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'Learn sign language to connect with deaf'

Communication fosters sense of belonging and ensures PwDs do not feel excluded, says association.

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PICTURE OF TOGETHERNESS ...

Muslims gather for breaking of fast in the open field in front of Putrajaya Corporation Complex at Persiaran Perdana in Putrajaya. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN

Post-mortem finds customs officer died of strangulation

Kuala Lumpur police chief says case still classified as sudden death report.

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Young women entrepreneurs beat odds to succeed

Twins defy social norms to create inclusive beauty products while studying law, and single parent turns adversity into opportunity.

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Power to sway

Influencers and media personalities have great responsibility to ensure content they create online is accurate, ethical and respectful of country's cultural diversity as they actively shape public discourse.

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King gifts interceptor boat to Pahang MMEA

KUANTAN: His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia, gifted a high-tech interceptor boat to the Pahang Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) through the Royal Johor Boat Hangar at the Maritime Post in Teluk Gading on Wednesday.

MMEA deputy director-general (Logistics) Vice-Admiral Datuk Saiful Lizan Ibrahim said the contribution would enhance surveillance and interception capabilities in safeguarding the nation's waters.

"This gift reflects His Majesty's deep concern for maritime security and MMEA's preparedness in combating maritime crimes.

"The boat is on a cost-free loan for five years, starting from March 1, 2025, and will be fully utilised to strengthen MMEA's patrol and enforcement operations.

"Its advanced capabilities will strengthen MMEA's efforts to prevent intrusions, smuggling and cross-border crimes, particularly in Pahang waters. This gift is not only an honour for MMEA Pahang but also a significant responsibility in safeguarding national waters," said Saiful Lizan.

The IC 1170cc boat boasts cutting-edge specifications, measuring 12.6m in length and 3.5m in width, with a high-powered engine capable of reaching a maximum speed of 56 knots and an optimal cruising speed of 40 knots.

"Built with modern engineering, the boat serves as a high-speed interceptor asset, enhancing maritime security and reinforcing the nation's defence against maritime threats," he added. — Bernama

PM issues stern warning against those inciting racial discord

PETALING JAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday warned the people against inciting racial sentiments and sowing seeds of hatred in the country.

Speaking at the Prime Minister's Office daily briefing, Anwar's senior press secretary Tunku Nashrul Abaidah said the prime minister is aware that there are malicious efforts by several vested parties who are trying to instil a perception of "double standards" when authorities take action.

"This is a wild accusation that has no basis whatsoever. Anyone who insults any religion in Malaysia will be investigated and prosecuted."

Nashrul highlighted several recent cases which saw authorities take decisive action, including in the KK Mart socks and Allah case where the company and the supplier were each fined RM60,000.

He also cited cases where a man who mocked the word "Allah" was fined RM12,000 and jailed for six months, a sweetcorn vendor who put up a racist notice was fined RM400, and comedian Harith Iskander and Cecelia Yap were each fined RM10,000 for hurting religious sentiments.

He said allegations and perception that the government is silent when Islam is insulted are slanderous and baseless.

"In all the cases, it is clear that all of them were investigated, charged and punished, and all of these actions were taken based on existing legal provisions. Each case that is reported will go through due process and legal channels.

"This is a strong message to all Malaysians to stop the habit of insulting any religion, culture and race, in any space in Malaysia. Don't let trivial matters destroy our strength and uniqueness when the country is developing and on a good trajectory."

Astro Audio recently suspended three of its radio announcers after a video of them allegedly mocking the *Thaipusam kavadi* ritual was widely circulated on social media.

Selangor Sultan opens mosque in Sekinchan

SEKINCHAN: The Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah officiated at the opening of Masjid Tali Air 8 Sungai Leman in Sekinchan, Sabak Bernam on Wednesday.

Also present were the Tengku Permaisuri of Selangor Tengku Permaisuri Norashikin and the Raja Muda of Selangor Tengku Amir Shah.

The royal family was welcomed by Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari and State

Secretary Datuk Dr Ahmad Fadzli Ahmad Tajuddin.

The Sultan presented Hari Raya contributions to 485 recipients from the *asnaf*, poor and *mualaf* groups, with each receiving RM500.

Sultan Sharafuddin also signed a plaque to mark the inauguration. He later joined the public in breaking fast and performed the

Maghrib, Isyak and 20 rakaat of Tarawih prayers.

Previously known as Masjid Kampung Seri Kedah, the mosque underwent renovations in 2013 with RM1.8 million in funding from the state government and the Federal Development Office of Selangor.

The refurbished mosque began operations in June 2016 and can accommodate up to 500 worshippers at a time. — Bernama

Investors to get permits for longer stays in Malaysia

► Single window method facilitates issuance of special passes electronically from April 1, enabling easier entry, ease of doing business, says minister

KUALA LUMPUR: Special passes for investors or groups of expatriates will be issued starting April 1 to enable them to stay longer in the country for business and investment purposes, said Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

He said it is a single window method to facilitate their entry with the issuance of passes being done electronically.

"We will issue new passes only for investors, to enable easier entry. Ease of doing business is what we want to see. The faster we process their applications, which is the role of the Immigration Department, the easier it is for them to accept the business climate in our

country," he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Saifuddin Nasution was replying to a supplementary question from Lee Chean Chung (PH-Petaling Jaya) on whether the Immigration Department is prepared to simplify and provide facilities so as to reduce dependence on agents, especially by foreign investors to obtain certain passes.

Responding to Lee's original question on service improvements, he said the Home Ministry is committed to completing the processing of 11,700 applications for entry passes and permits by June.

Saifuddin Nasution said currently, 80% of

every 100 entry permit applications are from foreign wives who are married to local citizens, Bernama reported.

He added that overall, the Immigration Department issues nearly three million passes a year with the most popular ones being the Temporary Work Visit Pass, Student Pass and Spouse Pass.

He said through digitalisation, several popular types of passes could be managed online which would cut government expenditure, including RM13 million for printing pass stickers to be affixed to passports.

"Now, there is no need for stickers because pass holders only need to carry a device that displays the status of their pass."

He said for Temporary Work Visit Passes, employers no longer need to come to the counter to renew their workers' expired passes.

He added that as a result, pass service counters have experienced a 70% reduction in congestion.

750 Malaysians rescued from job fraud syndicates abroad

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 750 Malaysians have been rescued from job fraud syndicates abroad and repatriated to Malaysia as of Feb 25.

The Foreign Ministry, in a written reply on the Parliament website, said eight Malaysians are in the process of being repatriated, while another 236 people are being tracked down.

"This brings the total number of Malaysians involved to 994. This number is based on reports received from the next of kin, family members, friends, police or the

individuals themselves."

The ministry was responding to a question by Chong Zemin (PH-Kampar) on steps taken to rescue Malaysians who were cheated and forced to engage in cyber scams abroad.

It added that efforts to rescue the Malaysians in question were carried out by the ministry through Malaysian diplomatic representations abroad in collaboration with police and local authorities.

The ministry said upon arrival in Malaysia, the individuals had their statements taken by

police to assist in investigations and determine their involvement in the syndicates.

"Strict action will be taken if there is strong evidence that they are recruiters and not victims based on existing laws, including the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007, which can carry a maximum prison sentence of 30 years."

It also advised Malaysians to be vigilant and not be easily fooled by advertisements on job offers abroad that promise lucrative and unrealistic salaries. — Bernama



ALL EARS ... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi visiting a booth at an exhibition held at the Finance Ministry in conjunction with the National Financial Council meeting in Putrajaya yesterday. — **BERNAMAPIC**

'Umno not linked to probe on ex-PM'

KUALA LUMPUR: Umno has emphasised that the party is not connected to the ongoing investigation into former prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob following the discovery of a large amount of cash and gold bars at several premises last week.

Its secretary-general Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki said: "Umno has no connection to the discovery and maintains that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) should be given the space to conduct its investigation transparently."

He said Umno would not hesitate to take legal action against any party that deliberately attempts to associate the party with the case or create a negative perception of Umno.

MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said Ismail Sabri is a suspect in a corruption and money laundering investigation after about RM170 million in cash was found in a safe house during a raid by the agency.

The investigation is focused on the expenditure and acquisition of funds for promotional and publicity purposes during his tenure as prime minister.

MACC has recorded statements from 31 individuals and frozen 13 bank accounts worth about RM2 million, all of which are confirmed to be legitimate and active. — Bernama

Govt to ensure preschool curriculum quality

KUALA LUMPUR: The government remains committed to ensuring preschool curriculum is high-quality, relevant and on par with those of other countries, the Senate was told yesterday.

Education Deputy Minister Wong Kah Woh said the Preschool Curriculum 2026 was developed with input from various stakeholders.

"To assess its feasibility, the curriculum was piloted in public and private preschools, involving 34 preschools under the Education Ministry, five Community Development Department kindergartens, three *tabika perpaduan* and eight private kindergartens.

"Its refinement was based on findings from the pilot programme, taking into account feedback from implementers on the ground," he said during a question-and-answer session in the Dewan Negara here yesterday.

He was responding to a question from Senator Datuk Mustafa Musa on the training plans and exposure to the new curriculum framework for preschool teachers under the ministry, department, Orang Asli Development Department, and National Unity and Integration Department to ensure students attain the expected competencies. — Bernama

RON97 and diesel prices down five sen in Peninsular Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: The retail prices of RON97 petrol and diesel in Peninsular Malaysia will be reduced by five sen each to RM3.38 and RM3.13 per litre respectively from March 6

to 12. The Finance Ministry said the prices were set based on changes in crude oil prices.

The retail price of RON95 remains unchanged at RM2.05

per litre while that of diesel in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan is also unchanged at RM2.15 per litre.

The ministry said the government would continue to

monitor the impact of global crude oil price movements and take relevant measures to ensure the welfare and wellbeing of the people. — Bernama

Cultural sensitivity urged in content creation

BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
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PETALING JAYA: In today's digital era, influencers and media personalities hold significant power in shaping public opinions, guiding societal values and influencing how people perceive the world.

They bear a responsibility to uphold integrity in the content they create, ensuring their messages are accurate, ethical and respectful of the country's cultural diversity.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Centre for Research in Media and Communication senior lecturer Dr Nurzihan Hassim said content created and shared on public platforms does more than entertain; it shapes public discourse.

Content creators must exercise ethical and cultural sensitivity in the content they choose to disseminate to the public, she stressed.

"The Era FM controversy over the video mocking the Hindu *kavadi* dance, a sacred ritual performed during Thaipusam in

Media figures must uphold integrity and ensure messages are accurate, ethical and respectful of cultural diversity: Academic

devotion to Lord Muruga, demonstrates that in matters of cultural sensitivity, impact always outweighs intent."

While the intent may have been to produce light entertainment, the harm caused to the affected community is real and valid.

"Failure to conduct proper checks before publishing content shows a lack of accountability."

Nurzihan said although mistakes are inevitable in content creation, it is important to issue a transparent and sincere apology that acknowledges the harm caused, assumes full responsibility and takes corrective measures.

"Unfortunately, many public figures and organisations struggle with this, opting for vague,

dismissive statements."

She said one of the most effective ways to prevent cultural missteps is by fostering diverse creative teams.

"When content is reviewed by individuals from different cultural backgrounds, potential issues can be addressed before publication."

She said media organisations should establish and regularly update editorial guidelines on cultural representation while authorities should conduct stricter monitoring of content related to religious observances, which hold spiritual significance.

She also called for accessible feedback channels in which communities can voice concerns.

Era FM radio DJs Nabil Ahmad, Azad Jasmin and Radin Amir

Effendi Ahmad Aruani provided their statements on Wednesday.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Head of Media and Communication Programme and Centre for Research in Media and Communication associate professor Dr Sabariah Mohamed Salleh suggested that influencers refer to the Malaysian Code of Ethics for Journalism as they play a role in information dissemination.

"The code emphasises acknowledging a variety of viewpoints across different segments of society, including cultures, races, ethnicities and religions, and steering clear of biases and stereotypes.

"Everyone has the power to influence and persuade, even if they have just one follower."

She urged content creators to ask themselves if they have done proper research, if they are aware of cultural norms and values, and if their content could cause harm.

Actor, influencer and content creator Karthik Mohan, 31, popularly known as Kaarthickjaya, said it is important for any influencer to be culturally mindful of their content, considering that we are living in a multiracial and multireligious society.

"As a public figure, I follow a set of ethical guidelines to ensure my content remains respectful and avoids sensitive issues. I categorise my content, whether personal or promotional. This prevents impulsive decisions, such as unplanned live streams or spontaneous uploads.

"I always plan my topics in advance and take precautions."

Before posting, he also seeks feedback from family and close friends to make sure his content is suitable for public consumption.

"Staying informed on trends and cultural sensitivities helps me navigate social media responsibly and avoid unnecessary backlash."

He stressed that humour and creativity should never come at the expense of cultural sensitivity.

"There is a fine line between appreciation and mockery."



Content creators are urged to undertake proper research, be aware of cultural norms and values, and ensure their content does not cause harm. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

Coal remains main electricity generation source

KUALA LUMPUR: The government is maintaining coal as the primary source of electricity generation due to its lower production costs and to ensure electricity tariffs remain affordable for consumers, said Energy Transition and Water Transformation Deputy Minister Akmal Nasrullah Mohd Nasir.

He said the government is committed to providing sufficient and

sustainable electricity supply at accessible rates.

"Malaysia's electricity generation relies heavily on coal and gas as the main fossil fuel sources to meet base load demand.

"However, the government remains focused on balancing energy affordability while exploring cleaner and more sustainable energy options," he said during a

question-and-answer session at the Dewan Negara here yesterday.

He was responding to Senator Robert Lau Hui Yew, who asked about the percentage of electricity generated from coal and whether there are plans to transition to net-zero carbon technologies.

He said based on the latest data presented at the Planning and Implementation Committee for

Electricity Supply and Tariff meeting on Nov 21 last year, coal accounts for 36.4% of installed capacity in Peninsular Malaysia.

"The meeting on Feb 7, 2023 decided that no new coal-fired power plants would be built, in line with the Power Development Plan projections.

"This decision supports Malaysia's commitment under the 2015 Paris Agreement to reduce greenhouse gas

emission intensity by 45% by 2030 and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050."

He said the government is exploring methods to cut carbon emissions in electricity generation, including by mothballing, co-firing and adopting new clean energy technologies, with nuclear power among the options under consideration. — Bernama



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Calls grow for Malaysians to learn sign language

Advocates urge better accessibility and awareness to bridge communication gaps for the deaf community

BY HARITH KAMAL
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysians should learn sign language as a crucial step towards fostering inclusivity and breaking communication barriers for the deaf community, said experts and advocates.

The importance of sign language gained attention last month after a viral video showed a Road Transport Department officer fluently communicating in sign language with a deaf driver.

The officer's efforts were widely praised, highlighting the need for more people to learn sign language to better support and engage with the deaf community.

Malaysian Federation of the Deaf (MFD) executive director Mohamad Sazali Shaari said under the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, Malaysian Sign Language (MSL) is the official sign language for the deaf in Malaysia.

He encouraged more Malaysians to embrace sign language in daily interactions, stressing that greater accessibility to MSL is crucial for social integration and equal opportunities.

"The deaf community wants to be part of society and public acceptance plays a crucial role.

"Inclusivity is important and learning MSL allows more people to connect with the deaf without barriers. This fosters a sense of belonging and ensures they do not feel excluded."

Mohamad Sazali highlighted that both free and paid sign language learning options are available physically and online.

"The public can also easily access our BIM SignBank website (www.bimsignbank.org), which offers tutorial videos covering basic alphabets, common phrases and more – an excellent starting point for those who want to learn independently.

"We also cater to employers as MFD is an



Mohd Armi said learning sign language is a valuable skill that can make a real difference in everyday interactions. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THE SUN

HRDC Training Provider, allowing them to arrange MSL classes for their non-deaf employees with certified trainers.

"Even a basic understanding of sign language can make a difference. Sign language is not just for the deaf, it is a tool for everyone to build bridges, foster understanding and create a more accessible world," he said.

Meanwhile, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris senior lecturer Dr Vestly Kong Liang Soon said the shortage of qualified sign language interpreters hinders the academic progress of students with hearing impairments.

"Teaching in sign language improves literacy and academic performance, but without interpreters students struggle to access higher education and professional development."

He added that employment remains a major hurdle for deaf individuals, as many face discrimination in the job market due to communication barriers.

"Without access to sign language, many deaf individuals struggle to secure jobs, leading to high unemployment rates within the community.

"Sign language interpreters in workplaces are essential for implementing inclusive policies and ensuring deaf employees can contribute effectively," Vestly said.

He added that access to legal and healthcare services is another pressing issue, with deaf individuals often struggling to obtain necessary services due to a lack of interpreters.

Sign language instructor Mohd Armi Rusli, who is the founder of SignOn – a free monthly sign language class available online and around Klang Valley – said while awareness has improved more efforts are needed to promote widespread understanding.

"Many deaf individuals still face difficulties accessing information because people around them do not know sign language.

"Our goal is for at least one person in every household to learn sign language so the deaf community can be better included in society."

Mohd Armi stressed that learning sign language is a valuable skill that can make a real difference in everyday interactions.

"We never know when we might encounter a deaf person who relies on sign language. If we have basic sign language skills we can better assist them and foster meaningful connections.

"The deaf community leads lives just like everyone else, their only challenge is communication barriers.

"If more people take the initiative to learn sign language, society will become more inclusive and accessible for them."

He stressed that sign language should be recognised not just as a communication tool but as a fundamental right that ensures equal participation for the deaf in all aspects of life.

According to the latest data from the Social Welfare Department, about 46,000 people in Malaysia have hearing impairments, including those who are deaf and hard of hearing.

24 sinkhole cases recorded between 2019 and 2024

KUALA LUMPUR: The Department of Mineral and Geoscience recorded 24 sinkhole incidents over the past five years, with Perak reporting the highest number at 11 cases, according to the Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Ministry (NRES).

A written reply posted on the Parliament website said three incidents each were recorded in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, two in Kelantan, and one each in Negeri Sembilan, Kedah, Selangor, Malacca and Perlis.

"This ministry, through the department, remains committed to efforts in reducing geological disaster risks in development areas involving geologically sensitive sinkhole-prone zones to ensure public safety," NRES said.

This was in reply to a question from Datuk Che Mohamad Zulkifly Jusoh (PN-Besut), who asked the ministry to disclose the number of sinkhole incidents reported in the country over the past five years and the ministry's efforts to address the issue.

The ministry also stated that the department is responsible for providing assessments on geological hazards and risks and is involved in formulating standards for national development planning at all levels.

The ministry affirmed its support for any review of development standards related to geologically sensitive areas at risk of disasters, particularly sinkhole-prone zones.

"The key information that must be emphasised is the geological data of the development site, which serves as the basis for preparing development proposals and geotechnical reports," the ministry added. – Bernama

RM1,500 'bonus' for Perak civil servants

IPOH: The Perak government has approved a special financial aid of RM1,500 for all state civil servants in conjunction with this year's Aidilfitri celebration.

Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Saarani Mohamad said the aid, which will be distributed on March 24, will also include Orang Besar Jahajan, state-appointed teachers, part-time workers and contract employees.

"Last year, we provided RM1,000, but with the blessings and prosperity granted by Allah this year, we are able to increase the amount.

"I also want to express my thanks to the heads of departments and civil servants who have greatly contributed to improving the state government's revenue," he said at the Mentri Besar's Iftar with civil servants event at Laman Seri Ridzuan on Wednesday evening.

About 1,000 civil servants, including department heads and junior officers, attended the iftar event.

Saarani mentioned that the Aidilfitri aid will have a financial impact of RM10 million and will benefit 13,582 recipients. – Bernama

Terengganu gets 60 tonnes of coconut for Aidilfitri

KUALA TERENGGANU: A total of 60 tonnes of mature coconuts will be brought into Terengganu this month to ensure sufficient supply for Ramadan and the Aidilfitri celebrations.

Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority

(Fama) Terengganu director, Muhamad Fadlee Hassan, told a press conference on Wednesday that the supply, received from Fama headquarters, will be delivered to the Fama operations centre in Kuala Terengganu and Besut for distribution to affiliated outlets.

Muhamad Fadlee added that the current price of mature coconuts is RM3 per kilogramme.

However, he noted that the price of the commodity will fluctuate based on market conditions due to supply shortages and global demand competition. – Bernama

Transport Ministry to push ECRL use for cargo transport

KUALA LUMPUR: The Transport Ministry will introduce a policy to encourage cargo and transport companies to utilise the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) service as an alternative to heavy vehicles on roads.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke said the policy would include providing incentives to industry players to promote the shift to ECRL services once the rail project is completed.

He said the use of ECRL is seen as an effective solution to reduce the number of heavy vehicles on roads, which could help ease traffic congestion and minimise accident risks.

"We see this as a viable alternative, especially for routes involving heavy vehicles to the East Coast. This policy will be introduced when the ECRL becomes operational," he said during the question-and-answer session in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Loke was replying to a supplementary question from Khairil Nizam Khirudin (PN-Jerantut) on whether the ministry plans to implement new policies or laws to curb the rising number of heavy vehicles during peak hours and reduce accident risks.

On Feb 4, Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir

Hamzah Azizan said the overall progress of the ECRL project, spanning Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu and Selangor, had reached 78.5% as of January, with the service expected to commence operations in early 2027.

Replying to Khairil's original question regarding the investigation into the fatal accident that claimed seven lives at KM204 of the North-South Expressway near Ayer Keroh on Dec 23 last year, Loke said the vehicle permit of Yinson Transport (M) Sdn Bhd – whose lorry tyre detached during the incident – was revoked effective Feb 11 due to repeated

speeding violations.

"Meanwhile, V Travel Sdn Bhd's vehicle licences were suspended from Feb 18 to March 19 for failing to comply with the Land Public Transport Agency's Industrial Code of Practice (ICOP) Safety requirements.

"S&C Maju Enterprise's operator licence was suspended for 30 days for failing to meet ICOP Safety standards, and its vehicle permit was revoked due to speeding violations," he said, adding that the decision was made by the Licence Cancellation and Suspension Committee on Monday. – Bernama

Customs officer died of strangulation: Police

► 'Case still classified as sudden death report'

PUTRAJAYA: A three-hour post-mortem on a Customs Tribunal officer revealed that the cause of his death was from compression of the neck due to ligature strangulation.

Kuala Lumpur police chief Datuk Rusdi Mohd Isa said based on the post-mortem report from the Forensic and Pathology Department at Putrajaya Hospital, the case is still classified as a sudden death report (SDR).

"A pathology expert from the Forensic and Pathology Department of Sultan Idris Shah Hospital in Serdang conducted the post-mortem.

"The cause of death was determined to be

compression of the neck due to ligature strangulation.

"According to the post-mortem report and the pathology expert's statement, the investigation remains under SDR," he said when contacted yesterday.

Meanwhile, a Bernama check at the department found the victim's family members were present to claim the body. However, they avoided media personnel and declined to be interviewed.

It was reported yesterday that a 45-year-old officer was found dead on the office floor with his neck and legs tied with cable ties.

The customs officer was found dead at the Treasury Office, Finance Ministry, and an examination at the scene found no criminal elements.

At 4.45pm, the body of the Customs Tribunal officer was claimed by family members to be taken to the Nirvana

Memorial Centre in Sungai Besi, Kuala Lumpur, for funeral arrangements.

The hearse carrying the body was seen leaving the Forensic and Pathology Department of the Putrajaya Hospital with two family members of the victim who had been present since noon.

Efforts by media personnel to get a reaction failed as family members still refused to give any comments.

Meanwhile, a source revealed that the deceased was believed to have been missing since Monday after clocking in for work.

An internal search was conducted, and the Civil Defence Force later found his body in a room within the ministry.

The Finance Ministry, which also verified that a death had occurred at its complex, said in a statement it is deeply saddened by the incident and has extended condolences to the bereaved family.

Sabah cops nab duo, seize RM3m syabu

KOTA KINABALU: Sabah police have seized 63.55kg of syabu worth about RM3 million following the arrest of two men in the Penampang district on Feb 27.

Sabah Police Commissioner Datuk Jauteh Dikun said in the 9am raid, a team from the Sabah Narcotics Crime Investigation Department detained two men who were in a vehicle at a supermarket parking lot.

"Upon inspection, they found four big boxes containing packets of syabu that were placed at the back of the vehicle," he said on Wednesday.

Jauteh added that the two suspects, aged 30 and 33, tested negative for drugs and had no criminal records.

They are believed to be acting as drug couriers.

"The two suspects have been remanded until today, and the case is being investigated under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952 which carries the death penalty or life imprisonment," he said.

He added that further investigations found that the drugs were brought to Sabah from the peninsula to be transported to a neighbouring country via Sandakan.

Meanwhile in Penang, police busted an ecstasy distribution syndicate following the arrest of a local man and a foreign woman in a raid around the Jelutong area on Monday.

Penang police chief Datuk Hamzah Ahmad said in the 8.45pm raid, powder and liquid ecstasy worth over RM1 million were seized.

He said police had earlier arrested a local man in front of a shop, and a subsequent search found three plastic packages with labels containing MDMA (ecstasy) powder valued at RM19,706.

"Following questioning, police were led to a car park in the same area, where they inspected a vehicle and seized 50 bottles of what is believed to be 19,700ml of liquid MDMA worth RM15,000, and 16 covered cups suspected of containing MDMA powder estimated at 672g, valued at RM4,800.

"Police then proceeded to a condominium unit in the same area and arrested a woman.

"A search of the property uncovered 265 plastic packages in various colours, suspected to contain MDMA powder weighing approximately 6,718g, valued at RM1.12 million, and 23 covered cups suspected of containing MDMA powder weighing approximately 966g, valued at RM6,900," he said in a statement. - Bernama

Prime suspect in forex fraud case identified

KUALA LUMPUR: Police have identified the prime suspect behind a foreign exchange (forex) investment fraud involving a company, which has resulted in losses exceeding RM24 million.

Bukit Aman Commercial Crime Investigation Department (CCID) director Datuk Seri Ramli Mohamed Yousuf said authorities are finalising the investigation, and actively tracking down the suspect.

Dismissing claims that the case was not being investigated, he stressed that since the probe began last year, five individuals, in their 30s, suspected of being mule account holders for the fraudulent investment scheme, have been arrested - both last year and earlier this year.

"A total of 80 reports have been received, involving losses amounting to RM24,813,086.47. The investigation is nearing completion," he said yesterday.

He added that the case is being investigated under Section 420 of the Penal Code, with findings indicating that the scheme, launched around 2019, promised investors a 7% monthly return. Interested participants were required to download a designated investment app.

"The issue arose when the company shifted the investments to cryptocurrency without the investors' consent. Investors could only view their purported profits through the app, but were unable to withdraw their funds," he said.

In a separate case, Ramli said police are tracking down a local man, Lim Voi Heng, suspected of cheating a businessman in a Lamborghini Aventador sale, five years ago.

He added that the suspect had allegedly offered to sell the luxury car to a 34-year-old man for RM2.4 million in June 2020. The complainant reportedly met with the suspect several times, and even test-drove the vehicle,

at a motoring company in Puchong, Selangor.

"The complainant was also shown a customs import form as proof that the car had been imported into Malaysia. Beginning June 15, 2020, he made 18 payments, totalling RM2.4 million, to a company account specified by the suspect," he said.

In January 2022, the businessman received several photos of a car seizure notice, after which the suspect assured him that he would resolve the issue, complete the registration, and transfer ownership of the car. However, to date, the complainant has neither received the vehicle nor been able to contact the suspect, who has since disappeared.

Ramli said the suspect's last known address was No. 703, Pangsapuri Sri Indah, Jalan Sg Besi Indah 2, Taman Sungai Besi, Seri Kembangan, Selangor. He urged the public with any information about the suspect to contact Insp Ruzanna Khairon at 010-442 5916. - Bernama



FREE MEN ... From left: K. Puvaniveran, 58, S. Purusothaman, 42, and R. Viknesh, 39, escape conviction after the High Court judge acquitted and discharged them of charges related to the possession and trafficking of methamphetamine six years ago. - BERNAMAPIC

Cleaner gets jail for housebreaking, theft

GEORGE TOWN: A cleaner was sentenced to 11 months' jail and RM2,000 fine by the Magistrate's Court here yesterday after he pleaded guilty to breaking into the Komtar state assemblyman's service centre office to steal money last December.

Magistrate Mohamad Azlan Basri handed down the sentence for C. Murli, 47, and ordered him to serve an additional two months in jail if he failed to pay the fine.

He was charged with breaking into the assemblyman's service centre office, which is used for administrative purposes, to steal office utility funds at 8.11pm on Dec 26, 2024.

According to the case facts, on Dec 27, an office worker discovered that a drawer containing a cash bag had been rummaged through, and that RM7,259 in cash meant for office utility payments was missing.

The worker reviewed the closed-circuit television footage and saw the man breaking into the office and stealing the money. His fingerprints were also found at the scene.

Murli, who was unrepresented, pleaded for a lighter sentence, stating that he earned RM50 per day.

Deputy public prosecutor Syairah Aqilah Khalil requested an appropriate sentence for him. - Bernama

SEAMLESS JOURNEY
WITH JOJO FLIGHTSELETAR, SINGAPORE ⇌ REDANG ISLAND ⇌ SUBANG SKYPARK
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BY DEEPAKSHMI MANICKAM
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Women's resilience, strength and accomplishments over the past few decades have been nothing short of extraordinary as they continue to make an indelible impact in fields once dominated by men.

From CEOs and judges to top surgeons, bus drivers and p-hailing riders, and at home, devoted wives and formidable mothers, women are breaking barriers and redefining expectations.

Ahead of International Women's Day on March 8, *theSun* spoke with inspiring young women entrepreneurs who have defied social norms to create inclusive beauty products.

Twins Suvikhavathy and Sundravathy Anand Kumar, 25, from Petaling Jaya, founded Desi Rose Cosmetics during the Covid-19 lockdown after struggling to find makeup products that suited their skin tones. "Growing up, we often faced difficulties finding the right makeup that suited our skin tones. The frustration led us to create Desi Rose, a brand that celebrates diversity and ensures every shade is represented."

She said starting a business at 21 years old while studying law in the United Kingdom was no small feat.

"We deferred our studies in our third year and committed to building Desi Rose from the ground up. We never imagined it would gain traction," she said, adding that time management is their biggest challenge now as they juggle their Certificate of Legal Practice (CLP) studies and run a home-based business.

Suvikhavathy said finding time to grow Desi Rose is tough as they study for 10 to 11 hours a day.

"What keeps us going is our commitment to inclusivity. We test our products diligently to ensure they work for everyone," she said adding that they now have a customer base of over 2,000.

For women looking to break into entrepreneurship, Suvikhavathy's advice is simple: "Have a solid plan, know your niche and trust the process. There will always be doubters, but the key is to focus on your vision and work hard. Success takes time, but persistence pays off."

Meanwhile, entrepreneur Kavitha Thuraisingam, 38, from Kulim in Kedah, has proven that challenges can only make her stronger.

"I started selling teas in 2019, just before the pandemic, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise for my business. My

Bold, brave and business savvy

► Women are changing the game in fields once dominated by men



Left: Suvikhavathy and Sundravathy founded Desi Rose Cosmetics during the Covid-19 lockdown. Right: Kavitha's tea shop sources premium teas from Darjeeling and Assam. — MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN

homemade *masala chai* struck a chord with customers seeking comfort and authenticity in trying times," she said.

Her business, Naira 9 Ventures, which started as a home-based venture selling condiments, *masala chai* and *badam* (almond) milk, quickly evolved into a thriving enterprise.

By July 2021, she had opened a shop lot, sourcing premium teas from Darjeeling and Assam. She later introduced Naira's Royal Tea, which supports small-scale tea farmers.

"I wanted to deliver quality while promoting sustainability. It's important to me that my business uplifts others along the supply chain, from farmers to consumers."

As a single parent, Kavitha said she is motivated to succeed to provide for her only child.

"I lost my husband in 2019 during the early stage of my business and was left to navigate life as a single parent to my

five-month-old son.

"Managing a business while raising him was overwhelming, but my son became my greatest motivation.

"Pursuing something I love has taught me that growth begins when you step out of your comfort zone. I used to fear speaking in public or handling customers, but today, I embrace every challenge as an opportunity to learn," she said, adding that her sales ranged between RM10,000 and RM20,000 per month.

Kavitha said she is passionate about inspiring other women to pursue their dreams.

"Since 2019, we've had the privilege of serving between 5,000 and 10,000 customers online. As we expand into offline sales, our focus now is on scaling the business and creating more growth opportunities.

"Women are capable of achieving incredible things when they believe in themselves. The key is to take that first step."

Understanding cryptic pregnancy

KUALA LUMPUR: Mariah (not her real name) woke up one morning with severe stomach pain, forcing her to rush to a clinic. She was stunned when the doctor informed her that she was pregnant and in labour.

She had no idea she was expecting, as she had not noticed any changes in her body and she never experienced nausea, headaches or cravings - symptoms commonly associated with pregnancy. Her menses had also continued, although it was sometimes irregular.

Mariah's condition is known as cryptic or stealth pregnancy, in which a woman is unaware of her pregnancy until the late stages.

UKM Canselor Tuanku Muhriz Hospital consultant in obstetrics, gynaecology and urogynaecology Assoc Prof Dr Ixora Kamsan Atan said women experiencing such pregnancies are not aware of their condition due to the absence of symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, breast tenderness or abdominal discomfort, adding that in some cases they may mistake them for other health issues.

Studies have shown that one in 475 women worldwide only realise they are pregnant when their pregnancy reaches 20 weeks. At this point, they may start noticing a "baby bump" or feeling fetal movements, reported Bernama.

Dr Ixora said one in 2,500 women remain unaware of their pregnancy until full term and some women, especially those who are obese, may not feel fetal movements, which only become noticeable between 16 and 20 weeks of pregnancy.

"For women with irregular periods, some may not menstruate for three to four months, which they consider normal. As a result, they do not take a pregnancy test.

"Early pregnancy bleeding can sometimes be mistaken for menstruation. In reality, it could be implantation bleeding, the light bleeding that occurs when the embryo attaches to the uterine wall, or it could be a sign of threatened miscarriage."

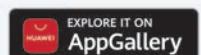
Sunway Damansara Medical Centre consultant in obstetrics and gynaecology Dr Sharina Mohd Razali said cryptic pregnancy could lead to low birth weight in babies due to inadequate nutrition and vitamins during the prenatal stage and the absence of routine pregnancy care.

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Tiananmen vigil activists freed

► Hong Kong top court quashes conviction of trio

HONG KONG: The city-state's top court ruled in favour of three Tiananmen vigil organisers yesterday, quashing the activists' prison terms over their refusal to submit information to national security police.

The judgment is a stinging rebuke to the government, which has targeted dissent using expansive powers under a national security law imposed by Beijing after Hong Kong's huge pro-democracy protests in 2019.

The law can be used to demand information from alleged "foreign agents" and authorities used that power in 2021 on the now-disbanded Hong Kong Alliance, which organised vigils to mark Beijing's 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown before those events were banned.

Three group leaders - Chow Hang-tung, Tang Ngok-kwan and Tsui Hon-kwong - were jailed, each for four and a half months, after they refused.

But five top judges yesterday sided with the trio and said the prosecution "made it impossible for them to have a fair trial".

"The court unanimously allows the appeals," Chief Justice Andrew Cheung said.

Tang, who had finished serving his prison term, said the ruling was a vindication of his group and urged people not to forget the victims of the Tiananmen crackdown.

"This is hugely gratifying for those who support the Alliance and its volunteers," he told reporters.

Prosecutors argued that the security law required people to hand over information when the police chief "reasonably believed" they were foreign agents, without needing to prove it in court.

But top judges said that was a misreading of



Activist Tang Ngok-kwan (centre) leaving the Court of Final Appeal yesterday. - AFP/IC

the law and the police ought to have proven that the Alliance was in fact a foreign agent when issuing the demand.

"There was no attempt at offering such proof," they wrote.

Judges also blasted prosecutors for heavily redacting evidence that purported to show the Alliance's overseas links, leaving "pages often completely covered in black ink".

"The striking feature of the exhibits is that a very large part of each document was redacted," they wrote.

Hong Kong used to be the only place on Chinese soil where people could publicly mourn the deadly clampdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, but commemorations have gone underground in recent years.

Hong Kong has arrested 320 people for national security crimes and convicted 161 of them as of March 1.

Defendant Chow, a lawyer-turned-activist, remains behind bars awaiting trial in a separate subversion trial which could land her in jail for life.

In a separate ruling yesterday, the same court ruled against activist Tam Tak-chi over a colonial-era sedition offence.

Tam, who is serving a jail sentence of more than three years, argued that prosecutors needed to prove he intended to incite violence.

Last year, Hong Kong authorities revamped the offence so it explicitly states that people can be convicted of sedition even if no intent to incite public disorder or violence was proven. - AFP

China firm sues Laos utility for US\$555m

SINGAPORE: Nam Ou Power, a unit of Power Construction Corp of China, has sued Laos utility Electricite du Laos for US\$555 million (RM2.5 billion) in unpaid dues, an arbitration filing shows.

EdL has yet to respond to the filing, according to a source familiar with the case, who also said that it was the first instance of international arbitration by a Chinese state-run entity against a Laos government-run firm.

The person declined to be identified as the matter is not public. Details of the case are being reported for the first time.

The unpaid dues claimed arise from electricity generated from the US\$2.73 billion Nam Ou River Cascade Hydropower project, according to a filing with the Singapore International Arbitration Centre.

PowerChina and EdL did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Wong & Leow, a law firm representing Nam Ou Power, declined comment.

Operated by Nam Ou Power, part of PowerChina, the hydroelectric project has a capacity of 1.27 gigawatts from its seven cascades along 350km of river in the landlocked, mountainous country.

China's Foreign Ministry, energy regulator and commerce ministries also did not respond to requests seeking comment.

Laos has spent heavily on hydroelectric schemes to become an exporter of electricity.

Those projects, along with a Chinese-built high-speed railway have caused high levels of debt.

In its filing last month, PowerChina said EdL owed it US\$486.27 million in dues plus interest it estimates at US\$65.79 million. The claims are associated with monthly invoices made between January 2020 and December 2024.

The total is about 4% of Laos' gross domestic product. EdL ceded majority control of its transmission unit to China Southern Power Grid Co in 2020.

Nam Ou claimed damages of US\$3.02 million for EdL predominantly paying its dues using the Lao kip currency, while the agreement had stipulated that 85% of the payments be made with the US dollar. - Reuters

Acquittal of Fukushima ex-bosses finalised

TOKYO: Japan's top court said yesterday it had finalised the acquittal of two former executives from the operator of the Fukushima nuclear plant charged with professional negligence over the 2011 meltdown.

The decision concludes the only criminal trial to arise from the plant's 2011 tsunami-triggered accident, the world's worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl.

Ichiro Takekuro and Sakae Muto, formerly vice-presidents of Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), had been accused of liability for the deaths of more than 40 hospitalised patients, who had to be evacuated following

the nuclear disaster.

Former chairman Tsunehisa Katsumata, who died last year, had also faced the same charges.

The men had faced up to five years in prison if convicted.

But the Tokyo District Court ruled in 2019 that the men could not have predicted the scale of the tsunami that hit the plant.

That verdict was upheld by the Tokyo High Court in 2023, but an appeal was then filed.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday "dismissed the prosecutors' appeals regarding Takekuro and Muto", said a court spokesman.

"Katsumata's public prosecution was

dismissed in November" after his death," he added.

Despite the not guilty criminal court judgment, in a July 2022 verdict in a separate civil case, the same three men and another were ordered to pay a whopping ¥13.3 trillion (RM398 billion) for failing to prevent the disaster.

Lawyers have said the enormous compensation sum was believed to be the largest amount ever awarded in a civil lawsuit in Japan - although they admit that is symbolic, as it is well beyond the defendants' capacity to pay. - AFP

UN to slash by half rations to Rohingya refugees

DHAKA: The United Nations will cut food rations to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh from US\$12.50 to US\$6 a month next month after failing to find funds, an official said, raising fears among aid workers of rising hunger in the world's largest refugee settlement.

"I received a letter confirming a US\$6.50 cut from April 1," said Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Bangladesh's top official overseeing refugee camps.

A spokesperson for the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in Dhaka did not immediately return a request for comment.

Bangladesh is sheltering more than one million Rohingya in overcrowded camps in Cox's Bazar district.

In a letter to Rahman, seen by Reuters, the WFP said it had been trying to raise funds to keep the rations at US\$12.50 a month but had failed to find donors.

A cut in rations to anything less than US\$6 would "fall below the minimum survival level

and fail to meet basic dietary needs", it said.

The WFP said it accepted that "given the refugees' complete reliance on humanitarian aid", the cut would strain families struggling to meet basic needs and heighten "increasing tensions within the camps". It said it had appealed to donors for funding and that cost-saving measures alone were not enough.

The US Embassy in Dhaka did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The head of the UN refugee agency Filippo Grandi said on Friday in a post on X during a visit to Cox's Bazar that if donor support to the camps "decreases dramatically, the huge work done by the Bangladesh government, aid agencies and refugees will be impacted, putting thousands at risk of hunger, disease and insecurity."

A previous round of ration cuts to Rohingya in 2023 that reduced the amount of food rations to US\$8 monthly led to a sharp increase in hunger and malnutrition, according to the UN.

Within months, they said 90% of the camp

population "struggled to access an adequate diet" and more than 15% of children suffered from malnutrition, the highest rate recorded.

The cut was later reversed.

Now, with US\$6 monthly, the refugees would receive the equivalent of about 24 Bangladesh taka daily.

"For comparison, a banana costs around 10-12 taka, and an egg 12-14 taka," said Rahman.

He said last month the US contributed more than 50% of the funds for the Rohingya humanitarian response last year, about US\$300 million.

The recent aid cuts by Washington meant there was already a "squeeze on operations" at hospitals and in waste management, he said, with five US-funded hospitals having to reduce services. He said if food were to be reduced it would create a "grievous problem".

"These people are stateless, ill-fated and should not be suffering due to the funding crunch," Rahman said. - Reuters



A Rohingya girl feeds a child from a jar with the USAID logo in Cox's Bazar. - REUTERS/IC



INDIA CONDEMNS UK SECURITY LAPSE

NEW DELHI: India yesterday condemned a security breach during its foreign minister's visit to London when a protester broke through a police cordon, stood in front of the minister's car and tore the Indian flag before being taken away. Its Foreign Ministry said it expects Britain to live up to "diplomatic obligations" and called the group of protesters a "small group of separatists and extremists". Videos posted on social media showed a handful of protesters waving flags of a separatist movement and shouting slogans outside think tank Chatham House in London on Wednesday where Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar was speaking. A member from the group broke away from the police cordon as Jaishankar was leaving the venue and was taken away by police officers within seconds. — Reuters

ERRATIC CYCLONE CREEPS TOWARDS BRISBANE

GOLD COAST: An erratic tropical cyclone lingered off Australia's eastern coast yesterday, bringing drenching rains and record-breaking waves to a heavily populated region rarely hit by typhoons. Tropical Cyclone *Alfred* was 250km east of Brisbane city yesterday, but government forecasts warned its slow and erratic crawl towards the mainland was growing difficult to predict. Some four million people were in the firing line along a 400km stretch of coastline expected to see the worst of the storm. "We're seeing gales developing on the coastal fringe," Bureau of Meteorology forecaster Sarah Scully told AFP.

Greenlanders shrug off Trump takeover rant

NUUK: Greenlanders on Wednesday shrugged off US President Donald Trump's vow to take over the Arctic island, seeing it merely as an opportunity to advance their own independence bid.

In his first major policy speech on Tuesday since returning to power, Trump underlined his expansionist vision, reiterating the importance of the United States taking over the strategically-located and mineral-rich island and taking back the Panama Canal.

Since returning to the Oval Office in January, he has put the topic back on the agenda and said he would not rule out military force to get it.

Political scientist Maria Ackren said: "There is no panic. Here in Greenland, people are very calm and you take one day at a time."

"He is more threatening for the whole world, actually, for the kind of world order that we have," she said, adding that there "will probably be hard negotiations coming up with Trump".

Greenlandic Prime Minister Mute Egede said: "We do not want to be Americans, or Danes either. We are Greenlanders. The Americans and their leader must understand that."

"We are not for sale and cannot just be taken. Our future is decided by us in Greenland."

In Denmark, of which Greenland has been a part since 1721, authorities said it is up to the people of Greenland to determine their future.

According to a poll in January, around 85% of Greenlanders said they did not want to leave Denmark to join the United States while only 6% were in favour. — AFP

Korean jets accidentally drop bombs on homes, 15 hurt

Residents have protested against potential hazard of military drills for years

POCHEON: Fifteen people were injured in South Korea yesterday after bombs dropped by fighter jets landed in a civilian district, damaging houses and a church during military exercises in Pocheon, the Air Force and the fire agency said.

The fire agency said in a statement that 15 people were wounded, including two who were seriously hurt.

Pocheon is about 40km northeast of Seoul, near the heavily militarised border with North Korea.

South Korea's Air Force said eight 225kg Mk82 bombs from two

KF-16 jets fell outside the shooting range during joint live-fire exercises.

"We are sorry for the damage caused by the abnormal drop accident, and we wish the injured a speedy recovery," the Air Force said in a statement.

The accident was due to a pilot entering incorrect coordinates, said a military official who declined to be identified because of the

sensitivity of the matter. The official said that the two jets then dropped four bombs each, with all of them detonating.

Authorities would suspend live-fire exercises until there was clear understanding of what went wrong, but the incident would not affect major South Korean and US military exercises due to begin on Monday, the official said.

Residents in the area have

protested about the disturbance and potential danger from nearby training grounds for years.

Photographs from the scene showed a house hollowed out by the impact, shattered windows and a church building strewn with debris.

Security camera footage aired on TV also caught the moments before and up to the incident, with a pickup truck driving on a tree-lined street before the area is consumed by a large explosion.

"The unthinkable has happened," said Pocheon city mayor Baek Young-hyeon, who urged the government and military to come up with measures to prevent any further civilian damage.

The Defence Ministry said earlier that South Korea and US forces were holding their first joint live-fire exercises in Pocheon, linked to annual military drill.

The Freedom Shield joint drills, which will run from Sunday to March 20, aim to strengthen the readiness of the alliance for threats such as North Korea, the Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said before the accident.

This year's drills will reflect "lessons learned from recent armed conflicts" and North Korea's growing partnership with Russia, it added.

"Our planners look across the globe and identify the trends that are changing and we look at how we can incorporate that into our exercises," Ryan Donald, a spokesperson for the United States Forces Korea, told a media briefing yesterday.

About 70 combined field training sessions are scheduled for this year's exercise, said Lee Sung-jun, a spokesperson for Seoul's JCS. — Reuters



A forensic officer walks near damaged buildings in Pocheon yesterday. — REUTERS/SPIC

Chinese hackers indicted for Treasury breach

WASHINGTON: Twelve Chinese nationals, including two Public Security Ministry officers, have been indicted for a series of hacking attacks, including a 2024 breach of the US Treasury, the Justice Department said on Wednesday.

Other alleged victims include US-based Chinese dissidents, the foreign ministries of several Asian countries, religious organisations and additional US federal and state government agencies, the department said.

Eight employees of a Chinese company called Anxun Information Technology Co Ltd, also known as i-Soon, and two Public Security Ministry officers were indicted in New York for involvement in the alleged hacking of email accounts, cell phones, servers and websites between 2016 and 2023.

"For years, these 10 defendants — two of whom we allege are officials —

used sophisticated hacking techniques to target religious organisations, journalists, and government agencies, all to gather sensitive information for the use of the PRC," acting US attorney Matthew Podolsky said in a statement.

The Justice Department said the private hackers were paid in some cases by the ministries of public security and state security to exploit specific victims.

"In many other cases, the hackers targeted victims speculatively," it said, identifying vulnerable computers and then selling hacked information to the government.

All 20 defendants remain at large and the State Department offered a reward of up to US\$10 million (RM44 million) for information leading to their arrest.

The hacking targets allegedly included a religious organisation

that sent missionaries to China, an organisation focused on promoting human rights and religious freedom in China, a Hong Kong newspaper and the foreign ministries of Taiwan, India, South Korea and Indonesia.

A separate indictment was also unsealed in Washington against Yin Kecheng and Zhou Shuai, alleged members of hacker group "APT 27", also known as "Silk Typhoon".

"Yin, Zhou and their co-conspirators exploited vulnerabilities in victim networks, conducted reconnaissance once inside those networks, and installed malware, such as PlugX malware, that provided persistent access," the Justice Department said.

"Between them, Yin and Zhou sought to profit from the hacking of US-based technology companies, think tanks, law firms, defence contractors, local governments, health care systems, and

universities, leaving behind them a wake of millions of dollars in damages."

The United States sanctioned Yin in January for alleged involvement in a hack of the Treasury Department last year.

According to US media outlets, then-Treasury secretary Janet Yellen and other senior Treasury officials were among those targeted.

The State Department announced a reward of US\$2 million each for information leading to the arrest of Yin and Zhou, who are believed to be in China.

Several countries, notably the United States, have voiced alarm at what they say is hacking activity targeting their governments, militaries and businesses.

Beijing rejects the allegations, and has previously said it opposes and cracks down on cyberattacks. — AFP

Platini's job hopes dashed by fraud claims: lawyer

ZURICH: French footballing great Michel Platini was accused of fraud to torpedo his chances of becoming the head of world soccer governing body Fifa, his lawyer Dominic Nellen told a Swiss court on Wednesday.

Platini, a former captain and manager of the French national team, is facing corruption charges in an appeal against his acquittal two-and-a-half years ago.

The Swiss federal prosecutor said the 69-year-old illegally took a payment of 2 million Swiss francs (RM9.9 million) from Fifa in 2011 after it was approved by the organisation's former Fifa president Sepp Blatter.

Blatter is also accused of fraud in the hearing at the Extraordinary Appeals Chamber of the Swiss Criminal Court in the municipality of Muttenz near the city of Basel.

Blatter and Platini denied the charges and were acquitted by a lower court in July 2022, which prosecutors are contesting.

The investigation into the payments wrecked Platini's hopes of succeeding Blatter.

Fifa did not respond to a request for comment.

Blatter's eventual successor Gianni Infantino denied helping to bring about Platini's downfall and said he only stepped up when UEFA asked him to after allegations against Platini emerged.

Nellen said the 2 million francs was back payment for consultancy work that Platini had done for Blatter from 1998 to 2002, and was to cover the difference between what he had received and what had been agreed earlier between the two.

"These proceedings have cost Michel Platini his career. It is time to finally put an end to this unworthy chapter," said Nellen.

A verdict is expected on March 25. — Reuters

Trump warns Gaza 'you are dead' if hostages not freed

US confirms direct talks with Hamas

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Wednesday threatened further destruction of Gaza if all remaining hostages are not released, and issued an ultimatum to Hamas leaders to flee.

The United States meanwhile confirmed unprecedented direct talks with Hamas.

Strongly backing Israel as the ceasefire teeters, Trump said he was "sending Israel everything it needs to finish the job" as his administration expedites billions of dollars in weapons.

"Release all of the Hostages now, not later, and immediately return all of the dead bodies of the people you murdered, or it is OVER for you," he wrote on his Truth Social platform after meeting freed hostages.

"This is your last warning! For the leadership, now is the time to leave Gaza, while you still have a chance."

Trump also warned of repercussions for Gaza as a whole, where virtually the entire population has been displaced by Israel's military campaign.

"To the People of Gaza: A beautiful Future awaits, but not if you hold Hostages. If you do, you are DEAD!"

The first phase of a ceasefire ended over the weekend after six weeks of relative calm that included exchanges of Israeli



A drone view shows destroyed houses in Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. — REUTERS/SPIC

hostages for Palestinian prisoners.

While Israel has said it wants to extend the first phase until mid-April, Hamas has insisted on a transition to the second phase, which should lead to a lasting ceasefire.

Israel has ramped up pressure not just with threats but also by halting the flow of goods and supplies into Gaza.

"Hamas has indeed suffered a severe blow, but it has not yet been defeated. The mission is not yet accomplished," said Israel's new military chief Eyal Zamir.

France, Britain and Germany jointly called the humanitarian

situation in Gaza "catastrophic," and urged Israel to ensure the "unhindered" delivery of aid.

South Africa said Israel's restriction of aid into Gaza amounted to using starvation as a weapon of war.

"We lack drinking water. We cannot get rid of the waste, which affects the groundwater," said Abu Hammam al-Hasanat, a 34-year-old who lives in the Gaza Strip.

Trump's hawkish language came after the United States confirmed unprecedented direct talks with Hamas, with the US envoy on hostage affairs, Adam Boehler.

"Look, dialogue and talking to people around the world to do what's in the best interest of the American people is something that the president believes is right, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said.

The United States had refused direct contact with the group since banning them as a terrorist organisation in 1997. But Leavitt said that the hostage envoy "has the authority to talk to anyone."

Five Americans are believed to remain among the hostages — four have been confirmed dead and one, Edan Alexander, is believed to be alive. — AFP

Pope Francis resting after 'peaceful night'

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis was "resting" yesterday after spending a "peaceful night", as he nears three weeks in hospital with pneumonia, the Vatican said.

The 88-year-old had used an oxygen mask overnight for a third time, the Holy See said.

The pontiff was hospitalised on Feb 14 at Rome's Gemelli hospital with breathing difficulties but is now battling pneumonia.

Francis missed the formal Ash Wednesday celebrations in Rome marking the start of Lent, but took part in a blessing in the private suite reserved for popes on the 10th floor of the hospital.

Christians across the globe celebrating Ash Wednesday prayed for his recovery, including in his native Argentina.

Francis, leader of the world's almost 1.4 billion Catholics, has not been seen in public since his hospitalisation, nor has the Vatican issued any photos, although he has published several texts.

In the Flores neighbourhood of Buenos Aires where the pope grew up as Jorge Bergoglio, pilgrims prayed on Wednesday in front of portraits of him in the Basilica of San Jose de Flores.

It was there that Francis has said he first felt the call, aged 17, to dedicate his life to the Church.

"We are praying so that he can finish his work," said Gabriela Lucero, 66, after the mass, which she said was themed on love for one's neighbour, regardless of their origins.

"In this time when the prevailing voices are



Mexican artist Roberto Marquez installing a portrait of Francis outside Gemelli University Hospital on Wednesday. — AFP/PPIC

rejecting immigrants, the pope is calling us to give love to all of them," she said.

The pope has suffered numerous health issues in his 12-year papacy, including

undergoing colon surgery in 2021 and a hernia operation in 2023, but this hospitalisation is the longest and most serious. — AFP

Lithuania quits cluster bomb treaty

VILNIUS: Lithuania yesterday quit an international convention banning cluster bombs, citing security concerns over neighbouring Russia in a move that has drawn criticism from human rights groups.

The formerly Soviet-ruled Baltic state of 2.8 million people has also signalled its intention to leave another international treaty prohibiting the use of anti-personnel land mines.

Nato member Lithuania has said it wants to strengthen its defences following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, fearing it could be next if Moscow succeeds.

But Amnesty International has called the decision "disastrous" and Human Rights Watch said it was "alarming", with both organisations warning that it could put civilian lives at risk.

The Lithuanian parliament voted to leave the cluster munitions convention last July, but the country had to wait six months after submitting exit documents to the UN for the decision to take full effect.

It is the first country to leave the convention, which was adopted in 2008, and the first European Union state to leave an arms regulation agreement.

Russia and Ukraine are not members of the convention and have both used cluster bombs in their three-year-long war.

"Russia uses all the instruments available in a conventional war, and this shows that we need to take action to ensure effective deterrence and defence," said Lithuania's Deputy Defence Minister Karolis Aleksa this week. — AFP

Propelling AI and 5G innovation

COMMENT

By Dr Rais Hussin

IT is 2025, and all eyes have been on the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. At every corner of the show floor, it was clear that 5G and AI had moved well beyond buzzwords – they are fuelling an unprecedented wave of innovation that is reshaping entire industries and forging new ones.

However, the most intriguing story may not be unfolding in Silicon Valley or Shenzhen – it is happening across Asean, and Malaysia is emerging as a surprise gateway to this rapidly transforming region.

In fact, 5G has moved well beyond its infancy. Around the world, mission-critical ultra-reliable low-latency communications (URLLC), immersive enhanced mobile broadband and massive machine-type communications, typically used in internet of things (IoT) applications, are becoming everyday realities.

Private 5G networks are expanding in manufacturing, logistics, healthcare and energy. Service providers are pairing edge computing with 5G for on-site real-time analytics, substantially reducing bandwidth needs.

Network slicing and virtualisation allow 5G to adapt dynamically to the needs of each industry.

On the AI front, we see dramatic strides in generative AI, multimodal intelligence, edge computing and responsible AI governance.

Large language models now work alongside vision-language systems and advanced reinforcement learning solutions, orchestrating complex tasks in real time.

Sustainability is also at the forefront – reducing AI's carbon footprint and ensuring privacy, fairness and transparency.

Major leaps in edge AI and federated learning allow data to be processed on devices or local nodes, improving response times while safeguarding user privacy. This is especially vital in the 5G era, where countless sensors generate continuous data.

Swarms of factory robots or autonomous vehicles can now collectively train AI models without sending raw data to distant clouds, all within milliseconds, thanks to 5G's high-speed, low-latency connections. That is the amazing 5G-AI synergy unfolding in 2025.

Take, for example, a "5G/AI Synergy Matrix" linking 10 global 5G trends to six key AI developments – ranging from predictive analytics and maintenance to computer vision,

natural language processing, robotics, anomaly detection, and Edge AI and federated learning.

Each cell highlights how AI and 5G can elegantly "tango" together in real-world deployments. While 5G provides the necessary bandwidth, reliability and scale, AI adds predictive intelligence, learning and automation. In tandem, they are pushing the boundaries of what connectivity and computation can achieve.

Asean's digital ecosystem

Asean – home to more than 680 million people, 65% of whom are under 35 – has embraced 5G and AI to modernise public services, encourage economic growth and compete globally.

This youthful demographic fuels the demand for connectivity and innovation, prompting many governments to prioritise 5G and AI to drive economic growth, modernise public services and boost global competitiveness.

A "5G/AI synergy matrix" tailored to the Asean context reveals real or pilot applications across port operations, manufacturing, public services and healthcare.

Each cell shows how a specific 5G application uses AI to address regional challenges in port operations, manufacturing, public services and healthcare – all are critical sectors given Asean's geographic diversity and rapid growth.

These use cases highlight the practical impact of 5G + AI across Asean, not just in industrial IoT or robotics, but also in everyday life. They can help close gaps in healthcare, agriculture, education and more.

Recurring themes in this matrix include the shift towards Industry 4.0 and automation as well as extensive use in service-oriented sectors.

Furthermore, these examples underscore a broader trend: public-private collaborations – telecom operators, government agencies and industrial giants – are a critical driver of digital transformation.

Malaysia's active neutrality and strategic position

Asean members are all forging unique AI-5G paths. Singapore stands out with its extensive initiatives across government, telecom and private sectors – a testament to its advanced high-tech ecosystem, strong policy support, deep innovation culture and vast talent pool.

However, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines are rapidly advancing, piloting 5G-AI applications in manufacturing, logistics, healthcare and smart city management, signalling strong momentum in their digital transformation efforts.

Yet, in this diverse landscape, Malaysia stands out for its doctrine of "active neutrality". Working with Eastern and Western powers, the country attracts diversified investments and fosters technology transfer while preserving strategic autonomy. This balanced strategy positions Malaysia as an important hub for innovation and collaboration in the region.

A success story is Johor's data centre boom. Catalysed by Singapore's data centre moratorium in 2019, Johor has become a prime alternative for global cloud providers, backed by sustainable energy strategies and advanced cooling solutions. These data centres deliver the computational muscle behind AI and manage the data flow demanded by next-generation 5G services.

On the connectivity side, Malaysia shifted from a single wholesale network to a more competitive dual wholesale network model. With a multioperator ecosystem, firms can test solutions across different networks in secure facilities, creating a vibrant digital market that encourages carriers to innovate while safeguarding core infrastructure for industrial IoT. Commercial successes already include agritech, healthcare and manufacturing. Importantly, these are not isolated pilot projects.

Malaysia's strategy establishes an ecosystem of testbeds, regulatory sandboxes and venture funding that helps prototypes evolve into full-fledged, market-ready products.

Programmes like the National Technology and Innovation Sandbox by Technology Innovation Park Malaysia (TiPM) has accelerated over 160 tech startups through access to prototyping labs, mentorship and "first big customer" collaborations with government-linked companies.

TiPM's leadership in orchestrating Malaysia's tech-driven ecosystem includes a dedicated AI Sandbox with global partners like Nvidia, training over 90 SMEs to integrate AI.

Moreover, TiPM is driving 5G adoption by establishing Malaysia's first technology park, with 100% 5G coverage, allowing enterprises in Dronetech, Agritech/Biotech and Healthtech to test solutions in real-world settings. Collaborations with major telcos showcase practical use cases such as 5G-enabled smart poles, safety drones and robotics.

Malaysia's "active neutrality" extends to facilitating partnerships between American cloud giants and Chinese open-source AI labs.

By offering regulatory support and advanced 5G infrastructure, the country attracts a wide array of investors looking to commercialise AI solutions for the 680-million-strong Asean

market. This approach fosters healthy competition, multiple technology options and diversified capital inflows – minimising reliance on any single power bloc.

Road ahead

Moving forward, Asean will continue accelerating 5G roll-outs, boosting AI adoption and driving digital transformation across the government and the private sector. Key priorities include:

➤ **Continued AI-5G integration:** Further melding connectivity with intelligence for advanced use cases like real-time robotics, immersive virtual reality and autonomous vehicles.

➤ **Sustainability as a core driver:** Ensuring greener data centre operations, reduced AI carbon footprints and better resource management.

➤ **Education reform:** Training a new generation of AI engineers, data scientists and 5G specialists to sustain growth.

➤ **Cross-border collaboration:** Establishing shared 5G testbeds and AI standards, encouraging knowledge exchange among Asean telecom operators, governments and industries.

Malaysia invites global telecom operators, AI startups, cloud providers, venture capitalists and research and development institutions to collaborate in this new frontier. Its strategic advantages include:

➤ **Prime location and market access:** Proximity to a massive, young consumer base.

➤ **Active neutrality:** Attracting investments from multiple global power centres.

➤ **Data infrastructure readiness:** Expanded facilities in Johor, Penang and Kuala Lumpur support AI at scale.

➤ **Strong government and policy support:** MyDigital, TiPM, the National AI Office and other entities driving robust innovation ecosystems.

Whether the goal is to test new 5G-AI solutions in Industry 4.0, pioneer sustainable data centre strategies or co-develop quantum-ready security frameworks, Malaysia stands ready as a strategic partner for Asean and beyond.

As the region continues to shape the future of connectivity and intelligence, this is a clarion call for meaningful partnerships, fresh ideas and bold actions that will propel Asean and the world into a new era of progress.

Dr Rais Hussin is CEO of

Technology Innovation Park Malaysia.

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Nurturing boys' competitive spirit without stifling ambition

Under One Roof

Q: I am a mum to three energetic young boys and grew up with two sisters – so it has been a real shock to me to see the constant competition between my boys. Should I be encouraging or discouraging their competitive nature?

Focus on the Family Malaysia: There are exceptions, of course, but most boys are wired to compete. If you watch how different groups of boys play together, you will see the same pattern across cultures.

If they do not have a game to compete in, they will create one. Rocks and sticks turn into guns and swords, and rolled-up t-shirts become balls for new games they invent.

One father recalls how his sons would spend hours building fortresses out of Legos, only to destroy them with a well-aimed tennis ball. The Death Star and the Evil Empire were destroyed

more times than he can count. Now as teenagers, they still compete with each other – and with him.

But it is not just about fun and games. Win or lose, the skills and discipline boys develop through competition will be pivotal later in life when they are managing careers, mortgages and families of their own. Ultimately, raising boys is about raising confident men who are prepared to face the world.

That is why we believe it is unhelpful for parents to inhibit their sons' competitive spirit. Instead, teach them how to harness their strength and use it in productive ways that will benefit not just themselves but others too.

Of course, they need boundaries but avoid being too restrictive. Focus on patience and guidance.

The goal is not to hold your sons back – it is to guide them on the right path. A boy in competition is a man in training.

Q: I am getting married soon, and my fiancé and I have been told to expect some

"normal" disagreements. But we are worried we may end up fighting about the wrong things. What topics are healthy to argue about?

Focus on the Family Malaysia: The list of issues couples can disagree on is endless – money, in-laws, sex, who should do the laundry, and so on. You both see the world through different lenses, so disagreements are inevitable. But here is the thing: you can actually "fight your way to a better marriage".

The key is that what you argue about is far less important than how you argue. Some couples fight with one goal in mind: winning the argument at all costs. Instead of listening to one another or trying to understand each other's point of view, they go on the offensive to get their way.

This is when things can get ugly – name-calling, criticism or even verbal or physical threats. These destructive behaviours will leave scars on your marriage long after the disagreement is over. You are attacking your

spouse, not the issue.

A better approach is to work towards a solution that is fair for both of you. You can get through almost anything if your ultimate goal is the health and well-being of your relationship.

The more complicated the issue, the more important it becomes to make healthy choices. You can choose to be defensive or open to your spouse's feelings. You can be self-righteous or humble. You can be stubborn or understanding.

Winning an argument is a hollow victory if it means wrecking your marriage in the process. Make strengthening your relationship the goal. Attack the problem, not each other.

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



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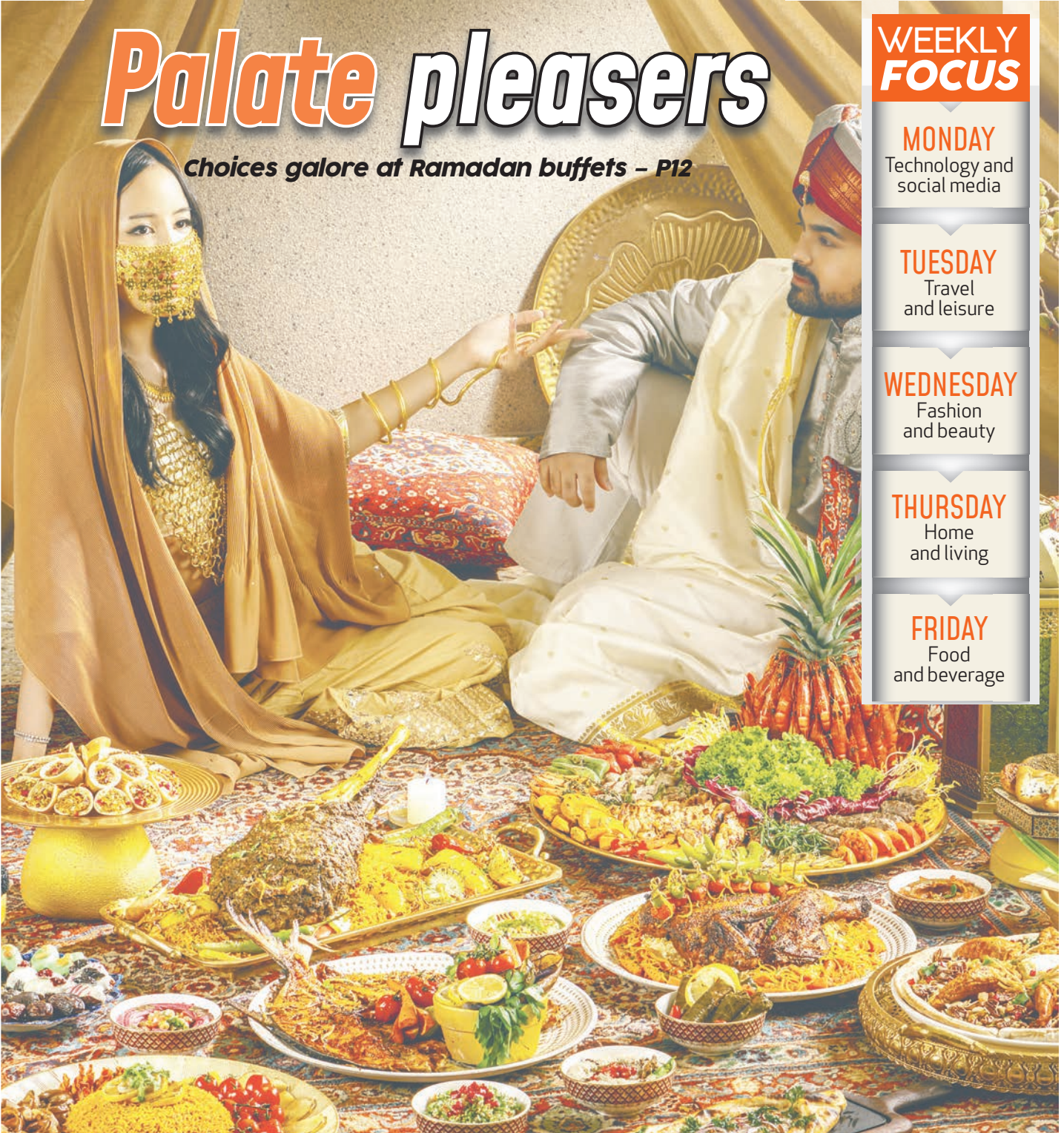
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Palate pleasers

Choices galore at Ramadan buffets - P12



WEEKLY FOCUS

MONDAY
Technology and social media

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Travel and leisure

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Fashion and beauty

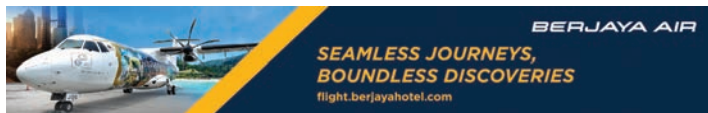
THURSDAY
Home and living

FRIDAY
Food and beverage

INSIDE **p21** Recipes inspired by popular influencers

p22 New reality cooking show kicks off

p23 Buried Hearts to enchant audiences



Mixed grilled landscape at the Sunway Resort Hotel.

Ramadan feasts

➤ Choices galore for bountiful *iftar*

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

RAMADAN is a sacred month of unity and gratitude, best enjoyed over a hearty *iftar* meal with loved ones. Kuala Lumpur's top hotels serve lavish buffets featuring traditional Malaysian delicacies, Middle Eastern specialities and international delights. Vibrant bazaar-style spreads and elegant fine dining experiences create a rich culinary experience for the season. Here are some choices to explore this Ramadan.

I,001 Arabian Nights @ Sunway Resort Hotel Jemput Makan Iftar Buffet
Time: 6.30pm - 10.30pm
Date: March 1 - 30
Price: RM248 nett per adult | RM124 nett per child/senior citizen

Jemput Makan Raya (lunch & dinner)
Time: 12pm - 3pm / 6.30pm - 10.30pm
Dates: March 31 & April 1
Price: RM248 nett per adult | RM124 nett per child/senior citizen

This Ramadan, Sunway Resort Hotel transports guests into the enchanting world of I,001 Arabian Nights with a grand buffet at Sunset Terrace. Indulge in a feast fit for royalty, featuring Middle Eastern delights such as spit-roasted whole lamb, maqluba, chicken fattedeh, havij polo, persian carrot rice and Turkish pide.

Complementing these are fresh seafood, vibrant salads and an array of decadent desserts, including putu bambu and qatayef. The magic continues each night with live storytelling sessions, in which a storyteller brings to life the legendary tales of Aladdin, Sinbad and Ali Baba. Intricate Arabian decor and luxurious gifting options complete this immersive experience.



Imperial Lexis KL's early bird promo has now been extended until next Tuesday.

Santapan Cahaya @ Courtyard by Marriott KL
Time: 6.30pm-10.30pm
Date: March 3-27
Price: RM137 nett per adult | RM69 nett per child | RM89 nett per senior citizen
Location: Courtyard by Marriott KL

A traditional Ramadan bazaar experience awaits at Courtyard by Marriott KL, where vibrant food stalls serve up an array of local favourites. Indulge in nasi dagang pantai timur, Uncle Cheong's chicken rice, live grill stations and delightful desserts, all designed to bring family and friends together in the spirit of Ramadan.

Cita Rasa Lexis @ Imperial Lexis KL
Time: 6.30pm-10.00pm
Date: March 3-26
Price: RM199 nett per adult | RM120 nett per child/senior citizen

Imperial Lexis KL presents the *BuGet Istimewa Cita Rasa Lexis* at Roselle Coffee House, offering a five-star dining experience with a mix of local and international delights. Highlights include baby lobsters, New Zealand mussels, assorted sushi, gado-gado, roti John, biryani rice, Singapore chilli crab, roasted duck and beef rendang. The lavish dessert station completes the feast with traditional sweets and premium ice creams.

Santai-Santai Iftar @ InterContinental KL Santai-Santai Iftar (dinner)
Time: 6.30pm-10.30pm
Date: March 4 - 9 & March 24 - 27
Price: RM288 nett per adult | RM178 nett per child
Dates: March 10 - 23
Price: RM216 nett per adult | RM134 nett per child

Santai-Santai Raya (dinner)
Time: 6.30pm - 10.30pm
Date: April 10 & 11



Variety of kuih muih served at the InterContinental KL.

Price: RM288 nett per adult | RM178 nett per child

InterContinental KL brings the *Santai-Santai di Serena* dining experience, offering a relaxed and indulgent Ramadan feast. The *iftar* buffet features standout dishes such as baked honey-glazed chicken, rendang minang smoked bbq beef ribs, Xinjiang whole lamb

with bukhari biryani and gulai assam rong-style claypot roasted duck. The spread also includes traditional Malaysian favourites, premium seafood selection and a grand dessert selection.

Secure a table in advance to enjoy these festive feasts.



A vibrant spread of diverse culinary delights served at Courtyard by Marriott KL.



U Mobile and Qualcomm in pact to boost IoT adoption in M'sia

PETALING JAYA: U Mobile Sdn Bhd has partnered with Qualcomm Services Ltd to accelerate digital transformation in Malaysia's Internet of Things (IoT) market through initiatives that enhance real-time tracking, device and condition monitoring, and supply chain efficiency.

U Mobile chief information officer Neil Tomkinson said the partnership will drive innovation in IoT solutions, enabling smarter and more efficient supply chains.

"Our next-gen (next-generation) network together with the Qualcomm Aware Platform will help ensure seamless performance through ultra-low latency and high-speed data transfer, enabling advanced automation," he said in a statement yesterday.

U Mobile also stated that these solutions enhance asset visibility and security, improve efficiency, and reduce costs for enterprises by leveraging real-time insights, artificial intelligence-driven automation, and predictive analytics.

"To drive adoption, the parties commit to developing go-to-market strategies tailored to various industries.

"These include industries with high-value assets and goods that require real-time tracking, such as logistics, healthcare, and manufacturing; as well as sectors where environmental conditions significantly impact product quality, like pharmaceuticals, agriculture, and cold chain logistics," the company said.

The country's second 5G network provider added that the collaboration will also target industries undergoing digital transformation, such as smart retail, oil and gas, and government fleets, while working with select customers to identify use cases that showcase the solutions' benefits.

The partnership was formalised through a memorandum of understanding signed at the Malaysian Pavilion during the Mobile World Congress 2025 in Barcelona, Spain.

The signing was witnessed by Deputy Communications Minister Teo Nie Ching. —Bernama

EmpowerHer Digital initiative for B40 women entrepreneurs

BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
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KUALA LUMPUR: The Digital Ministry is ramping up efforts to equip more women entrepreneurs with digital skills, addressing a significant gap in training accessibility.

The ministry, through a newly introduced programme called "EmpowerHer Digital", is collaborating with SME Corp, Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), Digital Nasional Bhd and industry players to provide targeted support for women-led businesses.

The programme will empower B40 women entrepreneurs with digital skills and market access. It aims to help participants generate income and build sustainable businesses in the digital economy.

Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo emphasised the need for more inclusive and accessible training

Ministry and partners collaborate to equip them with skills to build sustainable businesses and in market access

programmes.

"Currently, out of 220,000 women entrepreneurs, only 12% have access to early-stage training, raising concerns about whether existing government programmes are reaching those who need them most. To address this, the ministry is working on expanding training efforts in collaboration with other ministries and agencies to boost participation," he told reporters at the launch of EmpowerHer Digital yesterday.

He said infrastructure alone is not enough to drive digital transformation, stressing that talent development is a crucial factor.

"We want to build sophisticated and safe infrastructure, but if it is not utilised effectively, it does not mean anything. Training, particularly for women, will be a key focus area in the coming months to ensure that more entrepreneurs can adopt technology to grow their businesses."

The EmpowerHer Digital programme will be rolled out nationwide, with a tailored approach based on regional differences, Gobind said.

"We acknowledged that entrepreneurs in urban areas face different challenges compared to those in rural regions. To ensure equitable support, outreach efforts

will be conducted across the country, providing customised solutions based on local business needs," he added.

Gobind said the government will assess the programme's impact after a few months to determine whether adjustments are needed.

"This continuous evaluation approach aims to refine strategies that support women entrepreneurs more effectively and adapt to evolving business landscapes. Input from participants will be crucial in shaping future training modules and policies."

The initiative reflects the government's broader commitment to fostering a stronger digital economy through inclusivity, the minister said.

"With more women entrepreneurs gaining access to essential digital skills, the ministry hopes to bridge the current skills gap and enhance Malaysia's competitiveness in the digital space. By the end of the year, a significant increase in the number of trained women entrepreneurs will be visible," Gobind noted.

MDEC CEO Anuar Fariz Fadzil emphasised that EmpowerHer Digital is more than just a training programme.

"It is a movement to build a sustainable support ecosystem. This programme equips B40 women with digital skills, market access, and mentorship to help them develop competitive businesses. As the nation's digital economy enabler, MDEC is committed to ensuring that women are not just technology users, but also drivers of innovation."

Anuar highlighted that closing the gender gap in digital adoption is crucial for Malaysia's economic growth and digital transformation.



Gobind delivering his keynote address at the launch of the EmpowerHer Digital programme.

Bank Negara maintains benchmark rate at 3% to support economy

PETALING JAYA: The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of Bank Negara Malaysia yesterday maintained the Overnight Policy Rate (OPR) at 3% to support the Malaysian economy.

The current OPR level is also to keep up with the consistent current assessment of inflation and growth prospects.

"The MPC remains vigilant to ongoing developments to inform the assessment on the domestic inflation and growth outlook. The MPC will ensure that the monetary policy stance remains conducive to sustainable economic growth amid price stability," BNM said in a statement yesterday.

The Malaysian central bank also said the ringgit's performance continues to be primarily driven by

external developments.

"The narrowing interest rate differentials between Malaysia and the advanced economies is positive for the ringgit. Financial markets could experience heightened bouts of volatility due to global policy uncertainties," it added.

Nevertheless, BNM said Malaysia's favourable economic prospects and domestic structural reforms, complemented by ongoing initiatives to encourage flows, will continue to provide enduring support to the ringgit.

"The Malaysian economy recorded a higher growth of 5.1% in 2024, driven by stronger domestic demand and a rebound in exports. Moving forward, despite external uncertainties, the strength in economic activity is expected to be sustained in

2025, anchored by domestic demand. Employment and wage growth, as well as policy measures, including the upward revision of the minimum wage and civil servant salaries, will support household spending," it added.

BNM said the robust expansion in investment activity will be sustained by the progress of multiyear projects in both the private and public sectors, the continued high realisation of approved investments, as well as the ongoing implementation of catalytic initiatives under the national master plans.

Amid global policy uncertainties, it added exports are expected to expand at a more moderate pace.

Nevertheless, BNM said exports will remain supported by the global tech upcycle, continued growth in

non-electrical and electronics, as well as higher tourist spending.

"The growth outlook is subject to downside risks from an economic slowdown in major trading partners following significant uncertainties surrounding trade policies and lower-than-expected commodity production. Meanwhile, growth could be lifted by greater spillovers from the global tech upcycle, more robust tourism activity, and faster implementation of investment projects," it added.

It said headline and core inflation stood at 1.7% and 1.8% respectively in January 2025. "Overall, inflation in 2025 is expected to remain manageable, amid the easing global cost conditions and the absence of excessive domestic demand pressures. Global commodity prices are ex-

pected to continue to trend lower, contributing to moderate cost conditions. The recently introduced wage-related policies would provide additional support to demand, although the impact on inflation is expected to be limited. In this environment, the overall impact of the announced domestic policy reforms on inflation is expected to be contained. Upside risk to inflation would be dependent on the extent of spillover effects of domestic policy measures, as well as external developments surrounding global commodity prices, financial markets and trade policies," it added.

BNM said the latest indicators point towards continued global growth, supported by resilient domestic demand and global trade.



Nasdaq-listed ATPC announces US\$23 million private placement

PETALING JAYA: Nasdaq-listed Agape ATP Corporation (ATPC) yesterday entered into agreements for a US\$23 million (RM101 million) private placement with institutional investors.

The strategic funding will support ATPC's continued expansion in healthcare, oil and gas trading, and renewable energy, reinforcing its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and long-term market leadership.

Under the terms of the agreements, 46 million shares of common stock will be issued at US\$0.50 per share, in accordance with Regulation S of the US Securities Act, which governs offerings to non-US investors. The placement has been secured through subscription agreements with 18 institutional investors. The transaction is expected to close within 30 business days, subject to the satisfaction of conditions precedent and regulatory procedures.

In a statement, ATPC said this announcement comes at a pivotal time for them, as the company continues to expand its global presence across key industries.

ATPC founder and global group CEO Professor Datuk Seri Dr How Kook Choong stated, "This private placement marks an important milestone in ATPC's growth journey. The participation of institutional investors reflects confidence in our business strategy and long-term potential."

"With our expansion into oil and gas trading, solar energy, and our continued commitment to healthcare and wellness solutions, this investment will accelerate our ability to execute on key projects, strengthen our operational capabilities, and enhance shareholder value."

Rise of small language models and agentic AI

➤ Former offers more efficient and cost-effective solutions for enterprises, while latter enables systems to operate more autonomously: IBM Malaysia

■ BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The latest advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) innovation are expected to be driven by small language models and agentic AI, according to IBM Malaysia.

IBM Malaysia Country general manager and chief technology officer Dickson Woo said SLMs offer more efficient and cost-effective AI solutions for enterprises, while agentic AI enables systems to operate more autonomously.

"It also helps in making complex decisions and carrying out tasks with little or no human intervention."

"Organisations do not need a massive, all-knowing AI model but rather an AI that is open, targeted, and efficient," he said during the "AI ROI: Unlocking Value and Scaling Impact" presentation on Wednesday.

Woo said IBM has introduced IBM Granite, a small AI model with eight billion and two billion parameters, optimised for effi-

ciency and performance.

"This model is integrated into the IBM watsonx platform, allowing businesses to implement AI at scale with greater transparency and collaboration within the AI community. With increased investment in open-source AI and innovations like agentic AI, companies are expected to accelerate their digital transformation to compete in an increasingly complex global market."

Woo noted that agentic AI, built on SLM technology, is becoming more accessible for small and medium enterprises due to its lower cost and ease of implementation.

"It is more cost-effective, and adoption is also easier from a technical standpoint," he said, adding that the models require fewer computing resources and significantly reduce the total cost of ownership.

As these AI models consume less energy and require fewer technical resources, Woo said, SMEs can now deploy AI-driven solutions without the heavy financial burden traditionally asso-

ciated with AI adoption.

Companies worldwide are increasingly turning to open-source AI tools to maximise return on investment (ROI) and drive innovation, according to IBM's latest report, he noted.

"A study conducted by IBM in collaboration with Morning Consult and Lopez Research found that 89% of organisations plan to increase or maintain their AI investments in 2025. Of this, 62% will increase their allocations, with nearly two-fifths (39%) planning hikes of between 25% and 50%."

"Companies are now also focusing on strategic AI investments, particularly in IT operations (63%), data quality management (46%), and product and service innovation (41%," he said.

"The study also revealed a significant rise in open-source AI adoption, with 51% of companies using it achieving positive ROI, compared to just 41% among organisations that do not take this approach," he added.

Woo said key strategies planned by companies for 2025 include the adoption of managed cloud services (51%), recruitment of specialised AI talent (48%), and increased use of open-source solutions (48%).

Furthermore, since the introduction of IBM Granite, interest in

agentic AI has grown across various industries such as healthcare, manufacturing, finance, utilities, and public services, he pointed out.

"Many organisations are already engaging with us to develop agentic AI models, and we are currently in the proof-of-concept stage with several of them," Woo said.



Woo says agentic AI, is becoming more accessible for small and medium enterprises due to its lower cost and ease of implementation.

Malaysia gets its first digital twin water treatment plant

PETALING JAYA: Pengurusan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Air Selangor) has completed Malaysia's first digital twin water treatment plant (WTP) at Semenyih 2 WTP in a partnership with Schneider Electric, a company involved digital transformation of energy management and automation.

Operational since 2022, Semenyih 2 WTP is Malaysia's first fully automated WTP and has been recently equipped with asset digital twin technology capable of autonomous operation across standard, startup and shutdown processes. The plant delivers an average output of 100 million litres per day, and is projected to achieve up to a 20% improvement in productivity, setting a new benchmark for efficiency and innovation in water management.

Air Selangor CEO Adam Saffian Ghazali said: "The digital twin solutions are a game-changer for the water industry. By enabling real-time monitoring and optimisation of our WTP operations, we can deliver a more consistent and reliable water supply, reduce inefficiencies, and improve service quality for our 9.62 million consumers."

"This aligns with our commitment to sustainability and our vision to become

Asia's leading water services provider by 2030," he said.

With the new asset digital twin model at Semenyih 2 WTP, Air Selangor is ahead of the game in detecting anomalies, optimising water distribution strategies, forecasting the impact of planned and unplanned events before they happen and implementing mitigation strategies efficiently.

According to Schneider Electric, this technology can predict events up to several months in advance as the digital twin model accumulates more data, providing proactive forecasts that assist in efficient facility operations.

"Digital twin – a virtual representation of physical water infrastructure and processes – is revolutionising the water industry."

"By integrating diverse data streams with online hydraulic modelling in their large water distribution network, Air Selangor is unlocking a deeper understanding of complex water distribution networks through real-time monitoring and remotely control water distribution flow on demand, enabling more informed decisions and efficient operation in water management," said Shanmugavel Subramaniam, global water segment leader, Schneider Electric.

CelcomDigi inks MoUs with Huawei, ZTE to leverage AI in building future digital networks

PETALING JAYA: CelcomDigi Bhd yesterday signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with Huawei Technologies (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd and ZTE (Malaysia) Corporation Sdn Bhd, reinforcing its commitment to building Malaysia's future digital network.

These strategic collaborations aim to harness advanced artificial intelligence (AI) and next-generation connectivity technologies to provide Malaysians with superior digital experiences, and support the nation's transformation into a 5G-AI powered digital society.

CelcomDigi and Huawei Malaysia plan to establish an AI-powered fixed-mobile convergence (FMC) network, integrating cutting-edge technologies to enhance connectivity experiences for Malaysians while strengthening the country's digital infrastructure.

The collaboration will look into leveraging Huawei's latest innovations, such as AI-driven solutions to enable intelligent automation and network optimisation, accelerating the digital transformation of industries; Net5.5G to build high-performance, future-proof IP net-

works that support the increasing demand for data and low-latency applications and F5.5G to enhance home and fibre connectivity, ensuring ultra-fast, high-capacity broadband for households and businesses.

CelcomDigi and ZTE will collaborate to integrate AI technologies into the company's telecommunications network infrastructure to enhance connectivity, empower businesses, and support national digital initiatives.

The collaboration allows both parties to explore AI-driven solutions, such as New Calling, an AI-powered communication experience that transforms traditional calls into interactive, intelligent voice and video interactions; Intelligent Deep Packet Inspection to enable smarter network traffic management for improved security, efficiency, and quality of service and Intelligent operations and maintenance to automate network monitoring and maintenance with AI-powered predictive analytics, ensuring seamless connectivity and superior customer experiences.

The MoUs were signed at the

Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain by CelcomDigi deputy CEO Albern Murty, Huawei Malaysia CEO Simon Sun and ZTE Malaysia managing director Steven Ge, witnessed by Deputy Minister of Communications Teo Nie Ching.

Albern said the collaboration with Huawei Malaysia and ZTE marks a step towards building an AI-driven, high-performance digital ecosystem that will benefit consumers, businesses, and the nation.

Sun said, "Huawei Malaysia is evolving beyond just being an ICT solutions provider towards being a collaborative architect of AI-driven networks. By implementing the AI-powered FMC network with CelcomDigi, we will unlock substantial home and enterprise business value by allowing for a full integration of AI capabilities across all layers of fixed networks and enable FMC business success."

Ge, meanwhile, said by leveraging cutting-edge AI solutions, they aim to enhance network intelligence, elevate user experiences, and empower businesses in their digital transformation journey.

REDtone, ST Engineering in next-gen connectivity tie-up

PETALING JAYA: REDtone Digital Bhd has entered into a strategic collaboration with Singapore's ST Engineering at the Mobile World Congress 2025 in Barcelona, Spain to roll out next-generation connectivity solutions, targeting key sectors such as agtech, telecommunications, healthcare, logistics, and urban infrastructure in Malaysia.

REDtone CEO Lau Bik Soon said, "Malaysia's digital transformation is flying off. The industry prediction of a 12% annual growth in the IoT market illustrates a growing reliance on digital tools for operational efficiency. Meanwhile, the GSMA forecast of 45% 5G penetration by 2030 points to rapid expansion in advanced connectivity, essential for next-generation digital services mainly from AI and IoT applications. Collectively, these trends offer a robust, data driven rationale for a successful collaboration."

A key part of the partnership is the MEC Platform, which enables digital tools such as augmented and virtual reality, live video analytics, AI, and IoT applications. These tools are utilised in telecommunications, healthcare, and agriculture by processing data locally. This delivers faster response times, less network traffic, and lower data use - ensuring reliable operation of critical applications.

Additionally, the platform's flexible

► Partnership targets sectors such as agtech, telecom, healthcare, logistics and infrastructure



Tan (left) and Lau at the sidelines of the Mobile World Congress 2025 in Barcelona, Spain.

solutions are expected to create new revenue opportunities as REDtone manages the entire digital transformation process for its enterprise clients mainly from telecommunications, logistics, agtech, manufacturing and other sectors.

ST Engineering general manager of advanced connectivity, Sebastian Tan said, "In today's fast-paced, ever-

changing world, advanced connectivity is more critical than ever, enabling businesses, governments and individuals to thrive in a digital-first environment. This partnership exemplifies our shared commitment to advancing connectivity through localised data processing, delivering scalable solutions that support essential digital applications and drive sustainable growth."

WOU partners 3 firms to boost Penang's chip, industrial talent

GEORGE TOWN: Wawasan Open University (WOU) has signed MoUs with three organisations to enhance workforce development in Malaysia's semiconductor and manufacturing sectors, particularly in Penang.

The collaboration with TTVision Technologies Sdn Bhd, Oppstar Technology Sdn Bhd and Clarion (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd aims to equip 200 technical and engineering professionals with critical skills essential for success in the Industry 4.0 era.

WOU vice-chancellor and CEO Prof Dr Lily Chan said the MoUs position the university as the primary skills development partner for the three organisations, reflecting its commitment to providing accessible and industry-relevant education.

"This partnership shows how universities and industries can work hand-in-hand to meet the evolving needs of the workforce. By integrating industry insights into our curriculum, we are preparing professionals to thrive in the face of rapidly advancing global challenges," she said in her welcoming speech at the signing ceremony held at WOU's main campus yesterday.

Chan said the collaboration

aligns with Penang's strategic initiatives to build a skilled workforce in high-tech sectors such as semiconductors, automation, and automotive electronics.

"This also boosts talent development programmes from the Northern Corridor Economic Region and the Human Resource Development Corporation," she said.

Through the partnership, WOU will offer TTVision a Certification in IoT-Enabled Manufacturing Analytics, covering IoT, data analytics, and robotics integration. It also includes stackable micro-credentials for degrees in Mechatronics Engineering or Smart Manufacturing.

WOU, in partnership with Oppstar, will offer a Professional Certification in IC Design, covering CMOS, Mixed-Signal, and Digital IC Design. Participants can earn credit hours towards WOU's Master of Science in System Design Engineering.

The collaboration with Clarion Malaysia will offer employees postgraduate qualifications, including an MSc in Smart Manufacturing and an MBA in Manufacturing Management, enhancing technical and leadership skills. - Bernama

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Seven & i announces measures to fend off takeover

➤ 7-Eleven owner plans ¥2 trillion share buyback, IPO of North American unit

TOKYO: The Japanese owner of 7-Eleven announced yesterday a raft of measures to fend off a takeover by a Canadian rival, including a ¥2 trillion (RM58 billion) share buyback and an IPO of its US unit.

The announcements are the latest twist in a saga that began last year when Seven & i rebuffed a takeover offer worth nearly US\$40 billion (RM177 billion) from Canada's Alimentation Couche-Tard (ACT).

Seven & i, which operates some 85,000 convenience stores worldwide, also named Stephen Hayes Dacus as its first foreign chief executive.

"We're convinced that now is the time to take our initiatives to the next level, and our leadership will further pursue the improvement of

shareholder values and implement transformative policies," outgoing company president Ryuichi Isaka said in a statement.

"We have decided to conduct an initial public offering (IPO) of our SEI shares that operate the North American convenience store business, 7-Eleven, on one of the major US stock exchanges by the second half of 2026," Seven & i said.

It also said it plans to buy back ¥2 trillion of its own shares using funds generated by that IPO and other restructuring measures.

Reports of the raft of measures that appeared before the retailer's announcement had caused its shares to surge as much as 10% in afternoon trade.

They later trimmed those gains and were trading up 6.5% before the market close.

The company also announced the sale of its non-convenience-store business – comprising supermarkets, restaurants and other assets – to US private investment firm Bain Capital.

ACT's takeover would be the biggest foreign buyout of a Japanese firm, merging the 7-Eleven, Circle K and other franchises to

create a global convenience store behemoth.

Japan's *Yomiuri* daily reported this week that a special committee scrutinising ACT's raised offer of reportedly around US\$47 billion had decided formally to say no to that, too.

While Seven & i stressed on Tuesday that all options remained on the table, its latest moves are seen as a way to boost its own valuation and avoid the need for a buyout.

7-Eleven, the world's biggest convenience store brand, began in the United States but has been wholly owned by Seven & i since 2005.

Its stores are a beloved institution in Japan, selling everything from concert tickets to pet food and fresh rice balls, although sales have been flagging.

ACT, which began with one store in Quebec in 1980, runs nearly 17,000 convenience store outlets worldwide, including Circle K.

The *Nikkei* said yesterday that the IPO of 7-Eleven Inc was expected to raise more than ¥1 trillion, depending on business conditions.

Seven & i aims to use the US subsidiary as a springboard to expand its global convenience stores business, it said. – AFP

Alibaba shares surge after it unveils reasoning model

BEIJING: The Hong Kong-listed shares of Alibaba Group surged more than 8% yesterday following the release of a new reasoning model that the company said was on par with global hit DeepSeek's R1.

Qwen, the e-commerce leader's artificial intelligence unit, said on X that its QwQ-32B, with 32 billion parameters, can achieve performance comparable to DeepSeek's R1 model, which boasts 671 billion parameters.

The announcement came a day after the Chinese government pledged increased support for industries including artificial intelligence, humanoid robots and 6G telecom, as AI models see increasing adoption by government agencies and smaller companies in China.

Alibaba said the new model is accessible via its chatbot service, Qwen Chat, for which users can choose various Qwen models including Qwen2.5-Max, the most powerful language model in the Qwen series.

The firm said the QwQ-32B demonstrated capabilities in mathematical reasoning, coding and general problem-solving in benchmark tests, performing close to top models such as OpenAI's o1 mini and DeepSeek's R1.

DeepSeek has emerged as the new poster child of China's AI prowess, rivaling top models from OpenAI for a fraction of its costs with less powerful computing.

Analysts said initiatives laid out by the government will expand usage of AI in China.

"China is rapidly building an application-driven AI ecosystem that isn't just about research – it's about immediate, tangible economic impact," said Sun Wei, principal AI analyst at research company Counterpoint.

Alibaba's shares surged 8% to HK\$140.5 a share. – Reuters

DBS outgoing CEO pay up 57% in 2024

SINGAPORE: DBS Group paid outgoing CEO Piyush Gupta (pic) S\$17.6 million (RM58 million) for 2024, up 57% on year, as Singapore's biggest bank reported record annual revenue and profit.

Southeast Asia's largest lender by assets also has "momentum", its incoming CEO Tan Su Shan said in the bank's annual report published yesterday.

DBS stock has been riding high since mid-February when the bank forecast improved net interest income for 2025 and announced a dividend capital return plan – after booking a jump in quarterly earnings.

"Our strong performance reflects the structural changes Piyush has implemented over



the past decade, especially the digital transformation and growth of high-ROE businesses such as wealth management, transaction services and treasury customer sales," chairman Peter Seah said in the report.

Gupta is set to step down on March 28.

During his 15-year tenure, DBS became a regional banking powerhouse, bolstered by acquisitions that established significant presence in markets including China, India, Indonesia and Taiwan.

One notable blip came in 2023 when disruption to digital banking saw Gupta take a steep pay cut.

His remuneration made him one of Asia's

best-paid banking CEOs for 2024, behind peers such as Shemara Wikramanayake at Macquarie Group with A\$29.4 million (RM82 million).

Successor Tan highlighted continuity in comments in the annual report.

"While there are challenges ahead, opportunities abound," she said.

"The strategic moats we have built mean our successes are not easy to replicate and there is momentum in our business."

Gupta last month said DBS would cut 4,000 temporary jobs over the next three years in anticipation of artificial intelligence fulfilling more roles.

"We have to fully embrace the possibilities, which should lead to a fundamental rethink of our operating models and even the creation of new business models," Gupta said in the annual report. – Reuters

Japan's largest union group says average 6% wage hike sought for 2025

TOKYO: Japan's largest labour union group Rengo said yesterday its member unions are seeking an average wage hike of 6.09% for this year, outpacing last year's demand, which resulted in the highest wage increase in three decades.

The demand could mean another year of sizeable wage increases in Japan's annual labour-management talks, which Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba sees as key to the world's fourth-largest economy.

A broad-based pay rise is also a prerequisite for the Bank of Japan to continue monetary policy normalisation after the central bank raised interest rates to the highest level since 2008 in January.

The average demand surpasses Rengo's wage growth target of at least 5% in 2025, including a rise in the base pay of at least 3%.

Base pay rises exclude the seniority-based automatic annual increase already built into the pay scale.

Last year, Japanese companies agreed to an average 5.1% wage hike, the biggest increase in 33 years, following a 3.5% rise the previous year, according to Rengo.

Its member unions had sought an average 5.85% increase around this time last year.

The union group has about seven million members.

Talks between management and labour unions over the 2025 wage levels typically conclude around mid-March at major firms, and go into effect a few months later. – Reuters



A worker walking beside newly produced cars at Keihin industrial zone in the Japanese city of Kawasaki. – REUTERS/SPIC

Pfizer-BioNTech Covid vaccine broke patent: German court

BERLIN: A German court found on Wednesday that American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer and German firm BioNTech violated a patent to make their Covid-19 vaccine.

Siding with Moderna, an American pharmaceutical firm that brought the case, the court in Duesseldorf said BioNTech and Pfizer would have to provide estimates of how much they had profited from breaking the patent as well as provide "appropriate compensation".

Pfizer and BioNTech did not deny using mRNA technology that had been patented by Moderna for the development of their Comirnaty Covid-19 vaccine, but argued that a 2020 Moderna press release had allowed them to do so, with permission only being rescinded once the World Health Organisation declared the pandemic over in 2023.

Moderna, however, persuaded the court that permission had been rescinded as of March 2022 in a separate press release.

In 2020, Pfizer and BioNTech's vaccine became the first ever mRNA vaccine approved for widespread use.

Unlike traditional vaccines, mRNA vaccines contain genetic materials that instruct human cells to make proteins typical of the targeted virus.

Traditional vaccines contain some form of the dead or inactivated target virus.

Moderna persuaded the court that patents it had filed over the period 2010 to 2016 were valid and relevant to the case.

The ruling can be appealed. – AFP

Microsoft withdrew some CoreWeave agreements over delivery issue: FT

NEW YORK: Microsoft has moved away from some of its agreements with cloud computing provider CoreWeave over delivery issues and missed deadlines, the *Financial Times* reported yesterday citing unnamed sources.

Microsoft has a number of ongoing contracts with CoreWeave that provide it with computing capacity from data centres, a partnership which is worth billions of dollars, the newspaper said.

Founded in 2017, CoreWeave provides access to data centers and high-powered chips for AI workloads, mainly supplied by Nvidia.

The Nvidia-backed company, which competes against cloud providers such as Microsoft's Azure and Amazon's AWS, has laid groundwork for what could be one of the biggest IPOs in recent times.

CoreWeave is seeking a valuation greater than US\$35 billion in its New York flotation and is likely to target raising more than US\$3 billion from its share sale, Reuters has reported.

Microsoft's decision to walk away from some business with the cloud technology provider is unrelated to a broader shift in its own data centre plans, FT said, citing one of the people close to the matter.

CoreWeave, Microsoft and Nvidia did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for a comment.

On Tuesday, CoreWeave acquired AI developer platform Weights & Biases for an undisclosed amount in a bid to extend its cloud platform offering. – Reuters

US pauses tariffs on cars from Mexico, Canada

▶ Trump's call with Trudeau yields no breakthrough

WASHINGTON: Automakers received temporary reprieve on Wednesday from US President Donald Trump's tariffs targeting Canada and Mexico, as concerns mounted over consumer impacts and talks with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau yielded no immediate breakthrough.

Following discussions with the "Big Three" US automakers – Stellantis, Ford and General Motors – Trump decided to "give a one-month exemption on any autos coming through USMCA", White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said, referring to the North American free trade pact.

"They made the ask, and the

president is happy to do it," Leavitt told reporters.

Wall Street stocks rallied after the announcement, with shares of the three automakers each surging about 6% or more.

The American Automotive Policy Council said it applauded Trump's move.

But prospects of wider relief were dampened after Trump's call with Trudeau.

The US leader said he was unconvinced that Ottawa had done enough to address Washington's concerns over smuggling of the dangerous drug fentanyl.

Canada contributes less than 1% of fentanyl to the United States' illicit supply, according to Canadian and US government data.

But Trump has shrugged off these figures.

On social media, Trump accused Trudeau of using the dispute to "stay in power", but noted their discussion ended in a

"somewhat" friendly manner.

Later on Wednesday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with his Canadian counterpart Melanie Joly, according to a US statement.

"Secretary Rubio reaffirmed the importance of US-Canadian relations and reiterated that the Trump Administration will continue to put Americans' safety and national security first," US State Department spokesman Tammy Bruce said.

Trump's sharp 25% tariffs on US imports from Canada and Mexico – with a lower rate for Canadian energy – kicked in Tuesday, sending global markets tumbling and straining ties between the neighbours.

Ottawa swiftly announced retaliatory levies, while Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum plans to unveil her response at a mass rally on Sunday.

The American president has cited illegal immigration and fentanyl trafficking in imposing tariffs, though he frequently lambasts alleged

trade imbalances when discussing levies.

Consumer items appear poised for US price hikes after Trump's tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China.

These include products like avocados, strawberries, electronics and gasoline.

Of the agricultural products imported from Mexico to the United States in 2023, more than 72% were fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as beer and other alcohol, government figures showed.

In a speech to the Congress on Tuesday, Trump said tariffs would bring "a little disturbance" to the world's biggest economy.

Leavitt defended Trump's remarks on Wednesday as "realistic", saying that standing up to foreign nations "requires a little bit of disruption".

But she added of tariffs: "The president is open to hearing about additional exemptions." – AFP



A banner reading 'Buy Canadian', in response to Trump's 25% tariffs on goods from Canada, is held aloft by a pair of hockey sticks in front of a house in the city of Winnipeg. – REUTERS/PIC

Amazon Prime Video tests AI-assisted dubbing

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon's Prime Video streaming service announced on Wednesday it will begin testing AI-assisted dubbing to make its international content more accessible to viewers worldwide.

The pilot programme will initially feature 12 licenced movies and series that previously lacked dubbing support, including *El Cid: La Leyenda*, *Mi Mamá Lora* and *Long Lost*.

The service will launch with English and Latin American Spanish dubbing options.

"At Prime Video, we believe in improving customers' experience with practical and useful AI

innovation," said Raf Soltanovich, VP of technology at Prime Video and Amazon MGM Studios.

"AI-aided dubbing is only available on titles that do not have dubbing support, and we are eager to explore a new way to make series and movies more accessible and enjoyable."

The developments came as union leaders in the creative industries bill AI as an existential crisis for artists, who worry that their livelihoods will be wiped out by the technology.

The role of AI was a major factor in the 2023 Hollywood strikes by actors and writers who feared that studios would use generative AI to

perform tasks typically done by paid creatives.

With over 200 million customers worldwide, Prime Video reports growing interest from viewers seeking to enjoy content regardless of its country of origin.

Unlike some competitors, Prime Video said its approach combines artificial intelligence with human expertise, as localisation professionals collaborate with AI technology to ensure quality control.

In December, YouTube expanded its AI-powered auto-dubbing capability to "hundreds of thousands of channels" in its Partner Programme that focus on

knowledge and informational content.

YouTube's system automatically generates dubs in eight languages for English content, including French, German, Hindi, Italian, Spanish, Indonesian, Japanese and Portuguese.

In another recent announcement, Lumiere Ventures and AI startup ElevenLabs unveiled a collaboration to recreate the voice of Alain Delva, the late French voice actor who dubbed Sylvester Stallone for nearly five decades, for an upcoming film.

This project aims to preserve the voice French audiences associate with Stallone's characters following Delva's passing in February. – AFP



Volkswagen bets on affordable EV for turnaround

BERLIN: Volkswagen unveiled on Wednesday a small electric car that will cost around €20,000 (RM95,000) – a more affordable price-point than its current EV range – as the German auto titan seeks to turn around its fortunes.

The VW ID. EVERY1, which is set to go on sale from 2027, will have a range of 250km and a top speed of 130kph, the manufacturer said as the vehicle was presented in Duesseldorf.

Europe's biggest carmaker has poured huge sums into the shift to electric vehicles in recent years but has struggled amid weakening demand in the continent and fierce competition from local rivals in key market China.

Its planned new model is more affordable than its previous electric cars, which started at around €35,000, and is aimed at helping it gain ground in the mass-market EV segment.

Other automakers, including Stellantis, Renault and Citroen are all planning electric cars for around the same price in the near future.

VW's latest offering is aimed at the European market, and will be produced in Europe, the manufacturer said – after causing controversy last year when it announced plans to relocate production of its iconic VW to Mexico to cut costs.

Like other European carmakers, Volkswagen is battling a severe crisis that has hammered its profits, and announced in December it would cut about 35,000 jobs in Germany by 2030.

Manufacturers have been under pressure to offer cheaper electric models to boost sales due to a looming tightening of EU emissions reduction targets.

On Monday, the bloc yielded to industry pressure, announcing European carmakers would have more time to meet the 2025 goals. – AFP

Adidas to cut 500 jobs, says Yeezy trainers are history

BERLIN: German sportswear giant Adidas said on Wednesday it will cut up to 500 jobs as it looks to continue its revival and turn the page on a messy split with US rapper Kanye West.

The reduction in the headcount, aimed at driving efficiency, will affect staff at Adidas's headquarters in Herzogenaurach and will progress on a voluntary basis, CEO Bjorn Gulden said.

Gulden took the reins at the sports outfitter in 2023 in the wake of its damaging split with West – who now goes by Ye – over anti-Semitic remarks by the rapper.

Following the end of the collaboration, Adidas began offloading excess stock of Yeezy products developed together with West.

Adidas said on Wednesday it had sold off its last remaining pair of Yeezy-brand trainers in the last quarter of last year.

The loss of West and the income from the lucrative athleisure line drove Adidas to a loss in 2023, but the group has since bounced back.

In 2024, Adidas made a net profit of €824 million (RM3.9 billion) and said it hoped to continue the upward trend in 2025. – AFP



Visitors at the Lufthansa Technik AG booth at the inaugural edition of Business Aviation Asia Forum and Expo 2025 held at Changi Exhibition Centre in Singapore. – REUTERS/PC

Lufthansa profit dives amid strikes, rising costs

► But the German airline says turnaround plan will boost earnings this year

BERLIN: German airline giant Lufthansa said yesterday its 2024 profit dived during a turbulent year marked by strikes, rising costs and delays in aircraft deliveries, but vowed a turnaround plan will boost earnings this year.

The group reported a net profit of €1.38 billion (RM6.6 billion) last year, down 18% from 2023.

Revenue came in at €37.6 billion, an increase of 6% from the previous year.

"Strikes weighed on the passenger airlines", Lufthansa said in a statement.

It also pointed to problems caused by "significantly higher costs, especially in Germany" as

well as "further delays in aircraft deliveries".

The result was nevertheless better than a forecast of just over €1 billion euros by analysts surveyed by the financial data firm FactSet.

It came after a two-year streak of improving earnings for one of Europe's biggest aviation groups, whose carriers include Lufthansa, Eurowings, Austrian, Swiss and Brussels Airlines.

Like other airline groups, Lufthansa was hit hard when the coronavirus shut down global air travel and it had to be bailed out by the German government in 2020.

It recorded two years of losses before flying strongly back into

profit as demand roared back when lockdowns were lifted.

The worse figures for 2024 came despite an increase in passengers by 7% to 131 million.

Lufthansa gave an upbeat outlook for 2025, however, saying it was aiming for operating profits that were "significantly higher" than last year.

A turnaround programme launched last year for its flagship carrier, aimed at making hefty savings in the years ahead, will "lay the foundation for a sustainable increase in earnings", it pledged.

Lufthansa faced substantial turbulence in the first half of 2024 when it was hit by a wave of strikes as workers pushed for higher pay to combat inflation.

The group's ground staff and cabin crew staged repeated walkouts, which Lufthansa slammed as "uncompromising" and said

risks "damaging our guests, the company and ultimately our employees".

The airline's problems worsened later in the year due to a string of issues, including weak market conditions and delayed aircraft deliveries.

After a poor second quarter, the group slashed its outlook for the year and launched the turnaround plan.

The Hamas-Israel war and broader tensions in the Middle East also had an impact, forcing Lufthansa on occasion to suspend flights to and from several destinations in the region.

The group has also blamed EU climate regulations, particularly rules related to sustainable aviation fuels, for increasing costs, and last year introduced an environmental charge for fares in Europe to compensate. – AFP

Swiss lawmakers vote to enshrine cash in constitution

ZURICH: Swiss lawmakers voted on Wednesday in favour of enshrining cash in the country's constitution as mobile and card payments have taken a dominant position.

The lawmakers in the lower house of Parliament voted overwhelmingly against a government counterproposal to a referendum sought by a libertarian movement.

The Swiss Liberty Movement, which groups together opponents of Covid-19 public health restrictions, submitted last month more than the 100,000 signatures needed to force a

public referendum in the Alpine nation.

The "Yes to a free and independent Swiss currency in bank notes and coins (Cash is liberty)" initiative would add a provision to the Alpine nation's constitution that franc cash notes and coins remain in circulation.

The national government opposed the initiative although its counterproposal still recognised the "major importance of cash for the economy and society".

The vote by lawmakers in the

lower house of Parliament means that the upper house must now take up the measure.

Only around a quarter of payments in Switzerland are now made with cash, according to the latest survey by Swiss Payment Monitor, a group that brings together academics and the payments industry.

It found that mobile payments – those made using a smartphone or another connected device – were the top method for the first time in October and November last year, with a 30.7% market share.

Debit cards followed in second place at 24.4% and cash in third place at 24.2%.

Last October, the new president of the Swiss central bank, Martin Schlegel, unveiled plans for a new series of franc notes, saying cash would remain a "widely used payment method in the future" despite the rising market share of mobile and card payments.

He noted cash continued having many advantages including working in case of power failures and technical problems. – AFP

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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CIMB Securities projects 7% drop in auto TIV this year

KUALA LUMPUR: CIMB Securities Sdn Bhd predicts a steeper 7% drop in automotive TIV, expecting 760,000 units in 2025, against the MAA's 780,000-unit forecast.

In a research note yesterday, the stockbroking firm said the projected decline is driven by several factors including the potential removal of the RON95 petrol subsidy in mid-2025, which could impact consumer purchasing power.

Despite this, it expects resilient demand in the sub-RM100,000 vehicle segment, which remains predominantly dominated by national brands and select entry-level models from Japanese automakers.

MAA has forecast a 4.5% drop in TIV this year, citing global economic uncertainty, exacerbated by the ongoing US-China trade war, as a key factor contributing to the expected decline. The association also noted the government's deferment of the revised open market value (OMV) calculation method from January 2025 to January 2026.

"We view this deferment as a temporary positive for the auto sector, given that MAA estimates the new OMV calculation could increase the average selling prices of locally assembled vehicles by 10-30%," said CIMB Securities, adding that the deferment alleviates immediate pricing pressures.

CIMB Securities' forecast also takes into account a stable overnight policy rate for 2025 and the government's plans to retain fuel subsidies for 85% of RON95 users, as outlined in Budget 2025.

"This policy aims to keep prices affordable for mass-market buyers, helping national brands hold a 64.5% share in 2025, against 35.5% for non-national brands," – Bernama

Ringgit rises against dollar for third consecutive day

THE ringgit closed higher against the US dollar for the third consecutive day yesterday as the greenback's safe-haven status weakened due to a mix of slowing US economic data, tariff uncertainty, and unpredictable policymaking, prompting traders to look elsewhere, said an analyst.

At 6pm, the domestic unit rose to 4.4230/4270 against the US dollar from 4.4270/4320 on Wednesday's close.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes noted that the US dollar remained on the back foot for now.

"Unless the US economy experiences an unexpected surge that significantly shocks the markets, the path of least resistance appears lower over the short term," he told Bernama.

Innes said the broad US dollar selloff is fuelling strength across the Asian foreign exchange market, with the ringgit gaining ground.

Meanwhile, the ringgit was traded lower against major currencies.

It was lower against the British pound at 5.6964/7015 from 5.6825/6889 on Wednesday, slipped versus the euro to 4.7773/7816 from 4.7409/7462 and fell vis-a-vis the Japanese yen to 2.9940/9969 from 2.9614/9647 previously.

The local currency traded mixed against Asean currencies.

It eased against the Singapore dollar to 3.3186/3218 from 3.3126/3166 but went up against the Thai baht to 13.0939/1124 from 13.1545/1756.

The ringgit increased against the Indonesian rupiah at Thursday's close of 270.6/271.0 from 271.3/271.8 and was almost unchanged against the Philippine peso at 7.71/7.73 from 7.72/7.73 on Wednesday.

Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.4820	4.3480	4.3380
1 Australian Dollar	2.8550	2.7400	2.7240
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3640	3.2670	3.2590
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1210	3.0370	3.0250
1 Euro	4.8450	4.6890	4.6690
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5760	2.4810	2.4650
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3640	3.2670	3.2590
1 Sterling Pound	5.7870	5.6040	5.5840
1 Swiss Franc	5.0650	4.8490	4.8340
100 UAE Dirham	123.4600	117.0600	116.8600
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7650	3.5060	3.3060
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.2200	59.5900	N/A
100 Danish Krone	66.5800	61.2800	61.0800
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.2800	55.3800	55.1800
100 Indian Rupee	5.2400	4.9200	4.7200
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0284	0.0257	0.0207
100 Japanese Yen	3.0070	2.9110	2.9010
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.7000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	42.1900	38.8000	38.6000
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6300	1.5300	1.3300
100 Philippine Peso	7.9400	7.4800	7.2800
100 Qatar Riyal	124.3200	118.0200	117.8200
100 Saudi Riyal	120.8100	114.6900	114.4900
100 South Africa Rand	25.3800	22.9200	22.7200
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5600	1.4300	1.2300
100 Swedish Krona	45.3700	41.3200	41.1200
100 Thai Baht	13.9200	12.3500	11.9500

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

CIMB Group Holdings Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM9.25



Source: Bloomberg

CIMB held a briefing on Wednesday where it unveiled its next mid-term strategy plan. Titled Forward30 (F30), it intends to focus on 4Cs: i) Capital & resources – invest in high ROE business and capital management; ii) cash – low cost deposit gathering; iii) cross sell – raise capital-light non-Il; and iv) capabilities – cost efficiencies from technology.

In our view, the key thrusts of CIMB's F30 appear to be a continuation of strategic direction such as a liability-led growth strategy, allocating capital to high returns business/countries, and growing non-Il – areas in which CIMB has done rather well. In terms of capital allocation, CIMB intends to accelerate allocation towards the higher return countries (i.e. Indonesia and Singapore) and business segments (e.g. commercial and wealth management). The group will continue with its technology capex in F30 at a similar annualised pace as in its previous F23+ plan, but there will be a shift in emphasis towards "change-the-bank" capex from BAU technology capex.

Of the 4Cs above, cash and cross sell collectively are expected to be the biggest driver in lifting ROEs, thanks to wholesale, wealth, commercial, and transaction banking. By geography, Indonesia is expected to be a major driver, expectedly so given the increased capital allocation there. Drilling deeper into the financial metrics underpinning the ROE target, this appears to be a combination of broad-based drivers – lower funding cost, improved contribution from capital-light, client franchise income, better cost efficiency and some capital management.

BUY and RM9.25 TP. – **RHB Research, March 6**

Sunway Construction Group Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM5.63



Source: Bloomberg

SUNWAY Construction announced it was awarded a RM1.5 billion contract by Sunway Integrated Properties for the RTS TOD Project at Bukit Chagar. This follows SCGB's completion of around RM1.2 billion in projects at Sunway City Iskandar Puteri.

The RTS TOD Project comprises two parts (Part A and Part B). Part A is for the multi-storey car park and ride building combined with the drop-off and pick-up facility, immigration customs and quarantine complex connection, the perimeter ring road and retaining walls. Part B covers the retail mall, podium and topside property at Bukit Chagar station.

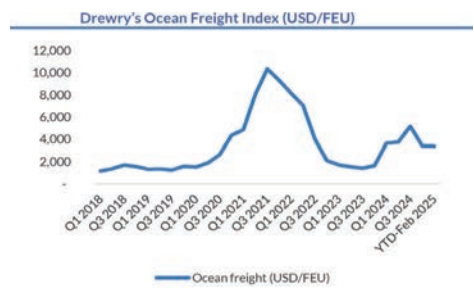
Based on our estimates, SCGB's construction orderbook after taking into account the RTS TOD Project should be RM7.8 billion. As of end Dec 2024, the company has RM14.6 billion worth of active tenders (vs RM10.6 billion as of end-Q3'24) with around 70% comprising data centre (DC) jobs, mainly for DC providers from the UK, the US and Singapore.

Prospective jobs for SCGB include Segment 2 of Penang Light Rail Transit, upcoming medical centres by Sunway and the potential expansion of Sunway's Ipoh Mall. Moreover, we believe that SCGB may have a chance of clinching future expansion works for the JHBX10 DC (client from a Tier-1 country which could be eligible for validated end-user status with regard to US chip restrictions) as we gather that the total planned capacity is to be around 200-300MW. SCGB's RM3.9 billion in total jobs awards so far for JHBX10 dc are estimated to cover between 100MW and 150MW of capacity contracted out, based on our projections.

BUY and RM5.63 TP. – **RHB Research, March 6**

Transportation

Neutral



Source: Bloomberg, RHB

WESTPORTS posted a Q4'24 core net profit of RM266 million (+17% QoQ, +29% YoY), bringing FY24 earnings to RM902 million (+16% YoY), above our and Street estimates at 106-108% of the full-year forecasts. The deviations were mainly from lower-than-expected operating expenses and higher-than-expected rental revenue. Post results, we lifted our FY25-26 earnings by 7-8% to include upward adjustments on rental revenue estimates and lower operating expenses.

FM Global Logistics (FM) reported Q2'25 (June) core profit of RM9.1 million (+21% QoQ, +10% YoY), bringing 1H'25 core earnings to RM16.1 million (-5% YoY). We deem the earnings to be in line with our full-year forecast as we anticipate FM to chalk a better 2H'25 performance. Hence, we keep our earnings forecasts unchanged as the results were in line. TASCOS' Q3'25 (March) earnings fell to RM9.1 million (-33% QoQ, -38% YoY), bringing 9M'25 core earnings to RM34 million (-24% YoY), below expectations at 55% of full-year estimates. The shortfall stemmed from weaker contributions in freight forwarding and contract logistics. Post-results, we cut FY25-27 earnings by 14%, 12%, and 10%, reflecting lower revenue growth and margin assumptions amid slower volume recovery.

RHB Economics remains optimistic about Malaysia's trade performance in 2025 as the country's export-oriented industries are expected to benefit from the positive global economic outlook, driven by easing global monetary conditions and steady economic growth in major economies. However, RHB Economics remain cautious as the trade outlook is still uncertain due to potential changes in future tariff policies, global supply chain disruptions and inflationary pressures. – **RHB Research, March 6**

Find cooking inspiration this Ramadan

➤ Three influencers to follow for easy, delicious recipes

■ BY **S.TAMARAI CHELVI**

DURING the holy month of Ramadan, many may find it difficult to obtain or prepare a good meal for breaking fast (or *buka puasa*) due to time and budgetary constraints.

Thankfully, many food influencers have risen to the occasion by sharing recipes and tips as well as pointing out where great food can be obtained. Audiences have responded positively as well, turning some social media users into overnight stars with millions of followers and viewers.

If you are looking for food inspiration during Ramadan, here are three influencers you should follow:

Khairul Amin Kamarulzaman

Home chef Khairul Amin Kamarulzaman, or simply known as Khairulaming, is arguably the most popular of the three and his videos are always hotly anticipated.

Seven years ago, he launched his *30 Hari, 30 Resepi* (30 Days, 30 Recipes) series by posting food and drink recipes online during Ramadan.

Since then, Khairul has built a massive following with his easy-to-follow recipes with simple ingredients. Now, his every video garners millions of views. Some claim whenever the home chef posts a recipe, its ingredients would shortly be out of stock at grocery stores during Ramadan.

This year, Khairul has upped his game with *30 Hari, 60 Resepi*.

On top of that, his Instagram page is set to feature live streams of Ramadan bazaars, highlighting the best ones, standout food and local entrepreneurs.

Khairul will also be releasing eight episodes of his travels to Oman.

Hamdan Mubarak

Hamdan Mubarak has started posting recipes, specifically for the *sahur* meal, which is an early morning breakfast Muslims have before they start their fast.

These simple recipes include *telur mata masak cili padi* and nugget balado. For 2025, Hamdan has set up his studio to resemble a *kampung* house, complete with a wooden wall



Hamdan cooking food outdoors.
 – PIC FROM THREADS @HAMDANMUBARAK_



Home chef Khairul, whose Instagram posts often receive more than a million views.
 – PICS COURTESY OF KHAIRULAMING



Che Sayang cooks authentic Malay dishes. – PICS FROM THREADS @CHESAYANGKITCHEN



Fishball with glass noodles (left) and fried chicken (right) by Che Sayang.



Sagu gula Melaka made by Khairul.



Telur masak with dendeng nyet berapi and sambal nyet berapi.
 – PIC FROM THREADS @KHAIRULAMING

with palm fronds.

Expect mouth-watering meat dishes, creamy beverages and delightful desserts. One thing to note is Hamdan cooks larger portions of food – useful if you need to feed a family.

Abdul Qayyum Halid

Abdul Qayyum Halid, popularly known as Che

Sayang, has delicious recipes lined up for Ramadan. With the tagline of “two minutes, one recipe”, he cooks authentic Malay dishes.

He uses local ingredients, including herbs and spices, and also explores cuisines from other Asian countries. His fish, prawn and squid dishes look particularly scrumptious and moreover, are easy to prepare.

Resorts World Genting, Kechara Soup Kitchen join forces to aid needy

■ BY **JOHN TAN**

RESORTS World Genting has linked arms with Kechara Soup Kitchen to foster the spirit of giving, launching a collaborative effort to empower the marginalised communities in Kuala Lumpur.

To celebrate its Founders' Day and 60th anniversary, Resorts World Genting joined Kechara in distributing over 190 food packs to the needy on Jalan Kancil in Pudu.

“Feb 28 is our Founders' Day and this year, we thought of giving back to the community. Over the past two years, we have not been able to give back with the lockdown and pandemic. So, this year, we wanted to do more. We have been motivated to link up with and do more for the local community,” said Resorts World Genting executive vice president of sales and marketing Spencer Lee.

This effort is only the beginning as both organisations aim to collaborate further, working on devising more sustainable plans to assist the marginalised communities in Kuala Lumpur.

Among them are job placement programmes, which capitalise on Resorts World Genting's connections as it has operations spanning multiple industries.

More plans will be announced soon when



Lee (left) and Selladurai handing out food at Kechara Soup Kitchen.
 – PICS BY JOHN TAN/THE SUN

details are finalised, said Kechara marketing representative Selladurai Perakasam.

“We are now only going back to the drawing board to see how we can collaborate further. We have a lot of ideas. Resorts World Genting also has a lot of ideas. So, we will see how we can gel them together,” he explained.

Since 2008, Kechara has worked to aid the needy, serving them through its soup kitchen, food bank and empowerment programmes.

As for Resorts World Genting, the organisation is focused on contributing to economic development, community welfare, environmental care and employee welfare.



Food packs being stacked and organised before distribution in Pudu, Kuala Lumpur.



Your weekend horoscope

Fresh twist to Ramadan culinary

► Malaysia's first reality cooking drama with 'watch today, buy tomorrow' concept

THIS Ramadan, catch *Dapur Goodday: Misi Sarimah & Tuyah vs Che Ton*, Malaysia's first reality cooking drama featuring a unique concept of "watch today, buy tomorrow" at Bazaar Ramadan Stadium Shah Alam.

Viewers can experience the flavours firsthand by purchasing the featured dishes showcased in the programme at the Ramadan Bazaar at Stadium Shah Alam, until March 29.

What makes this show special is that every recipe features Goodday milk as a key ingredient, enriching the flavours of each dish. Some of the must-try Ramadan delights include *nasi hujan panas*, *roti john*, bread and butter pudding, *kari ikan bawal*, *ayam perik*, and many more.

Beyond purchasing the featured dishes, bazaar-goers can take part in activities, including a game of spin-the-wheel with a minimum spend of RM20 for a sure chance of a reward. They can also enjoy meet-and-greet sessions with the celebrity cast of the show and win prizes from Astro Shaw and Goodday.

Goodday is also setting up its own booth at the bazaar. The same 29 featured dishes from the show will be made available the next day at the bazaar. This initiative is especially relevant during the holy month, a time of self-reflection and unity, as it brings families and friends together over shared culinary delights.

Dapur Goodday cranks up the drama to a new level by reviving beloved characters from last year's hit Ramadan drama *Khunsa*, featuring the



Dapur Goodday: Misi Sarimah & Tuyah vs Che Ton brings the drama by reviving beloved characters.

Che Ton played by Sherry Alhadad, Sarimah by Zarina Zainoordin and Tuyah by Ezu Hashim, but it also infuses the entire series with an exciting new twist. This time, Sarimah and Tuyah make a dramatic return to Earth after a mysterious UFO abduction, reuniting *Che Ton* under tense circumstances.

An enigmatic stranger then thrusts them into a high-stakes mission and if they succeed, they secure their place on Earth permanently. *Dapur Goodday* is not just a cooking show, it is a merging of feel-good moments and pulse-pounding episodes.

The show also features special guest appearances in each episode, bringing in iconic Malaysian film and drama characters, including Zizan Razak from the famed *Polis Evo* movies, Datuk Rosyam Noor from *Kala Malam Bulan Mengambang*, Scha Al-Yahya from *Awan Dania*, Naim Daniel from *Project: High Council*, Joey Daud from *Kampung Pisang Bersiri-Siri*, Tony Eusoff from *P. Ramlee* and many more.

Catch *Dapur Goodday: Misi Sarimah & Tuyah vs Che Ton* on Astro Ria daily throughout Ramadan at 5.30pm, and on Astro Go and On Demand.

Meghan Markle's new show goes live

MEGHAN Markle's new lifestyle show went live on Netflix last Tuesday, showcasing the former British royal as a thriving domestic maven.

The Duchess of Sussex, wife to Britain's Prince Harry, harvests honey, makes pasta and mixes bath salts against an idyllic California backdrop.

A rustic and effortlessly chic home, which is a luxury property near her home, provides the setting for the first episode. In the show, Harry only makes a cameo at the end of the eight episodes.

With Love, Meghan also gives insights about life as a British royal and the couple's unique experience with racism within establishment.

Episodes of *With Love, Meghan* feature appearances from chef Alice Waters, actress-writer Mindy Kaling and Abigail Spencer, one of Markle's *Suits* co-stars.

The show coincides with a rebranding of Markle's jam-and-cookies brand, which was originally called American Riviera Orchard but is now known as As Ever.



With Love, Meghan is on Netflix. - IMDBPIC

The series is the latest effort by the Sussexes to make their own financial way after being cut off from the royal purse.

A reported US\$100 million (RM442.9 million) deal with Netflix yielded the much-talked-about *Harry & Meghan*, a six-episode tell-all about their relationship and their high-profile split from the House of Windsor.

That was followed by Harry's successful autobiography *Spare*, which re-trod much of the same ground. But subsequent media ventures that have not rehashed the same grievances have fallen flat.

A Spotify interview podcast by Markle was not renewed after a first series critics blasted as pointless, while Netflix offerings about the sport of polo and the Invictus Games failed to make much impression.

Early reviews of *With Love, Meghan* in the British press were not kind, with *The Telegraph* calling the series an "exercise in narcissism."

Meanwhile Britain's *The Times* newspaper said the show was desperate in its "upbeatness" with Markle presenting her wealth and exclusive lifestyle as if it is available to anyone.



ARIES

Mar 21 – Apr 19

Bursting with energy this week, you are wrestling with swirling thoughts. You may find peace by keeping your words steady. A financial decision is looming, nudging you towards smart and thrifty choices. At work, your efforts are catching eyes, earning you the praise you deserve. Keep calm and steady progress keeps you grounded.



TAURUS

Apr 20 – May 20

You are sensing love all around — whether you are planning a sweet date night with your partner or crossing paths with someone new who clicks with you. Something from your past is resurfacing, giving you a golden chance to tie up loose ends and feel fulfilled. By sorting it out, you are welcoming a wave of closure that feels refreshing.



GEMINI

May 21 – June 20

Wrestling with indecision, you are losing a bit of sleep over a situation you know too well. Fear of shaking things up is slowing you down, but your charm is flipping the script in your favour. With your quick wit, you are smoothing over bumps and turning tricky moments into wins with a clever twist. It is only a matter of time until you find victory again!



CANCER

June 22 – July 22

You are riding a high this week, soaking in praise for all your hard work. Collaborating with others is unveiling handy tips and secrets you will treasure. You are keeping things steady by not betting everything on one move, staying ready for any sudden shifts that might come your way unexpectedly. Keep up the pace and you might get to your destination soon.



LEO

July 23 – Aug 22

This weeked, you are unwinding from a whirlwind of stress, leaning into rest to recharge your spark. Someone's mixed messages are throwing you off, but you are seeing through it soon enough. You are powering through with grit, trusting that these fleeting hiccups are fading fast into the background. Just be patient and pounce when the timing is right and potent.



VIRGO

Aug 23 – Sept 22

You are holding your ground in a work challenge, building courage despite any doubts about losing control. Pausing on a big call is proving smart as it keeps your strength intact. Keep up this pace as a truthful friend will be stepping in, cheering you on and lifting your spirits with solid backing for your goals. You are never alone in these battles, so keep braving through.



LIBRA

Sept 23 – Oct 22

Basking in wins earned through grit and guts, this week you are spotting fresh financial openings to chase. However, before any investments, do your research. The good vibes are pushing you forward, making success feel like second nature. You are staying sharp, dodging sneaky tricks from others and keeping your well-deserved rewards safe and sound.



SCORPIO

Oct 24 – Nov 21

You are smoothing out a little spat in love, finding strength in focusing on yourself for a bit. A little me-time would help speeding up the process. A big change is rolling in, lifting your relationship to a better place with ease. Remember to make communication the centre of your relationship. Your emotions are calming down, guiding you toward a future that is looking brighter every day.



SAGITTARIUS

Nov 22 – Dec 21

Climbing out of a funk from a recent loss, your health is picking up steadily. Exercise and a good diet are essential for a healthy mind and body. A smart friend is dropping wisdom that will likely heal you inside out, reminding you of your worth. Heed their advice! You are seeing yourself in a bold new light, rediscovering what makes you shine uniquely.



CAPRICORN

Dec 22 – Jan 19

You are uncovering a surprising truth, shifting financial stress into a flicker of hope. Financial worries are easing up as an unexpected ally swoops in with a lifeline. Use this time to make sustainable financial decisions. You are finding your emotional footing again, opening doors to fresh starts that feel promising and steady.



AQUARIUS

Jan 20 – Feb 18

You are buzzing with good news, reigniting your fire for new adventures. Old pals and work buddies are joining you in the fun, sparking ideas for ventures that excite you. Time to jot them down so you can keep track of them. You are leading the charge, bringing order and strength to projects that feel like an ideal fit. Come up with a steady schedule to ensure these projects materialise.



PISCES

Feb 19 – Mar 20

Missed shots are behind you, and you are rising with a flicker of hope as love steps into view. A warm, steady soul is sweeping in, lifting you higher with every glance. Get ready for your own romantic tale of love and passion. Depression is loosening its grip, replaced by joy.

This is contributed by Mystic Kali Tarot

Buried Hearts dangles twists for K-drama fans

➤ Intricate tale of political revenge, love, deception captivates with complex characters

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

ADDING to Disney+ Hotstar's compelling collection, *Buried Hearts* is a riveting South Korean political revenge drama. Directed by Jin Chang-gyu and penned by writer Lee Myung-hee, the series explores themes of ambition, betrayal and the intricate dance of power within a conglomerate.

Plot overview

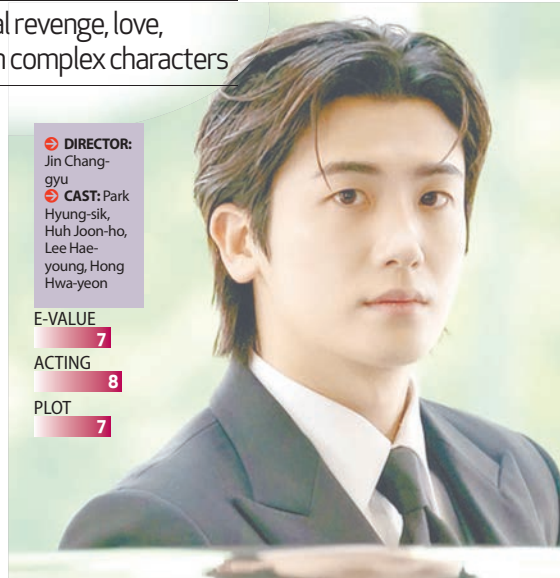
The narrative centres on Seo Dong-ju, portrayed by Park Hyung-sik, the head of the chairman's secretary office at Daesan Group. Dong-ju is renowned for his loyalty, earning him the moniker "Daesan Man". However, beneath this facade lies a man with grand ambitions to ascend to the pinnacle of the company. This role is a refreshing departure for Park, showcasing his versatility as he embodies a character torn between duty and desire.

Opposite him stands Yeom Jang-seon, played by Huh Joon-ho. A former director of the National Intelligence Service and a law professor, Jang-seon is a formidable power broker in South Korean politics.

His character exudes an intimidating presence, with a penchant for manipulating those around him to maintain his grip on power. Heo's portrayal brings depth to this antagonist, making him a compelling figure in the unfolding drama.

Character exploration

The series takes meticulous care in fleshing out its characters, ensuring viewers gain a deep understanding



This series features Park in a more mature role.

DIRECTOR:
Jin Chang-gyu
CAST: Park Hyung-sik, Huh Joon-ho, Lee Hae-young, Hong Hwa-yeon

E-VALUE
7
ACTING
8
PLOT
7

of their backgrounds and motivations. Dong-ju's relationship with Yeom Jang-seon, the chairman's granddaughter, takes an unexpected turn when she betrays him, adding emotional weight to the narrative.

Cha Kang-cheon (Woo Hyun), the powerful patriarch of Daesan Group, sets the stage for intense corporate conflicts, while Heo Il-do (Lee Hae-young), his ambitious son-in-law and president of Daesan Energy, triggers internal power struggles as he vies for control.

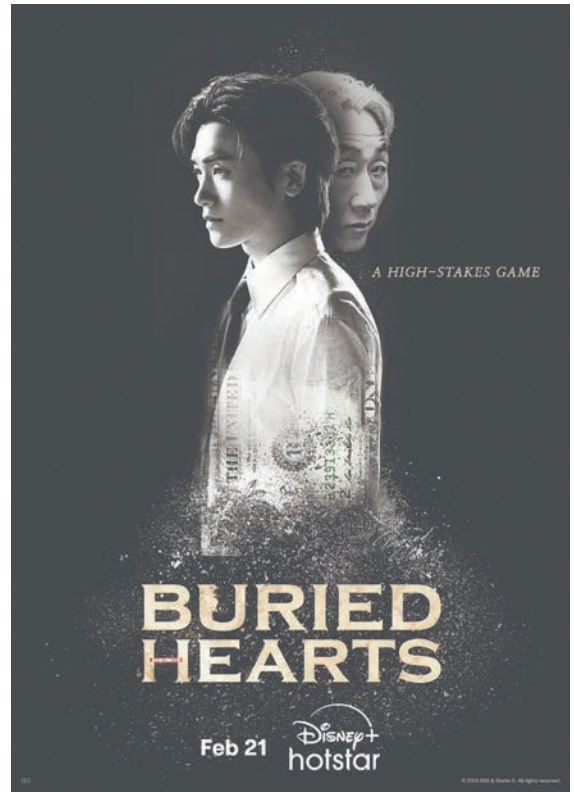
Eun-nam's mother Cha Deok-hee (Kim Jung-nan) and her sister Cha Guk-hee (Hong Soo-hyun) further complicate the family dynamics with their own stakes in the company. Meanwhile, Yeom Hee-cheol (Kwon

Soo-hyun), a prosecutor and Eun-nam's husband adds another layer of tension as his professional and personal ties intertwine with the unfolding drama.

With a well-rounded ensemble, this series balances political intrigue with personal betrayal, making every character an essential piece of the larger power play.

Betrayal, twists

A pivotal moment early in the series is the unforeseen betrayal by Eun-nam. Dong-ju, confident in his relationship and future with Eun-nam, is blindsided when she marries another man, leaving him devastated. This twist is masterfully executed, subverting audience



Buried Hearts offers fresh perspectives on familiar tropes of political intrigue and revenge. - PICS FROM DISNEY+ HOTSTAR

expectations and setting the tone for the intricate web of deceit and ambition that characterises the series.

While the show excels in character development and plot intricacies, certain segments may feel protracted. Viewers are encouraged to approach the series with patience, as the deliberate pacing allows for a deeper understanding of the characters' psyches and the high-stakes world they manage.

Familiar tropes in fresh light

Political intrigue and power struggles are staples in Korean dramas. However, the series infuses these elements with fresh

perspectives, particularly through its complex characters and their morally ambiguous decisions. The show invites viewers to consider the lengths individuals will go to achieve their desires and the ethical compromises they make along the way.

As the story unfolds, the intricate power plays and evolving character dynamics make for a captivating viewing experience. The foundation laid in the initial episodes hints at more surprises, alliances and betrayals, raising anticipation on what else the show has in store for audiences.

New episodes of *Buried Hearts* are released every Friday and Saturday on Disney+ Hotstar.

J-pop fest set for KL

CALLING J-pop fans - Japan's latest urban festival The Central Music and Entertainment Festival 2025 is set to make its Malaysian debut in Kuala Lumpur on April 26, featuring an electric line-up of top tier J-pop artistes such as Atarashii Gakko, Creepy Nuts and Tatsuya Kitani.

In 2025, Central expands its vision beyond Japan, bringing the best of Japanese music to global audiences. The expansion highlights Central's mission to bring the sounds of Japan to the world, offering music lovers a truly unique and unforgettable cultural experience.

Headlining the event is Atarashii Gakko, the self-proclaimed "Youth Representatives of Japan", which has taken the global stage by storm with its high-energy performances, original choreography and genre-defying sound.

Its viral hit *Otona Blue* propelled them to international fame, culminating in a show-stopping



The festival will kick off in Yokohama, head to Taipei and end in Kuala Lumpur.

performance at Coachella 2024. Known for their bold stage presence and dynamic style, the girl group is set to bring its infectious energy and unique flair to Malaysia.

Joining them is Japan's most celebrated hip-hop duo Creepy Nuts,

featuring rapper R-Shitei and DJ Matsunaga. With chart-topping hits such as *Bling-Bang-Bang-Born* that have amassed over 700 million streams, the duo will bring an explosive mix of rap and turntablism.

Rounding out the lineup is Tatsuya



Kitani will be among the artistes performing during the festival.

- PIC FROM FACEBOOK @CLUBUNREALITY

Kitani, a multi-talented artiste who rose to fame through online music platforms and has since become a household name in the anime and music worlds. Best known for his heartfelt anime theme songs, including *Where Our Blue Is* from

Jujutsu Kaisen, Kitani's soulful voice and poignant lyrics have earned him a loyal global fanbase.

Tickets for the show in Kuala Lumpur are priced at RM398 for the standing area and RM298 for the seats. - by MARK MATHEN VICTOR



Supra revisited

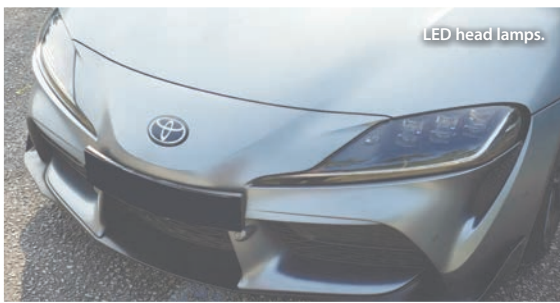
We rekindle a childhood dream of driving a symbol of Japanese automotive excellence



Sleek body designed to boost aerodynamic performance.



Volcanic Ash Metallic colour.



LED head lamps.

BY TIMOTHY PRAKASH

BORN in the land of the Rising Sun, the Toyota Supra is not just a car, it's an emotion, it's culture and a testament to power.

Over the years, the Supra has undergone several generations of development, each bringing advancements in technology, design, and engineering.

Originally introduced in 1978 as a variant of the Toyota Celica, the Supra quickly evolved into a standalone model, earning a reputation for its blend of reliability and high performance.

From its early days as a sleek, rear-wheel-drive coupe to its legendary status in the 1990s with the turbocharged fourth-generation (A80) model, the Supra became a symbol of Japanese automotive excellence.

After a hiatus in the early 2000s,

the Supra made a triumphant return in 2019, rekindling its legacy with a modern twist.

The current Toyota Supra, known as the A90 (and A91 for later variants), marks a thrilling chapter in the model's storied history, blending modern engineering with nostalgic design cues.

Unveiled in 2019, this fifth-generation Supra was developed in collaboration with BMW, sharing its platform and engine with the Z4 roadster. Which has led to people calling it the "BMW Supra."

While this partnership sparked some debate among purists, the result is a car that delivers exceptional performance, agility, and cutting-edge technology.

Unleash the power

The A90 GR Supra is powered by a turbocharged 3.0-litre inline-six engine, producing 388PS and 500Nm

of torque.

It also offers a 2.0-litre turbocharged four-cylinder engine in some markets, catering to a broader audience.

The car features a rear-wheel-drive layout, an 8-speed automatic transmission, and a near-perfect 50:50 weight distribution, ensuring exceptional balance and agility. This allows the Supra to sprint from 0-100kph in just 4.1 seconds!

The power delivery is smooth yet explosive, with a satisfying growl from the exhaust that intensifies as you push the car harder. The Supra's rear-wheel-drive layout and weight distribution make it an absolute joy to drive.

The chassis is stiff, the steering is precise, and the suspension strikes a fine balance between sporty firmness and everyday comfort.

Whether you're carving through winding roads or cruising on the highway, the GR Supra feels planted

and responsive.

After all, this was made to go up against Nissan's Godzilla, the GTR, a rivalry that has been around for ages.

We cannot tell you exactly how fast we went in this beast but all we can say is, "The chicken was still warm." If you are unfamiliar with that line, a quick Google search will show you why that was Jeremy Clarkson's most popular line amongst car enthusiasts.

Nod to the past, Leap into the future

The GR Supra's design is a masterclass in blending heritage with modernity. Its double-bubble roof, muscular rear haunches, and ducktail spoiler are clear nods to the beloved A80 Supra of the 1990s.

Yet, the A90 stands on its own with sharp, aggressive lines, a low-slung stance, and aerodynamic details that scream performance.

The front grille and LED

headlights give it a futuristic edge, while the rear's wide hips and taillights evoke a sense of raw power. It's a car that turns heads everywhere it goes, whether you're a Supra fan or not.

Inside, the car's cabin is a blend of sportiness and modern luxury. The driver-focused layout puts all controls within easy reach, and the seats offer excellent support during spirited driving.

While the interior shares some components with its BMW Z4 cousin, Toyota has added its own touches, such as Supra-branded details and a unique dashboard design.

The 8.8-inch touchscreen infotainment system is intuitive and responsive, featuring Apple CarPlay, navigation, and a premium sound system.

The digital instrument cluster provides all the essential information in a clean, modern layout.

If you have ever owned or driven a



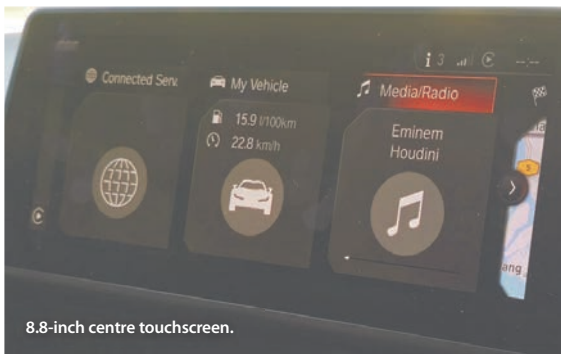
3.0 litre turbocharged straight-six.



Ducktail spoiler.



19-inch forged alloy wheels and Brembo brakes.



8.8-inch centre touchscreen.



8.8 inch colour tft display.



Dual-zone climate control.

BMW, these infotainment controls should not be an issue. If you are new to it, just play around with it for a few minutes and you will get the hang of it.

However, the cabin's compact size and limited visibility may not suit everyone. If you are tall and big just like this writer, the low roofline might be an issue getting in and out of the car, making you look less sexy while doing so. Still, these are minor trade-offs for a car designed with performance in mind.

Driving pleasure

The GR Supra is not just about straight-line speed; it's about the overall driving experience. The car feels agile and nimble, with a level of feedback that makes every drive engaging.

The turbocharged engine provides ample torque across the rev range, and the exhaust note is addictive without being overly intrusive. Although, I wished that the exhaust note was a little louder for a small car with a turbocharged 3.0-litre inline-six engine.

On twisty roads, the Supra shines. Its precise steering and well-tuned suspension inspire confidence, allowing you to push the car to its limits while feeling completely in control, even though it is a rear-wheel-drive car.



JBL surround sound system.

The optional adaptive suspension further enhances the ride, adapting to different driving conditions with ease.

The GR Supra's collaboration with BMW has been a point of contention for some enthusiasts.

While the shared platform and engine have undoubtedly contributed to the car's performance and refinement, some argue that it dilutes the Supra's Japanese identity.

However, Toyota has worked hard to infuse the Supra with its own character, and the result is a car that feels distinct and true to its heritage.

Living up to its name

For aficionado who grew up



Three-spoke leather steering wheel.



Gear shifter and infotainment controls.



Electronic handbrake.

idolising the A80 Supra, the A90 is a dream come true. And for a new generation of drivers, it's a gateway to the world of high-performance sports cars.

The GR Supra isn't just a revival – it's a reaffirmation of Toyota's commitment to performance and a reminder that the spirit of the Supra is alive and well.

The Toyota GR Supra is a modern classic in the making, blending heritage, innovation, and pure driving joy into one unforgettable package.

Would we buy one?

The simple answer is yes. Why? Well because we are fanboys of nameplates such as the Supra and Skyline, so owning these cars would feel just right.

As long as Toyota keeps doing it right, we will keep buying them, and as for the A90 Supra, Toyota did it right.

If you have deep pockets and a burning passion for the Supra, the prices start from RM645,000 for the manual transmission. The auto

transmission variant that we tested is RM655,000.

Specifications

Engine: 3.0-litre, turbocharged, inline-six-cylinder

Power: 388PS @ 6500rpm

Torque: 500Nm @ 5000rpm

Gearbox: 8-speed automatic

Top speed: 249kph

Price (As tested): RM655,000

We like: Power and handling.
We don't like: Small interior and low roofline.

New age alternative SUV

Jaecoo launched J7 Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) in M'sia

JAECOO has officially launched the J7 Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle (PHEV) in Malaysia, presenting it as a significant alternative to traditional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and fully electric models.

Designed to cater to the evolving preferences of Malaysian drivers, the J7 PHEV integrates advanced hybrid technology with an emphasis on performance, efficiency, and practicality.

At the heart of the J7 PHEV is a 1.5-litre hybrid-specific engine, which replaces the 1.6-litre turbocharged unit used in the Chery Tiggo 7 Pro. This powertrain produces 143PS and 215Nm of torque, prioritising fuel economy and extended range over outright power.

Although it generates slightly less output than its petrol-only counterpart, the J7 PHEV is designed to excel in long-distance travel.

To demonstrate its endurance, the vehicle recently completed a rigorous test run from Singapore to Hat Yai, Thailand, covering an impressive WLTP range of over 1,200 km on a single charge.

The feat underscores its ability to handle extensive road trips efficiently, positioning it as a practical solution for drivers who seek both fuel savings and environmental benefits.

Inside, Jaecoo has refined the cabin with a minimalist yet functional design approach.

The door panels have been redesigned, eliminating ornate grab



handles and traditional physical door mirror switches.

The centre console has been restructured, replacing the conventional gear lever with a steering column-mounted stalk, while a row of physical buttons, including dedicated controls for EV and HEV driving modes, ensures a user-friendly layout.

Despite the inclusion of a large battery pack beneath the boot floor, the J7 PHEV retains a 500-litre cargo capacity, which expands to 1,265 litres when the rear seats are folded down.

The full-size spare tyre has been replaced with a tyre repair foam canister, optimising storage space while maintaining practicality.

The J7 PHEV will be available in three exterior colour options, which are Khaki White, Moonlight Silver (with a

black roof), and Carbon Crystal Black, all complemented by a black interior. The J7 PHEV is priced at RM158,800.

All J7 PHEV SUVs come with a seven-year engine warranty or up to 150,000km mileage and an eight-year warranty or up to 160,000km mileage on its battery, power motor and power motor controller unit.

The eight-year warranty provides a 1 to 1 exchange when the state of health (SOH) of the battery falls below 70% during the warranty tenure.

In conjunction with the launch, Jaecoo announced a special early bird package which qualifies all existing J7 PHEV bookings and bookings placed up to 2nd March 2025 for a 10-year warranty or up to 1,000,000km mileage extended engine and high voltage battery warranty.



Volvo C40 Recharge now EC40

VOLVO Car Malaysia has officially rebranded the Volvo C40 Recharge as the Volvo EC40, reflecting the company's move toward a more streamlined model naming strategy.

The fully electric crossover SUV, which was first introduced in December 2022, now offers an extended range of 554km and debuts in a new Cloud Blue exterior colour.

The decision to rename the vehicle aligns with Volvo's commitment to enhancing transparency in its product lineup.

According to Volvo Car Malaysia, the EC40 retains all the standout features of its predecessor while improving efficiency and offering customers greater clarity in model identification.

Equipped with an 82kWh battery pack, the EC40 supports 200kW DC fast charging, allowing it to charge from 10 to 80% in just 28 minutes.

The vehicle features advanced pixel headlights that automatically adjust brightness for optimised visibility, ensuring a safer and more comfortable driving experience.

Additionally, customers will continue to benefit from five years of complimentary Digital Services, which include access to Google Assistant, Google Maps,

Google Play Store, and remote functions via the Volvo Cars App.

A five-year Volvo Service Plan (VSP) is also included, covering scheduled maintenance at authorized service centers.

The EC40 is powered by a twin-motor, all-wheel-drive (AWD) system, featuring a second-generation permanent magnet rear electric motor. Delivering 300kW of power, the vehicle offers dynamic performance with an emphasis on rear-wheel drive responsiveness, providing an engaging driving experience.

To date, Volvo Car Malaysia has introduced three fully electric models – the Volvo XC40 Recharge Pure Electric, Volvo EX30, and now the Volvo EC40.

The company's much-anticipated flagship Volvo EX90 is set to launch later this year, further reinforcing its commitment to sustainable mobility.

The Volvo EC40 is priced at RM288,888, maintaining the same price point as its predecessor. Customers can take advantage of flexible financing options through Volvo Car Financial Services, which offers attractive lower interest rates. Additionally, those who book the EC40 before March 31, 2025, will receive a complimentary wall box voucher worth RM5,000.

BMW unveils exclusive edition to celebrate 'Doctor' Rossi



BMW M has unveiled a special edition of its high-performance M4 CS, created in collaboration with nine-time motorcycle world champion and current BMW M works driver Valentino Rossi.

The BMW M4 CS Edition VR46, produced in a limited run of just 46 units, is a tribute to Rossi's legendary career and iconic racing number. Manufactured at BMW Group Plant Dingolfing, the exclusive model is available in two design variants: Sport and Style, both featuring distinct colour schemes and signature elements inspired by the Italian racing legend.

The special edition M4 CS pays homage to Rossi's illustrious career, with the No. 46 prominently displayed on the doors and carbon-fibre-reinforced plastic (CFRP) roof.

Rossi himself played a key role in the design process, ensuring that his signature aesthetic and personal preferences were reflected in both variants.

The Sport version is finished in Marina Bay Blue metallic, contrasted by a large No. 46 in

Tanzanite Blue metallic on both sides. The Style variant adopts a matte Frozen Tanzanite Blue metallic exterior, with the 46 displayed in Frozen Marina Bay Blue metallic.

Yellow accents – a signature colour associated with Rossi – are applied to the M kidney grille outline, a single V spoke on the forged M light-alloy wheels, the brake callipers, and an accent stripe over the door frames of the Sport model. Performance remains at the core of the M4 CS Edition VR46, with a high-revving 3.0-litre, six-cylinder in-line engine delivering 550hp.

Paired with an eight-speed M Steptronic transmission, BMW's M xDrive all-wheel-drive system, and an Active M Differential, the special edition accelerates from 0 to 100kph in 3.4 seconds, reaching 200kph in 11.1 seconds. The BMW M4 CS Edition VR46 stands as a testament to Rossi's enduring legacy in motorsport, blending BMW's racing DNA with the flair and spirit of one of the sport's greatest icons.

Isuzu Expands D-Max Lineup

ISUZU has reinforced its commitment to business operators with the introduction of the Isuzu D-Max Double Cab 1.9-litre 4x2 Manual Low Ride pick-up truck.

Designed to cater to urban business needs, this new model offers an affordable, practical, and highly efficient transportation solution.

The latest D-Max variant meets these needs by offering an impressive combination of functionality, affordability, and reliability.

A key advantage of the D-Max Low Ride 4x2 is its lower loading deck, positioned 78 cm above the ground, making it 5% lower than the standard high-ride variant.

This design significantly improves accessibility, allowing crew members to load and unload heavy goods with ease.

With a spacious cargo bed capable of carrying up to 930 kg, the vehicle enhances efficiency for businesses that require frequent transportation of goods.

Positioned as one of the most affordable pick-up trucks on the market, the D-Max Low Ride 4x2 not only features a lower purchase price but also offers reduced running costs.

It is powered by Isuzu's renowned 1.9-litre Blue Power engine, known for its impressive balance between performance and fuel efficiency.

Despite its practical and cost-conscious approach, the vehicle does



not compromise on design, comfort, and safety.

Its body-coloured front bumper in Splash White gives it a contemporary look, while integrated fog lamps and daytime running lights (DRL) enhance visibility. The 16-inch alloy wheels, fitted with 215/70 R16 tyres, provide both style and stability.

Inside the cabin, fabric seats ensure durability and easy maintenance, while the adjustable steering column provides both tilt and reach functions for added comfort.

The instrument panel features large dials and a 3.5-inch multi-information display, ensuring clear and accessible information for the driver.

The pick-up benefits from a suite of advanced safety technologies,

including Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brake-force Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), Electronic Stability Control (ESC), Traction Control System (TCS), Hill Start Assist (HSA), and Hill Descent Control (HDC).

At the heart of the truck is the award-winning 1.9-litre RZ4E-TC engine, delivering 150PS of power and 350Nm of torque between 1,800 to 2,600rpm.

The new Isuzu D-Max Low Ride 4x2 is now available at all authorised Isuzu showrooms nationwide and the on-the-road price without insurance is RM92,199.20.

It comes with a 5-year or 150,000 km warranty, providing peace of mind for business owners looking for a durable and cost-effective commercial vehicle.



the Sun Classified

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302 Jobs

the Sun WE ARE HIRING!

HR & ADMIN POSITIONS : (Executive / Senior / Assistant Manager)

Job Description:

- Maintain HR records, including employee files, salaries and benefits information.
- Handle employee attendance records, payroll and claims.
- Handle employee relations and resolve any workplace conflicts or issues.
- Provide HR support and guidance to managers and employees.
- Ensure compliance with all employment laws and regulations.
- Stay updated on changes in work legislation and industry standards.
- Handle employee training and development programs.
- Manage employee benefits programs and ensure compliance with regulations.
- Stay updated on current industry trends and best practices in HR management.
- For Senior / Assistant Manager with supervisor skills.
- Handle Recruitment matters.
- Experience in payroll system will be advantages.
- Handle General Admin and other HR works.

Requirement:

- Diploma / Bachelor's degree in Human Resources Management or related field.
- Executive : 1+ years of experience in HR & Admin or a related field
- Senior : 3+ years of experience in HR & Admin or a related field
- Asst Manager : 5+ years of experience in HR & Admin or a related field
- Fresh graduates are encourage to apply for Assistant Executive Post.
- Basic HR knowledge and proficiency in Microsoft Office.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

Send in your CV with your photo via email to: thesun.hr2@gmail.com
(Closing Date: 31st March 2025)

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI JOHOR BAHRU

DALAM NESEB JAJAN DARI TAKUM, MALAYSIA

PETISYEN PENGGUGULAN SYARIAK

NO. 14-2020-199-122024

Dalam perkara HONG THAI HEALTH CARE GROUP SDN. BHD. (NO. SYARIAK: 201601041589 (1212531-U)) Dan Dalam perkara Sekyen 456 (1)(b) (Syariat tersebut) pada 23 harabuan Desember 2024; DAN Petisyon tersebut telah diarahkan untuk dibicarakan di Mahkamah Tinggi Johor Bahru secara e-Review pada jam 9:00 pagi pada 29 harabuan Mei 2025; DAN mana-mana pihak pemungutan dan penyumbang Syariat tersebut yang ingin menyokong atau menyuarakan atau Perintah mengikut Petisyon tersebut boleh hadir dengan tujuan itu secara peribadi atau melalui peguam-caranya pada masa perbicaraan; DAN sesalarnya Petisyon tersebut akan dibincangkan oleh pihak yang berbanding dalam atau di bawah ini kepada mana-mana pemuatung atau penyumbang Syariat tersebut yang yang memintanya dengan membuat bayaran yang dikehendaki.

ANTARA

TML CONSUMER CREDIT (M) SDN. BHD. (Dahulunya dikenali sebagai TML GT SERVICES SDN. BHD.) (NO. SYARIAK: 200601002943 (723690-T)) ... PEMPETISYEN

DAN

HONG THAI HEALTH CARE GROUP SDN. BHD. (NO. SYARIAK: 201601041589 (1212531-U)) ... RESPONDEN

PENGUKURAN PETISYEN

NOTIS ADALAH DENGAN IN DIBERI

petisyen yang telah diarahkan untuk dibicarakan di Mahkamah Tinggi Johor Bahru secara e-Review pada jam 9:00 pagi pada 29 harabuan Mei 2025; DAN mana-mana pihak pemungutan dan penyumbang Syariat tersebut yang ingin menyokong atau menyuarakan atau Perintah mengikut Petisyon tersebut boleh hadir dengan tujuan itu secara peribadi atau melalui peguam-caranya pada masa perbicaraan; DAN sesalarnya Petisyon tersebut akan dibincangkan oleh pihak yang berbanding dalam atau di bawah ini kepada mana-mana pemuatung atau penyumbang Syariat tersebut yang yang memintanya dengan membuat bayaran yang dikehendaki.

Alamat Pemungutan adalah di No. 8700 Batu Pahat, Jalan Kangkang, Taman Batu Pahat, 83000 Batu Pahat, Johor.

Peguam-caranya Pemungutan ialah Tuan Hong & Fong yang beralamat di No. 64, Tingkat 1, Jalan Kuning, Taman Bukit Pagar, 83000 Batu Pahat, Johor Darul Takzim.

Bertarikh 17 harabuan Februari 2025

T.T.

Peguam-caranya Pemungutan

Peringatan:

Sesajaja yang ingin hadir pada perbicaraan Petisyon tersebut hendaklah menyampaikan atau menghantar dengan pos kepada Peguam-caranya Pemungutan di atas susatu nota berformat tentang niatnya sebagai. Nota tersebut hendaklah menyatakan nama dan alamat pihak atau firma berkenaan atau alamat firma, dan masalah dibandengkan dengan pihak atau firma berkenaan atau peguam-caranya (sekiranya ada) dan hendaklah disampaikan atau diserahkan dengan pos, hendaklah dihantar dalam jangka masa mencukupi supaya sampai kepada Pemungutan yang dimajukan di atas sebelum pukul 12:00 tengah hari pada 19 harabuan Mei 2025. Setelah sebelum tarikh yang ditetapkan untuk perbicaraan Petisyon tersebut.

Pengukuran Petisyon ini dikemukakan oleh Tuan Hong & Fong yang beralamat di No. 64, Tingkat 1, Jalan Kuning, Taman Bukit Pagar, 83000 Batu Pahat, Johor Darul Takzim. Peguam-caranya untuk Pemungutan yang disebut di atas. (No. Raj. Fat. B/S/22/0260). No. Telefon: 019-7103188

322 Notices

LOOKING FOR

MR PETER YEOH

(NRIC NO.620110-07-5327 / 6374702)

322 Notices

Or anyone who has any information or knowledge of his whereabouts, please urgently contact Mr Francis Goh, solicitor of MESSRS FRANCIS & LIM at Tel No. 04-6596377 / 6578377 or 016-4196377

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF NIKMAT SEKITAR SDN BHD (REGISTRATION NO. 201501020882 (1146218-X)) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act 2016, the Final Meeting of the Company will be held at Suite 23.03, Level 23, The Gardens South Tower, Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra, 59200 Kuala Lumpur on 7 April 2025 at 11.00 a.m. for the following purposes:

- To receive the final accounts of the Liquidator showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and to receive any explanation therefrom.
- To determine the manner in which the books, accounts and documents of the Company and of the Liquidator be destroyed (if any) after the winding-up.

DATO SRI CHEE HONG LEONG, JP Liquidator

Date: 7 March 2025

Note: A member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his stead. The instrument appointing a proxy must be deposited at the Liquidator's Office not less than 48 hours before the time appointed for holding the meeting.

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF KAVANGAN BAKTI SDN. BHD. (In Members' Voluntary Winding Up) (Registration No. 199501004507 (333702-A))

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459 of the Companies Act, 2016 that a Final Meeting of Members of the Company will be held at 184A, Jalan Raja Uda, 12300 Butterworth, Penang on the 7th day of April, 2025 at 10.00a.m. for the following purposes:

- To receive an account from the Liquidator showing the manner in which the winding up has been conducted and property of the Company disposed of and to hear any explanation that may be given by the Liquidator.
- To resolve that under Section 518(3)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016, the books, accounts and documents of the Company and of the Liquidator be destroyed three (3) months after the Company has been dissolved.

Dated this 7th day of March, 2025

TANG YIN KHAM Liquidator

302 Jobs

WE ARE HIRING!

1 MEDIA SALES Executive / Specialist

Job Description:

- Building and sustaining strong working relationship with advertising agencies and clients.
- New business development and business retention.
- Conceptualize, plan, and execute creative and innovative marketing campaigns to enhance brand visibility and engagement.
- Create, develop and continuously improve marketing material, presentations and proposals that showcase our products/services effectively.

Requirement:

- SPM Level with at least 2 years of experience.
- Diploma or Bachelor's degree in business, marketing or other related fields.
- Fresh graduates are encourage to apply, training will be provided.
- Good communication, presentation, problem-solving and organisational skills.
- Passionate in client servicing
- Possess own transport and willing to travel.
- Able to start work immediately.

Office based in Petaling Jaya (5 days a week)

2 MEDIA SALES Representative / Agent (Freelance)

Requirement:

- Minimum 1 year sales experience in classified ad, print and digital advertising
- Those without sales experience but with media advertising knowledge can apply.
- Attractive commission package and incentive.
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Send in your CV with your photo via email to : thesun.hr2@gmail.com

322 Notices

PROCLAMATION OF SALE IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT KUALA LUMPUR EXECUTION NO. WA-38-2661-092024

WILL SELL BY PUBLIC AUCTION ON WEDNESDAY, THE 26TH MARCH 2025 AT 9:00 AM ELECTRONICALLY ON THE e-LEADING WEBSITE, e-LEADING OPERATION CENTER KUANTAN COURT COMPLEX, PAHANG DARUL MAJLIS. Please visit <https://ebidding.kemajuan.gov.my/ebidding>

RESERVED PRICE RM 688,500.00

PLANNED DEFENDANT: * ARABANG (M) BERHAD; * ARAWINDAN ALI PALANI

TITLE NO./LOT NO.: * HAKMUK BSTRATA GERAN 189061/L36/4; LOT NO. 1848 BERKOTAK 18

MUKIM/DISTRICT/STATE: * BANDAR RAWANG / GOMBAK / SELANGOR

EXCUTOR: * MESSRS SIOCK TEON WONG & CHEN (S)

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322 Notices

FOCAL PARK SDN BHD (358698-H) NOTIS LELONG AWAM KENDERAAN UNTUK BILELONG SEPERTI SEDIA ADA

TEMPAT & TARIKH: LELONG: East Coast Region (Kota Bharu, Kuantan & Temerloh) 12-03-2025 (Rabu) Pukul 11:00pagi

TARIKH MELIHAT: :SEBELUM TIGA HARI LELONG (Pukul 9:00pagi) - 4:00petang)

PERTANYAAN (Tel) : Kota Bharu 07-7747972; Kuantan 017-4973133; Temerloh 012-428 7538

FPAC - PELELONG BERLESEN: a) En Mohd Fawzi Bin Ibrahim (33056) & Mr Mazenan Bin Haji Mohamed (01/2024)

Alamat: Lot 5196, Petak 41 Jalan 20, Kawasan Perindustrian Pengkalen Chepa, Fasa 2, Pengkalen Chepa, 16100 Kota Bharu.

: Lot 11069, Lot 10870 & Lot 10871 Jin Tanah Putih, Tanah Putih Kuantan

: PT5101 & 5102, KAMPUNG MEGAT SEGAMA, 28000 TEMERLOH

SILA LAYARI LAMAN WEB KAMI : <http://www.focalpark.com.my>

Lot	Reg No.	Model & Year	Tahun
AM1	WR623	HONDA CIVIC 1.8 (A)	2008
AM2	CEJ330	PERODUA AXIA 1.0 (A)	2021
AM3	BKL26	BMW 525I (A)	2004
AM4	WTJ3655	PROTON EXORA 1.6	2009

(Perhatian: Kenderaan-kenderaan diatas yang tidak dibida dalam perelotongan akan dilelong semua pada 12-03-2025)

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 and in the matter of VERTEX PRECISION TECHNOLOGY SDN. BHD. (REGISTRATION NO. 201201035199 (0198681-W)) (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)

Notice is hereby given that at the General Meeting of the Company was held at 347-V Tingkat Panamanar, 11700 Gelangpau, Pulau Pinang on 28 February 2025 and the following resolution was duly passed:-

SPECIAL RESOLUTION "VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP OF THE COMPANY"

That the Company be wound up voluntarily pursuant to Section 438(1)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016 and that Mr. Khair Mel Ching IJC (No. 741228-07-5200) of T.H Consultancy Services Sdn. Bhd. (20160105388 (118619-X)) of 347-V Tingkat Panamanar, 11700 Gelangpau, Penang be and is hereby appointed Liquidator for the purpose of such winding-up at a fee to be mutually agreed upon and that pursuant to Section 456 of the Companies Act, 2016, the Liquidator may exercise all her powers and duties in relation thereto.

That the 21 days' notice period required under Section 452 of the Companies Act, 2016 be waived.

Dated this 7th day of March 2025.

322 Notices

By Order of the Board
Khair Mel Ching (MACSA 7035984)

Di dalam perkara Aka Syarikat, 2016 dan di dalam perkara VERTEX PRECISION TECHNOLOGY SDN. BHD. (NO. PENDAFTARAN 201201035199 (0198681-W)) (Dalam Penggugutan Sukarela oleh Ahli Lembaga)

Nota: Pemberitahuan bahawa resolusi-resolution yang ditetapkan di bawah telah diumumkan di dalam Mesyuarat Agung yang telah berlangsung di 347-V Tingkat Panamanar, 11700 Gelangpau, Penang pada 28 Februari 2025:-

Resolusi khas "Penggugutan Sukarela Syarikat"

Bahawa Syarikat ini digugut secara sukarela melalui Penggugutan menurut Sukarela Panamanar Sdn. Bhd. (20160105388 (118619-X)) di 347-V Tingkat Panamanar, 11700 Gelangpau, Penang ialah diarahkan sebagai Pelelong untuk tujuan penggugutan Syarikat dengan bayaran yang akan dipersetujui berseam dan mengikut Lembaga Syarikat 456 Akta Syarikat, 2016, Pelelong boleh melaksanakan semua kuasa dan tugas yang bertukang dengannya.

Bahawa tempoh notis 21 hari yang diperlukan di bawah Seksyen 452 Akta Syarikat, 2016 akan dikecualikan.

Tarikh: 7th Mac 2025

Bagi pihak Lembaga Panamanar
Khair Mel Ching (MACSA 7035984)

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF KAYANGAN JOHAN SDN. BHD. (In Members' Voluntary Winding Up) (Registration No. 199501004430 (333625-T))

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459 of the Companies Act, 2016 that a Final Meeting of Members of the Company will be held at 184A, Jalan Raja Uda, 12300 Butterworth, Penang on the 7th day of April, 2025 at 12.00p.m. for the following purposes:

- To receive an account from the Liquidator showing the manner in which the winding up has been conducted and property of the Company disposed of and to hear any explanation that may be given by the Liquidator.
- To resolve that under Section 518(3)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016, the books, accounts and documents of the Company and of the Liquidator be destroyed three (3) months after the Company has been dissolved.

Dated this 7th day of March, 2025

TANG YIN KHAM Liquidator

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF TOMISHO SDN BHD (REGISTRATION NO. 198501011814 (144265-W)) (IN MEMBER'S VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act 2016, the Final Meeting of the Company will be held at Suite 23.03, Level 23, The Gardens South Tower, Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra, 59200 Kuala Lumpur on 7 April 2025 at 10.30 a.m. for the following purposes:-

- To receive the final accounts of the Liquidator showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and to receive any explanation therefrom.
- To determine the manner in which the books, accounts and documents of the Company and of the Liquidator, shall be disposed of.

DATO SRI CHEE HONG LEONG, JP Liquidator

Date: 7 March 2025

Note: A member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his stead. The instrument appointing a proxy must be deposited at the Liquidator's Office not less than 48 hours before the time appointed for holding the meeting.

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF KAWANBRIA FOODS SDN. BHD. Company No: 202001025498 (1381818-X) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459(2) of the Companies Act, 2016, a Final Meeting of the members of the Company will be held at 58-A, Jalan Perang, Taman Pelangi, 80400 Johor Bahru, Johor on Monday, 7 April 2025 at 10.00 a.m. for the following purposes:-

- To receive the Liquidator's account of receipts and payments and statements of distribution among the contributors and to hear any explanations that maybe given by the liquidator;
- To resolve that under Section 518(3)(b) of the Companies Act 2016, the books, accounts and documents of the Company be destroyed after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of the final meeting.

Dated this 7th day of March 2025

KAM CHAI HONG Liquidator

Dated this 7th day of March, 2025

TANG YIN KHAM Liquidator

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Scheffler ready to rumble

World No. 1 well rested for 'brutally difficult' Bay Hill

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER had a phenomenal 2024 season – seven wins, including at The Masters Tournament, the Paris Olympics and the Tour Championship. And the first victory came at the Arnold Palmer Invitational last March.

He enters the tournament at the Bay Hill Club and Lodge this week in suburban Orlando as the defending champion.

After a hand injury delayed his season start until the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am in late January, Scheffler has appeared in three events, with two top-10 finishes.

So when he was asked yesterday whether he needed a jump start on his season, the World No. 1 player largely scoffed.

"No. I'm here, ain't I? You

know what I mean? It's always nice to play good, and I try to ride momentum from good rounds and good tournaments, and there's no better momentum than you can have than being able to show up tied for the lead on Sunday and have a great round and kind of put away the tournament and be able to coast down the last few holes," Scheffler said.

"Do I feel like I need a jump start? No. Would I like one? Definitely. Yeah, why not?" Scheffler has been idle since Feb. 16, when he shot a final-round 66 to finish in a T3 at The Genesis Invitational.

Now, Scheffler said that, despite shorter prep time due to the injury, he's ready to go for the season.

"I would say that I feel caught up," the 28-year-old said. "It was a really nice last couple weeks I had at home to get ready for this week.

"It was, not rushed to start Pebble, but it was definitely quicker than my offseason prep usually is, just by nature of the injury. "So having a couple weeks at home after having a few weeks playing on the road,

where I can continue to work out, continue to work on my body and get ready to come back out and play, it was definitely very helpful to have a couple weeks at home, for sure."

At the Arnold Palmer last year, Scheffler finished at 15-under 273, five strokes ahead of Wyndham Clark. Scheffler started the fourth round tied with Ireland's Shane Lowry, but Scheffler's 66 left him alone at the top and Lowry in third after firing a 72.

Scheffler also won at Bay Hill in 2022, and he said he's looking forward to the challenge the course holds.

"I feel like if I'm in a good spot with my game," he said. "If my swing feels well then I should have a decent chance at winning the tournament.

"There's certain golf courses that I love to compete on with their history – this being one of 'em. I'm definitely excited for this week.

"I'm excited to try to tackle this golf course again this year. It's typically one of the most brutal tests that we see all year." – Field Level Media



New Zealand's Kane Williamson in action. – REUTERS/SPIC

Kiwis focused only on winning

KANE WILLIAMSON is too long in the tooth to get dragged into the debate over India getting to play the Champions Trophy final in Dubai and the batter is focused only on the chance of New Zealand grabbing silverware after reaching the title-decider.

those positives and be nice and clear about how we're trying to operate come two or three days' time in the final."

New Zealand have an injury concern over paceman Matt Henry, who injured his shoulder against South Africa, but Ravindra's form since his return from a concussion sustained in a warm-up match has been a big plus.

"We missed him while he had his little injury for a while there," said Williamson, whose partnership of 164 with Ravindra laid the platform for yesterday's win.

"But he just took a couple of weeks off and came back and is batting beautifully. Great to watch. Best seat in the house at the other end, for sure."

The 34-year-old scored his 15th one-day century, and Rachin Ravindra his fifth, as New Zealand beat South Africa by 50 runs in the semifinals at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday.

The Black Caps must now pack their bags for Sunday's final in Dubai, where India have played all their matches in the tournament because of their refusal to go to Pakistan.

"It is what it is," Williamson told reporters. "You know, it's just not something we're really looking too closely at.

"It's about the cricket that we want to play, and we'll take into account, obviously, the opposition, but be nice and smart come that final."

Williamson and his teammates have already played India in Dubai during the tournament, losing by 44 runs in the final group match last Sunday as Rohit Sharma unleashed a four-pronged spin attack on a turning wicket.

"Obviously, we played India once there, the conditions are different," Williamson added. "So it's important that we try and take away some of

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF T & L AUTO PARTS (2013) SDN. BHD. 201301011837 (1041775-X) (Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Creditors of the abovesaid Company, which is being voluntarily wound-up, are required on or before the 7th day of April 2025 to send in their names and addresses with particulars of their debts and claims, and of any security held by them, and the names and addresses of their Solicitors (if any) to the undersigned Liquidator at Suite 1223, 2nd Floor, Plaza Pekoliling, No. 2 Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur and if so required by notice in writing from the said Liquidator, are by their Solicitors or personally required to write in and prove their said debts and claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice or in default thereof they will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts and claims are proved.

Kuala Lumpur
Dated this 7th day of March 2025

Yau Siew Cheng
Liquidator

Note:
This notice is purely formal.
All known creditors have been or will be paid in full.

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF T & L AUTO PARTS (2013) SDN. BHD. 201301011837 (1041775-X) (In Members' Voluntary Winding-Up)

At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the members of T & L AUTO PARTS (2013) SDN. BHD. duly convened and held at Suite 1223, 2nd Floor, Plaza Pekoliling, No. 2 Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur on the 26th day of February 2025 the following special resolutions were duly passed:-

That the Company be wound up voluntarily and that Yau Siew Cheng of Suite 1223, 2nd Floor, Plaza Pekoliling, No. 2 Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur be and is hereby appointed Liquidator of the Company.

That the said Liquidator be authorised to distribute either in cash, specie or in kind amongst the contributors of the Company in accordance with their respective rights and interests therein.

That the Liquidator be indemnified by the Company against all costs, charges, losses, expenses and liabilities incurred in or sustained by her in the execution and discharge of her duties as Liquidator and in relation thereto.

Tan Seong Hor
Director

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF EDENGLD SDN. BHD. 199401023534 (308215-W) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP)

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 439 (2)(b) of the Companies Act 2016, that the Special Resolutions as set out below was duly passed by the members of the Company on 03 March 2025.

"That the Company will be liquidated by way of members' voluntarily winding-up and that Manoranjitham A/P N Lechumanam of LMR & Associates, Chartered Accountants (NF 0503) at CT-05-20, Level 5, Subang Square Corporate Tower, Jalan SS 15/46, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan be appointed as liquidator to act for the purpose of winding-up the Company's affairs, and distributing its assets, and that pursuant to Section 456 and Eleventh Schedule of the Companies Act, 2016 the liquidator may exercise all the powers and duties as required under these Sections".

"That the liquidator be authorised to divide all or such part of the surplus assets of the Company as she thinks fit amongst the members of the Company".

Dated this 07th March 2025
By Order of the Board

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF EDENGLD SDN. BHD. 199401023534 (308215-W) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP)

Notice is hereby given that the creditors of the above named company which is being wound up voluntarily are required on or before 15th day of April, 2025 to send their names and addresses with particulars of their debts and claims and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the liquidator of the said Company at the under mentioned address, and if so required in writing from the said liquidator, are by their solicitors or personally to come in and prove their debts of claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice or in default thereof they will be excluded from the benefits of any distribution made before such debts are proven.

Dated 07 March 2025

Manoranjitham A/P N Lechumanam
Liquidator

CT-05-20, Level 5, Subang Square Corporate Tower, Jalan SS 15/46, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan
Tel: 03-56300871

322 Notices

PENYIHTIARAN JUALAN DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG PERMOHONAN UNTUK PERLAKSANAN NO: PA-38-53/01/2025

Dalam perkara mengenai Seksyen 256 dan 257 Kanun Tanah Negara, 1965
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Gadai Perseorangan No. 0798S2023040205 beritarih: 16/08/2023 ke atas semua bawahan tanah yang dipanggil di bawah Hakmilik Strata No. Hakmilik : Pajakan Negeri 2090/NB/22/293, Lot 2614, Mukim Bandar George Town, Seksyen 1, Daerah Timor Laut, Pulau Pinang.
Dan
Dalam perkara mengenai Aturan 63 Kaedah-Kaedah Mahkamah, 2012

ANTARA
Public Bank Berhad (No. Syarikat: 6463-14)

...PLAINTIFF
Yeh Heng Choon (No. Kad Pengenalan: 800326075283)
Catherine Wong Kar Yan (No. Kad Pengenalan: 99032707532)

...DEFENDANT
Menurut Perintah Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia di Pulau Pinang mengenai Perintah Jual dan Pinjam bertarikh 7 Oktober 2024 dan 18 Februari 2025, dan perintah berkaitan dengan ini dipertiharkan bahawa Timbalan Pendaftar/Penolong Kanan Pendaftar Pusat Operasi P-L02N di Kuantan

AKAN MENJUAL SECARA LELANG ANAM
Pada Hari Khamis, 20 Mac 2025, Pada Jam 11:00 pagi,
SECARA ELEKTRONIK DI LAMAN WEB e-LELANG, PUSAT OPERASI P-L02N, KOMPLEKS MAHKAMAH KUANTAN, PAHANG DARUL MAKMUR

NOTA: Bakal pembeli adalah dinasihatkan agar membuat carian Hakmilik secara rasmi di Pejabat Tanah dan pemeriksa semua langganan, bebanan serta mengenal pasti semua terbitan berkaitan tersebut sebelum jualan tersebut dijalankan.

Sila layari https://e1elong.kedahkim.gov.my/bid/enweb

BUTIR-BUTIR HAKMILIK:
No. Hakmilik : Hakmilik Strata No. Hakmilik : Pajakan Negeri 2090/ M1B/22/293
No. lot : Lot 2614
Mukim / Daerah / Negeri : Bandar George Town, Seksyen 1 / Timor Laut / Pulau Pinang
Pegangan : Hakmilik Pajakan
No. Petak/No. Tingkat/ No. Bangunan : 293 / 22 / M1B
Keluasan Tanah : 2482.0000000000 kaki persegi
Keluasan Tanah : 226.0000000000 meter persegi
Pemilik Berdaftar : Yeh Heng Choon, Catherine Wong Kar Yan
Syarat Nyata : Petak ini hendaklah digunakan untuk tujuan pengapit sahaja.
Kecamatan/Kepentingan : Tanah yang dibenarkan ini tidak boleh dipindah milik, kecuali petak/petaka tanah ke atas apa-apa persetujuan tanpa kebenaran bertulis daripada Pihak Berkuasa Negara.
Bebanan / Lain-Lain : The subject property is charged to Public Bank Berhad under Presentation No. 0798S2023040205 dated 14th September 2023
Kawasan Rizab :
Kawad : Member Pers: 0798B202308812 Kawad Persendirian Atas Petak oleh PUBLIC BANK BERHAD ditandatangani pada 26. Julai 2023

LOKASI DAN PERIHAL HARTAMAN:
Hartaman tersebut adalah A 4-bedroom duplex penthouse yang beralamat pada di No. 31-B22-7, Jalan Tanjung Tokong, Grand View, 10470, Georgetown, Pulau Pinang.

MALASALAH:
Hartaman tersebut akan dijual atas "sepertimana sedia ada" terutamanya kepada satu harga ruzab sebanyak RM 950,000.00 (RINGGIT MALAYSI: SEMBILAN RATUS LIMA PULUH RIBU SAJAKU) dan kepada syarat-jualan yang ditetapkan. Pembeli yang berminat hendaklah memohonkan 10% daripada harga ruzab dalam bentuk Bank Draft di atas nama PUBLIC BANK BERHAD 1 HARI BUKERJA sebelum tarikh lelang awam. Bagi harga belian hendaklah dibayar oleh pembeli yang berkecuali PUBLIC BANK BERHAD dalam tempoh serendah dua puluh (120) hari dari tarikh jualan. Untuk butiran selanjutnya, sila berhubung dengan:-

Firma Guaman : WONG-CHOI & MOHD NOR
Alamat : NO. 27-IST & 2ND FLOOR JALAN MALI AJAY, PUSAT PERNAGAAN MAJU JAYA, 14000, PG, MY
No. Telefon : 04-3398855
No. Fax : 04-3398856
No. Rujukan : WCM(BM)/PBB-H/2024-339/INC(RS/J)

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF TOYO INK (PELAN) SDN. BHD. Company Registration No. 199201005242 (236746-H) (In Members' Voluntary Winding-up)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act, 2016, the Final Meeting of the abovesaid Company will be held at 229, Jalan Perkasia Satu, Taman Maluri, Cheras, 55100 Kuala Lumpur on 29 March 2025 for the following purposes :-

AGENDA
1. To receive and consider the Liquidator's Final Accounts showing how the winding-up has been conducted and to receive any explanations thereon; and
2. To determine pursuant to Section 518 (3)(b) of the Companies Act 2016, the manner in which the books, accounts and documents of the Company thereon shall be destroyed after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of final meeting.

CHIA KWONG CHOW
Liquidator
Date : 28 February 2025
Kuala Lumpur

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF SYF CONSTRUCTION SD BHD (REGISTRATION NO. 200201012915 (580578-X)) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act 2016, the Final Meeting of the Company will be held at Suite 23.03, Level 23, The Gardens South Tower, Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra, 59200 Kuala Lumpur on 7 April 2025 at 10.00 a.m. for the following purposes:-

AGENDA
1. To receive the final accounts of the Liquidator showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and to receive any explanation therefrom.
2. To determine the manner in which the books, accounts and documents of the Company will be held and of the Liquidator, shall be disposed of.

DATO' SRI CHEE HONG LEONG, JP
Liquidator
Date: 7 March 2025

Note:
A member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his stead. The instrument appointing a proxy must be deposited at the Liquidator's Office not less than 48 hours before the time appointed for holding the meeting.

CHIA KWONG CHOW
Liquidator
Date : 28 February 2025
Kuala Lumpur

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF TOYO INK (PELAN) SDN. BHD. Company Registration No. 199601033350 (405702-X) (In Members' Voluntary Winding-up)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act, 2016, the Final Meeting of the abovesaid Company will be held at 229, Jalan Perkasia Satu, Taman Maluri, Cheras, 55100 Kuala Lumpur on 29 March 2025 for the following purposes :-

AGENDA
1. To receive and consider the Liquidator's Final Accounts showing how the winding-up has been conducted and to receive any explanations thereon; and
2. To determine pursuant to Section 518 (3)(b) of the Companies Act 2016, the manner in which the books, accounts and documents of the Company thereon shall be destroyed after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of final meeting.

CHIA KWONG CHOW
Liquidator
Date : 28 February 2025
Kuala Lumpur

Note:
A member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the above meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his stead. The instrument appointing a proxy must be deposited at the Liquidator's Office not less than 48 hours before the time appointed for holding the meeting.

'Keane will solve problem at Old Trafford'

ROY KEANE delivered a typically forthright message to Manchester United players during a secret return to the club six years ago.

The ex-Red Devils captain, who has been backed to return to assist Ruben Amorim by former teammate Mikael Silvestre, visited Carrington in 2019 during pal and old colleague Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's reign at Old Trafford.

The *Sky Sports* pundit didn't mince his words when addressing the team, emphasising the dedication required to succeed at United to underperforming players.

Despite securing top-three finishes in both his full seasons, Solskjaer's stint without silverware was ultimately seen as unsuccessful, leading to his dismissal early in the 2021/22 season.

But those were heady days compared to today, as United lurch from one crisis to another on and off the pitch.

Amorim's side are languishing in 14th place in the Premier League and are out of both domestic cup competitions.

This has sparked frequent outbursts from Keane and fellow *Sky Sports* pundit Gary Neville regarding the club's dire situation, with Keane recently slamming Bruno Fernandes' captaincy.

However, another former United star sees Keane as a potential asset for Amorim's coaching staff.

Silvestre told *Yaysweepstakes.com*: "I think it would be great for Roy Keane to play a role at Manchester United."

"Because, the thing is with Roy, he always treated everybody exactly the same way. It didn't matter if you were a new signing, an old guy, the manager, everybody."

"That's how he got respect. That's how Sir Alex got respect. If you treat everybody the same, no problem."

"Now, it's true you have players, and as soon as you say something to them, they don't collapse, but it affects them much more. We used to have thicker skin."

Despite his – at times – brutal opinions, Silvestre believes Keane would "protect" the current group of players.

"I think it's a bit of a problem with this generation of players. They find criticism harder to take."

"If Roy (Keane) was involved at Manchester United, if he was on the inside with the group, he would have to protect and work for the group."

"You wouldn't see him criticising players in public, so there wouldn't be any issue." – *Express Newspapers*

Major blow in Indian Wells

Osorio topples Osaka, Kvitova ousted on chilly night in California desert

NAOMI OSAKA was bundled out of the first round at Indian Wells yesterday, falling 6-4, 6-4 to Camila Osorio in the Japanese star's first tournament since injury forced her out of the Australian Open.

Former world No. 1 Osaka, now ranked 56th in the world, looked rusty against the 52nd-ranked

C o l o m b i a n ,
struggling to
find the
range on
h e r

powerful groundstrokes on a chilly night in the California desert.

Osorio, who challenged Osaka with an array of drop shots and slices, gained the lone break of the opening set for a 5-4 lead and served it out without a hitch, then broke Osaka to open the second.

The Japanese star immediately broke back, but Osorio gained the upper hand with a break in the seventh game.

After Osaka fought off a match point against her own serve Osorio served it out, fighting off four break points to seal it with a stinging forehand winner.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova, on the comeback trail seven months after giving birth to her son Petr, also fell in the first round.

France's 70th-ranked Varvara Gracheva beat the Czech 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, but the 24-year-old was full of admiration for her 34-year-old opponent, who lifted the trophy at Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014.

"If you let me step back a little bit, I really want to congratulate her," Gracheva said. "Because she had a child quite recently, and I'm so happy that she now has the role of a mother and a tennis player, which is very demanding. It's very inspiring for sports, athletes, women – it's just amazing."

All 32 men's and women's seeds have first round byes in this combined ATP Masters and WTA 1000 tournament.

Gracheva lined up a second-round meeting with ninth-seeded Mirra Andreeva, the 17-year-old Russian who became the youngest ever WTA 1000 champion in Dubai last month.

In other matches, French veteran Caroline Garcia beat US wild card Bernarda Pera 6-3, 6-4 to line up a second-round meeting with second-seeded defending champion Iga Swiatek.

In men's action, Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands beat Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 6-3 to book a second-round meeting with top-seeded German Alexander Zverev, who heads a field missing world No. 1 Jannik Sinner as he serves a three-months drugs ban.

China's Bu Yunchaokete defeated American Nishesh Basavareddy 7-5, 6-4 to book a second-round match against Russian fifth seed Daniil Medvedev, runner-up the past two years to Carlos Alcaraz – who is seeded second as he chases a rare three-peat.

Japanese veteran Kei Nishikori, who revealed during the Australian Open that he almost quit tennis last year after lengthy battles with injury, defeated Spain's Jaume Munar 6-2, 5-7, 7-6 (7-3) to line up a second-round match against 18th-seeded Ugo Humbert of France.

Nishikori was treated for a leg injury in the third set and then soldiered through cramp to close out the victory.

"It was not easy," Nishikori said. "In the third set I was cramping pretty badly, but somehow I came back and won, so a very good match." – *AFP*



Camila Osorio plays a forehand against Naomi Osaka (not pictured) in their first round match during the BNP Paribas Open in Indian Wells, California. – *AFP/IC*

Cash hoping Aston Villa can keep feelgood factor going

BY JONATHAN VEAL

MATTY CASH says Aston Villa are daring to dream after they put one foot in the Champions League quarterfinals.

Villa's incredible debut season in the premier European competition continued with a 3-1 win at Club Brugge in the first leg of the last-16 clash. Only a collapse at Villa Park next week would stop them from reaching the last eight where they would meet Liverpool or Paris St Germain.

A special end to the campaign could be on the cards as Unai Emery's side are also in the FA Cup quarterfinals and still in the race for European qualification through the Premier League.

"As players and as a group, you obviously want to do the best you can and you want to dream about playing in the big games and competing," Cash said.

"But it is a cliché, you have got to take every game as it comes because when you get into the later stages the quality of the teams you're up against is a high quality, so you can only do as best as you can."

"We want a dream, we want to try and compete in every competition we can and

hopefully we can.

"I think we can all say we haven't really been fully at our best this season, as a group, really."

"But you look at it, we're in the FA Cup quarterfinals and then obviously we have got another massive game next week."

"Then one of the main things is we want to get consistent in the league and get back into the top five."

"But it's obviously nice to be in the top competitions and if you're still in them in March it is obviously a good sign, so fingers crossed we can keep going."

Cash was a second half substitute in Bruges and helped change the game, winning the penalty which saw Marco Asensio make it 3-1.

To have a three-time Champions League winner coming off the bench shows the strength of Villa's squad.

"His experience is obviously key," Cash said. "Him stepping over the penalty, I kind of knew where it was going. He shows that leadership with that quality day in and day out."

"He's obviously played for the biggest club in the world and other clubs as well. He's got a lot of quality and his mindset and his mentality is amazing." – *The Independent*

Gunners will be close to conquering Europe: Merino

BY PHILIP DUNCAN

MIKEL MERINO believes Arsenal could be on the brink of winning the Champions League following their record-breaking 7-1 demolition job of PSV Eindhoven.

The previously goal-shy Gunners ran riot in the opening leg of their last-16 tie in the Netherlands Wednesday to all but secure their place in the quarterfinals, where Real Madrid or Atletico Madrid await.

Mikel Arteta's side became the first team in Champions League history to score seven away from home in a knockout tie, with the result also Arsenal's biggest on their travels in the competition.

It marked a remarkable change in fortunes for Arsenal who have fallen 13 points behind Liverpool in the race for the Premier League after they failed to score in their last two matches, collecting just one point.

"I guess that whenever you start a competition like this, if you don't think that you can win it, it's better not to come and play," said Merino, who scored his side's third of a pulsating night at the Philips Stadion.

"It has to be the goal of every single team in this tournament, and it is ours, for sure."

"We are here to win, to win every single game, and if we do what we know we can do, in the end, we will be close to winning it."

"But we don't have to focus too much about it. We have to be proud, but at the same time think about the next game. It is coming real soon and we need to show the same mentality that we did tonight."

Commenting on another impressive display from England youth international Ethan Nwaneri, Merino said: "He is an unbelievable player. I have been saying it for a long time. I won't get tired talking about him, because he deserves it."

"He has the will to learn... he is still only 17. He is always willing to listen to the other guys, listen to the boss, and that's credit to him."

"It's fresh blood, and obviously, for the fans, it is unbelievable to see players from the academy, born and raised here, to be making these amazing performances."

"It's reassuring that this team has a good team now, but will have an even better one, or the same quality, in the future." – *The Independent*



SIDENETTING

Harry hails double strike

HARRY KANE said his two goals in Wednesday's 3-0 Champions League last 16 first-leg win over Bayer Leverkusen were "probably" the most important so far for Bayern Munich. The 31-year-old, who is still searching for a first team trophy in his career, did not win any silverware last season – his first at Bayern – but kept his team's dream alive of playing in the final in Munich in May. Asked if the goals were his most important so far, Kane said: "Probably, I'd say so." Kane has 75 goals in 79 games in all competitions since joining Bayern from Spurs in the summer of 2023. "This is the Champions League, this is the biggest game of all," Kane told *TNT Sports* after the game. "We're playing against a team who have had an unbelievable couple of seasons. If we don't carry it on, then it doesn't mean anything. We're here to send a message not just to everyone but to ourselves." Former Germany international Thomas Hitzlsperger told *BBC Match of the Day*: "Kane was instrumental to the win. I have seen him when he is quiet and doesn't score and people say he has reached a peak already. But his record speaks for itself, he is so important."

Leverkusen need big miracle: Alonso

BAYER LEVERKUSEN boss Xabi Alonso lamented his side's self-inflicted errors in yesterday's Champions League last-16 3-0 loss at Bayern Munich, saying his side needed a "big miracle" to reach the quarterfinals. In the 2005 Champions League final with Liverpool, Alonso helped the Reds come from 3-0 down against AC Milan, scoring the equalising goal before his side won on penalties. The match became known as the "Miracle of Istanbul", and Alonso suggested his side will need similar heroics if they are to have any chance of progressing to the final eight. "After this game we'll need a bit more time and after we recover – in football we've seen big miracles quite often and we almost need one. It's football, it's not my first time, and there's another game at home. We need to play maturely to control the game better and today we gave all the chances to Bayern to win 3-0. The mistakes, the details are important. It's a bitter evening, of course."

Lyon coach Fonseca banned until November

THE French League's disciplinary commission yesterday banned new Lyon coach Paulo Fonseca until November after an angry altercation with a referee. Former AC Milan coach Fonseca has paid a heavy price after seeing red during his side's 2-1 win over Brest in Ligue 1 on Sunday. Fonseca only replaced the sacked Pierre Sage at the former multiple French champions four weeks ago. Now he finds himself in the complicated position of being banned from the dug out and the referee's changing room until Nov 30. To compound his plight he has also been banned from entering his own team's changing rooms until mid-September, the commission's president Sebastien Deneux announced. "By throwing himself at the referee and shouting at him (Fonseca) displayed an intimidating and threatening attitude," Deneux said.

Great escape in Lisbon

Raphinha earns 10-man Barca tight first leg win at Benfica

RAPHINHA claimed Barcelona a 1-0 Champions League last-16 first leg win at Benfica yesterday, despite the Catalan giants playing most of the game with 10 men.

Teenage defender Pau Cubarsi was sent off midway through the first half of the tight clash in Lisbon with the score goalless.

Raphinha drilled home after 61 minutes to give five-time winners Barcelona a slim advantage on Bruno Lage's side ahead of the second leg next week.

Barcelona have not won the competition since 2015 but are expected to go deep this season, after a draw which many consider favourable.

Hansi Flick insisted before the game there was no such thing as an "easy" tie and the coach was proven right on a tense evening in the Portuguese capital.

"I said to the team *chapeau* (well done), I'm very proud," said the German coach after his team emerged with a victory.

"After the 22nd minute with 10 players it was not easy, and this is a big win."

Goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny endured two high-profile mistakes against Benfica in the group

stage in January but made amends with a string of saves as Barca were pinned back in the final half hour.

Szczesny made a smart save to deny Benfica's Kerem Akturkoglu after just a few seconds, and the opening stages were played in a way that indicated both sides were picking up where they left off in Barcelona's wild 5-4 win in Lisbon.

"The last time I don't think (Szczesny) left here very happy," said Barca midfielder Pedri.

"He saved a lot (tonight), one at the start where if they score you start the game on a bad footing – between the sticks he's a big presence and it's great to have him."

Dani Olmo fired narrowly wide at the other end as Barca threatened, before Benfica goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin produced a stunning triple save to keep the score level.

The Ukrainian first parried Dani Olmo's prodded effort, then made a brilliant reaction stop to thwart Robert Lewandowski converting from point-blank range and mopped up Lamine Yamal's attempt from the rebound.

Barcelona were dealt a blow when 18-year-old centreback Cubarsi was sent off after 22 minutes.

The Spaniard scythed down Benfica striker

Vangelis Pavlidis, who scored a hat-trick in the group match, as he ran through on goal.

Szczesny saved Orkun Kokcu's drive from the freekick, with Flick sacrificing Olmo for defender Ronald Araujo to steady the ship.

Szczesny made another good intervention to keep Pavlidis at bay early in the second half before Raphinha broke the deadlock.

"We had to be focussed, we had in our heads that we could get a chance and if we did, we had to score," said Raphinha.

Barcelona defended frantically in the final stages as Benfica sought to level and Szczesny came to the fore.

"Today we knew how to defend," added Pedri. "After the red we knew exactly what to do, stay together at the back, defend as a block and take advantage of our chances with the players we have up front."

Pavlidis said the Catalans were lucky to escape.

"Barcelona were lucky and scored the goal, we didn't and it's a big disappointment," said the Greek striker.

"Maybe on another day we could have scored three goals... there is a second game and everything is still up for grabs." – AFP

Kane puts Bayern on course for quarters spot

HARRY KANE struck twice as Bayern Munich eased to a 3-0 home win over 10-man Bayer Leverkusen yesterday, putting them on track for the Champions League quarterfinals.

Unable to beat Leverkusen in six attempts since Xabi Alonso took over in October 2022, Bayern were dominant from start to finish in the first leg of their last-16 tie against the German champions at the Allianz Arena.

Kane headed in a lovely Michael Olise cross after nine minutes. Jamal Musiala was in the perfect spot early in the second half to capitalise on a goalkeeper howler from Matej Kovar, the usual backup to Leverkusen captain Lukas Hradecky.

Eight minutes later, centreback Nordi Mukiele sunk his studs into the calf of Alphonso Davies, picking up a second yellow.

Mukiele's replacement Edmond Tapsoba bear-hugged Kane in the box. After the England captain fell to the turf, referee Michael Oliver consulted the VAR screen and pointed to the spot.

Kane converted his 30th consecutive penalty since his miss for England against France in the 2022 World Cup, placing Bayern on course for a victory in the tie and keeping the dream alive of appearing in this season's final in Munich.

Cameras showed Alonso

with his head buried in his palms as Kane and Bayern celebrated by the corner flag.

Bayern, who were considered outsiders by an array of pundits before the match, roared back into form, sending a reminder of where the balance of power in German football lies.

"It was a really big step in the right direction.

We've struggled against this side over the last couple of years, but from the first minute on we brought focus and intensity," Kane told DAZN.

"They'll believe they can turn it around and we have to go with the same mindset we had today and get through."

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany was calm after

the match, saying it was "only halftime" and that he would "not at all" enjoy the result until a quarterfinal spot was secure.

"This game was until now the most important game of our season. On Tuesday, we go again and then I hope another important game will come along," he said.

"We're staying calm and ready for what comes."

Leverkusen midfielder Granit Xhaka lamented "conceding two very, very bitter and unnecessary goals," but said "we need to keep believing, right until the end." – AFP



Bayern Munich's Jamal Musiala (left) celebrates scoring their second goal with Harry Kane. – REUTERS/SPIC

Inter's strike force seize control of last-16 tie

INTER MILAN'S powerful strike duo of Marcus Thuram and Lautaro Martinez combined to give the Italians a handy 2-0 advantage over Dutch side Feyenoord after an absorbing Champions League last-16 first leg yesterday.

Quality finishes either side of halftime from the French and Argentinian strikers proved the difference between the two teams, who meet again in Milan for next week's second leg, with the winner of the Bayern Munich-Bayer Leverkusen showdown lying in wait.

"Their quality is unbelievable," admitted Feyenoord defender David Hancko.

"Second half you could see that they were controlling the game and it was more difficult for us to be dangerous," added Hancko.

Ibrahim Osman, the pacy 20-year-old Ghana international winger on loan from Premier

League side Brighton and Hove Albion, was the main threat for the hosts, twice forcing Josep Martinez into sharp saves.

It was a moment of quality from Thuram that broke the deadlock with just eight minutes until the halftime whistle, latching onto a curling cross from Nicolo Barella to hook it in with the outside of his boot at the far post.

Feyenoord legend and recently installed manager Robin van Persie would have been glad to get his side into the dressing room just 1-0 down after an entertaining first half.

But his side's arrears doubled just five minutes into the second period, as Martinez drilled an unstoppable shot into the top corner, giving the hosts a mountain to climb.

Feyenoord pressed to the end looking for something to take to the San Siro but the Inter

defence held firm in a pleasing night for Simone Inzaghi's men.

"Feyenoord came out well a few times, but I think we were solid in defence," said Inter's Dutch international Denzel Dumfries.

"We hit them well on the break and we made things difficult for them," he added.

The Serie A leaders have only conceded one goal in their nine Champions League matches this season, and Inzaghi was pleased by the attitude demonstrated by his players in Rotterdam.

"(Lautaro and Thuram) played a great game, then (Mehdi) Taremi and (Marko) Arnautovic also came on and did well," the *Nerazzurri* said.

"On the wings, everyone did well. It wasn't a simple game and the second leg won't be either." – AFP/Reuters

RESULTS

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE (LAST 16, FIRST LEG): Feyenoord 0 Inter Milan 2 (Thuram 38, Martinez 50), Bayern Munich 3 (Kane 9, 75-pen, Musiala 54) Bayer Leverkusen 0, Benfica 0 Barcelona 1 (Raphinha 61), Paris Saint-Germain 0 Liverpool 1 (Elliott 87).

Turtles eye third spot

WITH four matches to go in the Super League, four points separates third-placed Sabah FC and fourth-placed Terengganu FC (TFC).

After 20 matches, Sabah are third with 35 points and TFC on 31 points. TFC also have to be wary of the threat posed by Kuching City FC, who are fifth on 30 points.

As such, TFC know they must beat Sabah at the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium (SSMZA) in Kuala Nerue today if they are to have a chance of pipping the former to the third spot when the season ends.

TFC head coach Badrul Afzan Razali acknowledged as much when he said: "We have a crucial game (against Sabah). We must get all three points to narrow the gap to Sabah (to one point).

"If we lose, we might as well kiss goodbye to our chances of finishing third.

"We must also be wary of Kuching City, who are just a point behind. We can't afford to lose... otherwise, we may fall to the fifth spot in the standings."

With so much at stake, the 49-year-old head coach has called on his players to stay focused and be wary of their opponents' tactical formation.

He added that Sabah possessed a strong and high-quality lineup of import players in attack who can be a real handful for the Turtles.

"We hope the (5-1) win over Pahang (on Feb 27) will stand us in good stead and we can keep the winning momentum going tomorrow.

"Although excited to bag all three points, we must be on our toes and not make any silly mistakes that can cost us dearly," he added after the Turtles' training session at the SSMZA in Kuala Nerus on Wednesday night. - Bernama

'I will defend top post in Malaysia Athletics'

MALAYSIA ATHLETICS (MA) president Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim has confirmed that he intends to defend the top post in the upcoming elections on June 15.

Shahidan stressed that he is willing to step down if there is an individual capable of bringing better changes to the MA, adding that he would fully support such a candidate for the progress of athletics in the country.

"InshaAllah, for now, I will contest the post of MA president.

"I have no qualms about relinquishing the president's post if my challenger is someone who can offer MA something better," he told reporters after the MA council meeting here yesterday.

For the record, Shahidan helmed the Malaysian athletics governing body from 2006 to 2012 before returning to the position for another spell in June 2022.

In the June 2022 elections, he defeated the incumbent Datuk SM Muthu by four votes.

Shahidan said that if he is re-elected, his priority will be to focus on preparing the athletes for the 2025 Thailand SEA Games from Dec 9-20.

"The SEA Games are the Southeast Asian version of a mini-Olympics. We must strive to ensure we can bag more medals as stated by the (Youth and Sports) Minister (Hannah Yeoh)," he said. - Bernama

JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM (JDT) head coach Hector Bidoglio believes that playing on home ground will provide a crucial advantage when they face Thailand's Buriram United in the 2024/25 Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Champions League (ACL) Elite round-of-16 return leg match on Tuesday (March 11).

This comes after the Southern Tigers had done the hard part - battling to a goalless draw against Buriram in the first-leg tie at the Buriram Stadium on Tuesday.

Although the Argentine coach expects a fierce showdown at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium

Malaysians in top form

Sanjay pulls off biggest career win to reach NZ Squash Open last eight

MALAYSIA'S Sanjay Ijeva pulled off the biggest victory of his career when he stunned world No. 22 Abdulla Al-Tamimi of Qatar to reach the men's quarterfinals of the 2025 New Zealand Squash Open yesterday.

World No. 65 Sanjay played the game of his life to stun the eighth-seeded Qatari 10-12, 11-9, 11-6, 5-11, 11-6 in a 54-minute second-round clash at the Isaac Theatre Royal in Christchurch.

His reward for making his first-ever silver-level quarterfinal in the Professional Squash Association (PSA) Tour is a date with compatriot and third seed Ng Eain Yow, who brushed aside New Zealand's Oliver Dunbar 11-4, 11-1, 11-3 in just 32 minutes.

"It's definitely the biggest win of my career," Sanjay said. "I've not had the chance to play against many of the top 50 players. This is the first time I've played against

Abdulla and he's the highest-ranked player that I've beaten, so far.

"Like me, he too prefers to play a lot at the front. I had to just try and keep it a bit more basic, a bit more straight. Sometimes, when I get nervous, I would attack the front way too early and make a lot of errors," Sanjay told the PSA website.

Sanjay will take on Malaysian compatriot Eain Yow in the quarters after the No. 3 seed ended the run of 18-year-old local wildcard and World No. 255 Oliver Dunbar with a convincing win in straight games.

Meanwhile, in the all-Malaysian women's second-round clash, world No. 7 S. Sivasangari had to toil for five sets before prevailing 11-5, 8-11, 9-11, 11-8, 11-7 over Aira Azman.

In an uneven performance, national No. 1 Sivasangari battled back from 1-2 down to overcome compatriot Aira and set up a quarterfinal clash with Rowan Elaraby, who

ousted American Marina Stefanoni 11-6, 11-6, 11-8 in the second round.

Their head-to-head record favours the Egyptian, who leads 4-3.

Malaysia's other woman representative, Rachel Arnold cruised into the quarterfinals after eliminating Hong Kong's Lee Ka Yi 11-4, 11-6, 9-11, 11-9 in a 32-minute battle.

World No. 19 Arnold, who is gunning for her second PSA Silver title of the 2024-25 season after lifting the China Open crown in October, faces an acid test in the last eight as she will be up against Egypt's world No. 8 Amina Orfi, who is also the second seed.

For the home crowd, defending champion Paul Coll provided the perfect tonic after Dunbar's loss, with the top seed - who spent many of his junior years in Christchurch - beginning his 2025 New Zealand Open campaign with a comprehensive win over Japan's Ryunosuke Tsukue. - Bernama/Agencies



Aaron Chia. - BERNAMAPIC

Chia advised to focus on recovery

NATIONAL MEN'S doubles ace Aaron Chia has been advised to focus on the full recovery of his recurring wrist injury ahead of the prestigious All-England badminton championships, which will begin in Birmingham on Tuesday (March 11).

Former world No. 1 men's singles shuttler Roslin Hashim said Aaron is understood to be grappling with the injury after undergoing intensive training recently, adding that the doubles ace needs sufficient rest period if he hopes to do well at the All-England.

"Usually, when a player suffers an injury and knows that he will be competing in back-to-back tournaments, the recovery period is of utmost importance.

"The player need not do much weight training and make sure he does not aggravate the injury. That's all one has to do," he said when contacted by Bernama yesterday.

Yesterday, Chia and his partner Soh Wooi Yik crashed out in the first round of the Orleans Masters in France after losing 18-21, 8-21 to China's Sun Wen Jun-Zhu Yi Jun.

The first-round defeat for Aaron-Wooi Yik, the 2019 and 2024 All-England runners-up, has derailed their preparations for this year's edition and Roslin believes that the coaches and the player himself need to make a proper assessment of the injury and come up with a different game plan.

"We know he (Aaron) is a back-court player. So, if he can't cover the backcourt, then it will surely affect their game.

"We do not know the severity of his injury... perhaps, he felt some pain and did not want to take further risks at the Orleans Masters yesterday.

"Or perhaps the coaches have a different idea on how they should play after this (loss in Orleans Masters) considering the situation Aaron is in," he said.

Besides Aaron-Wooi Yik, the other Malaysian men's doubles pairs bound for the All-England are Man Wei Chong-Tee Kai Wun and Wan Arif Wan Junaidi-Yap Roy King as well as the professional pairs of Goh Sze-Fei-Nur Izzuddin Rumsani, Ong Yew Sin-Teo Ee Yi and Nur Mohd Azriyn Ayub-Tan Wee Kiong. - Bernama

JDT banking on home support for ACL decider

in Iskandar Puteri, he believes that home advantage will give JDT the platform to showcase their true potential.

"The next match will also be difficult but we will be at home. It will be a different pitch, weather and fans... so we need to show our potential," he was quoted as saying on www.the-afc.com.

"This result (0-0) is good but, at home, we have to win and meet our target of qualifying for

the next round."

Commenting on the 0-0 draw, he expressed satisfaction with his team's solid defensive display.

Bidoglio acknowledged that his players showed strong discipline and cohesion to make it difficult for Buriram to break through

However, he stressed the need for improvement in possession as they prepare for the return leg.

"The game was difficult but, in our defensive setup, the team played very well. We were very compact but we need to improve in our possession.

"Whenever we had the ball, we found it difficult to find the (right) pass or the space.

"Overall, I'm satisfied with the players because they played as a team and gave their all," he said.

The return leg will be the third meeting between JDT and Buriram in this season's ACL Elite, having also drawn 0-0 in the league stage at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium last December. - Bernama



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Liverpool lucky to beat PSG and have best keeper in the world: Slot

LIVERPOOL head coach Arne Slot admits his side were lucky in their late 1-0 victory over Paris St Germain in the French capital having been dominated for almost all of their Champions League last-16 first leg.

And he credited man-of-the-match Alisson Becker - "the best goalkeeper in the world" - for keeping them in contention long enough for substitute Harvey Elliott to score in the 87th minute with their only shot on target.

The Liverpool boss said: "We're the lucky ones, that's clear for everyone. I think they were the much better team today, especially in the first half (when they had) three or four big, big chances.

"In the second half, they were still the better team, still had a lot of shots on target but they were mainly from outside the box.

"That's why Alisson still had to make a lot of big saves. I have had some very good players as a manager but never the best goalkeeper in the world until now.

"He showed that he is the best in the world today. To go away with a win here was probably a bit more than we deserved."

Alisson made nine saves from 27 shots against a side who had not been beaten since November and had scored 40 goals in winning their last 10 matches in a row.

The Brazil international told *TNT Sports* it was "probably the performance of my life" as he broke Pepe Reina's club record with his 22nd Champions League clean sheet.

"The manager was telling us how hard it would be to play against PSG, how good they are with the ball and that we would have to be ready to suffer...We knew what was coming," Alisson said.

His nine saves were also the most on record (since 2003) by a Liverpool goalkeeper in a Champions League match.

Liverpool were fortunate VAR ruled out Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's first half goal for offside and also decided Ibrahima Konate's shoulder barge on Bradley Barcola did not warrant a red card.

"We were lucky with the first half that the goal was fractionally offside," added Slot.

"I think if the referee would have blown his whistle (for the Konate offence) VAR would not have overturned it and it was also clear for me that he should not have overturned it because it wasn't clearly wrong. It's a big decision, that's true."

Slot also enjoyed great fortune with his substitutions, with one - Darwin Nunez - teeing up Elliott to score with his first touch after

replacing Mohamed Salah late in the game.

"A big moment for him. I can understand that he's sometimes frustrated about the playing time he gets, because he's a good player," Slot said of Elliott.

"He has to do it with limited playing time but he just keeps on going. I have to give him big compliments for that.

"But it wasn't only Harvey, it was also the one that assisted, Darwin, who came from a difficult two games but was absolutely there again tonight."

PSG head coach Luis Enrique was not too disappointed by the result, which he believes they can recover in the second leg at Anfield next week.

"I don't think it's too difficult to analyse tonight's game. We were far superior to Liverpool.

"We created more chances and produced a complete performance against one of Europe's top sides. Football can be unfair at times.

"Without a doubt [they can go through]. We've only played the first leg. We're a side with nothing to lose. If we can replicate tonight's performance, we can qualify."

PSG forwards Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Ousmane Dembele, especially in the first half, were electric - and managed 13 shots, six on target, between them.

"We deserved more," said Enrique. "Their best player was their goalkeeper - he was magnificent today. Today wasn't a game based on the stats or the details.

"We were far superior. We didn't allow Liverpool to play. They were better than us for the first five minutes but, apart from that, it was us on top." - The Independent/Agencies



Paris Saint-Germain's Joao Neves (right) looks on as Liverpool's Alisson gathers the ball during their Champions League Round of 16 first leg match. - AFP/IC

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