's engineers have integrated these advanced portal axles into the wheel hub assemblies,

requiring partial revisions to the suspension links. This not only elevates torque but also ensures the Q6 e-tron offroad concept excels in rugged terrains, reaffirming Audi's *Vorsprung durch Technik* philosophy.

The Q6 e-tron offroad concept is derived from the Audi Q6 e-tron, the first production model based on the Premium Platform Electric (PPE).

The Q6 series promises exceptional range, efficiency, and charging performance, solidifying its place as a benchmark for electric vehicles.

The Q6 e-tron offroad concept will make its debut on Feb 25, 2025, at the FAT Ice Race, offering enthusiasts a chance to witness its prowess. Fans can also follow its performance on Audi Sport's social media channels.

With this concept, Audi demonstrates its commitment to redefining the electric off-road segment, combining advanced technology with a focus on thrilling driving experiences both on and off the road.



First-ever M3 CS Touring



BMW has officially introduced the highly anticipated M3 CS Touring, a limited-run, high-performance variant of its renowned M3 Touring.

The world premiere took place at the legendary Mount Panorama Circuit in Bathurst, Australia, as part of the Bathurst 12 Hour endurance race programme on Jan 30, 2025.

Deliveries are set to begin in March 2025 across Europe, Australia, Japan, and South Korea, with Germany identified as the key market. Production of the special edition will occur alongside other M3 models at BMW's Munich plant.

Under the hood, the M3 CS Touring boasts a 3.0-litre six-cylinder inline engine equipped with M TwinTurbo technology, designed for high-revving performance.

With an increased boost pressure of 2.1 bar and enhanced engine management, the power output climbs to 550hp with 650Nm of torque available between 2,750 and 5,950rpm.

This enables a blistering 0-100kph sprint in just 3.5 seconds and a 0-200kph run in 11.7 seconds. The electronically limited top speed stands at 300kph, courtesy of the standard M Driver's Package.

Power is transmitted via an eight-speed M Steptronic transmission with Drivelogic, offering three distinct shift settings.

The M xDrive all-wheel-drive system, coupled with an Active M Differential, ensures optimal power distribution, enhancing traction and agility.

Drivers can select between 4WD, 4WD Sport, or pure rear-wheel-drive (2WD) mode with DSC deactivated for an unfiltered driving experience.

The car rolls on forged M light-alloy wheels in an exclusive double-spoke design, finished in matte Gold Bronze or matte Black.

These measures 19 inches at the front and 20 inches at the rear, with track tyres fitted as standard, although customers can opt for sport tyres at no extra cost.

Inside, M Carbon bucket seats, CFRP shift paddles, interior trims, and a lightweight centre console further reduce mass. Overall, these measures shave approximately 15kg compared to the standard M3 Competition Touring with M xDrive.

Aerodynamic efficiency is also a key focus, with the front-end design featuring a frameless BMW M kidney grille with red contour lines, an aggressive front splitter, and an exclusive high-gloss black roof and roof spoiler. The LED headlights emit a striking yellow light, reminiscent of BMW's GT racing cars.

The model will be offered in an exclusive colour palette, including British Racing Green, Laguna Seca Blue, Frozen Solid White, and Sapphirer Black metallic.

With its combination of power, precision handling, lightweight construction, and versatile Touring body style, the BMW M3 CS Touring offers an exhilarating yet practical performance machine for driving enthusiasts worldwide.

Special edition Lexus unleashed

LEXUS has introduced a new special edition for its IS sedan in Japan, alongside updates for the 2025 model year lineup.

The IS300 and IS300h models now come with the F Sport Mode Black IV package, which offers aesthetic enhancements and additional features aimed at elevating the sedan's sporty appeal.

The F Sport Mode Black IV stands out with its new set of black forged alloy wheels, designed by BBS, and black mirror caps featuring a smoked finish for the chrome accents.

These details differentiate the latest edition from its predecessor, the F Sport Black III, which also incorporated black exterior elements.

Inside, the F Sport Mode Black IV offers premium upgrades, including Ashwood inserts on the door panels and steering wheel.

The steering wheel and gear shift knob feature dimpled leather, while the heated and ventilated sports seats are upholstered in luxurious Ultrasuede material.

The 8-inch digital instrument cluster now comes with updated opening graphics, and the Panoramic View Monitor has been added as standard equipment, enhancing both convenience and driver visibility.

For enthusiasts seeking more power, the 2025 Lexus IS500 retains its iconic 5.0-litre V8 engine.

Although the IS500 does not feature the F Sport Mode Black IV trim, it shares the same black mirror caps with smoked accents.

This high-performance variant also introduces new genuine leather seat options in black, white, or red.

The powertrains remain unchanged across the lineup. The IS300 is equipped with a 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine, the

IS300h utilises a hybrid 2.5-litre engine, and the IS500 boasts a powerful 5.0-litre V8.

All models in the 2025 Lexus IS range are rear-wheel-drive, maintaining the series' reputation for sporty handling.

Lexus has also added a practical feature for the IS300h, introducing an external power supply attachment to the accessory outlet (AC100V, 1,500W).

This allows users to power external devices while keeping the windows closed, further enhancing the vehicle's versatility.

The 2025 Lexus IS lineup is now available for order in Japan. Pricing starts at ¥5,900,000 (approximately RM189,000) for the IS300 and ¥6,350,000 (around RM203,000) for the IS300h.



Medvedev sent packing

Italian qualifier stuns former world No. 1 in Rotterdam

ITALIAN qualifier Mattia Bellucci stunned former world No. 1 Daniil Medvedev in three tough sets yesterday to reach the Rotterdam ATP quarterfinals.

The 23-year-old left-hander, playing on a career-high ranking of 92, came through 6-3, 6-7 (6-8), 6-3 to record a first win over a top 10 opponent.

"It was a three-hour match and I really enjoyed every moment of it. I really tried to do the best I could. I'm pretty tired but I'm happy," said Bellucci.

"I was going for the serve and volley which is not something I'm used to doing but it worked pretty good today."

Bellucci sprung a surprise on Medvedev by winning the first set and it did not take long for tensions to flare up during the closely-fought encounter.

Serving to draw level at five games each in the second set, Bellucci was put on the back foot when Medvedev rushed to the net in a bid to take control of the point.

Bellucci responded by approaching the net

himself and firing two shots at Medvedev's body, with the second one hitting the target, before immediately holding up his arm to apologise.

Medvedev flinched as the ball struck his torso and flashed a stern look in the direction of Bellucci, clearly frustrated with his opponent's tactics.

During the third set, Bellucci risked upsetting his rival even more by pulling off a cheeky underarm serve. There was no reaction from Medvedev on this occasion, though.

It came just days after the Russian found himself in a furious exchange with the chair umpire during his first-round victory over Wawrinka.

He expressed his fury after being hit with a time violation in the opening set,

h a v i n g s e e m i n g l y b e e n d e l a y e d b y a b a l l k i d

while attempting to serve. Medvedev raged at the "rubbish" officiating despite winning the point, even referencing a previous incident involving Karen Khachanov to suggest the umpire had a history of making poor decisions.

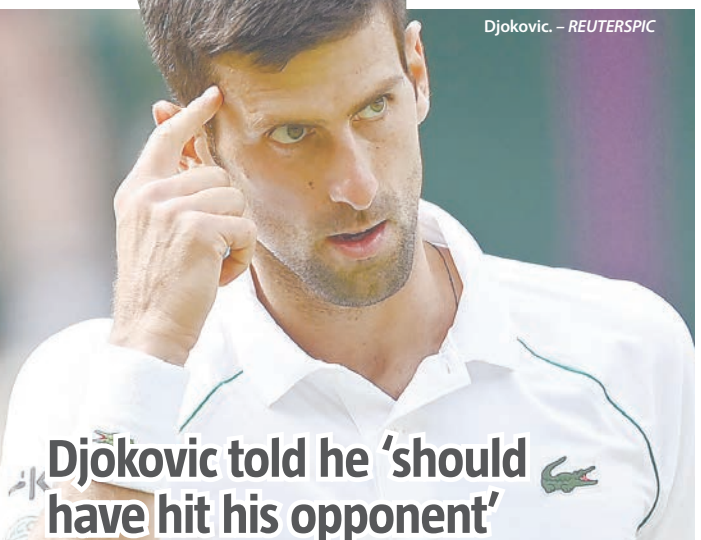
"Why are you giving me a time violation? You have some problem," shouted Medvedev. "She didn't give me the ball, the ball girl. Do you see? Open your eyes

"No, you don't have eyes, man. You're so bad. I remember with Karen Khachanov. I remember you don't have eyes.

"Why are giving me a time violation? You have a problem. You guys are absolute rubbish every match.

"I was calm but you're searching for trouble, man. You have some actual deep problems. I didn't talk to you. I didn't say anything and then you act like this.

"You have some problems, man. Open your eyes. Open your brain. I know you're just sitting there, but think a little more." - AFP/Express Newspapers



Djokovic. - REUTERS/PC

Djokovic told he 'should have hit his opponent'

NOVAK DJOKOVIC has been told that he "should have hit his opponent" during a controversial incident at the 2020 US Open.

The world No. 6 was famously defaulted from the tournament when he swiped a ball away in frustration and unintentionally struck a lineswoman.

The episode has been dragged up in recent days after an altercation between Zizou Bergs and Cristian Garin at the Davis Cup, which saw Garin and Chile disqualified after Bergs barged into him.

There was drama at the Davis Cup over the weekend as Belgium faced Chile in a qualifier tie.

When Bergs broke to serve for the match against Garin, he charged past the net to head to his bench in celebration but floored his opponent in the process.

Garin was knocked down by Bergs and refused to continue playing, calling on the umpire to disqualify his opponent. The Belgian only received a code violation, and Garin continued to protest the official's call.

Garin received a warning for his tirade but carried on. He received a point penalty and a game penalty, which gave Bergs a 6-3, 4-6, 7-5 victory and meant the tie went to Belgium.

The incident has sparked debate in the tennis world, with many drawing similarities to Djokovic's controversial altercation at the US Open more than four years ago.

During a fourth-round match in 2020, Djokovic grew annoyed after going a break down to Pablo Carreno Busta. He slammed a ball towards the back of the court but it struck a lineswoman and he was defaulted on the spot.

Former world No. 1 Andy Roddick has now suggested that Djokovic wouldn't have been disqualified if he hit his opponent instead.

"I will say, had Bergs done it to an umpire, he'd have been gone. But apparently you can do it to another player and it's fine," the American said on his *Served* podcast, discussing the Davis Cup debacle.

Co-presenter Jon Wertheim added: "If Novak Djokovic taps a ball and it happens to hit a lineswoman and he says, 'listen, I didn't intend anything'. It doesn't really matter what his intent is."

Roddick replied: "Yeah, he should've just hit the opponent."

The 2003 US Open champion isn't the only player who believes there is a grey area around the disqualification rules. Former world No. 16 Nikoloz Piashvili recently suggested that Djokovic would have received a harsher punishment in Bergs' situation.

"If Novak had done this, he would have been disqualified for life. WTF," he wrote on social media. - Express Newspapers

322 Notices

PA-38-1375-12/2024
PENSYTIRAHAN JUALAN
DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
PERMOHONAN UNTUK PERLAKSANAAN NO: PA-38-1375-12/2024

Dalam perkara mengenai Seksyen 256 dan 257 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Gadaian Perserahan No. 35190/2007 (bertarikh 15/11/2007) ke atas semua bahagian tanah yang dipegang di bawah Hakmilik Sementara H.S.(D) 21284, Lot 6374, Mukim 15, Daerah Seberang Perai Selatan, Pulau Pinang
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Aturan 83 Kaedah- Kaedah Mahkamah, 2012

ANTARA
PUBLIC BANK BERHAD (No. Syarikat: 196501000672) ... PLAINTIF
DAN
WAKIL DIRI KEPADA HARTA PUSAKA MOHD NASIR BIN LIAI, SI MATI (Lain-Lain: -) ... DEFENDAN

Menurut Perintah Mahkamah Tinggi Malaya di PULAU PINANG mengenai Perintah Jual dan Perintah bertarih 5 Julai 2024 dan 15 Januari 2025, adalah dengan ini diisytiharkan bahawa Timbalan Pendaftar/Penolong Kanan Pendaftar Pusat Operasi - Lelong di Kuantan

AKAN MENJUAL SECARA
LELONG AWAM
Pada Hari Rabu, 19 FEBRUARI 2025, Pada Jam 11:00 pagi,
SECARA ELEKTRONIK DI LAMAN WEB e-LELONG, PUSAT OPERASI e-LELONG, KOMPLEKS MAHKAMAH KUANTAN, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

NOTA: Bakal pembeli adalah dinasihatkan agar membuat carian Hakmilik secara rasmi di Pejabat Tanah dan memeriksa semua tanggungan, bebanan serta mengenal pasti dengan tepat hartanah tersebut sebelum jualan ledong dijalankan.

Sila layari <https://lelong.kahakimain.gov.my/bidderweb>

BUTIR-BUTIR HAKMILIK:
No. Hakmilik : Hakmilik Sementara H.S.(D) 21284
No. Lot : Lot 6374
Mukim/Daerah/Negeri : 15 / Seberang Perai Selatan / Pulau Pinang
Pegangan : Hakmilik Pakjain
No. Petak/No. Tingkat/No. Bangunan :
Keluasan Tanah : 4004.0000000000kaki persegi / 372.0000000000 meter persegi
Pemilik Berdaftar : WAKIL DIRI KEPADA HARTA PUSAKA MOHD NASIR BIN LIAI, SI MATI
Syarat Nyata : Tanah ini hendaklah digunakan untuk tujuan kediaman sahaja
Sekatan Kepentingan : Tanah yang dibekal ini tidak dibenarkan dipindahmilik, dicagar, dipajak atau dipungut tanpa mendapat kebenaran bertulis daripada Pihak Berkuasa Negeri dihalu
Bebanan / Lain-Lain : Digadai kepada Public Bank Berhad Melalui Gadaian Perserahan No. 35190/2007 yang ditandatangani pada 15-11-2007
Kawasan Rizab :
Kaveat :

LOKASI DAN PERHAL HARTANAH:
Hartanah tersebut adalah sebuah rumah banglo bertingkat satu (single storey bungalow house) yang beralamat pos di No. 43, Lorong Pekatra Indah 22, Taman Pekatra Indah, 14120, Simpang Ampat, Pulau Pinang.

HARGA RIZAB:
Hartanah tersebut akan dijual atas "sepertiimana sedia ada" tertaklik kepada satu harga rizab sebanyak RM 380,000.00 (RINGGIT MALAYSIA: TIGA RATUS LAPAN PULUH RIBU SAHAJA) dan kepada syarat-syarat jualan yang diampirkan. Pembida yang bermat hendaklah memendeposikan 10% daripada harga rizab dalam bentuk Bank Draft di atas nama PUBLIC BANK BERHAD 1 HARI BEKERJA sebelum tarikh lelong awam. Baki harga belian hendaklah dibayar oleh pembida yang berjaya kepada PUBLIC BANK BERHAD dalam tempoh seratus dua puluh (120) hari dari tarikh jualan. Untuk butiran-butiran selanjutnya, sila berhubung dengan:-

Firma Guaman : WONG & LOH
Alamat : No. 44, CANTONMENT ROAD, 10350, PG, MY
No. Telefon : 04-2286989
No. Fax : 04-2287989
No. Rujukan : GT/TK/PH/VN/PBB/2024/001

322 Notices

PENSYTIRAHAN JUALAN
DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
PERMOHONAN UNTUK PERLAKSANAAN NO: PA-38-1331-12/2024

Dalam perkara mengenai Seksyen 256 dan 257 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Gadaian Perserahan No. 0799SC2020019542 (bertarikh 09/09/2020) ke atas semua bahagian tanah yang dipegang di bawah Hakmilik Strata No. Hakmilik Geran 91195/M/1/2/9, Lot No. 1637, Mukim Bandar Tanjung Tokong, Seksyen 2, Daerah Timur Laut, Pulau Pinang
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Aturan 83 Kaedah- Kaedah Mahkamah, 2012

ANTARA
PUBLIC ISLAMIC BANK BERHAD (No. Syarikat: 197301001433) ... PLAINTIF
DAN
TAN LYE IM (No. Kad Pengalanan: 861123355660) ... DEFENDAN

Menurut Perintah Mahkamah Tinggi Malaya di PULAU PINANG mengenai Perintah Jual dan Perintah bertarih 22 Oktober 2024 dan 14 JANUARI 2025, adalah dengan ini diisytiharkan bahawa Timbalan Pendaftar/Penolong Kanan Pendaftar Pusat Operasi e-Lelong di Kuantan

AKAN MENJUAL SECARA
LELONG AWAM
Pada Hari Rabu, 19 Februari 2025, Pada Jam 11:00 pagi,
SECARA ELEKTRONIK DI LAMAN WEB e-LELONG, PUSAT OPERASI e-LELONG, KOMPLEKS MAHKAMAH KUANTAN, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

NOTA: Bakal pembeli adalah dinasihatkan agar membuat carian Hakmilik secara rasmi di Pejabat Tanah dan memeriksa semua tanggungan, bebanan serta mengenal pasti dengan tepat hartanah tersebut sebelum jualan ledong dijalankan.

Sila layari <https://lelong.kahakimain.gov.my/bidderweb>

BUTIR-BUTIR HAKMILIK:
No. Hakmilik : Hakmilik Strata No. Hakmilik Geran 91195/ M1/2/9
No. Lot : Lot No. 1637
Mukim/Daerah/Negeri : Bandar Tanjung Tokong, Seksyen 2 / Timur Laut / Pulau Pinang
Pegangan : Hakmilik Katal
No. Bangunan : 8/2 / M1
Keluasan Tanah : 704.0000000000 kaki persegi / 65.0000000000 meter persegi
Syarat Berdaftar : TAN LYE IM
Syarat Nyata : Petak ini hendaklah digunakan untuk tujuan pangasapuri sahaja
Sekatan Kepentingan : Digadai kepada Public Islamic Bank Berhad Melalui Gadaian Perserahan No. 0799SC2020019542 ditandatangani pada 08-09-2020
Bebanan / Lain-Lain :
Kawasan Rizab :
Kaveat :

LOKASI DAN PERHAL HARTANAH:
Hartanah tersebut adalah sebuah pangasapuri bertingkat tiga yang beralamat pos di 23-1-6, Jalan Evergreen 5, Taman Evergreen, 10470, Pulau Pinang, Pulau Pinang.

HARGA RIZAB:
Hartanah tersebut akan dijual atas "sepertiimana sedia ada" tertaklik kepada satu harga rizab sebanyak RM 370,000.00 (RINGGIT MALAYSIA: TIGA RATUS TUJUH PULUH RIBU SAHAJA) dan kepada syarat-syarat jualan yang diampirkan. Pembida yang bermat hendaklah memendeposikan 10% daripada harga rizab dalam bentuk Bank Draft di atas nama PUBLIC ISLAMIC BANK BERHAD 1 HARI BEKERJA sebelum tarikh lelong awam. Baki harga belian hendaklah dibayar oleh pembida yang berjaya kepada PUBLIC ISLAMIC BANK BERHAD dalam tempoh seratus dua puluh (120) hari dari tarikh jualan. Untuk butiran-butiran selanjutnya, sila berhubung dengan:-

Firma Guaman : WONG & LOH
Alamat : No. 44, CANTONMENT ROAD, 10350, PG, MY
No. Telefon : 04-2286989
No. Fax : 04-2287989
No. Rujukan : GT/TK/PH/VN/PBB/2024/043

322 Notices

NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR VOLUNTARY WINDING UP OF LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP
AND
(Section 50(4)(a) of the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2012)

Notice is hereby given that ESYNETIC PLT, Registration No. 201804002172 (LLP0016554-LGN) will be making an application to the Registrar of Limited Liability Partnerships for a declaration of dissolution pursuant to section 50(2) of the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2012 within seven (7) days after the publication of this notice. Any partner or creditor of the LLP desiring to object to the application may do so in writing to the Companies Commission of Malaysia within thirty (30) days from the date of this notice.

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016
AND
IN THE MATTER OF PHOENIX DEVELOPMENT SDN. BHD.
(Registration No.: 201701010782 (1224947-1))
(In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)
NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Final Meeting of the members of the Liquidator's Statement of Accounts showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and the property disposed of (if any) and of hearing any explanation that may be given by the Liquidator;

- To receive and consider the Liquidator's Statement of Accounts showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and the property disposed of (if any) and of hearing any explanation that may be given by the Liquidator;
- To resolve under Section 518(3)(b) of the Companies Act 2016, that all books, accounts and documents of the company and of the liquidator that are relevant to the affairs of the company at or subsequent to the commencement of the winding up of the company be destroyed on the expiry of three months from the date of the Final Meeting;
- To distribute surplus amount (if any) from Liquidator's Account to the Contributors; and
- To accept the resignation of the Liquidator pursuant to Section 513(3) of the Companies Act 2016.

CHAN CHEE KONG
Liquidator
Dated this 7th day of February 2025

Notes
A member of the company entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy or proxies to attend and vote on his behalf and such proxy need not be a member of the company. The instrument appointing a proxy or proxies must be deposited at the company's registered office not less than 48 hours before the time for holding the meeting or any adjournment thereof.

322 Notices

NOTIS PEMBERITAHUAN
Tharmmalagam A/L Ponnusamy
(No. I/C: 760127-08-6203)
dan
Menegah A/P Kannikumar
(No. I/C: 831116-10-6200)

Satu kes telah difailkan di Mahkamah Sesyen di Taiping. Anda diminta untuk hadir ke firma kami bagi membincangkan perkara ini dengan kadar segera. Kegagalan untuk memberikan maklumbalas dalam tempoh yang ditetapkan boleh menyebabkan Mahkamah meneruskan permohonan kes ini tanpa sebarang notis lanjut kepada anda.

Sila hubungi kami:
Firma :
Low & Partners
No. Telefon :
+605-241 8293 atau +6012-514 2178
Alamat :
No. 8B, Persiaran Greentown 1, Greentown Business Centre, 30450 Ipoh, Perak.
Rujukan Fail :
IP/DV/14623/07/24/ LHY/TYF_CIP

World's best for 'The People's Open'

THE WM Phoenix Open doesn't hold "signature event" status on the PGA Tour these days, but the event that dubs itself "The People's Open" is more populist than exclusive anyway.

Besides, tour stars don't need added monetary incentive to be persuaded to come to TPC Scottsdale.

Twenty-nine of the top 50 in the world rankings, including World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler and fan favourite Justin Thomas, will be on hand for this week's PGA Tour stop that begins today in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Famed for its raucous crowds and the par-3 16th Stadium Hole, TPC Scottsdale is a favourite stop for many on tour thanks to its character.

"I can't believe this is the 11th time I've played in the tournament. I didn't know that was possible," cracked Thomas, 31.

"It's fun, the couple times being able to get myself in contention on Sunday and play in those last couple groups. The energy is very high. Yeah, it's a place that I look forward to coming every year."

Canada's Nick Taylor won on the second hole of a playoff against Charley Hoffman last year. Before that, Scheffler had gone back-to-back in

2022 and 2023.

The field also features Japan's Hideki Matsuyama, who went back-to-back at the Phoenix Open in 2016 and 2017 and kicked off the 2025 season with a victory at The Sentry.

Former US Open champion Wyndham Clark and up-and-comers Sahith Theegala and Tom Kim of South Korea are others to watch.

The most intriguing storyline of the week may have nothing to do with beer-soaked fans or the names at the top of the leaderboard.

Florida State golfer Luke Clanton is one point away from earning full tour status via the PGA Tour University accelerated pathway.

If he makes the cut at the Phoenix Open, where he's playing on a sponsor exemption, he'd reach 20 points and would qualify for his tour card.

Clanton has already made eight cuts on tour, seven last year.

"It's been a lot of preparation over the last couple months for this," Clanton said. "It's been amazing."

"Every single PGA Tour event you play you've got a lot of people watching you, and you just kind of have to stay in your zone and do what you need to do." - Field Level Media

US Open first major to create LIV exemption

THE USGA has created an exemption category for LIV Golf players to compete in the US Open, making the tournament the first of golf's four majors to introduce a formal pathway for golfers on the Saudi-backed circuit, it said yesterday.

One spot in the 156-player field for the June 12-15 US Open in Oakmont, Pennsylvania will be awarded to a golfer who is not otherwise exempt and in the top three of the LIV Golf Individual Standings as of May 19.

The access will increase to two players for next year's US Open at Shinnecock Hills in Southampton, New York, with leading LIV Golf players from the final 2025 individual standings and the May 18, 2026 list gaining entry.

In both cases, the spots are for players not already exempt and among the top three in the standings.

"The USGA continues to evaluate the pathways that exist to ensure those playing their best have the opportunity to compete in our national championship," said John Bodenhamer, USGA chief championships officer.

"Consistent with our historical approach, we continuously evaluate talent levels on professional tours and in amateur events, which has led us to add a new exemption category."

While LIV Golf players had been eligible to play in golf's majors, there had previously been no direct pathway for them into the blue-riband events, which meant qualification was more difficult for those without previously existing exemptions.

But last June the USGA said it would consider creating a direct route into the US Open for well-performing LIV Golf players in a bid to ensure the world's best players compete against each other.

The announcement yesterday was applauded by LIV Golf.

"Every golf fan in the world longs to see the greatest players in the world competing on golf's biggest stages at the majors," LIV Golf CEO Scott O'Neil said in a statement.

"LIV Golf is committed to working hand in hand with golf's governing bodies to elevate the sport in all corners of the world." - Reuters

Time flies when he's having fun

World No. 1 Scheffler returns to Arizona where it all started

WORLD NO. 1 Scottie Scheffler acknowledges the passage of time can play tricks on the mind, like this week's return to Scottsdale, Arizona, for the WM Phoenix Open.

Scheffler has won this tournament twice, including his first PGA Tour victory in February 2022.

"It's a weird feeling because it feels like a lifetime ago, but at the same time, it feels like I just started out here. It's kind of a weird balance," Scheffler said yesterday.

"I really don't know how to describe it because I think about, what was it, three years ago?"

"I feel like you could have told me it was 30 years ago or three months ago, I wouldn't really know the difference. I feel like that's just how life is sometimes."

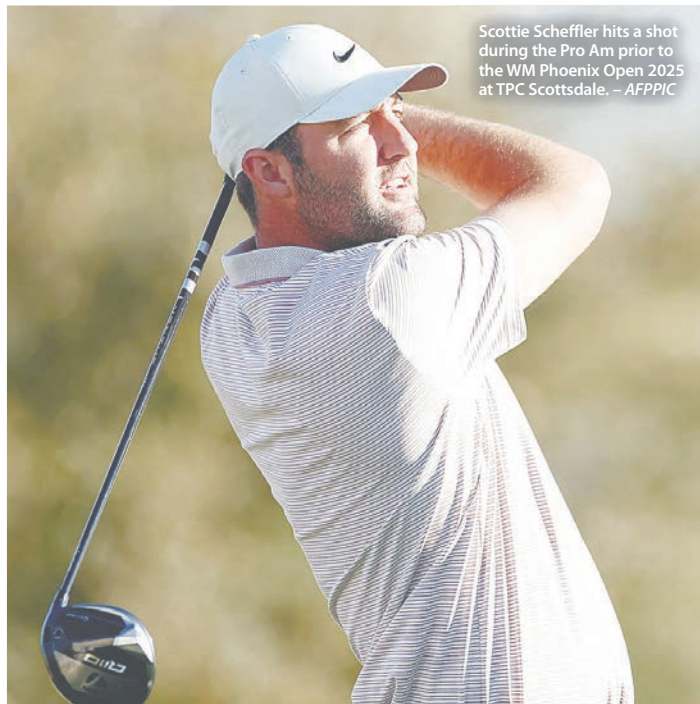
Time has flown as Scheffler found unmatched success, beginning a run of three consecutive PGA Tour Player of the Year awards. Scheffler, 28, likened the feeling to the birth of his son.

"I can't really remember a lot of what life was like before Bennett came, and it feels like he's been with us for forever, but he's only 9 months old," Scheffler said.

"I think that's just how life is. I'm really happy with the way things have turned out, and it's been a lot of fun, and I'm hoping to continue to play golf out here for a long time."

Since joining the tour in 2020, Scheffler has won 13 times, including the Masters and The Players Championship twice each. He has won all four majors as well, plus nine runner-up finishes overall and 10 times in third.

He has made 112 of 131 cuts. He captured the gold medal at the Paris Olympic Games last summer and the season-long FedExCup



Scottie Scheffler hits a shot during the Pro Am prior to the WM Phoenix Open 2025 at TPC Scottsdale. - AFP/PPC

title last fall.

Yet his approach is to consider the full picture, appreciating that he loses more often than he wins. It's the nature of the sport, and it drives him to be more competitive and aspire for more success.

Scheffler missed most of last month due to a hand injury from a cooking accident over the holidays. He tied for ninth in his season debut at the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am last week.

Scheffler was happy overall with his play, noting he still may have to shake off some rust.

He's very comfortable at TBC Scottsdale for "the People's Open," calling it a lot of fun to battle the golf course and the atmosphere of "a pretty hectic crowd out there," especially at No. 16.

Thinking about how times have changed, Scheffler said when he first played this tournament, he would get to the No. 16 tee and not many people would know who he is. Now spectators chant his name during practise rounds.

"It's cool to be able to get in that environment and have people cheering for you," Scheffler said. "The cheers for you immediately stop if you miss the green or don't make birdie, so that part is a little bit tough."

"It's really cool to be able to play in front of our fans, and this is a week when we get to play in front of a lot of them," he continued.

"As a player, I think it's a special week. It's a lot of fun. Like I said, I have great memories of this tournament, so every year getting to come back, I'm reminded of those things." - Field Level Media

SHORTS

Rahm excited for night golf

EVEN though he'll be up past his bedtime, Legion XIII captain Jon Rahm is thrilled about playing this week's LIV Golf season opener in Saudi Arabia after dark.

"From the moment I found out we were going to play under the lights, I've been really excited," the 30-year-old Spaniard told reporters yesterday at Riyadh Golf Club, where the tournament begins overnight.

"It's all about what LIV Golf is all about. It's innovating and creating a new product for the consumer."

"Formula 1 decided to go at night. TV looks

very, very cool and I hope golf comes out that way, as well."

Rahm, who said he's usually asleep by 9.30pm at home, said he has been trying to stay up until 1am to get used to having an evening tee time.

"It's definitely been interesting, especially when you travel far away, to have to stay up this late," he said. "But it's part of the appeal to a special week like this one."

Rahm, like most of the competitors, has little experience playing under the lights.

"Obviously we're all going to have our shortcomings because we're not used to it. We've never done it," he said.

"Back home there's a par-3 course that is lit at night that you can go and play, but there's a

difference between trying to hit a pitching wedge and a driver. It's a whole different feel."

Niemann looks to build on Saudi success

TORQUE GC captain Joaquin Niemann will look to follow up on last year's success in Saudi Arabia when LIV Golf opens the season under the lights at Riyadh Golf Club overnight.

The 26-year-old Chilean captured the LIV Golf Jeddah individual championship last March before winning the Asian Tour's season-ending PIF Saudi Invitational in December.

"Yeah, Saudi has been great to me lately. Last time we were here, it was a great week for

me," Niemann said during a press conference Wednesday.

Niemann defeated fellow LIV players Cameron Smith and Caleb Surratt in a playoff to win the Saudi Invitational. His lob on the second extra hole stopped a foot from the hole and he birdied for the victory.

"It was a lot of fun playing that, a lot of birdies there," he said. "I felt like down the stretch I didn't play my best, and sometimes those things happen, not being able to finish those last holes as good as I wanted, and being able to come back in the playoff and play well, it was good to me."

"Yeah, it was great. Saudi has been great, so I can't complain. Hopefully it keeps doing the same."

Leverkusen back from brink to reach last four

VICTOR BONIFACE scored an extratime winner as defending champions Bayer Leverkusen came back from two goals down to win 3-2 against derby rivals Cologne in the German Cup quarterfinals yesterday.

Leverkusen were expected to cruise against their second-division opponents, but found themselves two down early in the second half as Damion Downs and Linton Maina scored either side of half-time.

Starting at a first loss in the competition since July 2022, Florian Wirtz assisted Patrik Schick to kick start a comeback effort with 30 minutes remaining.

Schick then sent the game to extra-time with a header in the seventh minute of stoppage time.

Boniface, playing alongside fellow striker Schick for the first time this season, latched onto an Alex Grimaldo cross to put his side on track for victory.

Cologne looked to have sent the match to penalties when Imad Rondic scored in the 113th minute, but his goal was overturned on VAR review for a narrow offside.

"It was a very hard game against an opponent who did very well, but we showed a good reaction," Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso told reporters.

"It might not have been our best game but we showed heart and belief. We fought until the last minute, with patience and kept our structure. We're happy."

The win means Leverkusen, who put out Bayern Munich in the last round, join Stuttgart, who beat Augsburg 1-0 on Tuesday, in the semifinals.

Later in February, two-time winners RB Leipzig host 2015 winners Wolfsburg while Werder Bremen, who have lifted the trophy on six occasions, play at home against third-division Arminia Bielefeld. – AFP

Utd suffer latest cruel Shaw setback

LUKE SHAW has suffered another setback in his quest to return to fitness, ruling him out of Manchester United's FA Cup fourth-round clash against Leicester City tomorrow (4am Malaysian time), according to reports.

The 29-year-old hasn't started for United since leaving the pitch with an injury in last February's win at Luton Town.

He returned to action at the end of 2024 with three substitute cameos under Ruben Amorim before a fresh problem left him "devastated."

There was hope of an imminent comeback when Leicester visit Old Trafford after recent images showed Shaw in training.

However, *Mail Sport* report that the left-back has been dealt a minor setback in his recovery that will take him out of contention. It's claimed that the issue isn't considered serious and that Shaw could return to the training pitch as early as next week.

"It is hurting a lot having to write this as I really thought I had got through my recent struggles and was on a positive path going forward, but unfortunately, I've had a small setback," Shaw posted on *Instagram*.

"I've been through a lot and had a lot of ups and downs, but this has been my toughest period."

"I'm absolutely devastated, and it's extremely tough to come to terms with reality at this time."

"I understand there's going to be people frustrated, angry, disappointed, and I understand all that. There is no-one feeling that more than me at this moment in time." – Express Newspapers

New signings fire Milan past Roma

JOAO FELIX scored on his debut and Tammy Abraham netted a double against his parent club to earn AC Milan a 3-1 win over AS Roma in their Coppa Italia quarterfinal tie at the San Siro yesterday.

Abraham, who joined Milan from Roma in August on a season-long loan deal, put the hosts in front in the 16th minute before punishing his old teammates again three minutes before the break.

Roma substitute Artem Dovbyk pulled one back nine minutes into the second half, before Felix came off the bench and netted in the 71st minute, two days after his arrival on loan from Chelsea.

"Everybody knows how I feel about Roma, it's a club that means a lot to me. It wasn't nice," Abraham told broadcaster *Mediaset* after he was booed by the away fans.

"I think they thought I celebrated but I didn't

celebrate, I was just thanking God. This is football, it happens."

Roma made three changes at the start of the second half, and that decision paid off when Dovbyk put his side back in the game.

Milan coach Sergio Conceicao responded by sending on two deadline day signings, Felix and Santiago Gimenez, and the new arrivals combined to double the lead.

After the win, Conceicao said new signings Felix, Gimenez and Kyle Walker are already allowing him to implement his preferred style of football.

Asked after the game if he saw in Milan a resemblance to the Porto side with whom he won three championships, four Portuguese Cups, a League Cup, and three Super Cups, Conceicao told *Mediaset*: "I don't see the similarities with Porto yet.

"But we are working to be more compact, more aggressive, not allow the opponents to get into our final third so often."

"We're not there yet, but with the players who arrived in the transfer window, their characteristics give me the comfort to go towards the football I like, including with two strikers and the right balance not just to score goals, but also not concede them."

Conceicao, who took charge of Milan in December, said he was pleased at how quickly his players had learned the workings of his gameplan.

"We are trying to pass on to the team what we want, but we had just one training session to prepare for this game and I do not have the luxury of working on the game's details in training because we play every three days," the Portuguese manager said. – AFP/Reuters



YOUNG Real Madrid striker Gonzalo Garcia headed home a 93rd minute winner to put his side into the Copa del Rey semifinals with a 3-2 victory at Leganes yesterday.

Juan Cruz's brace for the hosts pulled back early strikes by Luka Modric and Endrick for the European champions at Leganes' Butarque stadium.

With extra-time beckoning 20-year-old forward Gonzalo headed home at the near post after fine work by Brahim Diaz to help Madrid snatch a derby victory and keep their legs fresh ahead of big upcoming games against Atletico Madrid and Manchester City.

Madrid were without Kylian Mbappe and Jude Bellingham after minor knocks, and started with youngsters Jacobo Ramon and Raul Asencio at the heart of their back-line because of their defensive injury crisis.

"We have to be very satisfied with what the young players have done tonight and we have to count on them," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti told a press conference.

"The youth academy adds up, those who work down below do well and the players arrive

prepared. Sure, they lack experience, but that's basically all they need."

"When I put a team together, I do it to try to win the game, not to give minutes to the youth academy."

"But this year they have had the opportunity due to injuries and other factors and they are doing really well."

In addition to 18-year-old Endrick and 19-year-old Arda Guler who started up-front, Ancelotti gave 20-year-old Ramon his first senior start alongside fellow academy player Asencio, who is a year older.

But it was substitute Garcia who grabbed the headlines by scoring the winner a few minutes after coming off the bench, his first goal with the senior squad.

"It was a competitive game. At the back we struggled a bit, Jacobo (Ramon) felt the weight of playing his first game with us a bit, he was a little nervous but then he was more clinical as the game progressed," Ancelotti said.

"Gonzalo (Garcia) is on a very good run with Castilla (Real Madrid's reserve team). Endrick has scored and we have a good feeling working for the team."

Leeds beat Coventry to boost promotion charge

LEEDS took another step towards the Premier League as the Championship leaders won 2-0 at Coventry yesterday.

First-half strikes from Joel Piroe and Jayden Bogle ensured Leeds would stretch their advantage at the top to five points.

Coventry had won their previous four games but they were no match for Daniel Farke's promotion chasers.

Leeds could have had more but they gladly settled for a sixth successive clean sheet in all competitions and extended their unbeaten run to 14 games.

They have made a habit of scoring early in recent games and this time they struck in the 17th minute.

Ellis Simms played a lazy back-pass deep into

his own half and Manor Solomon slipped through to Piroe, who buried his 13th goal of the campaign.

Coventry were the architects of their own downfall again when Leeds increased the advantage after 26 minutes.

Bogle's poor touch looked to have allowed Coventry keeper Oliver Dovin to halt his run into the area.

But Dovin spilled it back into the path of the defender and he slotted home from close-range.

Coventry thought they had got one back after halftime, but Illan Meslier produced a fine save to repel Simms' header.

Dovin twice denied Leeds by stopping stop low drilled efforts from Solomon and Piroe.

Dovin may have been to blame for Leeds' second but he also spread himself to stop Largie

Ramazani with his feet.

Meslier kept his clean-sheet intact by tipping Bobby Thomas' header on to the bar in the closing stages.

"A great night for us and a pretty important win. We knew Coventry were in red-hot form but this was a top-class performance," Leeds United boss Daniel Farke told *BBC Radio Leeds*.

"To win at such a difficult place and in such a deserved manner was impressive."

"We created so many chances against such a good side and we were too wasteful. Another night they could have been costly."

"We know we have a really good chance to finish in a great position this season, but we also know we have to keep going with more performances like this." – AFP/Agencies



RESULTS & STANDINGS

CARABAO CUP (semifinals): **Newcastle 2** (Murphy 19, Gordon 52) **Arsenal 0** - Newcastle win 4-0 on agg.

COPA DEL REY (quarterfinals): **Leganes 2** (Cruz 39-pen, 59) **Real Madrid 3** (Modric 18, Endrick 25, Gonzalo 90+3).

ITALIAN CUP (quarterfinals): **AC Milan 3** (Abraham 16, 42, Felix 72) **Roma 1** (Dovbyk 54).

GERMAN CUP (quarterfinals): **Bayer Leverkusen 3** (Schick 61, 90+6, Boniface 98) **FC Cologne 2** (Downs 45+10, Maina 54) **1st aet.**

FRENCH CUP (round of 16): Cannes 5 Dives-Cabourg 3, Stade Briochein Nice 1, Strasbourg 1 Angers 3, Toulouse 0 Guingamp 2.

ENGLISH CHAMPIONSHIP: Coventry 0 Leeds 2.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	31	19	9	3	62	19	66
Burnley	31	16	13	2	37	9	61
Sheff Utd	30	19	6	5	41	21	61
Sunderland	30	16	10	4	45	26	58
Blackburn	31	13	6	12	35	31	45
West Brom	30	10	14	6	39	27	44

The Martinator withdraws from Sepang

REIGNING world champion, Jorge Martin, has been ruled out from the 2025 Official Sepang Test following a horrific crash on the first day at the Sepang International Circuit (SIC) on Wednesday.

According to a post on X by @MotoGP, it said the Aprilia Racing rider, who was transported to a hospital, believed to be in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, for further checks immediately after the accident, has been diagnosed with a right-hand fracture and fractures in his left foot.

"He will stay in the hospital overnight and tomorrow he will fly back to Europe to undergo surgery on both of his right hand and left foot," it said.

Meanwhile, the 27-year-old rider on his Instagram post was gutted at missing out on a strong start to the new season.

"Not the best start of the 2025 season. But martinator always come back stronger," he said.

The unfortunate incident saw Martin thrown from his new Aprilia RS-GP bike at Turn 2, spinning in mid-air before landing hard on the tarmac.

Earlier in the session, the Spaniard, nicknamed the Martinator, had also been involved in a crash at Turn 1 while his best time of the day was two minute and 01.321 seconds (s) on the fifth lap.

The former 2021 world champion, Fabio Quartararo, led the way on the first day timesheet, setting the fastest timing of 1:57.555s. - Bernama

JDT Super League celebrations on hold

JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM (JDT) will put early celebrations for their near-certain Super League triumph on hold, as the Southern Tigers shift their full focus to their upcoming Asian Champions League Elite (ACLE) matches.

The league leaders need just one more win against Perak FC at Sultan Ibrahim Stadium later this month to clinch the Super League title, despite having five matches left.

However, head coach Hector Bidoglio has made it clear that the teams priority now is their two crucial ACLE matches against Central Coast Mariners and Pohang Steelers.

"I am pleased with the players performance, it truly makes me happy. Now, my focus is on two very important matches.

"We must play with quality, passion, and determination. It is essential that we work together, showcase our full potential, and compete at the highest level," he told reporters after JDT's 4-0 win against Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) FC at Sultan Ibrahim Stadium on Wednesday night.

The Southern Tigers are set to face Australian side Central Coast Mariners on Feb 11 in New South Wales, before wrapping up their East Region league stage campaign against South Korea's FC Pohang Steelers on Feb 18 at Sultan Ibrahim Stadium.

JDT currently hold a strong position to advance to the knockout stage, sitting in sixth place on goal difference, despite being level on eight points with China's Shanghai Port and Thailand's Buriram United after six matches.

Only the top eight teams from the 12-team league stage will progress to the quarterfinals.

Meanwhile, PDRM FC Head Coach P. Maniam wants his men to forget the defeat to JDT and focus on the Challenge Cup final against Selangor FC.

However, he praised his team for fighting hard despite being without some key players in last night's game.

The Cops currently sit in seventh place in the league standings with 21 points from 18 matches. - Bernama

Malaysia crash out of hockey World Cup group stage

THE national men's indoor hockey squad concluded their Group B campaign at the 2025 World Cup without earning a single point after falling to Iran 0-3 in Porec, Croatia, on Wednesday.

In their match at the Zatika Sports Centre, Malaysia, making their debut in the World Cup, fell behind in the 10th minute after Seyidmohammad Ghoreishroudbaraki converted a penalty corner.

Mohd Rodzhanizam Mat Radzi's side were again caught in a similar situation when Mohsen Bohoulou doubled Iran's lead in the 30th minute, before Sajjad Mamizadeh sealed the victory for the reigning Asian Cup champions with a field goal six minutes later.

The result saw Malaysia remain at the bottom of Group B, while three-time champions Germany topped the group with nine points, followed by Iran with six points, and Argentina in third place with three points.

Only the top eight teams from the group stage advance to the

quarterfinals, while the remaining four teams will compete in classification matches for the 9th to 12th places.

Malaysia opened their 2025 World Cup campaign on a disappointing note, suffering a heavy 4-12 defeat to Germany last Monday, followed by a second loss to Argentina, 2-5, the next day.

Despite the dismal results, Mohd Rodzhanizam said his players displayed satisfactory discipline, including reducing minor mistakes that had cost them in their first two group matches.

He also admitted that his players had several goal-scoring opportunities against Iran and hopes they can sharpen their finishing to breach opponents' defense in the next stage.

"I believe that with the performance shown by the players today, they can stay more focused until Malaysia's final match," he said in a video shared by the Malaysian Hockey Confederation to the media. - Bernama

Getting accustomed

Nur Syaiful getting in sync with coach Minemura's training regime

NATIONAL para swimmer Muhammad Nur Syaiful Zulkafli is beginning to adapt to the training methods of head coach Fumiyo Minemura following the 29-year-old's re-emergence in the pool after the 2024 Paris Paralympics.

Although he found it tough to adapt to Minemura's training regime when the coach took charge last October, Nur Syaiful said he is now more comfortable with the training programme drawn up by the Japanese coach, who focuses a lot on endurance.

"Previously, under coach Li Xin Xin of China, the focus was more on speed and my strokes but this Japanese coach takes a different approach during our training sessions.

"She emphasises the aspect of endurance, meaning I have to swim longer distances to test my mental strength. However, the more I've

been training under her, the more comfortable I feel," said the 100m breaststroke SB4 (physical impairment) gold medalist at the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Para Games when contacted by Bernama.

Nur Syaiful, also a two-time bronze medalist in the men's 50m

freestyle S5 (physical impairment) at the World Para Swimming Championships in London 2019 and Madeira 2022, hopes that Minemura's training will help him produce a positive result in his first outing since the 2024 Paralympics - the Para Swimming World Series 2025 in Fuji-Shizuoka, Japan from April 10-12.

He expects to compete in four events at the Para Swimming World Series - the 50m, 100m and 200m freestyle as well as the 100m breaststroke.

As such, the Sarawak swimmer admits to having high hopes of getting on the podium for the first time in the Para Swimming World Series, especially in the 100m breaststroke event since the other three freestyle events are expected to be hotly contested.

"Most of the para swimmers who have strong leg strength will be competing in the three S5 freestyle events that I will be competing in," said Nur Syaiful, who relies solely on his upper body due to a disability in his legs that left him partially paralysed after an accident at the age of 17.

Nur Syaiful also feels that the outing in Japan will help in his preparation for the 2025 World Para Swimming Championships in Singapore from Sept 21-27.

For the record, Nur Syaiful qualified for three finals in his second Paralympics appearance in Paris 2024 but returned home empty-handed. - Bernama



Muhammad Nur Syaiful Zulkafli. - BERNAMAPIC

Pathum United deny Terengganu Asean Club semifinal spot

TERENGGANU FC missed out on a semifinal spot in the 2024/25 Asean Club Championship (ACC) after losing 3-4 to Thai representatives BG Pathum United in their final Group A match at the BG Stadium, Pathum Thani on Wednesday.

Having been in second place before the match, the defeat dashed the hopes of Badrul Afzan Razali's side to progress to the knockout stage, as they dropped to fourth place with seven points, level on points with third-place PKR Sway Rieng FC from Cambodia.

Group winners Pathum United amassed 11 points, while runner-up PSM Makassar from Indonesia, with 10 points, both advanced to the semifinals.

In tonight's thrilling match, which saw a total of seven goals, Terengganu took the lead with a strike from Muhammad Akhyar Abdul Rashid in the 66th minute.

The home side, playing under new head coach Anthony Hudson for the first time, fought back to score two goals in quick succession, both courtesy

of Brazilian import forward Raniel Santana, in the 71st and 76th minutes.

Japanese midfielder Gakuto Notsuda scored the third goal for The Rabbits in the 83rd minute before Singaporean player Ilhan Fandi extended the lead with the fourth goal in the 87th minute.

In extra time, Terengganu managed to narrow the deficit as Muhammad Safawi Rasid netted in the 93rd minute and then scored his second personal goal by converting a penalty in the 98th minute. However, they were unable to prevent the

opposing team from securing the victory.

Meanwhile, in other Group A action, PSM Makassar triumphed 3-0 over Dong A Thanh Hoa FC from Vietnam, while PKR Sway Rieng defeated Myanmar's Shan United FC 4-2.

PSM Makassar is scheduled to face Group B winners Cong An Hanoi from Vietnam in the semifinals, while BG Pathum United will take on the Group B runner-up, a spot still contested between Buriram United, Kuala Lumpur City FC, and Borneo FC. - Bernama



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SCAN ME



Newcastle United's Anthony Gordon (left) celebrates yesterday's win against Arsenal in the Carabao Cup 2nd leg semifinal at St James' Park. - REUTERS/SPIC

Newcastle dare to dream

Howe determined to end Magpies' trophy drought in Carabao Cup final

BY REBECCA JOHNSON

NEWCASTLE BOSS Eddie Howe is determined to end the club's 70-year wait for a trophy after his team reached the Carabao Cup final with a thumping semifinal victory over Arsenal.

A dominant 2-0 win secured the Magpies a 4-0 aggregate victory over the Gunners to move within touching distance of what would be a first piece of major silverware since their FA Cup win in 1955.

Howe is hoping to end their trophy drought in next month's Wembley final.

"It's a long time. We'd love to end it and we'll work as hard as we can and prepare right to try to do that," he said.

Taking a 2-0 lead into yesterday's second leg tie at St James' Park, Jacob Murphy and Anthony Gordon struck either side of half-time and Howe insisted his side will not be caught up in the "emotion" of who they may face in the competition's showpiece on March 16.

"Fate will naturally take its course, I don't think we'll engage on the emotion of who we'll play. That will come in time, of course," Howe added.

"Two elite teams, two very good sides that we have faced this season, so we know whoever we play will be a tough opponent.

"But I think it's just a case at the moment of being really pleased to have won today, continued our good momentum and good form and yes, we've shown that we can compete against any team in the Premier League.

"The intention was to be aggressive and sometimes when you do that it doesn't always work. Today it did. We had to retreat at times but we were always in the game.

"At our very best levels, I think we're a very good team, so I think that should give us loads of confidence."

Newcastle have now reached the Carabao Cup final twice in the last three years, with their last Wembley outing coming in 2023 where they lost 2-0 to Manchester United.

When asked how it felt to have steered the Magpies to two

finals, Howe replied: "I'm fully prepared to take that, thanks.

"The players always deserve the credit. This group of players, since I have been here have been magnificent for me.

"Again tonight, they've gone hard for us. They've given everything physically, mentally. I'm very, very honoured to manage that group."

Goalscorer Gordon said it is important for Newcastle to "stay humble" after yesterday's win.

His comments come days after the Gunners' fiery clash with Manchester City, in which Myles Lewis-Skelly performed Erling Haaland's celebration in a 5-1 win.

"It is important for us to stay humble now," the England winger told *Sky Sports*. "(The final) will be a big occasion but it's so far away. It feels amazing. A proper team performance and we got the win.

"Our fans are never in question, they make it so difficult for the opposition and we did it the right way. We had a game plan we thought would work. Everyone knows we press."

A difficult performance saw Arsenal struggle to get a foothold in the game, despite having early opportunities to go ahead.

After Alexander Isak had a goal disallowed for offside, Martin Odegaard went close twice for the visitors before Murphy struck just moments later.

Boss Mikel Arteta said: "We had so many expectations, to believe we could turn it around we needed momentum, especially in the first half.

"The game started in the first action almost with them scoring and the goal being denied.

"Then we had two big moments with Martin, they then capitalised the next action and scored the goal.

"Obviously the game shifted, you need to stay cool to score a goal as early as possible, we didn't manage to do that the first time - I know we had a big chance in the second half then we started to struggle as the game went by.

"We didn't generate enough situations and establish ourselves in the final third enough. The game started to get away from us." - The Independent/Express Newspapers



Medvedev sent packing

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Real late win

Story on page 30