



## Billion\$ lost in forex hidden fees

Malaysians sending money overseas advised to compare exchange rate with mid-market rate, and read fine print to spot undisclosed markup.

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## Syndicate falsifying birth certs busted

NRD, MACC net 18, including mastermind, middlemen and birth informants in joint crackdown in four states.

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## Hidden dangers in beverages sold at Ramadan stalls

Many contain artificial additives, preservatives and sweeteners that could impact health negatively, says academic.



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Apart from artificial colourants, flavouring agents are often used as cheaper substitutes for natural extracts to enhance fruity sweetness. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THE SUN

# PM: RM1.1b SEB injection not bailout

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim says government funding meant to settle Sapura Energy's outstanding debts with 2,000 local vendors and preserve Malaysian O&G ecosystem.

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# 'RM1.1b capital injection into Sapura Energy not bailout'

➤ Funding solely for settling firm's outstanding debts with 2,000 vendors, preserving oil and gas ecosystem: Anwar

■ BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM  
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**PUTRAJAYA:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has asserted that the RM1.1 billion injected by the government into Sapura Energy Bhd (SEB) is strictly for restructuring, with zero perks for shareholders or ex-management.

He underscored that the funding is exclusively intended for settling SEB's outstanding debts with 2,000 local oil and gas vendors, most of them Bumiputera SMEs.

"The previous major shareholders are no longer involved in SEB's management. A new professional team has been put in place to spearhead the restructuring exercise," he said in a statement issued after the Finance Ministry's monthly assembly.

Anwar said the capital injection is aimed at protecting local workers who have gone unpaid for months, and preserving Malaysia's oil and gas ecosystem.

"This RM1.1 billion injection is specifically for paying SEB's debts to vendors. It is not a

handout to shareholders or a lifeline to the company's previous management."

Anwar said rigorous financial scrutiny, including audits and due diligence, would be carried out before finalising the restructuring plan.

He said the findings from these assessments would be shared with enforcement agencies, including the Securities Commission, to determine whether any legal action is warranted.

"An audit has already been carried out, and additional due diligence will follow."

Emphasising the Madani government's commitment to transparency and governance, he said SEB's restructuring plan had been approved by creditors and undergone legal proceedings.

Anwar also made it clear that the capital injection is an investment, not a grant.

SEB has been grappling with severe financial woes since the mid-2010s, as plunging oil prices triggered mounting debts and persistent losses.

By 2023, the situation had escalated to a

critical level when external auditors Ernst & Young sounded the alarm over the company's ability to sustain its operations.

Their stark warning ignited an extensive debt restructuring plan aimed at saving the ailing firm.

In February, creditors gave their decisive approval to the plan, with court clearance expected to follow shortly.

At the heart of this rescue effort is the robust RM1.1 billion capital injection, facilitated through Malaysia Development Holdings Sdn Bhd. This move is designed to avert SEB's looming liquidation and protect key oil and gas assets vital to the nation.

Permodalan Nasional Bhd (PNB), one of SEB's major shareholders, had said the injection was not a bailout, not about saving failing management or rewarding former shareholders.

PNB pointed out that the approach mirrors global restructuring efforts, drawing parallels with Singapore's overhaul of Sembcorp and South Korea's restructuring of Daewoo Shipbuilding.

It said the RM1.1 billion is being deployed as redeemable convertible loan stocks, a financial instrument that not only provides immediate relief but also lays the foundation for long-term stability of Malaysia's oil and gas industry.

## i-Saraan gets RM2.6b in contributions

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Total contributions to the i-Saraan programme, a voluntary scheme under the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), amounted to RM2.6 billion in 2024, said Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan.

He said of this amount, the government's incentive allocation was RM114.8 million, benefiting 529,667 members.

"This marks a significant increase compared with the government's incentive of RM54.7 million for 383,082 members in 2023 and RM33.2 million for 291,743 members in 2022."

"Total contributions received for i-Saraan in 2023 amounted to RM1.44 billion compared with RM888 million in 2022," he said in the Dewan Negara yesterday.

He was responding to a question from Senator Hasbie Muda on allocations for the i-Saraan and i-Suri programmes.

Amir Hamzah said the government had announced enhancements to the i-Saraan programme, including an increase in the matching incentive from 15% to 20%, subject to a maximum of RM500 per year and a lifetime limit of RM5,000 per individual under Budget 2025.

He added that eligibility for the incentive applies to individuals under the age of 60. - Bernama

## Umno unaffected by former PM's corruption probe, says DPM

**KUALA LUMPUR:** There will be no issue of Umno being affected by the investigation into the corruption case involving former prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob, said its president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

Ahmad Zahid said the case involves an individual and not the party.

"It is not an issue with the leadership and Umno members. We regard the case as a personal or individual matter. It has nothing to do with us officially," he said at a media conference after attending an *iftar* ceremony with the Umno Supreme Council on Tuesday night.

He was commenting on whether the corruption case involving Ismail Sabri would disrupt Umno's stability or affect the party's image.

He said Umno had nothing to do with the money and gold bars seized by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in the case involving Ismail Sabri.

"There is no direct connection to political funds or collections made by Umno. We will leave it to the MACC to take follow-up action, and if there is any legal action it is up to the MACC and the Attorney-General's Chambers."

Previously, MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki was reported to have said Ismail Sabri was a suspect in a corruption and money laundering investigation following the discovery of about RM170 million in cash at a safehouse during a raid.

The focus of the investigation is on expenditure and procurement of funds for promotional and publicity purposes while he led the country.

MACC had seized about RM170 million in cash in various international currencies including Baht, Riyal, Pound Sterling, Won, Euro, Swiss Franc and Yuan as well as 16kg of pure gold bars estimated to be worth nearly RM7 million. - Bernama



Ismail Sabri Yaakob waving to reporters as he arrives at the MACC headquarters in Putrajaya yesterday. - AFPIC

## Ismail Sabri spends six hours at MACC HQ to give statement

■ BY HARITH KAMAL  
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**PUTRAJAYA:** Former prime minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob spent six hours yesterday at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) headquarters to provide his statement.

The Bera MP is also expected to return to the headquarters today to continue giving his statement.

Ismail Sabri, who arrived at the graft busters' building at 9.47am, left at 3.14pm.

He was quoted by Bernama as saying that he would fully cooperate with the authorities.

"Today I was at the MACC headquarters to give my statement. I will continue cooperating with the authorities until the investigation is

concluded," Ismail Sabri said.

The country's ninth prime minister was summoned as part of an ongoing investigation into corruption and money laundering cases allegedly linked to him.

Nearly 40 reporters had gathered at the headquarters as early as 8am for his arrival.

He was initially scheduled to provide his statement at the MACC headquarters on March 5 but it was postponed.

It was reported that Ismail Sabri had collapsed at his home on Feb 21 and was hospitalised for blood pressure-related problems.

A later appointment on March 7 was also postponed after he submitted another medical certificate.

MACC chief commissioner Datuk Seri Azam

Baki was previously reported as saying that Ismail Sabri's medical leave had ended on March 12 and, to his knowledge, his illness is not serious.

On Tuesday MACC sources said statements from 36 witnesses had been recorded to assist in the corruption and money laundering investigation involving the former prime minister, with an additional 23 witnesses identified and set to be summoned soon.

On March 3, Azam confirmed that Ismail Sabri is a suspect in the investigation, following the discovery of about RM170 million in cash at a safe house during a raid.

The MACC has also reportedly frozen 13 bank accounts, containing over RM2 million, as part of its ongoing investigation.



## Study on splitting A-G, public prosecutor roles almost complete

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said is leading a Malaysian delegation to London to wrap up a groundbreaking study on splitting the roles of the attorney general and public prosecutor.

After trips to Canada and Australia last year for in-depth studies, this final phase aims to determine a model tailored for Malaysia.

Azalina said the empirical study began with a high-profile roundtable co-organised by the Legal Affairs Division of the Prime Minister's Department, University College London (UCL) and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

"Over 30 legal experts and academics debated the roles of the attorney general and public prosecutor as practised in Malaysia and the United Kingdom," she said.

She said the delegation met England and Wales Attorney General Lord Hermer K. C. at the Justice Ministry for a detailed briefing on the UK system.

She added that they also engaged with UK House of Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle, who had recently visited the Malaysian Parliament.

Azalina said discussions with the Crown Prosecution Service and its Inspectorate provided further insights into prosecutorial powers and oversight practices.

She said a final report is in progress and will be presented to the Cabinet later this year.

"The Secretariat for the Empirical Study is preparing a comprehensive report, which will guide our next steps." – Bernama

## RON97, diesel prices drop this week until March 19

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The retail price of RON97 petrol dropped by 10 sen, to RM3.28 per litre, while diesel in the peninsula decreased by seven sen, to RM3.06 per litre, yesterday, and will remain so until March 19.

In a statement, the Finance Ministry said the retail price of RON95 petrol remains unchanged at RM2.05 per litre, while diesel in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan remains at RM2.15 per litre.

The prices are determined based on the weekly retail prices of petroleum products using the Automatic Pricing Mechanism formula.

The ministry said the government remains committed to monitoring market developments and will continue to adjust the retail price of diesel based on the global oil market while ensuring price stability. – Bernama

## Public urged to report cooking oil shortage

**JOHOR BAHRU:** The Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry has urged the public to be the eyes and ears of the ministry and report any shortages of bottled cooking oil in their areas.

Johor ministry director Lilis

Saslinda Pornomo said this collaboration is vital to ensure the continuous supply of cooking oil, especially as the Hari Raya Aidilfitri festive season approaches.

"We will continue to monitor

the situation from time to time and urge the public to report to us immediately if they encounter this problem," she said after visiting the Rahmah Ramadan bazaar on Wednesday.

She attributed the shortage of

bottled cooking oil to the increase in global crude palm oil prices, coupled with the government's price ceiling policy, which has made it difficult for companies to cover operational costs. – Bernama

# Fake birth certificate syndicate busted in joint operation

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA  
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**PETALING JAYA:** The National Registration Department (NRD), in collaboration with the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) intelligence division, busted a syndicate involved in falsifying birth certificates on Tuesday after a year-long joint intelligence operation.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution said the operation, conducted simultaneously across multiple locations in four states – including Putrajaya, Selangor, Penang and Perak – revealed that the syndicate

➤ A total of 18 arrested, including mastermind, middlemen and informants in four-state crackdown

had falsified birth documents by creating and replicating fake documents to resemble official verification from registered and legal private healthcare facilities.

"These fraudulent documents were then used to cheat the NRD for birth registration purposes.

"The syndicate's modus operandi involved individuals acting as birth informants by submitting fake birth documents at NRD counters during

registration. Once an official birth certificate was obtained, it is believed to have been sold on the black market to parents or guardians of children without identification or Malaysian citizenship.

"The syndicate is also suspected of having both domestic and international networks and is likely involved in smuggling undocumented children from abroad to be sold to these parents,"

he said.

The operation, codenamed *Ops Tumpang*, was conducted simultaneously at multiple locations across four states on Tuesday and saw the arrest of 10 local women and eight men.

"Among them, four individuals, including a legal practitioner, are suspected of acting as middlemen between agents and applicants.

"He is also believed to be the mastermind behind the syndicate.

"Meanwhile, the other six have been identified as birth informants. The authorities also seized RM54,000 in cash from the suspects, believed to be proceeds from these illegal activities," Saifuddin said.

He added that the NRD has not ruled out the possibility of further arrests as investigations progress.

The case is being investigated under Section 36(1)(b) of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1957 (Act 299) for allegedly providing false information during birth registration.

If convicted, offenders may face a fine of up to RM20,000, imprisonment of up to three years or both.

The case is also expected to be investigated under other laws within the MACC's jurisdiction.

On Wednesday, it was reported that the MACC arrested 16 individuals, aged between 20 and 70, during 11am and 8pm on Tuesday during *Op Outlander* and *Op Birth*, which were conducted across the Klang Valley and Johor.

Among those detained were a civil servant, a medical practitioner with the title Datuk Seri, a legal practitioner, several agents and birth registration applicants.

A total of 12 individuals have been remanded for up to five days until March 16, while four others, including the medical practitioner with the title Datuk Seri, were released on MACC bail for health reasons after their statements were recorded.



Saifuddin (centre) displaying the seized items during a press conference yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC

## Over 5,200 youths declared bankrupt since 2020

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A total of 5,272 youths below the age of 34 have been declared bankrupt from 2020 to this year, according to Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh.

She said of the total, 5,189 were aged between 25 to 34, while 83 others were below 25.

"The trend of bankruptcy among youths shows an increase, with 877 cases recorded in 2024 – which is 150 cases higher than the 727 cases recorded in the previous year.

"According to the Insolvency Department's records, the main cause of bankruptcy cases in 2024 was personal loans, which accounted for 2,776 cases or 46.4% of the total 5,977 bankruptcy cases," Hannah said.

She was replying to Senator Roderick Wong Siew during Question Time at the Dewan Negara sitting yesterday.

The senator had wanted to know the total number of youths aged 35 and below who are declared bankrupt as of

this year and the main causes behind the issue.

Yeoh said factors contributing to youth bankruptcy include business loans (1,148 cases), housing loans (474 cases), other forms of debt (463 cases), vehicle hire-purchase loans (444 cases), corporate guarantees (383 cases), income tax debt (110 cases), credit card debt (89 cases), failure to contribute to the Employees Provident Fund (77 cases), scholarships and student loans (nine cases), and social guarantees

(four cases).

She said the ministry, through the National Youth and Sports Department, has taken the initiative to organise a special nationwide youth financial literacy programme, which aims to enhance youth financial resilience, from April to October this year.

"For this year too, the ministry is also organising the youth economic empowerment programme focusing on the cost of living elements for youth participants, particularly in the central

zone," she said.

Additionally, Yeoh said the government, through the Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency, has and will continue to carry out various programmes to assist the target groups in becoming more financially savvy and practising responsible financial management.

She added that all these efforts are aimed at reducing the risk of bankruptcy among Malaysians, especially young people. – Bernama



# Health risks of colourful drinks at Ramadan markets

➤ Artificial food dyes and preservatives linked to behavioural changes, allergic reactions and carcinogenic effects: Lecturer

BY KIRTINEE RAMESH  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Ramadan bazaars offer vibrant, refreshing drinks but many contain artificial additives that may pose health risks.

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu Food Biochemistry and Biophysics lecturer Assoc Prof Dr Mohamad Khairi Zainol said common artificial colourants include tartrazine for yellow hues, Sunset Yellow for orange, Allura Red for red and pink, and Brilliant Blue for blue and purple.

"Flavouring agents, such as ethyl maltol, which enhances fruity sweetness, benzyl acetate which mimics banana flavour and synthetic vanilla or pandan essence are often used as cheaper substitutes for natural extracts."

The beverages are typically priced at RM3 per cup while takeaway options, which come in larger portions, usually cost around RM5. However, prices may vary depending on the type of drink.

Specialty beverages, such as fresh fruit juices, premium smoothies or drinks with added toppings, can be priced higher, with some

costing RM8 or more per cup.

He warned that beverages containing artificial additives, preservatives and sweeteners could have negative health effects when consumed regularly.

"Tartrazine has been associated with hyperactivity in children and allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. Sunset Yellow has been linked to stomach discomfort while Allura Red has raised concerns over potential carcinogenic effects in animal studies."

Brilliant Blue may cause allergic reactions and digestive issues while synthetic flavouring agents can cause irritation when consumed in large amounts.

He added that long-term consumption of artificial food dyes and preservatives has been linked to behavioural changes, allergic reactions and potential carcinogenic effects at high dosages.

Some preservatives, such as sodium benzoate, may react with ascorbic acid or vitamin C in fruit-based drinks to produce benzene, a known carcinogen.

While the body can break down and eliminate most artificial additives, frequent intake could lead to chemical buildup, affecting liver and kidney functions. Some dyes, such as Sudan Red, have been banned in certain countries due to toxicity concerns.

Mohamad Khairi warned that excessive sugar intake, especially during Ramadan, could have harmful effects.

The rapid spike and subsequent drop in blood sugar levels, commonly referred to as a "sugar crash", could cause tiredness, dizziness and hunger soon after breaking fast.

"Certain artificial sweeteners, such as

sorbitol or sucralose, may lead to bloating or diarrhoea in sensitive individuals."

He suggested using natural alternatives for artificial colourants, namely butterfly pea flowers for blue or purple hues, pandan leaves for green, Roselle or beetroot for red or pink, and turmeric or oranges for yellow.

He recommended using fresh fruit purees from mango, pineapple, orange and lychee to add flavour, honey, dates or stevia as healthier sweeteners, and herbs and spices such as mint, ginger and cinnamon to enhance taste naturally.

Universiti Teknologi Mara Applied Sciences Faculty senior lecturer Dr Azizah Othman said while these drinks provide temporary refreshment, they ultimately make it harder to sustain energy throughout the fasting period.

"High sugar intake increases urine output, which could lead to dehydration."

She said while fasting burns stored fat for energy, breaking fast with sugary foods could lead to rapid fat storage and increase obesity risk.

She recommended water infused with cucumber, lemon or mint, fresh fruit juices without added sugar, and coconut water for electrolyte replenishment.

"Grass jelly drinks and barley water also help cool the body and aid digestion."

She underscored public education on the dangers of artificial beverages and the benefits of natural alternatives through community talks and social media campaigns.

"Authorities should introduce incentives, such as discounted stall fees for vendors selling healthier options, and a 'healthier choice' label to help consumers identify nutritious alternatives."

## State announces special aid for Aidilfitri

**KUANTAN:** The Pahang government has announced a special RM1,000 financial aid for around 8,000 civil servants in the lead-up to Aidilfitri.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Wan Rosdy Wan Ismail said the decision was made during the state executive council meeting, with the aid set to be distributed one week before Aidilfitri.

The initiative, which would cost the state government RM8 million, aims to ease the financial burden of civil servants as they prepare for the festive season.

The state government will also host *Jualan Makmur Kluster Perayaan Hari Raya Aidilfitri*, a special sale of essential food items from March 22 to 27 at 26 locations across Pahang.

The initiative, in collaboration with selected supermarkets and suppliers, will offer discounts of between 15% and 30% on various goods, with subsidies from the state government totalling RM1.1 million. — Bernama



**BRIGHT NIGHT ...** Hindus releasing floating lanterns into the water during a religious ceremony in conjunction with Theppa Thiruvizha in Teluk Bahang, Penang. — MASYR CHE ANI/THESUN

## Sabah divers club urges respect for marine life

**KOTA KINABALU:** The Sabah Dive Squad Club has condemned a video that was widely spread showing divers manhandling marine life, including a sea turtle and a whale shark, possibly near Pulau Manukan, said its president Sim Fui.

He urged divers to respect marine life and follow ethical guidelines, adding that such actions not only violate marine conservation laws but also breach ethical diving standards that protect Sabah's marine ecosystem.

"These irresponsible actions cause unnecessary stress to marine life and disrupt their natural behaviour. It damages the ecosystem that makes Sabah's waters a renowned diving destination."

The club has called for immediate action from relevant authorities to investigate the incident and identify the perpetrators.

"Sabah's underwater world is a privilege to experience, not a playground for reckless behaviour," said Sim.

He also said the club has pledged to continue its collaboration with local authorities, conservation groups and the diving community to protect Sabah's marine heritage.

Those with information about the incident are encouraged to come forward to assist in the investigation.

Sabah Wildlife Department director Mohd Soffian Abu Bakar confirmed that authorities are aware of the videos and are investigating. — Bernama

## Homestays need RM3m for promotion

**PORT DICKSON:** The Negeri Sembilan Homestay and Kampungstay Association needs an allocation of RM3 million to help homestay owners attract more local and foreign visitors to the state.

Its chairman Mistam Taib said nine homestays require financial aid and promotional assistance from the state government and Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry in conjunction with Visit Malaysia 2026 and Visit Negeri Sembilan 2026.

"This allocation is needed mainly to upgrade the halls and build new halls so that various exciting activities can be provided for visitors to the state."

"Homestay operators in the state comprise Homestay Pachitan and Homestay D'Pelandok Best in Port Dickson, Homestay Pelepong in Labu, Seremban, Homestay Rawa in Lenggeng, Nilai, Homestay Lonek in Jempol, Homestay Gemas in Tampin, and Homestay Sungai Buluh, D'Pasoh in Klawang, Jelebu," he told reporters here after the Tourism Malaysia engagement session with industry players in conjunction with Visit Malaysia 2026.

Also present were ministry secretary-general Datuk Shaharuddin Abu Sohoh, Tourism Malaysia Promotions Board director-general Datuk Manoharan Periasamy and state Tourism, Arts and Culture Committee chairman Nicole Tan Lee Koon.

Tan said the state government constantly strives and cooperates with the ministry to upgrade and reinvigorate the economy of homestays that was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

She said her committee recently brought in 500 tourists from China to stay at Homestay D'Pelandok Best and they were impressed with the *kampung* lifestyle as they participated in various interesting activities provided by the homestay operator, Bernama reported.

"They tried their hands at cooking traditional dishes, playing traditional games and, most interestingly, they were given the experience of a village-style wedding ceremony."

"The promotions of such homestays need to be intensified."

## Craft bazaar to be held this month

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Terengganu Batik Entrepreneurs Association will be organising the Aidilfitri Craft Bazaar at the Craft Complex in Jalan Conlay here next week, following the postponement of National Craft Day celebrations.

Its president Shafei Ghazali said the bazaar will run for 10 days from March 18, open from 10am to 7pm from Mondays to Thursdays, and 10am to 10pm on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

He said there will be 80 stalls offering a variety of *batik*, *songket*, silverware, rattan products and accessories, such as handbags, *songkok* and *tarbush*, and festive biscuits.

"The largest group of entrepreneurs are from Terengganu while others are from Kelantan, Selangor, Pahang, Perlis, Malacca, Negeri Sembilan, Sabah and Sarawak."

He added that the aim of the bazaar is to assist association members in marketing their products that were completed earlier for participation in National Craft Day celebrations, which was originally scheduled to be held from Feb 14 to 25. — Bernama



# 'Be mindful of clothing while riding motorcycles'

➤ Loose garment such as *telekung* could pose safety hazard when entangled in wheels, leading to fatal crashes: Social activist

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI  
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**PETALING JAYA:** With Muslims now attending Tarawih prayers regularly at mosques and *surau* during Ramadan, there are growing concerns about the safety of loose-fitting prayer attire, especially *telekung* (worn by Muslim women during prayers), which can get caught in motorcycle wheels and lead to crashes.

Alliance for a Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said wearing loose clothing while riding a motorcycle, especially as a pillion rider, poses a serious safety risk.

He warned that garments such as *telekung* or long skirts can easily be caught by the wind and entangled in motorcycle wheels, posing a serious risk of fatal accidents.

"Public awareness on this issue remains low, so there is a need for more intensive educational efforts to inform motorcyclists about the risks associated with their choice of attire," he said.

In 2023, a 64-year-old man lost control of

his motorcycle and crashed after his wife's prayer clothes got stuck in the rear wheel as they were heading for *Maghrib* prayers. He later succumbed to his injuries.

Lee said such an unexpected incident should serve as a reminder that road safety extends beyond just obeying traffic laws; it also includes being mindful of attire while riding motorcycles.

"Many only recognise the dangers after an accident occurs, but by then, it is too late.

"Crashes involving loose garments, such as *telekung*, long skirts or scarves, can be prevented with greater awareness and precautionary measures."

Lee said awareness efforts must be intensified through collaborative initiatives involving the government, road safety organisations, and the public.

He stressed that all road users must take preventive measures, as safety is a shared responsibility that requires proactive action to prevent crashes.

"Continuous road safety education programmes to promote safer riding and driving habits are important.

"Ensuring safety on the road is an ongoing effort that must involve all parties to reduce risks and effectively save lives," he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Road Safety Research Centre head Assoc Prof Dr Law Teik Hua said many Malaysians understand the importance of wearing helmets and reflective jackets, but concerns about loose clothing are often overlooked.

"To prevent accidents caused by loose clothing, motorcyclists and passengers

should take several precautions, including opting for well-fitted apparel that does not dangle or flow, as loose garments can easily get caught in the motorcycle's moving parts."

Law said motorcycle crashes caused by loose garments can result in severe injuries, especially when they become entangled in a bike's moving parts; they can trigger sudden and violent crashes.

"Such incidents can lead to traumatic brain injuries, even if a helmet is worn, as well as broken bones, internal organ damage, and severe abrasions from being dragged or thrown off the motorcycle."

Law said Malaysia's road safety recommendations emphasise wearing helmets, using reflective gear, and following traffic laws; however, there are no specific regulations addressing the dangers of loose clothing for motorcyclists and passengers.

He added that the gap highlights the need for more comprehensive safety measures that consider all potential hazards, including attire-related risks.

"Stricter laws and increased awareness campaigns are necessary. Public education efforts could include social media, television, and radio campaigns highlighting the dangers of loose garments while riding.

"Posting safety reminders at mosques, prayer halls, and public spaces can also encourage worshippers to secure their clothing before getting on a motorcycle. With proper education and policy measures, we can significantly reduce accidents caused by loose clothing and improve road safety for all motorcyclists," he said.



Law said posting safety reminders at mosques, prayer halls and public spaces can also encourage worshippers to secure their clothing before getting on a motorcycle. – MASRY CHE ANI/THESUN

## Seven nabbed for using bazaar stalls as drug den

**GEORGE TOWN:** Police arrested seven men suspected of using Ramadan bazaar stalls as a drug den during two raids in Bayan Baru.

Southwest district police chief ACP Sazalee Adam said the 8pm raid on Tuesday led to the arrest of six men, aged 20 to 33, who were working at the bazaar.

Police found five packets of ketamine, totalling 2.85g, and two ketamine-laced cigarettes.

"We conducted another raid at a nearby stall and arrested a 30-year-old man. During the search of the suspect, we found a red and silver foil package, containing two Erimin 5

tablets, weighing 0.60g," he said, adding that the estimated value of the seized drugs from the seven suspects is RM610.

Sazalee said all suspects tested positive for drugs, with six individuals having criminal and drug-related records, each having between one and six offences.

All were remanded for investigation under Section 12(2) and Section 15(1)(a) of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952.

In a separate case, Sazalee said a female factory worker was arrested for allegedly stealing gold scrap from an electronics factory in Bayan Lepas last Saturday.

The 47-year-old woman was detained in Kampung Matahari Jatu, Telok Kumbar, after selling the stolen gold to a trader, without any transaction records.

Police raided a gold shop in Bayan Lepas at 2.18pm on Tuesday, apprehending a 66-year-old shop owner suspected of buying stolen gold. During a shop search, officers seized 4.42g of gold scrap.

The woman confessed to stealing gold and selling it to the trader for RM1,700. The shop owner also admitted to buying the gold without proper documentation. Both have been remanded. – Bernama

## Journalist in bribery case to be charged

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A news portal journalist probed by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) for suspected involvement in a bribery case will be charged in court today.

Confirming the matter, MACC chief commissioner Tan Sri Azam Baki said the decision was made following consultation with the deputy public prosecutor.

Earlier, media reports said the male journalist was arrested on Feb 28 concerning a bribery case.

He was suspected of soliciting and receiving RM20,000 in exchange for removing an uploaded article, and refraining from further writing about a foreign worker agency allegedly involved in a syndicate.

The case is being investigated under Section 16(a)(A) of the MACC Act 2009. – Bernama

## Lecturer remanded over rape allegation

**CHUKAI:** A lecturer at a skill training institute in Kemaman has been remanded six days from yesterday over an allegation of raping his student at the end of last year.

The remand order on the 38-year-old man was issued by Magistrate Sharifah Amiranda Shasha Amir Sharifuddin.

Kemaman police chief Supt Mohd Razi Rosli said the suspect was arrested on Wednesday following a report lodged by the 18-year-old victim at 3.38pm.

"Police also seized a car and several other items from the man to facilitate investigations," he said.

Mohd Razi added that police are also investigating whether other victims were involved. – Bernama

## Car driver hurt in baby elephant mishap

**MERSING:** An elderly man was injured when the car he was driving hit a baby elephant crossing a road at Km30 Jalan Nitar-Mersing here last Tuesday.

Mersing police chief Supt Abdul Razak Abdullah Sani said the 70-year-old man injured his neck and right wrist in the incident, and is undergoing treatment at Kluang Hospital.

He said police received a report on the incident at about 9pm.

"An investigation found that the incident occurred when the Toyota Altis car, with the victim at the wheel, hit a baby elephant which was crossing the road with a herd of other elephants.

Abdul Razak said the Wildlife and National Parks Department took immediate action to remove the carcass of the baby elephant. – Bernama

## 'Child in stolen car found unharmed'

**SHAH ALAM:** A woman went through a harrowing ordeal when her six-year-old daughter was taken along with her stolen car for nearly 45 minutes in an incident in Setia Alam.

District police chief ACP Mohd Iqbal Ibrahim said the 34-year-old woman was dropping off her younger child at a nursery at 6.55am on Wednesday when she left her eldest daughter asleep in the backseat of her car, which was still running and unlocked.

When she came back, the car was gone. "Police were alerted, and with assistance from the public, we located the stolen car at 7.45am near an apartment complex, about 2km from the scene. The victim's daughter was found inside, safe and unharmed," he said in a statement.

– Bernama

# Collective duty to manage food waste

► From excess to impact, food initiative group has turned bazaar leftovers into aid

■ BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Ramadan is not just a much-awaited holy month leading up to Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebrations, but also a time when Muslims and non-Muslims unite to enjoy the wide variety of food sold at Ramadan bazaars.

The bazaars showcase Malaysia's rich cultural tapestry, offering Malay, Arab, Chinese, Indian and Western cuisines. However, the abundance of food often results in significant waste.

The MySaveFood@Ramadan initiative has made progress in combating food waste. As of March 11, the initiative has collected and redistributed approximately 11,000kg of unsold food from over 50 bazaars nationwide.

Its director Mohammad Harith Mohd Tarik said while food waste during Ramadan has declined in recent years, it remains a pressing concern that requires continuous attention.

"During Ramadan in 2023, Malaysia disposed of 8,159 tonnes of solid waste daily, with food waste accounting for 2,892 tonnes or 35.45% of the total. Although this represents a 3.07% decrease

compared with previous years, significant progress is still needed."

He said the most commonly wasted items include rice, noodles and traditional delicacies, adding that vendors frequently overprepare in anticipation of high demand, leading to surplus food, while consumer over-purchasing also contributes to large amounts of uneaten food.

"It's a mix of misjudged demand and impulse buying."

Harith said to address the issue, MySaveFood has set up food collection counters at bazaars, such as the one near Stutong Community Market in Kuching, to ensure excess food is redistributed to college hostels, mosques, and those in need.

He said the initiative collaborates with various organisations to facilitate food distribution and promote awareness on mindful consumption.

"We encourage vendors to donate rather than dispose, and we work with volunteers to ensure the food reaches the right hands before it spoils."

Harith emphasised that food safety is paramount during redistribution.

"We follow strict safety measures, including rapid distribution to



MySaveFood has made progress in combating food waste and has set up collection counters at bazaars to ensure the surplus is redistributed to college hostels, mosques and those in need.  
— AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

maintain freshness, proper storage to prevent spoilage and food labelling with QR codes.

"This allows recipients to provide feedback or raise any concerns. We ensure food quality is never compromised, and recipients can trust what they are consuming."

Harith said despite its success, MySaveFood faces significant challenges, especially a shortage of volunteers.

"Many people are tied up with

personal and religious commitments, making it difficult to maintain a steady workforce," he said, adding that the initiative actively recruits from NGOs, student groups and CSR programmes.

Harith urged the public to volunteer for food collection and distribution efforts, donate to sustain MySaveFood's operations and raise awareness on responsible consumption.

He said over the past five years,

Ramadan food waste has increased by 21%, underscoring the need for sustainable practices.

Harith stressed that while the initiative's efforts represent a significant step forward, lasting change demands collective responsibility.

"We all have a role to play, from vendors to consumers. Ramadan is about gratitude and giving – what better way to observe this than by ensuring no food goes to waste?"

theSun

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# Duterte takes full responsibility for drug war

## Ex-president anticipates long ICC battle

**MANILA:** Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte said he takes full responsibility for his administration's "war on drugs", in a video message posted on his Facebook account, as he braces for a legal battle at the International Criminal Court.

"Whatever happened in the past, I will be the front of our law enforcement and the military. I said this already, that I will protect you, and I will be responsible for everything," Duterte said. His remarks were his first since being put on a plane to The Hague.

Duterte was taken into custody by the ICC on Wednesday following his arrest in Manila on murder charges linked to his "war on drugs" in which thousands of purported dealers and users were killed.

The video, which has been viewed 10 million times, showed only Duterte speaking, while wearing a plain white shirt. It appeared to have been recorded inside the plane, with the faint hum of the engine audible in the background.

In a statement, the ICC said Duterte was

"surrendered to the custody of the International Criminal Court. He was arrested by the authorities of the Republic of the Philippines ... for charges of murder as a crime against humanity".

He will be brought before an ICC judge in The Hague in coming days for an initial appearance, the statement said.

He was transferred to a detention unit on the Dutch coast. The centre offers each prisoner an individual cell equipped with a computer to work on their case, along with an outdoor exercise area.

"This will be a long legal proceeding, but I say to you, I will continue to serve my country. And so be it, if that is my destiny," Duterte said, while assuring his supporters he was well.

"I am okay, do not worry," the 79-year old former Philippine leader said in the more than two-minute video clip.

Duterte will be held there until an initial court appearance, likely in the coming days.

Speaking to AFP outside the ICC, Gilbert Andres, a lawyer representing victims of the drug war, said: "My clients are very thankful to God because their prayers have been answered."

"The arrest of Rodrigo Duterte is a great signal for international criminal justice. It

means that no one is above the law," Andres said.

Before her father's departure, the Philippines' Vice-President Sara Duterte said he was being "forcibly taken to The Hague", labelling the transfer "oppression and persecution".

Duterte, who led the Philippines from 2016 to 2022, will face allegations of crimes against humanity for overseeing death squads in his anti-drug crackdown. He could become the first Asian former head of state to go on trial at the ICC.

The ICC arrest warrant says that as president, Duterte created, funded and armed the death squads that carried out murders of purported drug users and dealers.

During his six years in office, 6,200 suspects were killed during anti-drug operations, by the police's count.

Sara Duterte arrived in The Hague on Wednesday evening, her office said.

Lawyers and academics said the arrest and transfer were a big moment for the ICC, which is targeted by US sanctions and does not have any police of its own to arrest people.

A State Department spokesperson said the United States is aware of Philippine authorities' arrest of Duterte. - Reuters/AFP

## S'pore developer drops lawsuit to remove CEO son

**SINGAPORE:** City Developments said its executive chairman has dropped a lawsuit against his son, the company's CEO, seeking to resolve a high-profile boardroom tussle at one of Singapore's largest property developers.

Kwek Leng Beng said last month he had taken legal action to remove Sherman Kwek from the helm of the company, accusing him and other directors of breaching corporate governance standards to consolidate control of the company's board.

Both father and son will remain in their roles and all directors will retain their positions on the board, the company said in a statement issued late on Wednesday.

"All the board members have agreed to put aside their differences for the greater good of CDL and its stakeholders," Leng Beng said in the statement.

Shares in the firm gained 3.4% early yesterday, set for their strongest session since Aug 22, 2024. They are roughly flat compared to Feb 25, the day before the lawsuit became public.

Some analysts cautioned that key issues were unresolved.

"The gesture offers a small respite but does not fully address corporate governance issues and board differences raised during the dispute," RHB analysts said in a note to clients.

Leng Beng had alleged that his son bypassed the firm's nomination committee on a couple of occasions to change the board composition and made significant changes to committees and governance. - Reuters

## University sued over 'no married couples' rule

**TOKYO:** A couple who both worked at a Japanese university have sued the institution, a court said yesterday, for reportedly allowing only the husband to keep an academic position after they were married.

Despite its highly educated female population women leaders remain rare in Japanese business and politics.

The husband, a law professor, informed the dean at Miyazaki Sangyo-keiei University in southern Japan when they married in July, the *Asahi Shimbun* said on Wednesday.

However, the dean "expressed discomfort and told him that the woman's job contract would be suspended at the end of March", *Asahi* said, citing the unidentified couple's lawyer.

The university said there was an unwritten rule that two spouses should not work there because it was a small institution.

Miyazaki District Court confirmed the lawsuit was filed against the university and the dean last month.

A spokesman for the university said there had been "a grave violation of the rules" by the couple but declined to comment further, citing privacy concerns.

The couple even chose to file for divorce to keep their jobs in the university's law faculty.

Even then the man was demoted to associate professor while the woman, an assistant professor, was made a clerical official, local broadcaster UMK reported.

"I felt I had been demanded to choose between marriage and career," the woman said.

"I'm very sad and indignant that the only university in this region that has a law faculty, and that touts recruitment of female students and their career support, can unfairly deprive a female teacher of her job and sense of fulfilment," she said.

The couple are seeking reinstatement of their former positions. - AFP



Duterte supporters waiting for his arrival at Scheveningen Prison in The Hague on Wednesday. - REUTERS/SPIC

## 'US server fraud case involves US\$390m of transactions'

**SINGAPORE:** Prosecutors told a court here yesterday that a case in which Singapore-based firms have been accused of fraudulently supplying US servers to Malaysia involves transactions worth US\$390 million (RM1.7 billion).

Three men have been charged with committing fraud against Dell and Super Micro by falsely representing where the servers would end up.

Singapore media have linked the case to the possible transfer of Nvidia's artificial intelligence chips to Chinese AI firm DeepSeek.

The United States is investigating if DeepSeek has been using banned US chips.

Singapore authorities have said the servers may have contained Nvidia chips but did not say whether the chips were the high-end semiconductors that are subject to US export controls.

Asked about the potential link to DeepSeek, Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam said last week that he did not want to speculate. The three suspects are Singaporeans Aaron Woon, 41, and Alan Wei, 49, and Chinese national Li Ming, 51.

Prosecutors said they believe Wei paid himself dividends amounting to tens of millions of dollars while Woon received a bonus of millions.

Shashi Nathan, the lawyer for Wei, said he wants to see proof from prosecutors of the value of Wei's alleged fraudulent transactions.

Li's lawyer declined to comment and Woon's lawyer did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The case is part of a wider police investigation in Singapore of 22 individuals and companies suspected of false representation. Six other people were arrested.

Prosecutors also said police are investigating whether other suppliers are involved in similar cases.

Malaysia is also investigating if its laws were breached. - Reuters



# Football fans clash with police at pensions march

➤ Argentinians push back against austerity measures

**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentine police fought running battles on Wednesday with hundreds of football fans and anti-austerity marchers, during a weekly protest by pensioners here.

Riot police used tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannon to disperse stone-throwing demonstrators, leading to at least 20 injuries and more than 100 arrests, city authorities said.

Many of those involved in the clashes wore football jerseys and the regular protest turned out to be one of the most violent demonstrations yet against President Javier Milei's budget-slashing policies.

The crowd chanted "Milei, garbage, you are the dictatorship!" – comparing his rule to that of Argentina's 1976-1983 military junta – as clashes erupted near the Congress building and the landmark Plaza de Mayo.

Among the injuries, the most serious was to photojournalist Pablo Grillo, seen in social media videos being hit by a projectile while taking pictures. His father Fabian told local press that his wounded son's life was in danger and blamed Milei's government.

The demonstrators, many waving national flags and pictures of the late football great Diego Maradona, were met by a major security presence outside Congress, which was in session when the protests began.

Columns of riot police on foot, backed by officers on motorbikes, fought for over two hours to clear a central avenue of protesters who threw firecrackers, stun grenades and stones taken from broken-up sidewalks.

A patrol car and garbage cans were set on fire and several streets barricaded with debris.

A video of a police officer pushing and hitting an elderly woman who fell to the ground, her head bleeding, has been widely shared on social media.

The protest is the latest in a years-long series of pensioner demonstrations, always on a Wednesday, that usually draw just a few dozen people.

This week, fans of several football clubs called for a show of solidarity with pensioners, some of whom have been teargassed or baton-charged in recent protests over their diminishing purchasing power.

Supporters of River Plate, Boca Juniors, Racing, Independiente and several other clubs joined the march.

After Wednesday's clashes were over, residents banged pots and pans in various parts of the city, blocking streets and singing

songs against Milei and National Security Minister Patricia Bullrich.

Emotions have been running high in the South American country with Tuesday's start of the trial of seven medical staff accused of homicide over Maradona's death in 2020.

Maradona died alone in a rented house in Buenos Aires, where he was being cared for after brain surgery.

He died of heart failure and acute pulmonary edema and his medical team is accused of having been criminally negligent in his care.

For the past week, calls to support struggling pensioners have been circulating with a video from 1992 of Maradona stating: "You have to be a real coward not to defend retirees."

"Ole, Ole, Diego, Diego," some of the protesters shouted on Wednesday.

"We have to unite and take to the streets to defend our rights and our sovereignty," 60-year-old Patricia Mencia, who was wearing a Quilmes club jersey, said as she marched alongside her 84-year-old mother.

Pensioners have taken the most pain in a year of drastic austerity, with pension increases having fallen far short of inflation.

Nearly 60% of retirees receive only the minimum amount, equivalent to some US\$340 (RM1,506) a month. – AFP

## University researchers reel from funding cuts

**SYDNEY:** Australia's top universities said yesterday the Trump administration had cut US funding to some of its researchers and asked others who receive US government financial support to prove their work was aligned with American interests.

The Group of Eight, a coalition of Australia's most research-intensive universities, said the action could jeopardise crucial medical and defence research.

Some researchers who receive funding from US federal agencies had been asked to assess their work's compliance with President Donald Trump's agenda in a 36-point questionnaire, said the universities.

The survey included questions on diversity, equity, and inclusion programmes that the Trump administration has been seeking to end. In some cases, recipients were only given 48 hours to respond, the Group of Eight said.

"We are extremely concerned about the broader implications of the Trump administration's policy, not only for the future of health and medical research, but especially regarding defence collaboration," the Group of Eight CEO Vicki Thomson said in a statement.

The Group of Eight has sought Australian government intervention and is seeking urgent guidance from the US government, including a time extension to respond to the questionnaire, the statement said.

A spokesperson for the US embassy in Canberra declined to comment. Australia's Education Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Group of Eight universities carry out 70% of all university research in Australia and the US is their single largest global research partner.

The universities collectively received around US\$161.6 million (RM716.56 million) in grants from the US National Institutes of Health between 2020 and 2024.

The universities said some researchers had received a "show cause" notification to justify funding over the past week and an extensive survey with questions relating to the Trump administration's priorities and research collaboration with China, Russia, Cuba or Iran.

The questionnaire, issued by the US Office of Management and Budget and seen by Reuters, asked Australian researchers questions such as: "Can you confirm that this is no DEI project (sic) or DEI elements of the project?" and "Does this project take appropriate measures to protect women and to defend against gender ideology?" – Reuters



A police officer uses a crowd control spray on a demonstrator in Buenos Aires on Wednesday. – REUTERS/SPIC

## At least 25 bodies retrieved from train siege

**MACH:** The bodies of at least 25 people, including 21 hostages, killed in a train siege by gunmen in Pakistan were retrieved from the site yesterday.

Security forces said they freed more than 340 train passengers in a two-day rescue operation that ended late on Wednesday after gunmen bombed a railway track in mountainous southwest Balochistan and stormed a train with around 450 passengers on board.

The assault was claimed by the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), one of a number of groups that accuse outsiders of plundering natural resources in Balochistan near the borders with Afghanistan and Iran.

Death tolls have varied, with the military

saying in an official statement that "21 innocent hostages" were killed by the gunmen as well as four soldiers in the rescue operation.

A railway official in Balochistan said the bodies of 25 people were transported by train away from the hostage site to the nearby town of Mach yesterday.

"Deceased were identified as 19 military passengers, one police and one railway official, while four bodies are yet to be identified," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A senior local military official overseeing operations confirmed the details.

An army official, speaking on condition of anonymity, earlier put the military toll at 28, including 27 off-duty soldiers taken hostage.

Passengers who escaped from the siege said after walking for hours through rugged mountains to reach safety that they saw people being shot dead.

Prime Minister was also expected to visit Balochistan, his office said.

"The prime minister (Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif) expressed grief and sorrow over the martyrdom of security personnel and train passengers," it said in a statement.

The BLA released a video of an explosion on the track followed by gunmen emerging from hiding places to attack the train.

Attacks by separatist groups have soared in the past few years, mostly targeting security forces and ethnic groups from outside the province. – AFP

### BRIEFS

#### KOREAN PILOTS CHARGED OVER BOMBING OF VILLAGE

**SEOUL:** South Korean military investigators charged two Air Force pilots yesterday with criminal negligence over an accidental bombing of a village last week during a training exercise, which injured at least 29 people and caused extensive property damage. Defence Ministry investigators have confirmed that errors by the pilots when they entered coordinates into the aircraft systems were "direct factors", the ministry's Criminal Investigation Command said in a statement. The pilots were charged with criminal negligence causing bodily harm. – Reuters

#### NZ SPY CHIEF RAPPED OVER CHINA COMMENTS

**BEIJING:** China's embassy in New Zealand accused Wellington's top spy of "spreading false information" after the intelligence chief warned of security risks posed by Beijing's growing influence in the Pacific. Security Intelligence Service Director-General Andrew Hampton said last week the focus of Pacific nations on economic and transnational crime issues had opened the door for China to sign strategic deals. The embassy in Wellington urged Hampton to stop "mirroring" China with "cold war thinking and zero-sum mentality". – Reuters



# Judge extends ban on student's deportation

➤ 'Arrest an attack on free speech rights'

**NEW YORK:** A US judge on Wednesday extended his order blocking federal authorities from deporting a detained Columbia University student, in a case that has become a flashpoint of the Trump administration's pledge to deport pro-Palestinian college activists.

District Judge Jesse Furman had temporarily blocked Mahmoud Khalil's deportation earlier this week, and extended the prohibition on Wednesday in a written order following a hearing in Manhattan federal court to allow himself more time to consider whether the arrest was unconstitutional.

The Department of Homeland Security says Khalil, 30, is subject to deportation under a legal provision holding that migrants whose presence in the country are deemed by the US Secretary of State to be incompatible with foreign policy may be removed, according to a document seen by Reuters.

"The Secretary of State has determined that your presence or activities in the United States would have serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States," read the DHS document, dated March 9, ordering Khalil to appear before an immigration judge on March 27.

The document did not provide



A demonstrator holds a sign in support of the Palestinians during a Board of Regents meeting at the University of Washington in Seattle. – REUTERSPIC

additional detail. The DHS did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Khalil's lawyers say his arrest on Saturday by DHS agents outside his university residence in Manhattan was in retaliation for his outspoken advocacy against Israel's military offensive, and thus violated Khalil's right to free speech under the US Constitution's First Amendment.

"Mr Khalil was identified, targeted, detained and is being processed for deportation on account of his advocacy for Palestinian rights," Khalil's lawyer Ramzi Kassem said in court.

Khalil's wife, Noora Abdalla, said after the hearing she hoped her husband would be free and back in

New York in time for the birth of their first child, due next month.

Outside the courthouse on Wednesday, Kassem told reporters that the legal provision DHS referred to was rarely-used and was not meant to silence dissent.

Khalil was born and raised in a Palestinian refugee camp in Syria and came to the US on a student visa in 2022, becoming a permanent resident last year. He was a prominent member of Columbia's protest movement against Israel's military assault on Gaza.

President Donald Trump has said on social media that Khalil supported Hamas, but his administration has not charged him with a crime and has not provided

evidence to show Khalil's alleged support for the group.

The Trump administration says pro-Palestinian protests on college campuses have included support for Hamas and antisemitic harassment of Jewish students. Student protest organisers say criticism of Israel is being wrongly conflated with antisemitism.

"This is not about free speech," Secretary of State Marco Rubio told reporters earlier on Wednesday during a trip to Ireland. "Being a supporter of Hamas and coming into our universities and turning them upside down ... If you told us that's what you intended to do when you came to America, we would have never let you in."

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside the courthouse in lower Manhattan, holding signs reading "Release Mahmoud Khalil" and chanting "Down, down with deportation, up, up with liberation."

At the hearing, government lawyer Brandon Waterman said Khalil's challenge to his arrest should be moved to New Jersey, where he was held when his lawyers first sought his release, or Louisiana, where he is being held.

Furman also ordered that Khalil be allowed two hour-long private phone calls with his lawyers, one on Wednesday and one yesterday, after Kassem said Khalil's sole phone call with a member of his legal team from detention in Louisiana so far was cut off prematurely and was on a line recorded and monitored by the government. – Reuters

## Putin orders swift defeat of Ukrainian forces

**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin, dressed in military fatigues, ordered top commanders to defeat Ukrainian forces in the western region of Kursk as soon as possible after the United States asked him to consider a 30-day ceasefire proposal.

Ukrainian forces smashed across the Russian border on Aug 6 and grabbed a slice of land inside Russia to distract Moscow's forces from the front lines in eastern Ukraine and to gain a potential bargaining chip.

But a lightning Russian advance over the past few days has left Ukraine with a sliver of less than 200 sq km in Kursk, down from 1,300 sq km at the peak of the incursion last summer.

"Our task in the near future, in the shortest possible timeframe, is to decisively defeat the enemy entrenched in the Kursk region," Putin told generals in remarks televised late on Wednesday.

"And of course, we need to think about creating a security zone along the state border."

The remarks by Putin came as US President Donald Trump said he hoped Moscow would agree to a ceasefire and said that if not then Washington could cause Russia financial pain.

Valery Gerasimov, the chief of Russia's General Staff, told Putin that Russian forces had pushed Ukrainian forces out of over 86% of the territory they had once held in Kursk.

Gerasimov said Ukraine's plans to use Kursk as a bargaining chip had failed and its gambit that its Kursk operation would force Russia to divert troops from its advance in eastern Ukraine had also not worked. – Reuters

## Israel used sexual violence as war strategy: Report

**GENEVA:** Israel carried out "genocidal acts" against Palestinians by systematically destroying women's healthcare facilities during the conflict in Gaza, and used sexual violence as a war strategy, UN experts said in a new report.

Israel's permanent mission to the UN described allegations as unfounded, bias, and lacking credibility.

"Israeli authorities have destroyed in part the reproductive capacity of the Palestinians in Gaza as a group, including by imposing measures intended to prevent births, one of the categories of genocidal acts in the Rome Statute and the Genocide Convention," said the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and Israel.

Those actions, in addition to a surge in maternity deaths due to restricted access to medical supplies, amounted to the crime against humanity of extermination, the commission said.

The report accused Israel's security forces of using forced public stripping and sexual assault as part of their standard operating procedures to punish Palestinians.

Israel rejected the accusations. "The IDF (Israeli Defence Force) has directives ... and policies which prohibit such misconduct," the permanent mission to the UN in Geneva responded in a statement, adding that its review processes are in line with international standards. – Reuters

## Syria sets up National Security Council

**DAMASCUS:** Syria's new authorities announced on Wednesday they are forming a National Security Council, to be chaired by interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa.

The body will be tasked with "coordinating and managing security and political policies," the country's presidency said, according to a decree posted on its Telegram account.

Its creation comes as the authorities seek to impose national rule, disband armed groups and rebuild the country after more than 13 years of civil war.

That goal has been complicated by a wave of executions, mostly of members of the Alawite minority to which Assad belongs, since March 6, after pro-Assad gunmen attacked security forces.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said nearly 1,400 civilians were killed by the security forces or allied groups. Syria's authorities announced on Monday that the operation against Assad loyalists had ended.

Sharaa, whose Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) group has its roots in the Syrian branch of Al-Qaeda, has vowed to protect Syria's religious and ethnic minorities.

He made the vow after rebel forces led by HTS toppled Assad in early December.



A resident of Jableh, Abu Ali al-Khair, inspecting his damaged house on Wednesday. – REUTERSPIC

The decree on the new council stated that it was being formed "in an effort to enhance national security and respond to security and political challenges in the coming stage."

Other members of the council

will be the ministers for foreign affairs, defence, the interior, and the head of the country's intelligence agency.

There will also be two "advisory" members and a technical expert appointed by Sharaa. – AFP

Meetings will take place periodically or when the president decides, "and decisions related to national security and the challenges facing the state will be implemented in consultation with the members". – AFP



# Old school meets new tech

**COMMENT** By Dr Carmelo Ferlito

**I**N an ideal world, I would spend the first part of my morning sitting at a small outdoor cafe, drinking my espresso, reading the newspaper and enjoying a small cigar.

At the end of such a stereotypical ritual, I would stand up, pay in cash and leave. That world existed, or at least, it manifested in good approximations but is now almost completely forgotten.

While the ethical state is fighting hard to deprive us of tobacco pleasures, technological development has killed printed news and banknote payments. Like in the song Video Killed the Radio Star.

Do not get me wrong, I am not against technological development, quite the contrary. I just tend to be nostalgic. Surely, I would prefer to keep on buying books in bookstores – and I still do – but there are plenty of books I would not have access to without Amazon and its international shipping service.

As economist Joseph Schumpeter described very well, innovation will always be there to challenge the traditional way to do things and it will always find people like me who will struggle to abandon the good, old ways. Innovation can be defined

as such only if it encounters the market favour from the bottom-up.

The innovation I find difficult to get along with is cashless payments. It took me years to start trusting credit cards, and now I have my issues with QRs and e-wallets.

I still remember the beginning of my corporate career as an international salesperson, travelling around the world with envelopes filled with different currencies, just to realise, years later, how practical it was and is to keep just a minimum amount of cash for emergency and handle the rest with credit cards.

Indeed, QRs and e-wallets are simply a further step in the same direction, building on the advantages created by credit cards.

As is easy to understand, travelling internationally with enough cash to perform all the necessary operations is definitely inconvenient. Furthermore, on the international scale, we only see a higher-level version of what could also be an issue in daily domestic operations: safety.

Cash can easily be lost or stolen without any backup procedures, unlike credit cards and apps, which offer options like blocking, resetting passwords and more. Cash, once lost, is just gone.

*“Recent evolutions involving payment systems represent important milestones towards quicker, cheaper and safer transactions. While they will undoubtedly face opposition from nostalgic individuals like me, the trend cannot be stopped – innovation has already won consumers’ favour.”*

Moreover, if properly designed, electronic payment systems can reduce transaction time and, with it, transaction costs.

As an international traveller, I remember the endless discussions with taxi drivers eager to exploit a foreigner with the “no change available” excuse, which often meant I had to leave unintended tips.

With electronic payments now linked to transportation, that excuse is gone for good, and the transaction amount can be known in advance, saving time that would otherwise be spent on bargaining. The same goes for situations where coins are needed for public transport and similar scenarios.

Additional costs that can be saved are the so-called “shoe-costs” represented by the need to keep going to ATM machines for cash withdrawals, only to find them broken, needing to search for another one or struggling to locate one from your bank that does not charge a withdrawal fee, among other inconveniences.

In fact, quite recently, individuals have protested the RM1 withdrawal fee, which, however, should be a matter outside the government’s control, as it is a private transaction between financial institutions and their clients.

Another important advantage is the instant access to transaction

history and cash balances, allowing users to stay informed about their financial situation and avoid being caught by surprise – provided they familiarise themselves with the available tools.

In a nutshell, recent evolutions involving payment systems represent important milestones towards quicker, cheaper and safer transactions. While they will undoubtedly face opposition from nostalgic individuals like me, the trend cannot be stopped – innovation has already won consumers’ favour.

However, more needs to be done for a broader education, not only about the advantages of the new system but also about the proper use of the control tools associated with cashless payments. This is to prevent users from falling into the trap of losing control over their expenses.

Finally, while we embrace the unstoppable and triumphant march of innovation, let us allow dinosaurs like me the freedom to continue using the banknotes and coins we are attached to. Freedom of choice must remain a cherished value.

**Dr Carmelo Ferlito** is CEO of the Centre for Market Education, a visiting research fellow at Bank Negara Malaysia and a faculty member at Universitas Prasetya Mulia. Comments: [letters@thesundaily.com](mailto:letters@thesundaily.com)

## Staying grounded and making the most of your present

### Under One Roof

**Q: This past year is one I would rather leave behind and forget, though I cannot. With 2025 bringing uncertainties in various areas of my life, do you have any suggestions for how I can cope with it all?**

**Focus on the Family Malaysia:** You are not alone. Many people are stuck in the past while others focus their energy looking only towards the future, which is uncertain for all of us. But few seem able to embrace the present.

Dr John Townsend explains that the past, present and future all have their benefits. Staying connected to our past is important because of the lessons we have learned and the memories we cherish.

Setting our sights on the future is wise because we have to be intentional if we hope to create a good one. However, if we do not live a healthy way in the present, we will struggle. We will either get stuck in the past and suffer from regret and guilt, or we will cripple our future with fear and anxiety.

That is why it is important to be mindful of today because you can have control over how you approach the present.

Townsend offers these suggestions: Pull away from your usual routine a few times a day and reflect on three things:

- How much you care about the good people in your life;
- How you are feeling at that moment, whether positive or negative; and
- What activities are truly important to you in life.

Use those insights to get a handle on how you can make the most of where you are at right now and where you may be able to improve.

Taking this approach each day can help you find stability and better prepare you for



If we do not live a healthy way in the present, we will struggle. We will either get stuck in the past and suffer from regret and guilt, or we will cripple our future with fear and anxiety.

whatever the future holds.

**Q: How can I help my children resist peer pressure? They often follow their friends, even when it leads to poor choices.**

**Focus on the Family Malaysia:** Many children

and teenagers are driven by the pressure to be noticed or to fit in with others.

This desire to belong is a powerful motivator and can sometimes lead children to make harmful or dangerous decisions. Here are six suggestions to help children build resistance to peer pressure:

- **Offer genuine affirmation:** Help your child discover their true strengths. Encourage them when they fail and cheer them on when they bounce back.
- **Listen closely:** When your child says, “I need a smartphone”, they may really be saying, “I just want to feel normal and belong”.
- **Empathise and teach them how to cope:** Teenagers often make peer-pressured decisions, such as smoking, skipping classes or using substances, because they feel stressed and want to be accepted. Help your child understand that everyone has insecurities and wants acceptance from others. Teach them healthy ways to deal with stress.
- **Make time for relationships and conversations:** Parents may think that if children are not talking or they prefer to be with friends, they do not want their parents involved in their lives. Research shows that this is not the case.
- **Help them pursue growth, not just good feelings:** A counsellor once told clients that if they want to feel good, they should see a massage therapist but if they want to grow, they must make choices that may not be comfortable. This principle applies to grown-ups as well as children.
- **Teach them to apply positive peer pressure:** Help your child to take notice of those who need kindness, love and affirmation. Show them how to build others up through encouragement. Children often become highly motivated when they realise they can positively influence those around them.

**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](http://family.org.my). Comments: [letters@thesundaily.com](mailto:letters@thesundaily.com)**





# Sweet sensations

Indulge in premium desserts this Raya - P12



## WEEKLY FOCUS

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**p21** Buka puasa options for every taste

**p22** Berjaya Times Square Hotel treats children in need

**p23** New eateries, coffee spots to try



BY S.TAMARAI CHELVI

# Festive desserts galore

➤ This Raya, bring something different to table by buying from these homegrown businesses

**D**URING Hari Raya Aidilfitri, food is at the centre of most open houses, as family and friends gather to celebrate over a delicious festive fare.

This year, why not step beyond the usual assortment of traditional cakes and cookies for something a little more adventurous?

Here are three homegrown bakeries that offer something different as these businesses aim to tickle palates with delectable desserts that range from non-traditional tarts to pavlovas.

## Poppy Cherry Pop

Khalisshah Iman founded her online home-based baking business in March 2019. Located in Cheras, Poppy Cherry Pop sells delicate, beautiful tarts that will tantalise the taste buds.

The 30-year-old graduate from the YTL School of Hotel Management worked with JW Marriot KL for five years before turning her passion into a tarts business.

Her creations come in a diverse range of exciting flavours and shapes,



Tarts are Poppy Cherry Pop's specialty.

including hearts and monograms.

A wide variety of flavours are available, including lotus biscotti, classic key lime with passion fruit filling topped with buttercream, rich Valhorna chocolate with layers of hazelnut pralines

with Guanaja ganache.

Her online business started getting noticed after the launch of her signature lotus biscotti tart.

"Our tart menu remains unchanged but we have expanded our offerings to include cakes, cookies and eclairs. We are also now offering catering services for events, including weddings and corporate functions. Additionally, for each festive season, we create a specially curated menu that highlights classic seasonal flavours and designs to celebrate the occasion," said Khalisshah.



Pavlova from Pleasure Pastry.

The Madeleine Tower from Brown & Sugar.

— PICS FROM BROWN&SUGAR



## Brown & Sugar

It is an all-female affair at Brown & Sugar, with co-founder and creative director Syainim Ghazali, cake artist Liyana Ghazali and executive chef Sakinah Ibrahim making its core team.

Scrolling down the Brown & Sugar website, foodies will not be able to stop admiring the beauty, creativity and artistry of the cakes and pralines.

Its creations are a beautiful combination of art and craft that would make one stop and admire its colour palette, design and all the effort that goes into making these mouth-watering desserts.

Brown & Sugar makes gorgeous acrylic-painted designer cakes, tree cakes, elegant rectangle or round pralines with paintings, custom cupcakes, mini cupcakes, doughnuts, along with madeleine, macaron and choux towers.

For Raya, its *Lebaran 2025*, featuring an array of gift boxes, cookies, pralines and more, is a feast for the eyes as well as tummies.



Khalisshah's creations come in a diverse range of exciting flavours and shapes.

— PICS COURTESY OF KHALISSHAH IMAN

## Pleasure Pastry

Farah Azrooin Ghazali was just 19 years old when she started her online pastry business on Instagram. Pleasure Pastry churns out pavlovas, brownies and burnt cheesecakes, with the marshmallowy pavlova being a crowd favourite.

Farah has whisked up a bite-sized version of the delectable meringue desserts, which is named after a



Sea salt cookies are among Pleasure Pastry's top sellers.



Brown & Sugar's Lebaran Cookies include pineapple cheese bars.

Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova. The 29-year-old baker claimed the secret behind her melt-in-the-mouth pavlovas lies in the fact she uses only premium ingredients.

These days, the diploma holder in patisserie from Berjaya University College has expanded her repertoire, making cakes and cookies.

"For Ramadan, my hot selling items are the semperit and sea salt cookies," she said.

This Raya, why not give these homegrown businesses a try and add something different to the dessert table?

Farah has been running Pleasure Pastry since she was 19 years old.

— PICS COURTESY OF FARAH AZROOIN GHAZALI





## IRB, MyDigital ID cooperate to accelerate digital identity adoption

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Inland Revenue Board (IRB) and MyDigital ID Sdn Bhd are reinforcing their partnership to accelerate digital identity adoption in Malaysia, particularly through the integration of MyDigital ID into the MyTax and MySTR platforms.

In a statement, the IRB said the collaboration was formalised with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on digital identity empowerment at a ceremony in Cyberjaya yesterday.

"The MoU reflects the commitment of both parties in supporting the digitalisation of the country's public services and aligning the adoption of emerging technologies with the public sector's digital transformation, particularly in taxation and government assistance management. This collaboration not only aims to strengthen online data protection but also to give the people greater confidence in the government service delivery system," the statement said.

According to the IRB, the integration of MyDigital ID into the MyTax and MySTR platforms will enhance user access, streamline online transactions, and reduce cybersecurity risks.

"This initiative aligns with the government's digital transformation agenda and supports the national goal of developing a sustainable and competitive digital ecosystem," it said.

According to IRB records, 687,361 users have utilised MyDigital ID verification on the MyTax Portal to search for their Tax Identification Number, while 14,137 users have used the system to verify access to the MySTR platform.

The IRB said its MoU with MyDigital ID reflects a significant step towards a fully digitalised taxation system, improving service efficiency and public trust in digital governance and data security.

"This strategic collaboration is expected to create more opportunities and serve as a catalyst for greater synergy between the public and private sectors in driving the nation's digitalisation aspirations," it said. — Bernama

# Velesto Energy on expansion trail in Southeast Asia

■ BY JOHN GILBERT  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Velesto Energy Bhd is actively expanding its presence in Southeast Asia, with two rigs currently bidding for opportunities in Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia – key growth markets where the company has previously operated.

"This aligns with our strategy to diversify and strengthen our regional footprint," president Megat Zariman Abdul Rahim told *SunBiz*.

"Currently, Velesto Energy's three rigs continue to operate with Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd, and one rig contract in Malaysia is under negotiation," he said.

According to reports, the Southeast Asian oil and gas market is projected to post a compound annual growth rate of more than 4% through 2030, driven by industrial demand for natural gas as part of the energy transition and economic expansion.

Megat Zariman said with the jack-up rig market in Malaysia and Southeast Asia remaining stable, Velesto Energy is strategically positioning itself to weather market shifts such as oil price fluctuations and regional competition.

On the domestic front, Megat Zariman said, the demand outlook for jack-up drilling remains stable, with steady activity in Malaysia's upstream sector.

While exploration drilling may continue at a slower pace in 2025, he added, development drilling remains a priority as Petroleum Nasional Bhd (Petronas) and regional operators sustain their production.

"Velesto Energy remains operationally active, with three rigs

## Company eyes growth opportunities in Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia

under Petronas Carigali and additional contracts under negotiation."

Velesto Energy's RM709 million order book provides financial visibility until early 2026, Megat Zariman said.

Elaborating, he said the order book provides a solid foundation for financial stability, ensuring earnings visibility through early 2026, driven by long-term contracts for its jack-up rigs Naga 2, Naga 4 and Naga 6.

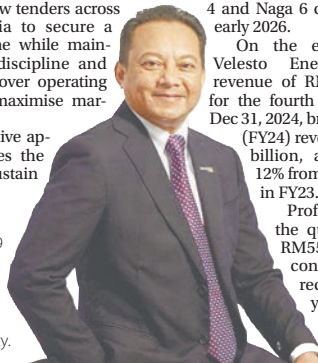
To strengthen financial visibility and sustain growth, Velesto Energy is actively expanding its contract pipeline, with negotiations for Naga 5 expected to begin in June.

Velesto Energy is also optimising fleet efficiency by maintaining Naga 3 and Naga 8 in preparation for future contracts.

The company is also actively seeking contract extensions and bidding on new tenders across Southeast Asia to secure a robust pipeline while maintaining cost discipline and strict control over operating expenses to maximise margins.

This proactive approach enables the company to sustain

Megat Zariman says Velesto Energy's RM709 million order book provides a solid foundation for financial stability.



strong cash flow, minimise idle time, and drive profitability through 2025 and beyond, capitalising on market opportunities while securing long-term agreements to ensure stable revenue.

When asked how Velesto Energy plans to mitigate potential revenue gaps, with some rigs scheduled for maintenance, and optimise fleet utilisation in 2025, Megat Zariman said the company has two remaining scheduled special periodic surveys for Naga 3 and Naga 8 this year to keep them in optimal condition for future contracts while maintaining operational continuity.

"Our fleet utilisation remains healthy, and we are actively working to optimise fleet utilisation and secure new contracts."

Megat Zariman said Velesto Energy strives to maintain stable revenue streams, with Naga 2, Naga 4 and Naga 6 contracted until early 2026.

On the earnings front, Velesto Energy recorded revenue of RM276.1 million for the fourth quarter ended Dec 31, 2024, bringing full-year (FY24) revenue to RM1.36 billion, an increase of 12% from RM1.21 billion in FY23.

Profit after tax for the quarter stood at RM55.2 million, contributing to a record high full-year profit after tax amounting to RM207.7

million, exceeding the RM99.5 million recorded in FY23 by more than twofold.

The group's impressive performance was driven by improved average daily charter rates of US\$118,000 (RM523,200) per day from US\$94,000 per day in FY23 and higher rig utilisation at 87% from 83% in FY23 under the drilling services segment, as well as the completion of the i-RDC project.

When asked about Velesto Energy's strategic priorities for 2025 and plans to diversify revenue streams beyond drilling services, Megat Zariman said the company is committed to maximising shareholder returns through operational excellence, efficiency and financial discipline.

It is targeting 99% fleet uptime, leveraging the strong performance of Naga 4 and Naga 6, which achieved high utilisation in 2024.

"To secure long-term earnings, Velesto Energy is actively bidding for projects in Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia while prioritising long-term contracts. Cost efficiency is driven by automation and predictive maintenance to protect margins.

"With long-term borrowings fully repaid, Velesto Energy is in a net-cash position, allowing for an increased dividend payout ratio of nearly 50%, with further opportunities being explored to enhance shareholder returns.

"The exceptional results achieved in 2024 and our optimism for another strong year in 2025 provide us with a platform to drive sustainable shareholder returns and long-term value while maintaining our industry leadership position," Megat Zariman said.

# Madani Digital Trade launched to help SMEs export to world markets

■ BY AIMIE SHAZRIE  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade), in collaboration with Nazsoft Tech Sdn Bhd and supported by the Royal Malaysian Customs Department, yesterday launched Madani Digital Trade (MDT), a virtual integrated platform designed to strengthen Malaysian exporters' access to international markets.

Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz said MDT is a transformative initiative aimed at helping SMEs expand into international markets through digital solutions.

"The initiative aligns with the Madani Economy Framework and the

New Industrial Master Plan 2030, which emphasise economic security, inclusivity and technological adoption.

"SMEs make up 97% of Malaysia's business landscape, yet they still lag in digital adoption due to high costs and limited literacy. MDT will bridge this gap by providing a one-stop platform for export promotion, business matching, and capacity-building," he said at the launch of MDT.

Tengku Zafrul said MDT integrates technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data and cloud computing to enhance trade efficiency, and also offers training, advisory services and financial support mechanisms to SMEs.

Furthermore, the MDT initiative aims to position Malaysian SMEs more competitively in regional and global

trade, with a strong focus on Asean, China and India under Malaysia's trade agreements.

"The government is also exploring opportunities in emerging markets such as Latin America and Africa, where demand for Malaysian products is rising," he said.

Tengku Zafrul noted that intra-Asean trade currently stands at only 23–24% of the bloc's total global trade, leaving significant room for Malaysian businesses to capitalise on the region's 680-million-strong population.

"MDT will serve as a critical tool in strengthening Malaysia's export presence across these high-potential markets," he remarked.

To ensure sustained growth, he said, the government is looking to

expand MDT's capabilities by integrating it with global e-commerce platforms, enhancing cross-border digital payment systems, and strengthening cybersecurity measures.

"MDT will also align with the Asean Digital Economy Framework Agreement, which aims to add up to US\$2 trillion (RM8.8 trillion) to the regional economy by 2030. Malaysia's role as Asean Chair this year provides an opportunity to push for greater digital trade harmonisation, which will directly benefit SMEs," Tengku Zafrul said.

He said MDT will play a key role in driving Malaysia's export growth, which is a crucial contributor to the nation's gross domestic product.

"By streamlining export processes and improving access to global

markets, the platform will help SMEs increase their revenue and competitiveness, ultimately boosting the country's trade performance. MDT's integration with advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics will enhance productivity, enabling businesses to scale more efficiently.

"With Malaysia's strategic position in Asean and its growing digital economy, MDT has the potential to strengthen the country's position as a regional trade hub while ensuring long-term economic sustainability," he added.

Tengku Zafrul also urged SMEs to leverage MDT to tap into new market opportunities, reaffirming the government's commitment to make Malaysia a key player in global digital trade.

## Wise: Forex hidden fees could cost M'sians up to RM3.3b annually by 2029

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysians could lose up to RM3.3 billion annually by 2029 if foreign exchange (forex) hidden fees are left unchecked, according to new research commissioned by Wise.

The company said Malaysians lost around RM2.99 billion to hidden forex fees in 2023, with 76% of those who transferred money internationally

believing they "somewhat" or "fully" understood the true costs of these payments. It noted that only 18% of these Malaysians recognised the hidden forex margins impacting their transfers.

"For example, an international transfer of US\$1,000 (RM 4,420) advertised as 'fee-free' could cost RM159 in hidden forex markups if a

3.6% margin is applied. While upfront fees are usually stated by providers, many providers tend to add an undisclosed markup on the exchange rate, rather than using the fair, mid-market rate, resulting in consumers paying more than expected," it said in a statement.

Wise is a global technology company involved in money transfers.

The company also revealed that 52% of Malaysians used PayPal to send money abroad, followed by banks (44%) and Western Union (33%).

"While many assume these providers are transparent about their fees, hidden exchange rate markups often go unnoticed. As more Malaysians send money abroad for family support, education and healthcare costs, these

charges can quickly add up, becoming a significant financial burden," the company said.

Hence, Wise advised Malaysians who send money overseas to compare the exchange rate with the mid-market rate, watch out for "zero-fee" or "low-fee" claims, and read the fine print to spot hidden forex fees. — Bernama

## SumiSaujana set to raise RM74.4 million from listing

➤ Initial public offering involves issuance of 310 million new shares at 24 sen per share

■ BY HAYATUN RAZAK  
sunbiz@thesunday.com

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Oil and gas (O&G) specialty chemicals manufacturer SumiSaujana Group Bhd aims to raise RM74.4 million from its initial public offering (IPO) in conjunction with its listing on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia Securities.

The IPO involves the issuance of 310 million new shares at an issue price of 24 sen per share.

Of the proceeds, RM40.2 million (54%) is allocated for the acquisition of a new warehouse and a new corporate office in Puncak Alam to consolidate its warehousing and operational facilities while RM18.9 million (25.4%) is for the acquisition of its existing Puncak Alam factory to support operational sustainability.

A sum of RM2.1 million (2.8%) is allocated for enhancing facilities, RM7.6 million (10.3%) for expansion of the group's research and development division and RM5.6 million (7.5%) for listing expenses.

CEO Norazlam Norbi said since its establishment, SumiSaujana has expanded its capabilities and strengthened its position as a solutions provider for the oil and gas industry.

"With the funds raised, we will focus on expanding our production capacity, strengthening our global footprint, and reinforcing our commitment to delivering value to all our stakeholders," he said during the IPO prospectus launch yesterday.

He added that the company is embarking into the specialty oleochemicals and fine chemicals for industrial use including sustainable lubricants and polyols.

"We are already embarking on this new work for the last two years and we hope to see some fruition very soon on this. That, we think, will



From left: SumiSaujana Group executive director/chief operating officer Ramli Mohamad, executive deputy chairman Toh Chee Seng, Norazlam, RHB Investment Bank CEO/managing director Kevin Davies and corporate finance director/head Tommy Har.

actually help further grow the company in the near and long term."

Norazlam said the palm oil sector in Malaysia has growth potential in high-end specialty oleochemicals.

"This is the palm oil sector. There's not enough being done to go deeper and promote the high-end specialty oleochem market. And we hope we will be able to serve that in the near future."

However, he said its thrust will always remain in the oil and gas industry, regardless of the stream. "We are looking at a balanced approach. However, looking ahead, we see significant potential in the specialty industrial chemicals sector."

More than 70% of SumiSaujana's revenue comes from international markets, including the Asia-Pacific, Middle East, Africa, Europe

and the Americas. Roughly 30% comes from Malaysia, with customers including Petrolim Nasional Bhd and a UK-based oil company.

As part of the IPO, an offer for sale of up to 90 million shares, representing 6.23% of the enlarged share capital, will be made available via private placement to Bumiputera investors approved by the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry.

Applications for the IPO opened yesterday following the prospectus launch and will close on March 25. SumiSaujana is expected to debut on the ACE Market on April 9. At an IPO price of RM0.24 per share, the company's market capitalisation upon listing will be about RM346.5 million.

RHB Investment Bank Bhd is the principal adviser, sponsor, sole underwriter and sole placement agent for SumiSaujana's IPO.

## Saliran Group debuts on ACE Market with 1.85% premium

**PETALING JAYA:** Saliran Group Bhd, a supplier and distributor of pipes, fittings and flanges as well as related parts and accessories and steel products, made its debut on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia Securities in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Saliran shares opened at 27.5 sen, half a sen higher than the initial public offering (IPO) price of 27 sen, representing a premium of 1.85%.

Saliran's IPO raised RM21.7 million, which will be allocated to fuel the company's growth and operational expansion. The proceeds will be

used for the establishment of a sales office in Indonesia, purchase of machinery and delivery trucks to improve operational efficiency, repayment of bank borrowings to strengthen financial flexibility, as well as for general working capital to support daily business activities. A portion of the funds will be used to cover listing expenses.

Managing director Liew Choon Wei said the listing is a testament to their unwavering dedication to growth, operational excellence, and creating long-term value for their stake-

holders.

"With the strong foundation we have built over the years, we are confident in our ability to expand further, strengthen our supply chain, and enhance our capabilities to better serve our customers. We remain committed to driving sustainable growth and seizing new opportunities in the industrial supply and O&G sectors," he added.

Malacca Securities Sdn Bhd is the principal adviser, sponsor, underwriter and placement agent for the IPO.

## Nacra 2025 launched, entries must be received by May 30

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Bursa Malaysia Bhd, Malaysian Institute of Accountants and The Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants jointly launched the 35th National Annual Corporate Report Awards (Nacra) in a virtual event yesterday.

Themed "Towards Accountability & Excellence", Nacra underscores the vital role annual reports play in propagating transparency and enhancing the integrity of the capital market.

"For those new to Nacra, it is important to note that the Nacra framework and assessment criteria underwent a significant overhaul in 2020. This was in response to a rapidly changing corporate and regulatory landscape, as well as increasing demands from investors for both financial and non-financial information. We also sought to recognise a broader range of leading organisations and align with global reporting frameworks and best practices. A new awards structure was introduced, where organisations compete for excellence awards based on market capitalisation for listed companies, and with a separate category for non-listed organisations," said Nacra organising committee chairman Foong Mun Kong.

He added that with the evolving global and local reporting trends, Nacra will continue to adapt its framework to encourage companies in their journey towards the National Sustainability Reporting Framework.

"The importance of sustainability-related disclosures has led us to emphasise the integration of non-financial metrics alongside financial ones, which align with global developments and local regulations, including Bursa Malaysia's ongoing efforts to strengthen sustainability reporting requirements. In response to this, Nacra continues to promote excellence in sustainability reporting," he said.

Bursa Malaysia chairman Tan Sri Abdul Wahid Omar, in his speech, said, "By participating in Nacra 2025, companies not only demonstrate their dedication to robust corporate reporting, but also contribute to the collective effort of raising the bar for transparency and accountability across all sectors."

He urged companies to participate in this healthy competition, and encouraged their peers to do so as well.

Nacra 2025 is open to all companies incorporated or registered in Malaysia, including listed and non-listed entities, as well as the public sector and other organisations established in Malaysia. All submissions must be received by May 30. Only annual reports with the 2024 financial year-end are eligible for entry to Nacra 2025.



# Parkson Credit launches RM1b medium-term sukuk

➤ Asset-backed financing from HSBC will boost company's business expansion in Malaysia

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Parkson Credit Sdn Bhd launched its inaugural asset-backed Islamic medium term notes (MTN) programme (Sukuk Wakalah Programme) of RM1 billion, for which HSBC Amanah Malaysia Bhd acted as sole principal adviser, lead arranger, lead manager and shariah adviser.

For the initial tranche of RM333.33 million Sukuk Wakalah issuance, HSBC Amanah was also the senior sukuk holder for RM250 million.

In a statement yesterday, Parkson Credit said the creation of this innovative financial tool consolidates hire-purchase debt obligations and offers another avenue of investment for investors in the Malaysian capital market. This development also broadens the pool of capital providers available to Parkson Credit.

Parkson Credit's primary focus remains on motorcycle financing, representing about 99% of the company's total sales. The strategic funding provided by HSBC will bolster Parkson Credit's expansion initiatives and enable the company to broaden its reach into emerging and underserved markets, particularly in suburban and outskirts areas across both Peninsular and East Malaysia.

The company is also focused on introducing new, innovative financing products tailored to meet evolving consumer needs.

Lion Group executive chairman Tan Sri William Cheng said: "This marks a new chapter for the Lion Group, reflecting our commitment to innovation, resilience, and excellence in advancing Malaysia's economic progress. As a forward-looking diversified

business group, we remain steadfast in our vision to contribute to nation-building while seizing opportunities that shape the future of industries and communities alike."

HSBC Malaysia CEO and banking head Datuk Omar Siddiqi said, "As Parkson Credit pursues growth, a scalable and adaptable financing solution becomes imperative for achieving its expansion goals. HSBC Amanah's innovative financial product facilitates debt (sukuk) issuance backed by Islamic hire purchase receivables, creating a new funding avenue for motorcycle hire purchase financing. Leveraging on our international structuring expertise, this deal demonstrates our ability to unlock a new source of capital and link clients to prime Islamic financing opportunities."

Parkson Credit CEO Danny Poh said this collaboration has been instrumental in strengthening the company's position within the motorcycle financing sector and enhancing their ability to expand market reach and deliver innovative financing solutions to a broader customer base.

## RHB: Investors still keen on M'sian healthcare sector

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The future growth outlook for Malaysia's healthcare sector stays promising in 2025, with investors' continued appetite for good-quality healthcare assets remaining intact, said RHB Investment Bank Bhd.

The bank said this sustained demand from investors would be driven by a permanent, structural shift due to the country's ageing population.

It further said that the government's recent initiatives in setting up national health insurance and takaful products represent more sustainable measures in ensuring equitable access to public and private healthcare.

"Such mechanisms are similar to Singapore's MediSave, where income earners are mandated to contribute a portion of their salary to a pool of funds (managed by a government-owned entity), and the savings can be used for medical treatment when needed," it said in a research note, yesterday.

Meanwhile, the bank said that the regulatory overhang arising from the diagnosis-related group (DRG) pricing mechanism could affect investor sentiment in the near-term.

"Ultimately, we believe the implementation of DRG pricing mechanism still requires extensive study and engagement with various stakeholders, given the complexity of each medical procedure and its underlying costs," it said. - Bernama

## AirAsia X expands network with new route to Karachi

**SEPANG:** AirAsia X (AAX) is kicking off the first quarter of the year by providing direct service to Karachi in Pakistan, starting May 30.

The four-times-weekly flights mark another milestone in the airline's international expansion. With 22 routes in total, the airline strengthens its commitment to affordable medium-haul travel.

As the only low-cost carrier in Malaysia to provide direct service to Karachi, this new route enhances affordable connectivity between the two nations, allowing Malaysian travellers and the thriving Pakistani community in Malaysia to fly home affordably.

AirAsia X CEO Benyamin Ismail said: "As we build on our strong growth momentum in 2024, we are thrilled to launch AAX's next adventure in Karachi, further strengthening our presence in the South Asian market. Karachi is a dynamic city with a rich history and a thriving

The Karachi route will offer travelers seamless connectivity to hundreds of destinations, including major markets like Australia, China, and Thailand. - PEXELS PIX



modern economy, and we are proud to be the sole low-cost carrier connecting this vibrant metropolis to our extensive network beyond Malaysia. This route will also open up hundreds of seamless connectivity options for travellers to key markets such as Australia, China, Thailand, and more via our Fly-Thru services."

He added AAX anticipates carrying more than 100,000 guests annually on this route, further reiterating their commitment to support the government's initiative to welcome 30 million tourists in line with the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign.

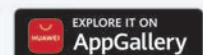
AAX is offering promotional fares from Kuala Lumpur to Karachi, starting from RM959 all-in one-way and from Karachi to Kuala Lumpur for PKR64,990 (RM1,029.36) all-in one-way. The promotional fare is available for booking on the AirAsia MOVE app and airasia.com from now until April 20, 2025 for the travel period between May 30, 2025 and March 27, 2026.

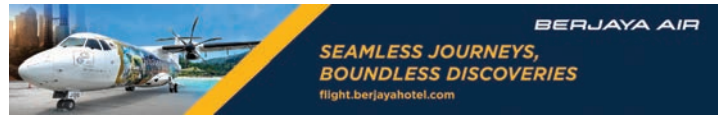
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# Pulau Indah power plant begins operation

➤ Facility projected to produce electricity needed for 2.5 million homes

**PETALING JAYA:** GE Vernova Inc announced yesterday that the Pulau Indah power plant, developed by Selangor state-linked company Worldwide Holding Bhd (WHB), has started operation.

Powered by two-blocks of GE Vernova HA combined cycle equipment, the new 1,200 megawatts (MW) plant is projected to produce the equivalent electricity needed to power approximately 2.5 million homes in Malaysia. In addition, under the terms of a 21-year agreement, GE Vernova is expected to provide maintenance services and software solutions to improve asset visibility, reliability, and availability of the plant.

Over the next three decades, the Malaysian economy is estimated to triple in size, while its population is projected to rise to over 40 million

people; consequently, energy demand in Malaysia is set to increase significantly.

Malaysia has announced its aim to reach net-zero emissions by as early as 2050 – reflected in its latest National Energy Policy – and continues to refine a long-term lower-emission development strategy.

At the core of the plant, the two 9HA gas turbines, engineered from the ground up to be extremely flexible, feature high ramp rates and fast start up times to help meet fluctuating demand.

In addition, the HA unit has the capability to burn up to 50% by volume of hydrogen when blended with natural gas.

Natural gas has become an increasingly popular option for electricity generation in Malaysia due to increased availability and the fact that it emits less CO2 and other pollutants than coal.

Gas power plants can also be turned on or off relatively easily, which allows for greater flexibility in dealing with demand peaks or low supply from renewable sources.

For the Pulau Indah Power Plant, GE Vernova provided two blocks of 600 MW, each

including a 9HA.01 gas turbine, an STF-D650 steam turbine, a W88 generator and a Once Through Heat Recovery Steam Generator (OT HRSG).

Overall plant performance will be monitored and enhanced with GE Vernova's tightly integrated Mark VIe Distributed Control System (DCS) software to help improve asset visibility, reliability, and availability while reducing operation and maintenance costs. In addition, data collected from sensors throughout the facility will be monitored and analyzed 24/7 at GE Vernova's Monitoring & Diagnostics (M&D) Center in Greenville, SC, United States.

"We are proud to add this plant to the 116 units operating globally, and that have amassed more than three million commercial operating hours, the equivalent capacity needed to power more than 50 million US homes," said GED Vernova president and CEO of Asia Ramesh Singaram.

"With more than 40 years of operations and the largest base of installed gas turbines in the country, GE Vernova is uniquely qualified to support Malaysia's energy transition, while helping meet the growing power demand in the country."

## Maxis unveils Gen AI-driven concierge service

**PETALING JAYA:** Maxis, Malaysia's integrated telco, has introduced Mia (Maxis Intelligent Assistant), an innovative generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) powered concierge service for business customers.

Designed to simplify customer experience on the Maxis Business Hub (MBH) digital self-serve portal, Mia combines conversational AI with intelligent workflow automation to deliver seamless roaming service management for businesses.

Mia represents a leap forward in AI-driven solutions by Maxis Business, Maxis' B2B arm, as an intelligent, guided chatbot service offering 24/7 instant roaming support, smart recommendations and personalised suggestions.

Maxis chief enterprise business officer, Prateek Pashine said: "Maxis Business is pioneering Gen AI adoption in the B2B space, harnessing its transformative capabilities that have already redefined many B2C customer experiences today."

"Mia demonstrates our commitment to leveraging AI as an enabler of innovation."

"By integrating Mia into our digital experiences, we create a seamless and intuitive interface that empowers customers to manage their services and needs."

"Equipped with contextual intelligence, Mia understands user intent and interactions, enhancing the overall customer experience. We will continue to expand Mia's functionality and capabilities, further reinforcing our dedication to delivering world-class customer service to businesses."

Mia is a breakthrough in generative AI innovation, powered by cutting-edge AWS technology.

Built on Amazon Bedrock and featuring a leading large language model, this revolutionary solution harnesses the full potential of AWS's industry-leading cloud infrastructure.

## Natural rubber production down 20.8% in January

**PUTRAJAYA:** Natural Rubber (NR) production decreased by 20.8% in January 2025 (30,342 tonnes) as compared to December 2024 (38,299 tonnes) said Chief Statistician of Malaysia Datuk Sri Dr. Mohd Uzir Mahidin.

Year-on-year comparison showed that the production of NR increased by 0.2% (January 2024: 30,287 tonnes). Production of NR in January 2025 for Malaysia was mainly contributed by smallholders sector (87.0%) as compared to estates sector (13.0%).

Total stocks of NR in January 2025 increased by 6.0% to 177,936 tonnes as compared to 167,801 tonnes in December 2024. Rubber processors factory contributed 87.5% of the stocks followed by rubber consumers factory (12.4%) and rubber estates (0.1%).

Exports of Malaysia's NR amounted to 44,337.6 tonnes in January 2025, decreased 0.001% as against December 2024 (44,337.8 tonnes).

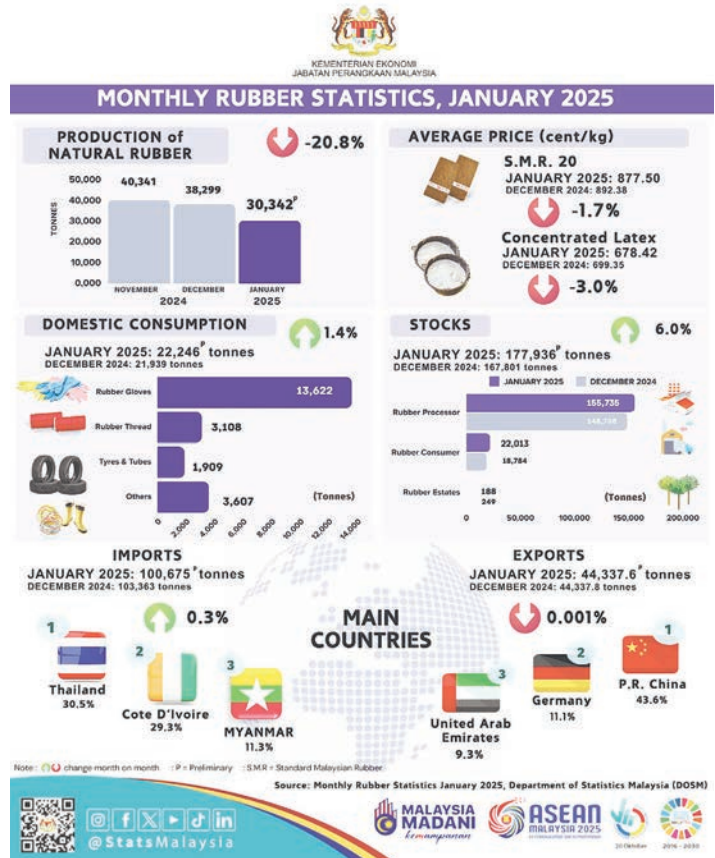
China remained as the main destination for NR exports which accounted 43.6% of total exports in January 2025 followed by Germany (11.1%), the United Arab Emirates (9.3%), the United States (7.6%) and Portugal (3.0%).

The exports performance was contributed by NR-based product such as gloves, tyre, tube and rubber thread. Gloves were the main exports of rubber-based products with a value of RM1.4 billion in January 2025, a decrease of 8.1% as compared to December 2024 (RM1.5 billion).

Analysis of the average monthly price showed that Concentrated Latex recorded a decrease of 3.0% (January 2025: 678.42 sen per kg; December 2024: 699.35 sen per kg) while Scrap decreased by 1.9% (January 2025: 743.27 sen per kg; December 2024: 757.28 sen per kg). Trend of prices for all Standard Malaysian Rubber (S.M.R) decreased between 1.6% and 3.0%.

The World Bank Commodity Price Data reported the prices for TSR 20 (Technically Specified Rubber) has decreased 3.1 per cent (from US\$1.99/kg to US\$1.93/kg) and SGP/MYS (Singapore/Malaysia) decreased 0.6 % (from US\$2.38/kg to US\$2.37/kg).

According to the Malaysia Rubber Board Digest published in January 2025, the Kuala Lumpur Rubber Market displayed a mixed trend



in tandem with the regional rubber futures markets owing to uneven economic performance of the US and China.

The market faced downward pressure from the strengthening of ringgit against the US dollar and declining crude oil prices.

## Asia Poly to supply eco-friendly material to Sumitomo unit

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Asia Poly Holdings Bhd's 35% associate, EcoGreen Monomer Sdn Bhd, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sumitomo Corp Asia & Oceania Pte Ltd (SCAO) to supply depolymerised methyl methacrylate monomer (DMMA) to the latter for the paint and glue industry.

Via this MoU, Sumitomo will purchase a minimum quantity of 2,000 tonnes of DMMA per month from EcoGreen.

The DMMA will be packed in ISO tanks of 22 tonnes per unit.

The pricing of each unit will be subject to the global industry benchmark of MMA on a weekly basis.

Sumitomo intends to sell and market EcoGreen's DMMA to European countries, US, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia and India.

DMMA is an eco-friendly raw material used to manufacture acrylic plastics.

It is produced from recycling used or waste acrylic products, in contrast to MMA, which is derived from petrochemical processes.

The terms of this MoU will commence one month from the date of signing. SCAO is a leading integrated trading and investment solutions provider.

It is also a subsidiary of the Sumitomo Corporation Group, a Fortune Global 500 conglomerate engaged in businesses across various sectors.



## Indonesia keeps 2025 budget deficit forecast unchanged

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia's government is maintaining its forecast that the Budget deficit will be 2.53% of GDP this year despite a 30% plunge in tax revenues in the first two months of 2025, the finance minister said yesterday.

Southeast Asia's largest economy ran a budget deficit of 31.2 trillion rupiah (RM8.4 billion) in January to February, equal to 0.13% of gross domestic product, compared with a surplus of 26 trillion rupiah, or 0.11% of GDP, a year earlier.

"The budget posture does not change," Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said.

"We will maintain the deficit at 2.53% of GDP, including by considering any correction in revenues."

Financial markets have been keen to see the budget figures after the government began the year with US\$19 billion of planned budget cuts, the cancellation of a tax hike and an expansion of a free school-meals programme, the signature policy of President Prabowo Subianto.

Total government revenue for January and February fell by 20.8% from a year earlier to 316.9 trillion rupiah, while spending was down 7% to 348.1 trillion rupiah.

Of total receipts, tax revenues, excluding customs and excises, fell an annual 30.2% in the two months to 187.8 trillion rupiah.

The Finance Ministry said moderating prices of key commodities such as coal, nickel and crude oil were to blame for the drop, as well as administrative changes to the way personal income tax and value-added tax were collected. — Reuters

## Japan eyes boosting rice exports eightfold by 2030

**TOKYO:** Japan wants to boost its rice exports almost eightfold by 2030, a ministry official said yesterday, despite currently suffering a domestic shortage of the grain.

The country's rice consumption has more than halved over the past 60 years as diets have expanded to include more bread, noodles and other energy sources.

The new target is part of a long-term national policy to boost overseas shipments of the staple, and make farming it more efficient, especially as the ageing population shrinks.

"We plan to set a goal of 350,000 tonnes in 2030," an objective likely to be approved by the Cabinet this month, Masakazu Kawaguchi, an agriculture ministry official in charge of the rice trade, told AFP.

The target is 7.8 times the 2024 volume — around 45,000 tonnes — which was sold for ¥12 billion (RM359 million).

However, rice is in short supply at the moment.

This week the government began a rare auction of its emergency rice stockpiles in a bid to help drive down prices, which have nearly doubled over the past year.

The shortages have been driven by various factors, including poor harvests caused by hot weather and panic-buying prompted by a "megaquake" warning last summer. — AFP

# Selloff in Indian stocks burns retail investors

**MUMBAI:** As India's longest equity slump in nearly three decades wipes out roughly US\$1 trillion (RM4.4 trillion) in market capitalisation, the major blow to retail investors is denting consumer spending and threatening to further slow growth in the world's fifth-largest economy.

Investors trying to catch their breath may have to wait longer for the selloff to ebb, analysts say, as uncertainty about the impact on global growth from a burst of policies under American President Donald Trump adds to worries over weak domestic earnings and persistent foreign outflows.

That spells more trouble for consumer spending and the broader economy, which is expected to grow at its slowest pace in four years in the current financial year due to weak urban demand.

Consumer spending, already hurt by sluggish income growth and high inflation, makes up half of India's gross domestic product.

"The equity market correction could result in a moderation of household investment and urban

## Consumers cut spending, raising more risks for economic growth

consumption demand, and that could possibly weigh on economic growth," said Gaura Sen Gupta, India economist at IDFC FIRST Bank.

Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi, economists at Nomura, concurred, cautioning that "income struggles and balance sheet stress" will drag on urban consumption and growth.

The income strains have intensified for many investors including Mumbai-based Vilas Sahay, after the benchmark NSE Nifty 50 and BSE Sensex indices tumbled about 14% since September; the retail-focussed small-cap and mid-cap indices have fared even worse, dropping over 20% and confirming a bear market last month.

Lured by a dizzying rally in the benchmark indices, which more than doubled since the Covid-19

pandemic until the third quarter of last year, 31-year-old Sahay is among nearly 100 million new investors who took to trading stocks and equity derivatives via low-cost trading platforms.

Sahay invested his 100,000 rupee (RM5,101) savings in equities in January 2024, doubling his money by August, which encouraged him to borrow funds for riskier options trading.

When markets tumbled, he suffered losses and borrowed more on hopes of a rebound, trapping him in debt.

"The thing with option trading is that the gains are massive, but I was underprepared to face the loss," he said.

Sahay and his family have slashed spending to a bare minimum.

Reuters spoke to two dozen retail investors across many major

cities, including Mumbai, Chennai and New Delhi.

Most, rattled by the sharp fall in stock markets, said they were considering pausing or cutting their overall spending including reducing investments in markets in the near term.

Puneet Goyal, a 36-year-old from Udaipur in Rajasthan, is delaying plans to buy a house, after the market downturn wiped roughly 14% or two million rupees off his portfolio's peak value.

He was hoping to cash out from the markets to make initial payments for the home.

There are also early signs of the market slump impacting auto sales.

Two-wheeler sales fell 9% in February, data from an auto industry body showed, while passenger vehicle dispatches grew a modest 2%, which Nomura analysts partly blamed on weak consumer sentiment from market volatility.

Leading Indian auto dealers' industry chief C.S. Vigneshwar said the current market turmoil "certainly" affects urban vehicle sales, as "customers also tend to be a little bit more circumspect in terms of spending."

That could further undermine economic growth as, according to India Brand Equity Foundation, a government-established trust, India's auto industry contributes around 7.1% to GDP.

An extended market slump risks slowing the steady flow of retail money that has helped cushion losses during foreign investor sell-offs, fund managers said.

Retail and high-net-worth individual ownership in all listed companies on India's National Stock Exchange hit a record 18.2% by December-end, surpassing foreign portfolio investors for the first time since 2006.

But many investors are now rethinking their bets.

"I am thinking whether to pause the investments or continue," 29-year-old Mansoor Khan, who started investing in 2019, said.

He is considering moving investments to safer assets, such as gold. — Reuters



A man walking past the Bombay Stock Exchange building in Mumbai. — REUTERS/SPIC

## South Korean reps pass Bill expanding duty of boards

**SEOUL:** The opposition-controlled Parliament in South Korea passed yesterday a revision to the Commercial Act expanding the fiduciary duty of board members to protect the interests of minority shareholders and address the so-called "Korea discount."

It is not clear if the amendment will be adopted or vetoed by the acting president, since the ruling conservative party has opposed the revision.

The main opposition Democratic Party has pushed for the revision of the law to extend the fiduciary duty to shareholders, to address depressed stock prices and poor

corporate governance at Korea's family-owned conglomerates.

Under the existing law, board members have a fiduciary duty to perform their duties in the company's interest, but not to safeguard the interests of shareholders.

The legislation also aims to address the lack of board independence, particularly at family-run conglomerates known as chaebols, which are often criticised for putting the interest of family members ahead of others, leading to undervaluation of Korean companies versus overseas peers.

South Korea's failure to protect the interests of shareholders are

"stumbling blocks" to revitalising the domestic market stock market by preventing inflows of foreign capital, the opposition party said.

The country's business community, which includes some of the major chaebols, has expressed objections to the amendment, saying it will hamstring business growth and make South Korea a country where it is tough to do business in.

A South Korean business association that includes conglomerates such as Samsung and Hyundai as members warned businesses could be subject to

shareholder lawsuits and attacks from "speculative" overseas funds if the law was amended.

The conservative ruling People Power Party also objected to the revision as unnecessarily broad in scope as it would apply to more than a million companies incorporated in the country rather than to publicly traded companies, which it said are where the change is needed.

The ruling party yesterday called on acting President Choi Sang-mok to veto the revision.

Choi previously expressed reservations about the revision in November, but it is not clear whether he will veto it. — Reuters



## Monopoly Go game maker Scopely to buy Pokemon Go team

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Mobile games giant Scopely will pay US\$3.5 billion (RM15.5 billion) to acquire Niantic's game unit including the studio behind Pokemon Go, the companies announced on Tuesday.

The purchase will add Pokemon Go, Pikmin Bloom, and Monster Hunter Now teams to a Scopely stable that includes popular mobile title Monopoly Go.

San Francisco-based Niantic plans to spin off its geospatial artificial intelligence business into a new company led by founder and chief executive John Hanke.

Niantic is known for mobile games that combine real-world mapping and exploration with play by synching challenges or accomplishments with locations detected by smartphones.

More than 100 million people play Niantic games, according to the company.

"We spun out as a small team from Google with a bold vision: to use technology to overlay the world with rich digital experiences," Niantic said of separating from the internet giant in late 2015.

"Our goal: to inspire people to explore their surroundings and foster real-world connections, especially at a time when relationships were becoming increasingly digital."

Niantic sees the rapid advance of AI as an opportunity to put its geospatial technology to work in consumer and business applications along with games.

The new company, called Niantic Spatial, is developing a model to enable people and machines to understand and navigate the real world.

It will keep some of its augmented reality games including *Ingress Prime*, and Scopely will be an investor in the enterprise, according to Niantic.

Scopely games include *Monopoly Go*, *Marvel Strike Force*, and *Star Trek Fleet Command*. - AFP

## Deliveroo reports first year of profit, positive cash flow

**LONDON:** British meal delivery company Deliveroo reported its first year of profit and positive free cash flow in 2024 and said it expected to deliver more growth this year despite an uncertain consumer environment.

The company made a profit of £2.9 million (RM16.9 million), against a loss of £31.8 million the previous year.

Adjusted core earnings came in at £129.6 million, at the top end of its guidance, it said yesterday.

Deliveroo, one of the market leaders in Britain and Ireland and present in another eight markets, had already reported in January a 6% rise in gross transaction value (GTV) to 7.43 billion pounds from 296 million orders in 2024.

Founder and chief executive Will Shu said the "robust" results showed the company's strategy was working.

"Whilst the consumer environment remains uncertain, I am confident that we can continue to deliver growth by focusing on the levers in our control," he said.

Deliveroo said on Monday it would leave the Hong Kong market after nine years, with the sale of some of its assets to rival Delivery Hero's foodpanda. - Reuters

# Intel names Malaysia-born Lip-Bu Tan as CEO

Chipmaker's shares surge 10% after announcement

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Intel on Wednesday announced tech industry veteran Lip-Bu Tan as its new chief executive, boosting shares of the US computer chipmaker struggling to catch up in the AI race.

Tan told the Intel team his focus would be on engineering, saying it "won't be easy" to overcome challenges faced by the company.

Tan, who was born in Malaysia, will start as Intel chief on March 18, according to the company.

Shares were up more than 10% in after market trade.

Intel is one of Silicon Valley's most iconic companies, but its fortunes have been eclipsed by Asian powerhouses TSMC and Samsung, which dominate the

made-to-order semiconductor business.

The company was also caught by surprise with the emergence of Nvidia, a graphics chip maker, as the world's preeminent AI chip provider.

Nvidia's strength is in chips for powering AI, which are coveted by tech companies competing in that technology.

Intel's niche has been in chips used in traditional computing processes being eclipsed by the AI rage.

Tan's predecessor, Pat Gelsinger, was forced out as Intel chief in December after the board lost confidence in his plans to turn the company around.

Gelsinger's abrupt departure

came just months after the company vowed to cut more than 15,000 jobs in a draconian cost reduction plan and paused or delayed construction on several chipmaking facilities.

"I believe with every fiber of my being that we have what it takes to win," Tan said in a message to his team, vowing that Intel will be an engineering-focused company.

"In areas where we are behind the competition, we need to take calculated risks to disrupt and leapfrog."

While chief of Cadence Design Systems from 2009 to 2021, Tan transformed the company and more than doubled its revenue, according to the Intel board.

Former US president Joe Biden's administration last year finalised a US\$7.9 billion (RM35 billion) award to Intel as part of an effort to bring semiconductor production to American shores.

But Intel in February extended the timeline for completing two new fabrication plants in Ohio, saying it is taking a prudent approach to the US\$28 billion project.

"We will continue construction at a slower pace, while maintaining the flexibility to accelerate work and the start of operations if customer demand warrants," Intel Foundry Manufacturing general manager Naga Chandrasekaran told Intel employees at the time.

For the full year 2024, Intel recorded a net loss of US\$18.8 billion as the US chip giant continues to struggle to stake its place in the AI revolution.

In Europe, Intel late last year said it was delaying its plans to build two mega chip-making factories in Germany and Poland as the company faces lower demand than anticipated.

Intel also said at the time that it would pull back on its projects in Malaysia. - AFP



A woman walking under a banner that reads in Spanish 'Defend Mexico, No to Tariffs' in Mexico City. - AFP/IC

## Trump uncertainty brings risk of recession: Economist

**NEW YORK:** The "disorderly" implementation of trade and government reform policies by the administration of President Donald Trump has raised the risk of a "largely avoidable" US economic downturn, a top S&P economist said on Wednesday.

Uncertainty sparked by constant White House pivots on tariffs has potentially delayed business investments and prompted consumers to pull back on spending, said Paul Gruenwald, global chief

economist at S&P Global Ratings.

Gruenwald said the drive to shrink government spending and reduce waste overseen by billionaire Trump adviser Elon Musk has also been more disruptive than needed.

He pointed to the "reinventing government" downsizing push in the 1990s under then president Bill Clinton, which he said was executed in a "predictable and orderly" manner.

"The objectives themselves, I think most of them have merit, but the way they're being implemented

is very disorderly," Gruenwald told AFP in an interview on the sidelines of the CERAWeek energy conference.

"If this leads firms and consumers to hold back on their spending and demand pulls back, we could get a slowdown or even a recession that was largely avoidable."

"That is a downside risk."

Gruenwald described the US economy as on solid footing when Trump came into office in January, saying "the passing of the economy from the Biden administration to the

Trump administration was pretty strong".

Gruenwald pointed to a spike in the US economic policy uncertainty index, a benchmark that has gotten more attention since Trump returned to the White House.

The index is currently at one of its highest levels in its 40-year history - below its highest-ever reading at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, but above the level seen during most of the first Trump administration. - AFP



# MARKET ROUND-UP: MARCH 13

## Bursa Trade Statistic

13 MAR 2025

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

Retail (16.93%)		Institution (41.88%)		Foreign (41.19%)	
Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)	
<b>-92.53</b>		<b>+230.93</b>		<b>-138.40</b>	
Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
445.74	538.27	1332.96	1102.03	1128.36	1266.76

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

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

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

**DISCLAIMER:** The data and reports are provided as a service to investors. Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd shall not be liable or responsible for any consequences resulting from usage of the information.

## Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	11,250.50 +199.33
FBMKLCI	1,510.03 +25.20
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	474.28 +3.86
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	152.33 +3.38
CONSTRUCTION	251.98 +7.51
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,572.10 +371.41
ENERGY	705.57 +21.25
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	477.22 +2.14
HEALTH CARE	1,847.52 +18.39
TRANSPORTATION	1,003.76 +8.62
PROPERTY	975.50 +23.61
PLANTATION	7,331.65 +37.61
FBMSHA	10,905.70 +171.29
FBMACE	4,530.54 +131.57
TECHNOLOGY	47.68 +1.70

TURNOVER: 3.261 bil VALUE: RM2,906 bil

## FBM KLCI bounces back as top performer in region

THE FBM KLCI emerged as the top-performing index in the region yesterday, gaining 1.69%, as it bounced back from a significant five-day sell-off, driven by bargain hunting.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI jumped 25.2 points to 1,510.03 from Wednesday's close of 1,484.83.

The market bellwether opened 3.96 points higher at 1,488.79, and moved between 1,487.0 and 1,513.97 throughout the day.

On the broader market, gainers outpaced losers with 651 to 244, while 522 counters were unchanged, 973 untraded, and 13 suspended.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors Sdn Bhd head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan noted that the earlier decline had pushed the index into a technical correction, prompting investors to engage in bargain hunting for stocks with strong fundamentals.

However, not all regional indices rebounded from yesterday's sell-off as most of them continued to slide.

"Among FBM KLCI components, construction and banking stocks led today's gains. Stocks that were most affected by yesterday's sell-off rebounded strongly, recovering their previous losses," he told Bernama.

Heavyweights Public Bank rose 15 sen to RM4.48, CIMB was 25 sen firmer at RM7.25, Tenaga Nasional added 40 sen to RM13.40, and Sunway increased 24 sen to RM4.41. Petronas Gas fell 32 sen to RM16.60.

As for the actives, Sapura Energy and Ta Win gained half-a-sen to 4.5 and 3.5 sen respectively, Natongate climbed 14 sen to RM1.31, Oppstar put on 7.5 sen 54.5 sen, SNS Network ticked up 2 sen to 41.5 sen, while Borneo Oil and Velesto were flat at one sen and 15.5 sen respectively. ACE Market debutant Saliran fell six sen to 21 sen after opening at 27.5 sen.

## Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
SAPNRG	0.045	+0.005	+12.50	1,740,426
BORNOIL	0.010	-	-	1,608,129
HSI-CWCF	0.065	-0.015	-18.75	1,568,406
SALIRAN	0.210	-0.060	-22.22	1,343,782
HSI-PWD4	0.140	+0.010	+7.69	935,956
HSI-PWD2	0.100	-	-	904,762
NATGATE	1.310	+0.140	+11.97	803,062
TAWIN	0.035	+0.005	+16.67	802,919
NEXG	0.255	-	-	537,117
HSI-CWCD	0.080	-0.030	-27.27	461,328
CIMB	7.250	+0.250	+3.57	435,663
MYEG	0.925	+0.020	+2.21	419,511
GAMUDA	3.900	+0.130	+3.45	394,802
HSI-PWDN	0.060	+0.005	+9.09	320,585
HSI-CWCY	0.215	-0.025	-10.42	301,990
PBBANK	4.480	+0.150	+3.46	292,930
HSI-CWCM	0.215	-0.020	-8.51	281,722
SNS	0.415	+0.020	+5.06	271,633
HSI-CWCA	0.120	-0.025	-17.24	253,633
OPPSTAR	0.545	+0.075	+15.96	247,933



## Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
ALLIANZ-PA	18.260	+0.760	10
ALLIANZ	17.620	+0.740	745
PETDAG	17.020	+0.620	5,633
HEIM	26.700	+0.480	1,157
DLADY	27.160	+0.460	215
HLIND	13.380	+0.460	783
TENAGA	13.400	+0.400	62,107
FRONTKN	3.600	+0.360	31,715
AJI	14.180	+0.260	225
HLBANK	20.300	+0.260	10,783
CIMB	7.250	+0.250	435,663
PIE	3.550	+0.250	16,443
SUNWAY	4.410	+0.240	87,541
AMBANK	5.590	+0.220	57,984
DAYANG	1.700	+0.210	84,933
CARLSBG	18.260	+0.180	2,307
HIBISCS	1.550	+0.180	88,347
UWC	2.100	+0.180	21,449
AEONCR	5.970	+0.170	2,262
FGN	23.880	+0.160	424

## Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
AEON-C33	0.020	+300.00	4,170
WCT-C30	0.015	+200.00	1,200
99SMART-CG	0.040	+166.67	25,091
UWC-C9	0.025	+150.00	11,850
ARMADA-C99	0.010	+100.00	288
EAH	0.010	+100.00	1,211
ENKKAH-WB	0.010	+100.00	1,037
FBMKLCI-CQU	0.010	+100.00	6,181
FOCUS	0.020	+100.00	20,243
GENM-C3C	0.010	+100.00	260
HARTA-C2L	0.010	+100.00	12,088
HONGSENG	0.010	+100.00	7,535
INARI-C3C	0.010	+100.00	200
NATGATE-CL	0.020	+100.00	117,095
OVERSEA-WB	0.010	+100.00	500
PARLO-WA	0.010	+100.00	20,625
RENEUCO-WA	0.010	+100.00	1,150
SIMEPROP-C41	0.020	+100.00	1
SNS-CC	0.010	+100.00	10
SPSETIA-C85	0.010	+100.00	1

## World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	41,350.93	-82.55	-0.2
S&P 500 (US)	5,599.30	27.23	0.49
NASDAQ (US)	17,648.45	212.35	1.22
NYSE (US)	19,051.64	-0.49	0
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	5,358.10	-1.32	-0.02
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,563.71	22.74	0.27
DAX (GER)	22,596.91	-79.5	-0.35
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	36,790.03	-29.06	-0.08
TOPIX INDEX (JPN)	2,698.36	3.45	0.13
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	23,462.65	-137.66	-0.58
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,911.58	-15.65	-0.4
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	185.13	0.11	0.06
SHANGHAI SE COM (CHN)	3,358.73	-13.19	-0.39
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,573.64	-1.18	-0.05
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	73,842.44	-187.32	-0.25
ASX 200 (AUS)	7,749.07	-37.17	-0.48
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	7,966.57	-36.02	-0.45
FBM KLCI	1,510.03	25.2	1.7
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,838.45	5.38	0.14
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	67.57	-0.11	-0.16
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	70.88	-0.07	-0.1
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,953.60	6.8	0.23
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	33.57	-0.17	-0.51
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	977.2	-10.81	-1.09
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	482.55	-2.4	-0.49
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,770.00	107.5	1.11
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	464.5	3.75	0.81
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	558.25	4.25	0.77
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	41.72	0.04	0.1
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	8,355.00	53	0.64
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	194.8	-2.5	-1.27

As at 5pm, Mar 13

## Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
PETGAS	16.600	-0.320	13,744
HSI-CWEB	0.815	-0.225	600
PANAMY	14.740	-0.220	355
UTDPLT	21.220	-0.180	16,465
GLDHK-H1	0.045	-0.155	2
ALIBABA-C36	0.725	-0.110	1
NPC	2.650	-0.110	15
SUPERMX-C41	0.010	-0.110	108
MARDIY-C41	0.050	-0.100	1,000
HSI-CWA9	0.505	-0.095	210
HSTECH-C18	0.285	-0.090	3,523
NIKKEI-HM	1.680	-0.090	35
HSTECH-C20	0.545	-0.085	345
BURSA-C93	0.070	-0.080	160
TENCENT-HIF	0.170	-0.080	1,305
PINEPAC	0.205	-0.075	111
HSI-CWA8	1.200	-0.070	200
HSI-CWA5	0.440	-0.065	840
FBMKLCI-HA5	0.500	-0.060	1,469
FBMKLCI-HA8	0.265	-0.060	1,500

## Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
SUPERMX-C41	0.010	-91.67	108
GLDHK-H1	0.045	-77.50	2
MARDIY-C41	0.050	-66.67	1,000
BURSA-C93	0.070	-53.33	160
BINACOM-WA	0.005	-50.00	501
DAYANG-C46	0.015	-50.00	300
EKOVEST-C64	0.005	-50.00	1,700
HSI-PWDK	0.005	-50.00	4,919
KOSSAN-C70	0.005	-50.00	2,500
MRCB-C11	0.005	-50.00	300
NATGATE-CD	0.005	-50.00	4,642
SAMAIDEN-CA	0.005	-50.00	1
VS-C92	0.005	-50.00	2,000
ZENITECH	0.005	-50.00	14,506
JTASA-C2	0.015	-40.00	700
FAST-WB	0.010	-33.33	6,163
FBMKLCI-HA2	0.030	-33.33	3,667
GAMUDA-C20	0.020	-33.33	6,499
HANDAL-WB	0.010	-33.33	100
MTRONIC	0.010	-33.33	3,544

# 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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## InvestKL secures RM4 billion foreign investments in 2024

**KUALA LUMPUR:** In 2024, Greater Kuala Lumpur (GKL) solidified its status as a leading regional hub, with InvestKL securing RM4.08 billion in foreign investments from 12 global companies. These investments will create 4,394 executive jobs, supporting Malaysia's goal of building a knowledge-driven, innovation-led economy.

To date, InvestKL has attracted over 150 global companies, contributing a cumulative RM33.8 billion in investments and generating 31,849 executive job opportunities.

InvestKL CEO Datuk Muhammad Azmi Zulkifli said InvestKL has successfully achieved its KPI of securing RM35 billion in committed investments ahead of its 2025 target.

Moving forward, he added they have been entrusted with a new target of RM50 billion in committed investments by 2030, reinforcing their role in advancing Malaysia's economic ambitions.

InvestKL's 2024 investment portfolio spans diverse, high-growth sectors such as professional services, digital and technology, energy and advanced engineering solutions.

New companies from Asia include a floating production solutions provider for offshore oil and gas, a robotics and automation firm, a digital network operator, and a financial services company focused on auto financing and leasing.

The Americas are strongly represented, with investments from a sustainable mining company, a digital infrastructure provider, a customer experience solutions leader, and a packaging company known for innovative labels.

From Europe, investments came from a top food and beverage company and the region's largest semiconductor manufacturer. The UK also saw contributions from a global business software provider and a leading recruitment consultancy.

## Ringgit falls ahead of US producer price data release

**THE** ringgit closed lower against the US dollar yesterday ahead of the release of the US Producer Price Index (PPI) data amid trade war concerns, said an analyst.

At 6pm, the ringgit dropped to 4.4310/4375 versus the greenback from Wednesday's close of 4.4260/4300.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said investors would closely monitor the release of the US PPI tonight to see whether it would show a trend similar to February's Consumer Price Index.

"Market participants remain cautious about the trade war and whether it would result in a considerable slowdown in the US economy," he told Bernama.

Mohd Afzanizam said the US dollar-ringgit pair hovered around RM4.43 as the US Dollar Index (DXY) rose 0.11% to 103.73 points.

The ringgit was traded mostly lower against a basket of major currencies.

It rose versus the euro to 4.8205/8276 from 4.8301/8345 at Wednesday's close but depreciated against the British pound to 5.7426/7510 from 5.7255/7306 yesterday and declined vis-à-vis the Japanese yen to 2.9909/9953 from 2.9775/9804 previously.

The local note performed lower against Asean currencies. It dropped versus the Singapore dollar to 3.3198/3250 from Wednesday's closing price of 3.3181/3213 and retreated against the Thai baht to 13.1199/1443 from 13.0688/0868.

The ringgit also edged lower vis-à-vis the Indonesian rupiah to 269.7/270.2 from 269.0/269.3 on Wednesday and slipped versus the Philippine peso to 7.72/7.74 from 7.71/7.73.

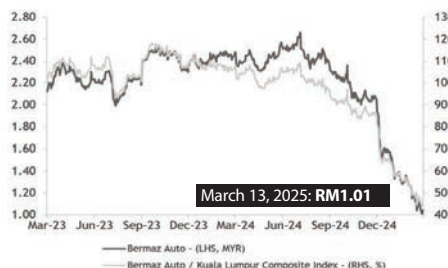
## Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.4980	4.3620	4.3520
1 Australian Dollar	2.8630	2.7470	2.7310
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3750	3.2740	3.2660
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1270	3.0420	3.0300
1 Euro	4.9020	4.7430	4.7230
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5910	2.4950	2.4790
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3750	3.2740	3.2660
1 Sterling Pound	5.8390	5.6510	5.6310
1 Swiss Franc	5.1360	4.9150	4.9000
100 UAE Dirham	123.8900	117.4400	117.2400
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7790	3.5170	3.3170
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.5600	59.9000	N/A
100 Danish Krone	67.3700	61.9700	61.7700
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.5100	55.5800	55.3800
100 Indian Rupee	5.2500	4.9200	4.7200
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0283	0.0256	0.0206
100 Japanese Yen	3.0360	2.9380	2.9280
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.7000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	43.4300	39.9200	39.7200
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6300	1.5300	1.3300
100 Philippine Peso	7.9500	7.4900	7.2900
100 Qatar Riyal	124.7500	118.4200	118.2200
100 Saudi Riyal	121.2300	115.0800	114.8800
100 South Africa Rand	25.4500	22.9700	22.7700
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5600	1.4400	1.2400
100 Swedish Krona	46.0100	41.8500	41.6500
100 Thai Baht	13.9000	12.3300	11.9300

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

## Bermaz Auto Bhd

Hold. Target price: RM1.06



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

**BAUTO** 9M'25 CNP fell 48% YoY to RM135 million, with revenue declining 30% YoY. Vehicle sales fell 32% YoY to 12,497 units, in absence of backlog orders and new models, compounded by heightened competition from new brands/models in the domestic market, particularly in the mass premium passenger vehicle segment. Kia Carnival sales plunged 46% YoY to 535 units, impacted by the diesel subsidy rationalisation effective June 1, 2024.

QoQ, BAUTO's Q3'25 CNP fell 40% as revenue and vehicle sales declined 7% amid intensifying competition. EBIT margin contracted 2.6ppt, likely due to the absence of economies of scale and higher promotional costs. Despite weaker earnings, BAUTO declared a 1.5 sen DPS, reflecting a 132% DPR (72% ex-special). We trim our DPR assumption to 75% (from 80%).

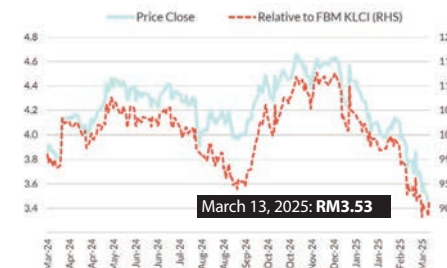
BAUTO's vehicle sales are normalising post a two-year super cycle, facing added pressure from rising competition in the mass premium segment. XPeng's G6 has gained traction with 497 units sold in six months (launched Aug 2024), but we remain cautious on Mazda and Kia, which face stiff competition with no major launches ahead. Order backlogs are largely cleared, with bookings averaging 1.4k units/month (FY24 average: 1.8k units/month). A potential catalyst is the launch of Deepal, a new distributorship secured in Nov 2024.

There are several risk factors for our earnings estimates, price target, and rating for BAUTO. Soft consumer sentiment and unattractive model launches may drag earnings. Forex volatility will affect its profitability and operational planning. Execution mishap, cost overruns and/or absence of new orders will cause adverse impact on earnings.

HOLD with RM1.06 TP. - Maybank Investment Bank, March 13

## Scientex Bhd

Neutral. Target price: RM3.70



Source: Boomerang

**SCIENTEX** posted a Q2'25 net profit of RM126 million (-2.1% QoQ, -4.4% YoY), bringing 1H'25 core earnings to RM255 million (-5.6% YoY). This came in below expectations, at 44% of our and Street's full-year estimates - mainly due to lower-than-expected contributions from the packaging segment.

The packaging segment's operating profit fell 34% YoY in Q2'25 despite a 1% YoY slip in revenue. This was mainly due to the challenging environment for the industrial packaging sub-segment, as capacity expansion in the market resulted in lower realised ASPs. As a result, this segment's core operating margin thinned to 6.7% in Q2'25 (Q2'24 : 8.6%). This brought 1H'25 operating profit to RM73 million (-36% YoY). On the property side, revenue and operating profit rose 6% and 5.7% YoY thanks to the higher construction progress and strong take-ups from new launches.

Management believes the packaging market will remain challenging in the near term, especially for the industrial sub-segment, with a rebound anticipated in CY26 - offset by returning demand for consumer packaging. Meanwhile, a relatively weak RM should support Scientex's export markets. Note: The consumer packaging sub-segment roughly makes up 44% of 1H'25 packaging revenue. The property segment continues to remain robust - driven by strong demand for its affordable housing offerings.

We cut our FY25-27 earnings by 4-10% after lowering our margin assumptions for the packaging segment to 5.3%, 6.7%, and 6.8% from 7.6%, 8.6%, and 7.8%. This is given the intensifying competition in the industrial packaging sub-segment.

NEUTRAL with RM3.70 TP. - RHB Research, March 13

## Yinson Holdings Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM4.78



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

**WE** were able to set foot on Yinson's "greenest" FPSO Agogo just before it set sail in early March. Agogo is recognised as the "greenest" FPSO ever constructed in history as it features the world's first offshore post-combustion carbon capture plant onboard an FPSO (link). Also, Agogo was able to sail away 3 months earlier-than-expected (early March 2025) - this is testimony of Yinson's strong project management and execution capabilities. With early delivery, we estimate Yinson could lock in decent cost savings from the project due to: i) lower project man-hours; and ii) reduced construction/ docked days in Cosco's shipyard. Also, Yinson could likely be eligible for an undisclosed bonus payment, in our view.

With early delivery, we believe that the targeted first oil in Angola should also be brought forward to Q3'25 (vs. initial expectations of Q4'25). Yinson's FPSO Agogo will be deployed for Azure Energy, which is a JV between BP and Eni. Agogo will contribute to increasing production in Block 15/06, with an expected production capacity of 120k bpd.

Based on our channel checks, we gather that Yinson may be prospective bidders in some upcoming conversion projects: i) a replacement for FSO Unity (offshore Nigeria, within the Nigerian Exclusive Economic Zone) for Total Energies; ii) FPSO for Baleine Phase 3 (offshore of Ivory Coast) for Eni; and iii) a replacement for FPSO Kikeh (offshore Sabah, 120km off Labuan) for PTTEP, to name a few. We believe Yinson is well positioned to win future projects and could be a preferred choice for the bids given its proven track record. We do not expect any equity fundraising should it in any of these jobs.

BUY with RM4.78 TP. - Maybank Investment Bank, March 13





Visitors to Le Meridien Petaling Jaya can expect a bazaar-style buffet and live Ghazal music.



MiCasa All Suite Hotel offers a homely buffet with live cooking stations.

## Buka puasa buffets in KL, Selangor

➤ Delicious choices for every taste, budget

**W**ITH Ramadan here, many locations across Kuala Lumpur and Selangor are offering sumptuous buffets that blend tradition with innovation. This year, expect vibrant street food flavours, traditional *kampung* favourites and international delicacies ideal for gatherings with family and friends. Here is a look at what is on offer during the holy month.

### Fusion of flavours at Four Points by Sheraton Kuala Lumpur

Dates: Feb 28 - March 30  
Price: RM168+ per person

If you are craving something unique this Ramadan, Quan's Kitchen at Four Points by Sheraton Kuala Lumpur in Chinatown is the place to be. The Chinese Muslim Ramadan Buffet returns with an exciting twist, blending Malay cuisine with street food inspired by Xi'an's Chinese Muslim community.

Dishes such as *daging salai masak lemak* and *sambal sari kentang ikan bilis dan kacang* complement the bamboo-roasted *lemang* and *ketupat palas*. The Sup Jalan Doraisamy station returns with beef, mutton and chicken soups alongside dishes such as *daging asam pedas* and *ikan keli berlada*.

For those looking for something different, the Xi'an Muslim Street section features Chinese-style lamb skewers at the Na Jie China BBQ station, as well as Malay grilled specialities such as *otak-otak* and *sata*. The standout? Roasted lamb with Xinjiang marination served with pilaf rice and a choice of sauces.

The buffet experience is complete with stunning views of the Merdeka 118 tower, setting just the right ambience for a memorable *iftar*.

### Homely traditions at MiCasa All Suite Hotel

Dates: March 7 - 23  
Price: RM139 nett per adult | RM95 nett per senior citizen and child  
At MiCasa All Suite Hotel, the *Icip-Icip Desa* theme offers a nostalgic culinary journey with dishes that remind you of home. From *kerabu kerisik kulit timun* and *nasi ambeng* to the rich flavours of *asam pedas tetel* and *itik salai masak*

*lemak cili api*, each dish is prepared using the finest ingredients.

Live cooking stations add to the lively atmosphere, with chefs preparing oxtail soup, roasted lamb and an array of fresh salads right before your eyes. Delectable desserts such as assorted *kuih melayu*, *pengat pisang*, *ABC*, *cendol* and a variety of fresh fruits wonderfully round off the meal.

The hotel's spacious dining area, ideal for families and groups, ensures a comfortable and warm setting for sharing the blessings of Ramadan.

### Feast of over 300 Dishes at WTCKL's Laman Tradisi

Dates: March 7 - 28

Price: RM148 nett per adult | RM85 nett per senior citizen and child  
World Trade Centre Kuala Lumpur (WTCKL) brings back its beloved *Laman Tradisi Ramadan* buffet, featuring over 300 dishes in five rotating menus. Expect traditional *kampung*-style delights such as *patin tempoyak*, *minang beef rendang*, fried mussels with black pepper and squid in spicy *sambal petai*.

Live cooking stalls will serve a variety of dishes, from herb-spiced soups and roasted lamb with black pepper sauce to popular street snacks such as *apam balik* and *rojak*. The iconic WTCKL *bubur lambuk* remains a highlight, loved by returning guests year after year.

This year, WTCKL adds a special treat: *Nasi Kandar Saddam*, famed for its crispy fried chicken and savoury black curry beef along with *nasi mandy* and *kunafa* from Mandy Al Yemen. For a more sustainable celebration, guests can purchase limited-edition tiffin carriers to take home leftovers for *sahur*.

### Bazaar-inspired experience at Le Meridien Petaling Jaya

Dates: March 3 - 28

Price: From RM128 to RM198 nett per person  
Le Meridien Petaling Jaya brings the Ramadan bazaar atmosphere indoors with its *Jamuan Bazaar* buffet. From aromatic *gulai kawah* and *kambing bakar 13 rempah* to rich sup gearbox and *mee ketam*, the



Four Points Chinatown offers a fusion of Malay and Xi'an flavours.



WTCKL's Laman Tradisi Ramadan buffet offers over 300 dishes.

offerings cater to all palates.

Two dining experiences await: *Pasar Baru*, a casual buffet with fresh durian offerings, and a more elegant Grand Ballroom setting complete with live Ghazal music. For those staying home, Le Meridien also offers Raya Open House takeaway sets, including whole lamb with *nasi minyak* and a variety of *rendang* options.

### Luxurious Ramadan at Hilton Kuala Lumpur

Dates: March 1 - 30

Price: RM238 nett per adult | RM119 nett per child  
Hilton Kuala Lumpur's Ramadan

showcase at Vasco's is designed for indulgence. Featuring premium dishes such as the signature Lambassador smoked paprika beef shank, Australian lamb neck *asam pedas* and slow-baked Australian beef short ribs, the buffet emphasises contemporary takes on traditional recipes.

The *Bakar-Bakar* grilling station offers a vibrant array of freshly grilled delicacies, while Musang King durian specialities and a premium ice-cream bar ensure a sweet end to the meal. Hilton Honours members can enjoy up to

25% off throughout March.

While Hilton Kuala Lumpur's Ramadan showcase stands out in the city, Hilton properties nationwide also offer diverse dining experiences. From *Kampung Nostalgia* themes at DoubleTree by Hilton Shah Alam i-City to *Essence of Perak* feasts at DoubleTree by Hilton Damai Laut Resort, each location provides unique flavours and festive atmospheres.

Whether you prefer the fusion of Malay and Chinese Muslim flavours at Four Points, the *kampung* favourites at MiCasa, WTCKL's extensive spread, Le Meridien's bazaar-inspired selection or Hilton Kuala Lumpur's premium offerings, these buffets promise memorable *iftar* experiences.

Reservations are recommended at these dining destinations.



Find contemporary takes on traditional recipes at Hilton Kuala Lumpur.





# Your weekend horoscope



**ARIES**  
Mar 21 – Apr 19  
This week, be ready to tackle challenges in your personal relationships and at work. Both aspects of your life may require extra attention. Be sure to communicate openly and practice patience. A surprise may reinvigorate your passions, so stay open to new experiences. As for your finances, caution is advised. Trust your instincts but balance them with practicality.



**TAURUS**  
Apr 20 – May 20  
Introspection may be a priority this weekend. Reflect on your personal goals and desires. It is time to think about what you desire in the long run. Patience will serve you well. Do not rush decisions, instead come up with a structured plan. Creative pursuits flourish now, so dive into projects that inspire you. Follow your heart and rewards will come.



**GEMINI**  
May 21 – June 20  
You might find social engagements particularly rewarding this week. New connections can offer fresh perspectives on old and existing issues. Open conversations could lead to breakthroughs. Health-wise, focus on achieving mindfulness. Indulge in calming activities such as meditation, yoga and deep breathing that will boost focus and reduce stress.



**CANCER**  
June 22 – July 22  
Emotions may be your central focus this week. The past few days may have taken a toll on your mental well-being. Past challenges may have even resurfaced. Addressing and reflecting on them could lead to healing. Do not fear seeking professional help or speaking with loved ones if necessary. Work-wise, opportunities could come your way if you find the courage to step into uncharted territory.



**LEO**  
July 23 – Aug 22  
A burst of creativity marks this week for you. Engage in artistic pursuits or hobbies that ignite your passion. In the process, you may even discover something new about yourself and the way forward. Relationships could also be a highlight. Through shared activities or insights, you can strengthen your bond with loved ones. Be sure to spare some time with them and create new memories.



**VIRGO**  
Aug 23 – Sept 22  
Practicality reigns this week. Focus on organising your space and life. Small adjustments can lead to significant improvements. Do not let the first step intimidate you. Start with setting goals for yourself and establishing a mini-routine. Relationship-wise, be sure to communicate openly. If you feel unheard or misunderstood, express your point of view calmly and honestly.



The buka puasa event is part of Berjaya Times Square Hotel's CSR initiative.

## » Berjaya Times Square Hotel hosts buka puasa event for orphans, children in need

**I**n a gesture of community spirit, Berjaya Times Square Hotel, Kuala Lumpur hosted *Majlis Amal Berbuka Puasa* for 35 children from Pertubuhan Kebajikan Al-Firdausi, bringing warmth and cheer during the holy month of Ramadan.

The event, part of the hotel's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative, is aimed at providing a memorable evening for orphans, underprivileged children and those with disabilities.

The children were treated to a lavish Ramadan buffet featuring over 150 dishes, offering them a

delightful *buka puasa* experience alongside hotel staff and representatives from Pertubuhan Kebajikan Al-Firdausi.

To make the evening even more special, the hotel presented them with duit Raya and Cosway-sponsored goodie bags, which were filled with thoughtful essentials.

"We believe in making a positive impact, especially during Ramadan, by sharing joy and supporting those in need," said Berjaya Times Square Hotel area general manager Adrian Chung, who emphasised the hotel's commitment to uplifting the less fortunate.

"It is heartwarming to see the smiles on these children's faces. CSR is not just a duty but a privilege," said the hotel's director of business development and marketing Tricia Loh.

The initiative reflects the true spirit of Ramadan: a time for reflection, generosity and kindness.

## Michelin-star Malaysian chefs join Singapore food event line-up

**MALAYSIAN** chefs Darren Teoh and Raymond Tham will be joining the international line-up of Kita Food Festival's Singapore Weekender event, which began yesterday and will run until next Monday.

Festival co-founder Teoh, the driving force behind Malaysia's only two Michelin-star restaurant Dewakan (located in Kuala Lumpur), will be presenting a special three-course menu paired with three curated cocktails by East47 – a new experience by the acclaimed Manhattan bar in Conrad Hotel – that spotlights a selection of wild and artisanal ingredients.

Chef Tham of one Michelin-star restaurant Beta (Kuala Lumpur) will be joining Marvas Ng of Path (Singapore) for an exploration of heritage flavours reimagined with modern artistry.

The six-day event will feature acclaimed chefs from across the



Teoh is the driving force behind Malaysia's only two Michelin-star restaurant Dewakan.



Tham helms one Michelin-star restaurant Beta, which is located in Kuala Lumpur.

world, including from Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Japan. They will participate in a showcase of four-hand dinners, kitchen takeovers and the grand Big Barbecue finale.

This year's expanded line-up solidifies the festival's role as a platform for connection,

innovation and celebration of Southeast Asia's vibrant culinary diversity. Featuring 12 events and over 50 participants, the festival aims to foster collaboration, advance sustainability and celebrate the rich heritage of the region's food culture.



**LIBRA**  
Sept 23 – Oct 22  
Balance is key, particularly in relationships. Ensure that your personal needs are met while also supporting others. Self-care is not selfish. Instead, it is crucial for your emotional and physical well-being. Financial decisions should be considered carefully. Do not act impulsively. Maintain an optimistic but practical outlook for positive outcomes.



**SCORPIO**  
Oct 23 – Nov 21  
Introspection can yield powerful insights this week. Consider what truly matters to you and align your actions with your values. Your future self may just thank you for doing so.

Relationships may deepen through honest dialogue despite some challenges. Career advancements could be on the horizon, stay proactive and open.



**SAGITTARIUS**  
Nov 22 – Dec 21  
Some adventure could be good for you this week. Explore new hobbies or ideas that

excite you. Socially, new and existing connections may lead to unexpected opportunities. You may just connect with someone new or see an existing loved one in a new light. Health-wise, be sure to evaluate your current lifestyle and ensure it is on the right track.



**CAPRICORN**  
Dec 22 – Jan 19  
Focus on your core goals this week. It is time to reassess your long-term plans and make

necessary adjustments. Professional advancements are possible with the right initiative and plan. Regarding relationships, you may be required to be more nurturing and understanding. This may strengthen your bonds with loved ones.



**AQUARIUS**  
Jan 20 – Feb 18  
Embrace this week as one for innovative ideas and creative pursuits. Engage in collaboration

with peers as collective efforts yield the best results. Do not forget to connect with like-minded individuals while you are at it. This could lead to more partnerships and effective outcomes in the future. Financially, things may significantly improve as new opportunities will come your way.



**PISCES**  
Feb 19 – Mar 20  
Emotional insights are heightened this week. Trust your intuition, especially in personal relationships,

and you may see strengthening bonds. It is also a great time for creative projects or spiritual pursuits that resonate with you. Find time to connect with yourself and the environment around you. This may reconnect you to an older aspect of yourself that you miss and value.



**T**HERE is something about a new restaurant that sparks curiosity. It can be the atmosphere, the people behind it or simply the joy of experiencing something fresh. From familiar names branching out to hidden gems making their debut, each opening adds a new layer to the city's ever-evolving food scene. These latest additions are ready to be explored if you are looking for a new favourite spot.

**Zus Signature**

Zus Coffee has unveiled Zus Signature, its first-ever specialty coffee store, stepping up its brand with premium single-origin coffee while maintaining affordability. This concept store in Taman Paramount, Petaling Jaya, offers a new coffee experience, featuring Single Origin Espresso Brazil and Ethiopia, brewed to highlight their distinct tasting notes.

Designed with a sleek and modern aesthetic, Zus Signature uses the Victoria Arduino Eagle One espresso machine, the same model used in the World Latte Art Competition, ensuring precision in every cup. The menu introduces innovative beverages like the Zeriously Matcha Latte and Yuzu Thunder, alongside classic favourites such as CEO Latte and Gula Melaka Latte.

For added convenience, customers can order via the Zus Coffee app for pickup or delivery. Also, a second Zus Signature outlet has opened at Sunway Pyramid, The Oasis (LG1.115A).



Universal Bakehouse is well-known for its sourdough.

**Universal Bakehouse**

After making a name for itself in Damansara Kim, Petaling Jaya, Universal Bakehouse has expanded to The Campus, Ampang. Located in the re-purposed grounds of The International School of Kuala Lumpur, this new outlet retains its reputation for high-quality artisanal bakes, offering a grab-and-go bakery experience with alfresco seating.

With a new partnership with Afloat Coffee Roasters from Bukit

➤ Eateries, coffee spots to explore

Jalil, the Ampang outlet introduces rotational single-origin coffee and a batch-brewed "daily fresh brew", a rarity in Malaysia's coffee culture.

The Campus outlet also features an expanded sandwich menu tailored for the active community

around Mutiara International Grammar School, with hearty, rotational sandwiches and exclusive bakes available only at this outlet.

**Ippudo | Maisen**

The world's first Ippudo | Maisen combined concept store has opened at The Gardens Mall, Kuala Lumpur, bringing together two of Japan's most renowned brands.

Ippudo, famous for its rich tonkotsu ramen, and Maisen,

Japan's top *tonkatsu* restaurant, have merged their offerings to create a unique dining experience.

Diners can now enjoy Ippudo's signature *umami*-packed ramen alongside Maisen's tender, crispy pork cutlets, known for being so soft they can be cut with chopsticks. This collaboration marks Maisen's second outlet in Malaysia, while Ippudo expands to its 12th location nationwide.

**Ministry of Crab**

Ministry of Crab, Sri Lanka's world-renowned seafood restaurant, has arrived in Kuala Lumpur at Tuah 1895, bringing its celebrated mud crab and freshwater prawn dishes to Malaysian diners.

Founded by chef Dharshan Muniadasa alongside cricket legends Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, the brand has consistently made the Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list (2015-2022). The Kuala Lumpur location follows the brand's no-freezer policy, ensuring all seafood is air-flown from Sri Lanka for peak freshness.



Asylum Coffeehouse combines precision-brewed specialty coffee and creativity in one package.

The restaurant's "Crab Board" displays available crab sizes for the day, while signature dishes like Garlic Chilli Crab and Black Pepper Dashi Crab cater to both seafood lovers and communal dining experiences. The intimate setting, styled as a modern "crab cave," seats 50 guests in the main area and 30 in private rooms.



Zus Signature presents a curated menu of beverages and snacks made with premium ingredients.



Ministry of Crab flies in all its seafood from Sri Lanka for peak freshness.



Ippudo and Maisen have partnered to open a concept restaurant in Malaysia.

**Asylum Coffeehouse**

Singapore's Asylum Coffeehouse has arrived in Bangsar KL, redefining the specialty coffee experience with its precision-brewed offerings and immersive space. Known for serving only beans with a cupping score of 87+, Asylum ensures flavour complexity and balance in every cup. Their Rubasse roasting machine from Taiwan uses infrared heating for consistency, unlocking the best flavours in every batch.

Beyond coffee, Asylum fosters community and creativity, featuring modular spaces for conversations, workshops and events. Do not miss its signature Keluak Blend, inspired by *ayam buah keluak*, or the playful PB&J Latte, a classic flavour pairing.





# Ace in hand

*Mini Aceman S offers good looks, but ride quality may not be for everyone*

BY KESHY DHILLON

**What's the background of the Aceman?**

**I**CONS never die, they just become better with time. That cannot be truer for an iconic brand like Mini. Effectively under the BMW Group's stewardship since 1994, Mini has come a long way. If you have been living in a cave for the past 40 years, you may be surprised to see what the brand has now become.

Its cars are now Mini in name but not so much in size. They are also stylish and rather quirky at the same time – a combination which has made Mini cars a must buy, not only as a statement but because of their versatility.

Over the years, Mini has expanded its line-up of models. You don't only get the iconic Cooper name, instead you get the Cooper S, Mini John Cooper Works – which is the high-performance model.

On top of that, you also get the Countryman, the Paceman, Clubman, Roadster, and many more. Some still live on while others like the Paceman have been discontinued.

The most recent model to join the line-up is the Aceman, and for the first time in Mini's history, it is only available with an electric powertrain.

Other Mini EV's like the Cooper and Country have been available with either an internal combustion engine, or with an electric drivetrain.

Launched in Malaysia towards the end of last year, the Aceman is quite a special model, and we got to drive it recently.

Despite popular belief, the Aceman is not a replacement for the Paceman. They might sound similar, but they are two entirely different cars.

While the Paceman was a large coupe, the Aceman is a four-door variant that positions itself as a practical car.

In terms of sizing, it sits smack in between the Cooper SE and the Countryman SE. That makes it perfect for those who find the Cooper too small and the Countryman too big.

It is also priced at RM213,888 which also gets you a two-year, unlimited mileage warranty. But if you are willing to spend RM221,888, you will get a four-year unlimited mileage warranty together with a service package.

In comparison, the Cooper SE is priced at RM200,188 with the full warranty and service package. The Countryman SE on the other hand is priced at RM266,288 with the full package. So the Aceman has carved out a nice little spot in the entire Mini line-up.

The Aceman is also built in China through a joint-venture with Great Wall Motors, though there are plans to build it elsewhere as well to help the BMW group manage hefty import taxes into key markets.

**What differentiates it from the rest?**

It is more similar to its siblings than different actually. Modern cars carrying the same brand badge tend to do that in the name of cost optimisation.

So rather than have a different interior design, lighting design and such, it is easier to have their interiors and other bits look somewhat the same, but with different sizing.

Modern car companies are all about pleasing members of the boardroom and keep buyers coming back because of the brand on the bonnet.

But having said that, the Aceman S







Big and chunky steering wheel.



Harman Kardon sound system makes your favourite music sound good.



Twist the centre knob to start the car.



Seats are electronic with memory function.



Mini ditched the circular headlamps eons ago



Unique LED brake and indicators.

is more similar to the Cooper SE than the Countryman.

Despite its bigger size, the Aceman S uses the same electric motors as the Cooper SE, which is not exactly surprising since they are built on the same assembly line.

The key distinguishing factor is of course its size and design, which looks like a watered down version of the bigger Countryman.

The battery packs and electric motors are the same as well.

Step inside, and the same interior greets you, though with a little redesign but with the same bits and pieces.

The circular, 9.4-inch OLED infotainment



Cool 9.4-inch OLED screen. Lags occasionally.



Stunning 19-inch wheels.



No spare wheel, just a tyre repair kit.

screen is shared among the Mini siblings though. This is something that Mini is particularly proud of since it is quite large yet thin at the same time.

It looks good, gives you access to all the car's information as well as entertainment and navigation. Yet it also doubles as the speedometer with customisable displays. So you can have it look like a 70s Mini, or like a tech laden 2025 model.

### What else about the interior?

The seats are from the John Cooper Works models, and that means they look and feel great.

The layout of the dash is great as well, with everything laid out clearly and within easy reach. Quality feels good too.

Overall spaciousness around the front is generous even for taller drivers and passengers, but the same cannot be said about the rear seats.

The rear is cramped while the backrests are too upright. Personally, I would not want to spend too much time in the back seats other than short 10 minute trips.

The rear third window does a good job at making the back feel airy though. So the rear might feel tight, but it is far from working on your claustrophobia.

### How does it drive?

Like a typical modern Mini. The company is particularly proud of the "go-kart like handling" embedded into each of their cars, which is great if it were a sports car.

But Mini's have grown to accommodate families, and go-karts have little to none in terms of suspension and absorbers and the Aceman S, like some of the other Minis, has inherited that trait.

So, fortunately or unfortunately (depending which part of the argument you sit on), the ride

quality can feel a little stiff.

The 40-profile tyres don't help either but they definitely make the car look good from the outside.

But comfort aside, the car handles like a dream if you are into cars with sharp and agile handling. It changes directions on a dime, and you can launch into a corner with little body roll threatening to upset the distribution of grip.

It is a lot of fun, which I guess is what the team at Mini means when they say their cars handle like go-karts.

But the flipside to that is the car tends to reveal where the fat on your body is by jiggling those lose bits on uneven roads.

The rear passengers don't have it easy either as they are already cramped for space and then have to deal with being thrown around.

But something had to be sacrificed in the pursuit of fun, and that is a small price to pay. And as I said earlier, if it is comfort you want, the Countryman is the Mini to go for.

### Let's get to the technical bits now

The Aceman S utilises a single, front-mounted electric motor that is also used in the Cooper SE. The motor is juiced by a 49.2kWh battery.

The motor puts out 218PS and 330Nm of torque and catapults the car to 100kph in 7.1 seconds. It maxes out at 170kph.

Before you frown, electric cars other than a Porsche Taycan are not known for their top speed capabilities.

As for charging, the car takes 11kW of AC charging and 95kW of DC charging. The latter lets the car juice up from 10-80% in just 30 minutes.

### Should you put down your hard earned money for one?

It all depends on what you want. If it is something that is stylish, fun and stands out as a testament to your success as well as good taste, then why not? The Aceman S is surely more practical than a Cooper and depending on who you ask, looks better too.

But if you want something comfortable and convenient, then the Countryman SE is worth a look. That costs about RM45,000 more though. So perhaps the Volvo EX30 may be worth a look if it is comfort and convenience that you want.

### Specifications

**Motor:** Single, front-mounted

**Power:** 218hp

**Torque:** 330Nm

**Battery:** 49.2kWh

**Charging:** 11kW AC/ 95kW DC

**Acceleration (0-100kph):** 7.1 seconds

**Top speed:** 170kph

**We like:** Stylish design.

**We don't like:** Ride quality.



# Big & beautiful

X9, the ultra smart 7-seater

**B**ERMAZ Xpeng, the exclusive distributor of the XPeng brand in Malaysia, has officially launched its latest flagship model, the XPeng X9, the ultra smart, large seven-seater.

Priced from RM269,888.00, the X9 is now open for bookings, offering a revolutionary blend of cutting-edge technology, versatility, and luxury that sets a new benchmark in the MPV segment.

Built on XPeng's advanced SEPA 2.0 architecture, the X9 combines groundbreaking innovations in design, intelligence, space, handling, and safety.

The SUV boasts a futuristic yet practical design, blending sleek aesthetics with advanced technology. Its streamlined silhouette, flowing lines, and distinctive "starship" frame create a bold statement of modern elegance.

The front fascia features XPeng's signature "robot face" design, highlighted by a seamless horizontal daytime running light that visually extends the vehicle's width.

The X9's youthful and dynamic look is further emphasised by a sharply angled A-pillar, floating roof, and expansive side windows.

Step inside the X9, and you're greeted by a



luxurious interior inspired by a starship cockpit.

The all-in-one center console offers an intelligent and immersive driving experience, complemented by premium materials such as wood veneer and aluminum air vents for a modern, minimalist aesthetic.

Designed to meet the needs of both individual and family travel, the X9 can be configured from a spacious 7-seater to an ultra-spacious 4-seater with a single click, thanks to its electrically folding third-row seats.

The SUV is built on XPeng's SEPA 2.0

architecture, featuring an 800V high-voltage silicon carbide (SiC) platform for ultra-fast DC charging.

The standard range 2WD Pro variant comes with an 84.5 kWh LFP battery, offering up to 500km of range, 450 Nm of torque, and 315 hp.

The long range variants feature a larger 101.5 kWh NMC battery, extending the range to 590km with the same power output.

With cutting-edge energy optimisation and thermal management, the X9 supports rapid charging, with DC charging capacities of up to



317 kW. This enables a 10-80% charge in just 20 minutes, making it one of the fastest-charging MPVs in its class.

The X9 is equipped with the XPilot 2.5 system, offering a comprehensive suite of safety features. Standard safety includes six airbags and an electronic child lock, while advanced driver assistance utilises high-definition radar, ultrasonic sensors, and a 360° HD camera powered by the Nvidia Orin-X chipset.

The XPENG X9 is available in three striking exterior colours: Nebula White, Crescent Silver, and Dark Night Black. Inside, customers can choose between two elegant interior colour options: Starry Night Black and Moon Shadow Brown.

Pricing starts at RM269,888 for the 2WD Pro, RM287,888 for the long range 2WD Pro and RM299,888 for the long range 2WD Pro Plus.

## Luxury, tech and performance



**VOLVO** has officially introduced the ES90, a new all-electric model that defies traditional vehicle categories.

Neither sedan nor SUV, the ES90 stands in a class of its own, though its sleek, elevated design and generous ground clearance suggest strong crossover influences.

Regardless of what you call it, Volvo sees the ES90 as a flagship model, sharing top-tier status alongside the EX90 SUV.

At first glance, the ES90 exudes familiar Volvo styling. The front is defined by signature "Thor's Hammer" LED headlights, while vertical driving lamps and a minimalist grille complete the look.

Around back, C-shaped taillights stretch into the sharply sloped rear glass of its hatchback design, which provides easy access to 733 litres of cargo space with the rear seats folded (or 495 litres with them upright), plus an additional 48-litre trunk.

Built on the same SPA2 platform as the EX90, the ES90 is slightly longer in wheelbase (310cm) but shorter overall at 5m. With 20.3 cm of ground clearance and a total width of 212 cm, it strikes a balanced profile between sportiness and practicality.

The ES90 will launch in three configurations: the single motor variant, featuring rear-wheel drive, a 329hp output, a 92.0kWh battery, and up to 644km of range; the twin motor variant, offering all-wheel drive, 442hp, a 106.0 kWh battery, and a range of up to 700km; and the twin motor performance variant, which boasts all-wheel drive, 670hp, a 106.0kWh battery, a 0-97 kph acceleration time of 3.9 seconds, a top speed of 180kph, and a range of up to 700km.

The Volvo ES90 is currently available to order in select European markets. Availability in other markets is expected in the near future, though no official timeline or pricing has been announced.

## JAC Motors launches T9 diesel, electric pickups

**CHINESE** automaker JAC Motors has officially launched its T9 range of pickup trucks in Malaysia, marking the brand's entry into the local market with both internal combustion engine (ICE) and fully electric (BEV) variants.

This milestone follows the company's previously announced investment plans, which aim to position Malaysia as a key hub for the production and export of commercial vehicles to the Asean region.

Founded in 1964, JAC Motors – also known as Jianghuai Automobile Co Ltd – is a state-owned Chinese manufacturer specialising in commercial vehicles, SUVs, and electric vehicles.

The company is recognised as one of China's leading automotive brands, with a diverse product portfolio that extends from passenger cars to light and heavy-duty trucks.

The diesel-powered JAC T9 is built on a ladder-frame chassis and features a robust double-cab design.

Measuring 5,330 mm in length, 1,965 mm in width, and 1,920 mm in height with a 3,110 mm wheelbase, the T9 offers a kerb weight of 2,055kg, slightly bigger than a Toyota Hilux.

Under the hood, the T9 diesel variant is powered by a 2.0-litre inline four-cylinder turbodiesel engine producing 167hp and 410Nm of torque. This engine is paired with an eight-speed ZF automatic transmission, sending power to all four wheels.

The pickup is also equipped with a comprehensive suite of active safety features such as ABS, EBD, brake override, hill start assist, brake assist, traction control, and stability control.

Seven airbags, including a front centre airbag, are standard, and the model has earned a five-star rating from the Australasian New Car Assessment

Program (ANCAP).

The T9 EV is powered by a dual-motor setup and delivers a total power output of 295hp alongside a total peak torque of 516Nm.

This configuration enables the T9 EV to accelerate from 0 to 100 kph in 8.4 seconds, with a top speed of 140kph.

Power is supplied by an 88 kWh LFP battery pack . D C

fast charging at up to 88 kW allows for a 30-80% charge in just 35 minutes, while AC charging via an 11 kW Type 2 connection takes six hours and 50 minutes for a full recharge.

To celebrate the launch of the T9, Evolvelectric Motors is extending the introductory price of the T9 until the end of the year.

The T9 Diesel variant is priced at RM119,888 (Peninsula Malaysia, on-the-road without insurance) while the T9 BEV variant is available at RM199,888.



## Audi unveils new A6 Avant

**AUDI** has officially introduced the latest generation of the A6 Avant, marking a new era of sophistication, innovation, and performance for the iconic estate.

With a renewed focus on sleek aesthetics, advanced technology, and improved efficiency, the new A6 Avant combines timeless styling with exceptional aerodynamic performance, achieving a drag coefficient of just 0.25 – the most efficient ever recorded for a combustion-engine Avant in Audi's history.

At the front, large air curtains and controllable cool-air intakes optimise airflow, while a sporty roof spoiler and aerodynamic

panels positioned alongside the rear window further reduce drag.

The rear of the vehicle is dominated by a bold diffuser, flanked by distinctive quattro blisters that emphasise the Avant's muscular stance. Together with an elongated hood and long wheelbase, these design elements create a harmonious blend of dynamic proportions and refined styling.

Powering the new A6 Avant is Audi's advanced MHEV Plus mild hybrid technology, which improves both performance and efficiency.

Customers can choose between a 2.0-litre

TDI four-cylinder engine producing 204PS and a 3.0-litre TFSI six-cylinder engine delivering 367PS. Central to the MHEV Plus system is a 48-volt battery, a belt alternator starter (BAS), and a powertrain generator (PTG) equipped with integrated power electronics.

The driver-oriented cockpit features expansive digital displays, while seven customisable digital light signatures add a personalised touch to both the front and rear of the vehicle.

The new Audi A6 Avant will be available for order starting in March 2025, with customer deliveries expected to commence by the end of May 2025. In Europe, the A6 Avant TFSI 150kW base model is priced from €58,000 (RM298,700), while the 2.0 TDI variant with MHEV Plus technology starts at €61,700 (RM317,755).



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**302 Jobs**

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**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 programmes.
- Manage employee benefits programmes 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 would be advantageous.
- Handle General Admin and other HR duties.

**Requirements**

- Diploma/Bachelor's degree in Human Resources Management or related field.
- Executive: 1+ years of experience in HR & Admin or related field.
- Senior: 3+ years of experience in HR & Admin or related field.
- Asst Manager: 5+ years of experience in HR & Admin or related field.
- Fresh graduates are encouraged to apply for Assistant Executive post.
- Basic HR knowledge and proficiency in Microsoft Office.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

**SAFETY & BUILDING MAINTENANCE ( Executive )**

**Job Description**

- Perform routine and preventive maintenance on factory & office building systems, including HVAC, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical systems.
- Conduct regular inspections of the factory & office building to identify and address maintenance issues.
- Respond promptly to emergency maintenance requests and ensure timely resolution.
- Maintain accurate records of maintenance activities, including work orders, inspections, and repairs.
- Ensure all maintenance activities comply with relevant health, safety, and environmental regulations.
- Coordinate with external contractors and vendors for specialized maintenance and repair works.
- Monitor and optimize energy usage to improve efficiency and reduce costs.
- Assist in the preparation and management of the maintenance budget.
- Carry out audits and put up recommendations on effectiveness of Health and Safety systems and procedures for Safety & Health Officer's consideration for further improvement. Assist in the preparation, maintenance and distribution of Health and Safety documents for audit certification purposes.
- Ensure the respective department managers comply with current health and safety legislations such as the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, FMA1967, EQA1974, BOMBA Act 1988 and other approved codes of practice related to HSSE only.
- Carry out rectification action to mitigate the impact and likelihood of health and safety risks
- Assist on any ad-hoc operations and admin task assigned by Management from time to time.

**Requirement**

- Diploma/Degree in Building or Facilities Management, Safety & Health or a related field.
- Additional Certificate: Electrical Chargeman, preferably A4 or minimum A1 will be an added advantage
- Minimum of 1 year of experience in Building Maintenance or Safety & Health.
- Adequate technical knowledge of building systems (HVAC, electrical, plumbing, etc.).
- Excellent problem-solving and troubleshooting skills.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to work flexi hours.
- Able to handle urgent and last-minute job request.

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**322 Notices**

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 19-03-2025 (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 (32954) & Mr Mazenan Bin Haji Mohamed (01/2024)

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Item	Reg No	Jenis & Model	Tahun
AM1	WLH9412	HONDA ACCORD 2.4 (A)	2003
AM2	COW9409	NISSAN GRAND LIVINA 1.6 (A)	2011
AM3	DBT9032	PERODUA VIVA	2011
AM4	DES7069	HONDA WRV 1.5	2023
AM5	WTJ3655	PROTON EXORA 1.6	2009
AM6	DEP8697	PROTON SAGA 1.3	2023

(Perhatian: Kenderaan-kenderaan diatas yang tidak dibida dalam perelangan akan dilelong semula pada 26-03-2025)

**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.
- Conceptualise, 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.

**Requirements**

- SPM level with at least two years of experience.
- Diploma or Bachelor's degree in business, marketing or other related fields.
- Fresh graduates are encouraged to apply, training will be provided.
- Good communication, presentation, problem-solving and organisational skills.
- Passionate in client servicing.
- Possess own transport and willing to travel.
- Able to start work immediately.

**2 MEDIA SALES Representative/Agent (Freelance)**

**Requirement**

- Minimum one year sales experience in classified ad, print and digital advertising.
- Those without sales experience but with media advertising knowledge may also apply.
- Attractive commission package and incentives.
- Able to start immediately.
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**322 Notices**

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Prima Avenue and DPC (Block G, H, I) Management Corporation is the project owner. Prima Avenue and DPC (Block G, H, I) Management Corporation wishes to invite prospective Contractors to participate in the Pre-Qualification and Tender for the works package stated in the table below.

TITLE OF TENDER	CONTRACTOR'S QUALIFICATION	TENDER CRITERIA	TENDER TIMELINE
<b>COLD WATER PIPE REPLACEMENT FOR DPC (BLOCK G, H, I) AT JALAN PUJ 1/37, DATARAN PRIMA, 47301 PETALING JAYA, SELANGOR</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Contractor</li> <li>Registered with Construction Industry Development Board Malaysia (CIDB)</li> <li>Grade: G3 and above</li> <li>Specialization: B04, CE19, CE20, CE21, M15</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Scope of Works : To replace existing main cold water supply pipe and meter. The Contractor will be fully responsible for the management, scheduling, and coordination of the whole Works.</li> <li>Having a minimum of ten (10) years of experience and establishment.</li> <li>Having a total annual value of Plumbing Services Works that have been successfully completed in each of the last 5 years of not less than RM5 million in total and having completed Plumbing Services Works in a single contract in the past 3 years of not less than RM500,000.</li> <li>Strong financial background and capacity to undertake the project.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registration of Interest</li> <li>1. Required Information: (Compulsory)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Title of Tender, Company Name, Registered Address, Phone Number, Company Email Address, Name and Contact Details Person in Charge</li> <li>Registration of Interest Deadline: 15 March 2025 (Saturday), 12:00 p.m.</li> <li>Registration of Interest to submit via Email: <a href="mailto:cmy@ktatena.com.my">cmy@ktatena.com.my</a> and <a href="mailto:manager.primaavenue2021@outlook.com">manager.primaavenue2021@outlook.com</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Tender Site Visit (Compulsory)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site Visit Date: 18 March 2025 (Tuesday)</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Pre-Qualification and Tender Document               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submission Deadline: 24 March 2025, 3:00 p.m. (Kuala Lumpur time)</li> <li>Document Submission: Hard Copy</li> <li>"Pre-Qualification Documents" and "Commercial Tender Documents" shall be submitted in separate envelope.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Note:**  
 Contractors/Companies that do not meet these minimum criteria will not be considered.  
 Prima Avenue and DPC (Block G, H, I) Management Corporation reserves the right at its sole and absolute discretion, to accept or reject any submission and/or to annul and withdraw the Pre-Qualification process and reject all submissions, without assigning any reason whatsoever to any and all participants and without incurring any liabilities to the affected participants or any obligations to inform the participants the grounds for the action. Only successful prequalified participants will be notified.  
 Prima Avenue and DPC (Block G, H, I) Management Corporation shall not for any reason and/or under any circumstances and/or at any stage whatsoever be responsible for any and all costs, expenses and claims incurred by the participants in preparing, responding to, completing, and submitting the Pre-Qualification documents. All risks associated with the preparation, response, completion, and submission of the Pre-Qualification documents shall be borne and addressed solely by each participant. Prima Avenue and DPC (Block G, H, I) Management Corporation does not require participants to pay any fee for accessing and downloading the Pre-Qualification document or uploading/submitting their response.  
 Late registration and submissions will be DISQUALIFIED.

**322 Notices**

**NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR VOLUNTARY WINDING UP OF LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP (Section 50(4)(a) of the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2012)**

Notice is hereby given that JOY ICE CREAM ENTERPRISE PLT [LLP No. 201804003301 (LLP0017683-LGN)] will be making an application to the Registrar of Limited Liability Partnerships for a declaration of dissolution pursuant to section 50(2) of the Limited Liability Partnerships Act 2012 within seven (7) days after the publication of this notice. Any partner or creditor of the Limited Liability Partnership desiring to object to the application may do so in writing to the Companies Commission of Malaysia within (30) days from the date of this notice.

**322 Notices**

**IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF SMARTLAND ADVANCE SDN. BHD.**

**DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI DI KUALA LUMPUR (BAHAGIAN SIVIL) SAMAN PENJUAL: WA-2ANCV-314-01/2025**

Dalam perkara Perjanjian Jual Beli bertarikh 16.10.2012 bagi Unit No. A-08-21 Dan

Dalam perkara Jadual H Akta Pemaju Perumahan (Kawalan dan Pelesenan) 1988 dan Peraturan-Peraturan Pemaju Perumahan (Kawalan dan Pelesenan) 1989

Dan

Dalam perkara Seksyen 25, 37, 57 dan 68 Akta Kontrak 1950

Dan

Dalam perkara Mayland Valiant Sdn Bhd v Majlis Perbandaran Subang Jaya 2018 7 CLJ 165

Dan

Dalam perkara Perintah Mahkamah Tinggi bertarikh 29.08.2016 melalui Gusan No. 21NCVC-160-09/2012

Dan

Dalam perkara Aturan 5, Aturan 7, Aturan 28 & Aturan 92 Kaedah 4 Kaedah-Kaedah Mahkamah 2012

ANTARA

PACIFIC VALIANT SDN BHD (No. Sijarah: 200801131584 (814782-D)) ... PLAINTIF

DAN

1. YAP MEE YEE (No. K/P: 800303-14-5430)

2. YAP MEE PING (No. K/P: 810523-14-5634)

3. YAP MEE KUAN (No. K/P: 861005-56-5110) ... DEFENDAN-DEFENDAN

NOTIS PENYAMPAIAN GANTI-BENTUK IKLAN

Kepada:

YAP MEE YEE  
 YAP MEE PING  
 YAP MEE KUAN  
 C-9-5 Endah Promenade Condo  
 Jalan 2/14E, Taman Sri Endah, Sri Petaling, 57000 Kuala Lumpur

1. To receive and consider the Liquidator's final statement of accounts showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and to receive any explanations arising therefrom.

2. To resolve that under Section 518(3)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016, the books, accounts and documents of the Company and the Liquidator, be destroyed after the expiration of three months from the date of the final meeting.

Dated this 14th March 2025

Chew Choon Seong  
 Liquidator

**IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF ASTUTE WEALTH MANAGEMENT SDN. BHD. (1007332-M) (In Members' Voluntary Winding Up)**

At a General Meeting of the Members of Astute Wealth Management Sdn. Bhd. (1007332-M) duly convened and held on 10th March 2025, the following Special Resolution was duly passed:-

"THAT the Company be liquidated by way of members' voluntary winding up pursuant to Section 438(1)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016 and that Lim Choon Tong of No 9-2, Jalan Setia Utama AW U/3/AW Setia Alam, 40170 Shah Alam Selangor D.E. be and is hereby appointed as Liquidator of the Company for the purpose of winding up the affairs and distributing the assets of the Company in accordance with their respective rights and interest therein.

Chua Yok Wan  
 Director  
 Dated this 14th March 2025

**IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF ASTUTE WEALTH MANAGEMENT SDN. BHD. (1007332-M) (In Members' Voluntary Winding Up)**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of Astute Wealth Management Sdn. Bhd. (1007332-M), which is being voluntarily wound up, are required on or before 14th April 2025 to send their names and addresses with particulars of their debts or claims, and of any security held by them, and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned Liquidator at Lot 4, Level 4, Partams Complex Office Tower, Jalan Tuenku Abdul Rahman, 50100 Kuala Lumpur, and if so required by notice in writing from the aforesaid Liquidator, or personally or by their solicitors required to write in and prove their said debts or claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice, or in default thereof, they will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts and claims are proved.

Lim Choon Tong  
 Liquidator  
 Dated this 14th March 2025





## PIN HIGH

## 'I Don't know where I'm going'

**BROOKS KOEPKA** did not entirely dismiss recent comments by Fred Couples that the five-time major champion wants to return to the PGA Tour, but said that he does intend to fulfill his LIV Golf contract. Couples stirred speculation about Koepka's future by telling a Seattle radio station last week that he "really wants to come back and play the Tour." Koepka said he texted with Couples after the comments were made, but that the two did not go into much detail about future plans. "Everybody seems to have their own opinion and no one asks me," Koepka said yesterday ahead of this week's LIV event in Singapore. "Like I've said before, I'm not in those rooms. I've got a contract obligation out here to fulfill, and then we'll see what happens. I don't know where I'm going, so I don't know how everybody else does," Koepka said.

## McIlroy wants monthly battle of the best

**WHETHER** negotiations between the PGA Tour and Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund result in a reunification of professional golf or not, Rory McIlroy said he believes that competition at the highest level of the game needs to be more global. The World No. 2 said he would like to see the game's best players compete against one another at least once a month, and perhaps even more than that. Certainly a lot more than in just the four major championships. "My thing is for golf to stay where it is and be relevant... worldwide. It's a year-round calendar," McIlroy told reporters yesterday ahead of The Players Championship at TPC Sawgrass. "It's got to be once a month if not more," he said about how often fans should see the best players in the world brought together. "I think 12 times a year or maybe a little higher than that I think would be a good number."

## Obamas in talks to produce Tiger film

**BARACK** and Michelle Obama are in talks to produce a new biopic about golf superstar Tiger Woods, a source familiar with the negotiations told *AFP* yesterday. The movie is in development at *Amazon MGM*, according to Hollywood trade outlet *Deadline*, which first reported on the project. The studio had purchased the rights to *The Tiger Slam: The Inside Story of the Greatest Golf Ever Played*, Kevin Cook's book on how Woods became the first golfer to be reigning champion at all four majors simultaneously, in 2000-01. Reinaldo Marcus Green, the filmmaker behind *King Richard* - which told the story of the childhoods of tennis greats Venus and Serena Williams and their coach father Richard - is attached to direct, *Deadline* said.

**BORUSSIA DORTMUND** recovered from losing an early goal to fight back and beat Lille 2-1 in France in the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie yesterday, sealing a 3-2 aggregate victory and a place in the quarterfinals.

Jonathan David gave Lille an early lead on the night, putting the French club ahead in the tie after last week's 1-1 first-leg draw.

However, Emre Can squared things by converting a penalty for Dortmund on 54 minutes, and Maximilian Beier then fired in a fine winner for last season's runners-up.

Dortmund will now face Barcelona in the quarterfinals next month, having already lost 3-2 at home to the Catalans during the league phase in December.

## Ball didn't move, says Simeone on controversial penalty call

**ATLETICO MADRID** coach Diego Simeone cast suspicion on the decision to rule out Julian Alvarez's penalty in his team's Champions League defeat by Real Madrid yesterday.

Los Blancos won 4-2 on penalties after a 2-2 aggregate draw in the last 16 tie, with Alvarez slipping as he scored in the shootout. VAR ruled it out for a supposed double touch on the ball.

"The referee said when Julian got to the penalty spot he touched the ball with his standing foot, but the ball did not move," Simeone told reporters.

"But beyond that, which now just serves to argue about whether it should have counted or not, I am proud of my players, I am happy, truly.

"Why? Because we competed in an exemplary

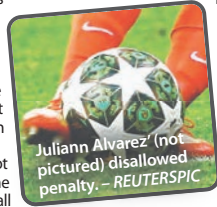
way. And yes, we could not beat Real Madrid in the Champions League, sure, we could not, but they had a really bad time (against us) again."

The Atletico coach said he wanted to believe the officials got the penalty decision right.

"I've never seen a penalty where they've called the VAR, but well, they would have seen that he touched it, I want to believe, I want to believe they saw he touched it."

The coach asked members of the media to raise their hand if they had seen a replay in which it was clear Alvarez had touched the ball twice.

"Raise your hand, anyone who saw Julian touch it twice, who is going to raise their hand? Nobody has raised their hand," shouted Simeone.



## Real steel Madrid edge Atletico on penalties to reach Champions League quarters

**REAL MADRID** produced a gritty display to reach the Champions League quarterfinals with a 4-2 win on penalties against rivals Atletico Madrid, following a 1-0 defeat after extratime yesterday.

Diego Simeone's side outplayed the record 15-time champions at the Metropolitan stadium for much of the game, but Madrid have never been eliminated by Atletico in the competition and they battled hard after Conor Gallagher's first minute opener to secure a 2-2 aggregate draw.

Thibaut Courtois made several saves to thwart Julian Alvarez and Vinicius Junior blazed a penalty high and wide for Madrid.

In the shootout Alvarez scored for Atletico but his

effort was controversially ruled out for seeming to touch the ball twice because of a slip as he shot.

Marcos Llorente also missed for Atletico and Madrid's Antonio Rudiger struck the winner for the reigning champions, who will face Arsenal in the last eight.

"I had to pick the coldest players possible (for penalties)," said Real coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"I think it's a lottery still, a toss-up, today it came in for us - Atletico got out with their heads held high because they played at a good level. We were never out of the tie - at worst, it was even."

Atletico played with caution in the first leg despite trailing, willing to take a single goal deficit back to the fiery Metropolitan stadium, where they believed they could really turn the heat



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe (left) fights for the ball with Atletico Madrid's Jose Gimenez during their Champions League match. - AFP/PIC

Real Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said he felt the former Manchester City striker did touch the ball twice as he slipped.

"In the end it's a lottery, I felt a little that he had touched it twice, that's what I told the referee, it is clearly not easy to see, but it's a bit of bad luck for them there," Courtois told *Movistar*.

The Belgian goalkeeper criticised Atletico for complaining about the decision, but also appeared to take a swipe at his own club, who have been relentlessly attacking Spanish refereeing in recent weeks and claiming it is "rigged".

"I think UEFA saw it clearly - I'm sick of this victimhood, always crying about stuff like this, the refs don't want to help particular teams, not in Spain, not in Europe," Courtois told reporters.

"They saw it clearly and that's why they made that decision... they saw it clearly with VAR, they have a lot of images and cameras." - AFP

up on their arch-rivals.

Real Madrid knocked Atletico out in the 2017 semifinals in the final European game at the Vicente Calderon, with this the first time the derby has been played at Atletico's new home in the Champions League.

After defeats by Madrid in the 2014 and 2016 finals, the latter on penalties, and elimination on every other occasion the teams have met in the competition, Atletico were desperate to change the narrative, but came up fractionally short.

"I think we played a great match, but unfortunately we lacked a bit of luck," Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak told *Movistar*. "The truth is that one feels pain, it hurts a lot."

Atletico came flying out of the blocks and took the lead after just 27 seconds through Gallagher, levelling the tie on aggregate.

Rodrigo De Paul's low ball in from the right was not cut out by Raul Asencio and former Chelsea midfielder Gallagher lunged in to beat Courtois from close range.

"We came out as if it was already won and in the first move they scored a goal against us, and that messed us up a lot," Madrid midfielder Fede Valverde told *Movistar*.

Atletico were content to sit deep and soak up pressure as Real Madrid pushed the ball around in their territory but were also ready to spring forward on the counter.

Madrid shaded extratime as both teams looked tired but pushed themselves to their limits with the match on a knife-edge.

Mbappe stepped up first from the spot and sent Oblak the wrong way, with Jude Bellingham following suit after Alexander Sorloth netted for Atletico.

Alvarez slipped as he smashed home the hosts' second penalty and after a VAR review it was ruled out as he had touched the ball twice as he struck it.

Oblak saved from Vazquez's weak penalty to put Atletico back on track but it was short-lived as Llorente crashed his penalty off the bar.

Oblak dived the right way for Rudiger's decisive penalty, getting a hand to it but he could not keep it out as Madrid marched into the last eight, after winning their sixth shoot-out against Atletico from six. - AFP

## Dortmund fight back to beat Lille

The result is a huge boost for Dortmund and their recently-appointed coach Niko Kovac, coming as the club languishes in 10th place in the Bundesliga.

"For the whole 90 minutes we controlled the game. It was a fantastic performance," Kovac told *uefa.com*.

Speaking to *DAZN* later, he added: "A great team effort. It was unfortunate that we went a goal down, but the team still dominated the game."

He will now come up against a Barcelona side coached by Hansi Flick, his former assistant at

Bayern Munich.

"Lille are a strong team on the ball. But Barcelona will top that, by a lot actually," Kovac said.

The result is a massive disappointment for Lille, who were hoping to reach the quarterfinals of the Champions League for the first time in their history after an outstanding performance during the league phase.

They finished seventh out of 36 teams, beating both Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid on the way, while also holding Juventus and putting six past Feyenoord.

Their coach Bruno Genesio insisted it had been a "satisfying" campaign despite the exit, but club president Olivier Letang was unhappy about the decision to award the penalty from which Dortmund equalised.

"I want to emphasise how good a run we had, even if we are frustrated," before questioning the decision to appoint as referee Sandro Scaer, a German-speaking Swiss.

"I don't think it was a penalty and it changed the game," he said.

"When I saw who was appointed referee, and that he was a German-speaking Swiss, I thought it was a bit strange.

"And at half time he was speaking to the Dortmund players exclusively in German." - AFP/Agencies



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MALAYSIA

## Time for Magpies to soar, says Trippier ahead of Cup final

**KIERAN TRIPPIER** has called on Newcastle United's stand-in stars to follow Harvey Barnes's lead and step up for the Carabao Cup final.

Barnes created the Bruno Guimarães goal which downed West Ham on Tuesday, and he is set to deputise for the suspended Anthony Gordon against Liverpool at Wembley.

Vacancies have also been opened up in defence by injuries to Lewis Hall and Sven Botman.

And Trippier has challenged whoever gets the nod to rise to the occasion, just like Barnes did at the London Stadium.

"Of course, Anthony is a massive miss for us, but this is where players have got to show their

character," said the 34-year-old.

"Players have got to step up, and Barnes has done that. Like myself, he's been in and out of the team, and getting that assist will do him the world of good.

"Playing against (Aaron) Wan-Bissaka is not easy because he's probably one of the best one-on-one defenders around.

"But he'll take a lot of confidence from that assist and his performance. Whoever plays on Sunday, I'm sure they'll be ready."

Trippier is one of the players who stands to benefit from the Magpies' injury and suspension woes.

Starts have been hard to come by for the

former England man this season, but he was selected at right-back against West Ham, with Tino Livramento switching flanks to cover for Hall.

Trippier could therefore play a vital role at Wembley, and the value of his experience is not limited to the pitch.

"I'm one of the oldest in the squad," he explained. "So my role is just to make sure everyone's calm and relaxed.

"I've been making sure that everyone's relaxed in the dressing room and at the training ground. We have to stay composed and just look at it as another game."

Newcastle players will need no reminding of

the club's 70-year silverware drought, and just how desperate the fans are for it to end.

Trippier was amongst the starters when the Magpies came within one win of breaking their duck in the 2023 Carabao Cup final. Manchester United emerged 2-0 victors on that occasion.

And while Liverpool are an even tougher obstacle to overcome on paper, Trippier believes that Newcastle themselves have toughened up in the two years since their Wembley near-miss.

"There was a lot of noise the first time we got to a final, but now the lads have experienced it and we know how to handle it. It'll be a different feeling for everyone this time." – Express Newspapers

## Rooney slams 'lazy' Van Dijk for role in defeat

**WAYNE ROONEY** has singled out Virgil van Dijk's "lazy" performance as a reason behind Liverpool's Champions League exit at the hands of Paris Saint-Germain.

After a first leg win, Liverpool were beaten at Anfield with a decisive goal by Ousmane Dembele before the visitors' success on penalties.

Despite the subsequent misses by Darwin Nunez and Curtis Jones in the penalty shootout, it was Van Dijk's actions, or lack thereof, that drew Rooney's ire during his commentary on *Amazon Prime Video*.

"This goal from Liverpool's perspective is wrong in so many ways," Rooney fumed.

He criticised Van Dijk for failing to engage and leaving a gap for Dembele. "They are trying to press the ball and Van Dijk gets lazy. If you keep your eye on Van Dijk, he's walking and leaves a massive gap to Dembele.

"All he has to do is come across and cover Dembele because there is no other pass for Paris to get out and he doesn't."

"Dembele gets it and he's got a lot of space, gets the ball out wide and then Konate doesn't switch on and then he reacts. Dembele makes a good run and gets a tap in."

After the match Van Dijk called for the team to move past the defeat and focus on the upcoming Carabao Cup final against Newcastle. He commented: "It's part of football."

Manager Arne Slot remained optimistic despite the defeat.

"I said to the guys 'you can be disappointed because we are out of the competition, but chin up'."

"Now we get ready for the next challenge at the weekend which is a beautiful one."

"I think we were pretty good today as well, and you want to go as far as possible, but we knew when we drew PSG it was going to be very difficult."

"We saw in Paris when we struggled but we won, and today we saw a very good Liverpool side but we're out of the competition."

"Today from the first second and then extratime, when fatigue kicks in for both sides, it becomes more open but especially regular time, we showed a very good game."

"We can speak about the game for ages but we're out of the competition, that is the reality." – Express Newspapers

## Proud Emery

BY JONATHAN VEAL

**ASTON VILLA** boss Unai Emery is excited to go toe-to-toe with the best clubs in Europe after his side booked a Champions League quarterfinal against Paris St Germain.

Villa continued their dream debut season in the premier European cup competition after completing a 6-1 aggregate win over Club Brugge in the last 16.

They won the second leg 3-0 at Villa Park thanks to three goals in 11 second half minutes, with Marco Asensio grabbing a brace and Ian Maatzen adding another against the Belgian side who were reduced to 10 men in the 17th minute.

A two legged tie with Liverpool's conquerors awaits next month, which will be a first return to the Parc des Princes for former PSG boss Emery, while Asensio will be able to face his parent club, having joined Villa from the Ligue 1 side on loan in January.

But for now Villa can bask in the glory of another famous European night in front of the watching Prince William, who jovially beamed "see you in Paris" after the game.

Emery said: "Real Madrid, Bayern Munich, Inter Milan, Arsenal, Borussia Dortmund, this is the level and we are in this level. We have to be proud."

"We want more, we want to compete against the best teams in the world. We are one in the last eight and our priority is to try to be close in the level we are facing."

"Of course to play quarterfinal is fantastic, we're very motivated against everything we were expected to play."

"They show the capacity against Liverpool, the best team in the Premier League, and it's been a very huge challenge for Aston Villa, for the supporters and players and coaches and me as well."

"To play against PSG is special

because I didn't go back since I left, either playing or visiting Paris. It will be fantastic."

The French champions showcased their potential to finally get their hands on the Champions League by beating Liverpool over two legs.

Emery knows the size of the job in the next round.

He added: "I know the potential they have, now they are going to be excited and very motivated in the Champions League. They performed very well, they competed two matches fantastic."

"We will try as best as possible to prepare for the match. It's very important to be in the Champions League and to play against PSG is something we have to be proud of."

Villa captain John McGinn has warned PSG that his team want to "write our

names in history" when they meet in the quarterfinals.

Villa are looking to reach the semifinals for the first time since winning the tournament in 1982 and Scotland midfielder McGinn is determined to keep their fairytale campaign going against PSG in April.

"It's mad. A lot of years of hard work. Champions League quarterfinalists? Can't ask for much more," he said.

"We let ourselves down in the first half but even with 10 men they were the better side. We're lucky to have Marco to come off the bench. The second half was brilliant."

"It doesn't get much harder than PSG over two legs. We're giving these fans experiences they'll remember forever."

"We want to write our names in history and make these nights more frequent." – The Independent/AFP



Aston Villa's Marco Asensio (left) celebrates scoring their third goal with Aston Villa's Marcus Rashford. – REUTERS/SPIC

## New Old Trafford could impact team, says United CEO Berrada

**OMAR BERRADA** would love Ruben Amorim to lead Manchester United into their new stadium, but the chief executive admits it is a "risk" to try to build a world-class team and venue at the same time.

The Premier League club announced on Tuesday they planned to build a new 100,000-seater ground on land adjacent to Old Trafford.

Berrada hopes the club can move into the £2 billion (RM11b) stadium by the start of the 2030-31 season and said: "We'd love to open the new stadium with Ruben as head coach."

But the Portuguese has dealt with more downs than ups since taking charge in November, with the

Red Devils lying 14th in the Premier League and needing Europa League glory to save their season.

Failure to do so would almost certainly see them miss out on European qualification, damaging their finances and rebuild under Amorim.

Berrada admits the cost of their new stadium could also have an impact, acknowledging that Arsenal and Tottenham both struggled to juggle building a ground and fighting at the top.

"That is a risk," he said. "Clearly it's something we want to avoid."

"We don't want to inhibit our ability to invest in

the team, for us to continue being competitive while we are building a new stadium."

"There's various ways around that and one of the things we are looking at is to shorten the construction timelines so we can have a new stadium within five years. That's our ambition."

"In the meantime, by getting our finances back in order and becoming profitable, we believe that we can be very competitive."

"The big, big benefit that this club has is that it has the biggest fanbase in the world and therefore the ability to be the number one in terms of revenues that it generates." – The Independent



## RESULTS &amp; STANDINGS

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE** (Last 16, 2nd leg):  
**Lille 1** (David 5) **Borussia Dortmund 2**  
 (Can 54-pen, Beier 65) – Dortmund win 3-2 on agg, **Arsenal 2** (Zinchenko 6, Rice 37)  
**PSV Eindhoven 2** (Perisic 18, Druiuech 70)  
 – Arsenal win 9-3 on agg, **Aston Villa 3**  
 (Asensio 50, 61, Maatsen 57) **Club Brugge 0** – Villa win 6-1 on agg, **Atletico Madrid 1**  
 (Gallagher 1) **Real Madrid 0** set – 2-2 on agg; Madrid win 4-2 on pen.

**ENGLISH CHAMPIONSHIP:** Ports-mouth 1 Plymouth 2, Hull 2 Oxford 1, Leeds 2 Millwall 0, Watford 1 Swansea 0, Stoke 1 Blackburn 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	37	23	10	4	74	23	79
Sheff Utd	37	24	7	6	52	28	77
Burnley	37	20	15	2	50	11	75
Sunderland	37	19	12	6	55	34	69
West Brom	37	13	17	7	47	33	56
Coventry	37	16	8	13	52	48	56
Bristol City	37	13	15	9	47	40	54
Mid'boro	37	15	8	14	57	48	53
Blackburn	37	15	7	15	41	38	52
Watford	37	15	7	15	47	50	52
Sheff Wed	37	14	9	14	53	58	51
Norwich	37	12	13	12	59	52	49
Millwall	37	12	12	13	36	39	48
QPR	37	11	11	15	42	48	44
Preston	37	9	17	11	37	43	44
Swansea	37	12	8	17	38	47	44
Portsmouth	37	11	9	17	45	59	42
Hull	37	10	10	17	38	46	40
Stoke	37	9	12	16	37	50	39
Oxford	37	9	12	16	38	55	39
Cardiff	37	8	12	17	40	61	36
Derby	37	9	8	20	37	49	35
Luton	37	9	7	21	34	60	34
Plymouth	37	7	12	18	38	74	33

## BRIEFS

## Malaysia in Sudirman Cup

**MALAYSIA** stand a strong chance of advancing past the group stage of the 2025 Sudirman Cup, which will be held in Xiamen, China, from April 27 to May 4. In the virtual draw streamed on BWF TV's YouTube channel yesterday, fifth-seeded Malaysia were placed in Group C alongside Japan, France and Australia. On paper, Japan are expected to be Malaysia's main challenger, while France could pose a threat to the national squad's bid to finish among the top two in the group. Since the tournament's inception in 1989, Malaysia have yet to lift the Sudirman Cup, with their best achievements being semifinal finishes in 2009, 2021 and 2023.

## PSM to turn stadium into world-class takraw academy

**THE** Sepaktakraw Association of Malaysia (PSM) president, Datuk Mohd Sumali Reduan admitted that the Jalan Raja Muda Kampung Baru Stadium needs improvements before it can be developed as the Malaysian Sepak Takraw Academy (ASTM) this June. According to Mohd Sumali, all the improvements to the venue will be carried out by his party after taking over the venue on April 1 as previously announced. "After I visited with the deputy president Datuk Abdul Halim Suleiman, we felt that there are many things that we need to do, for example, the hall itself needs to have the best equipment, and also air conditioning," he said. "In addition, there are also approximately 32 accommodation rooms here which I feel we need to upgrade to provide comfort to the occupants. So we will discuss these matters in the next meeting," he added after visiting the Jalan Raja Muda Stadium yesterday.

# Another pair bites the dust

Wei Chong-Kai Wun out of All England and Zii Jia withdraws from Swiss Open

**N**O men's doubles pair from the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) advanced to the second round of the All England after Man Wei Chong and Tee Kai Wun were eliminated in the first round early yesterday.

Competing at the Utilita Arena in Birmingham, the seventh-seeded duo fell to China's He Ji Ting-Ren Xiang Yu in a straight set, 21-15, 21-8, in just 32 minutes.

Earlier, the first round saw four national pairs – two from BAM (Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik and Wan Arif Junaidi-Yap Roy King) and two

professional pairs (Ong Yew Sin-Teo Ee Yui and Nur Mohd Azriy Ayub-Ian Wee Kiong) – shown the way out early after losing to their opponents.

Currently, at press time, Malaysia's only remaining contenders in the men's doubles category are Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin Mohd Rumsani.

Meanwhile, Malaysia's men's singles shuttler Lee Zii Jia has withdrawn from next week's Swiss Open due to a recurring right ankle injury.

"Team LZJ can confirm that Zii Jia is withdrawing from the upcoming Swiss Open in Basel due to his right ankle injury," the team said

in a social media post yesterday.

"Zi Jia will seek further treatment before any announcement is made on his tournament plans," the statement said.

The world No. 8 Zii Jia first suffered the injury at the BWF World Tour Finals in December last year.

The 26-year-old professional returned to competition at the Orleans Masters last week and went on to play in the All England Championships, where he lost 16-21, 12-21 to Hong Kong's Angus Ng Ka Long in the first round on Wednesday. – Bernama

## Kuching aim to sink Red Giants, KDA want to stay in MSL next season

**KUCHING CITY FC** (KCFC) are determined to maintain their impressive form to defeat Selangor FC in Sunday's match and consolidate their position in the top four of the 2024/25 Super League.

Acknowledging the challenge of overcoming The Red Giants, head coach Aidil Sharin Sahak said support from fans could be the key to victory for The Cats.

"We hope the fans will turn up in large numbers for the match because we can see that when they cheer, the players feel more motivated and lift their performance despite being tired."

"This upcoming game with Selangor FC will be tough because they have very good players."

"We've won our last three matches against Kelantan, Pahang and Kedah, which is a positive sign."

"We need to improve and be consistent so we can keep up with the top four or five," he told reporters after KCFC beat Kedah 3-0 on Wednesday night to overtake Terengganu and move into fourth place in the league.

Meanwhile, Kedah Darul Aman FC (KDA FC) will continue to fight to remain in the Super League competition next season, said the club's majority owner, Tan Sri Dr Mohd Daud Bakar.

He said reports that KDA FC won't be competing in the Malaysia Super League next season, that went viral on social media yesterday, were not based on facts.

"The management team and I are always in communication with



Kuching City's Tchetché Herman Brice Kipre (right) tries to dribble the ball past Kedah's goalkeeper Mohd Irfat Akmal during the Super League match at the State Stadium on Wednesday night. – BERNAMAPIC

the league operators to ensure we comply with all the club licensing requirements within the period stipulated by the Club Licensing Body of the Malaysian Football League (MFL).

"We have never intended to disband our team and we have also never tendered any such letters that could give an impression that we want to leave the Malaysia Super League," he said in a statement posted on KDA FC's Facebook page yesterday.

He said they intend to fight on and are confident that their efforts will not be in vain.

Earlier, The Regent of Johor, Tunku Mahkota Ismail said that there is a big possibility that Sri Pahang FC and KDA FC will not be in action in next season's Super League competition.

His Royal Highness also explained that this is due to mismanagement of funds, with the clubs spending more than they earned. – Bernama

## 'I will strive to the best of my ability as Johor Sports Ambassador'

**NATIONAL** badminton legend Datuk Lee Chong Wei is committed to doing his best after being appointed by the Regent of Johor Tunku Mahkota Ismail Sultan Ibrahim as the state's badminton advisor and sports ambassador.

Chong Wei said he is pleased with the trust placed in him by Tunku Ismail to carry out the responsibility and is committed to developing sports in Johor.

"The passion His Royal Highness has for sports is unwavering and his dedication towards the development of sports is impressive. I share in this commitment and will strive to the best of my ability to develop sports in Johor and Malaysia."

"I express my highest appreciation to His Royal Highness for this extraordinary opportunity. Thank you to the media and my friends for the support given to me all these while," he said in a statement posted on Facebook yesterday.

On Wednesday, several local media reported Tunku Ismail announcing Chong Wei as the Johor sports ambassador, besides naming other world-class athletes to spearhead efforts to develop youth and sports programmes in the state.

Tunku Ismail said this during a question-and-answer session with Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) fans at the JDT Cafeteria to discuss the latest issues involving the football club.

Other than Chong Wei, who is a three-time Olympic silver medallist and nicknamed the "King of Superheroes", Tunku Ismail also named several world-famous sports icons like Sonny Bill Williams (former All Blacks rugby player), Khabib Nurmagomedov (former UFC lightweight champion) and Tim Cahill (former Australian footballer). – Bernama

## Faisal Halim returns to Harimau Malaya

**SPEEDY** winger Mohamad Faisal Abdul Halim is making a return to the Harimau Malaya squad for the third round of the 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers against Nepal at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium, Iskandar Puteri, Johor, on March 25.

The surprise inclusion was announced by the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) in a press conference today while unveiling the 27-player squad selected by head coach Peter Klamovski for centralised training, ending Faisal's nearly year-long absence from the national team.

However, the squad list does not feature any new heritage players, despite earlier reports suggesting reinforcements for Harimau Malaya.

Players who were left out of the 2024 Asean

Football Federation (AFF) Cup campaign have been recalled, including Dion Coals, Nafiq Insa, Mohd Afiq Fazail, Romel Morales, Afif Aiman Hanapi, Muhammad Akhyar Abdul Rashid and Muhammad Safawi Rasid.

Key members of the AFF Cup 2024 squad such as Paulo Josue, Endrick dos Santos, Muhammad Safwan Mazlan, Muhammad Haqimi Azim Rosli and Stuart Wilkin have retained their spots. Among the new call-ups is Selangor FC defender Ahmad Zikri Mohd Khalili.

Harimau Malaya will undergo an eight-day training camp in Johor Bahru before the opening match against Nepal.

Klamovski confirmed that the registration

process for the heritage players is now in its final phase.

"All Malaysian players and the process of the heritage is in the final stages and positive news will come next week for a few players."

"The maximum is three players and more will come in June," he told a press conference at which a 27-player list for the qualifier against Nepal was unveiled.

Previously, the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) was awaiting approval from the Malaysian government to secure citizenship for four new Harimau Malaya heritage players. FAM was also reported to be in the process of completing documentation for four other players. – Bernama





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# Real test for Gunners

*Arteta insists Arsenal capable of beating Madrid in Champions League*

BY RACHEL STEINBERG

**M**IKEL ARTETA called on Arsenal to take the “next step” after booking their place in the Champions League last eight in successive seasons for the first time in 15 years.

Oleksandr Zinchenko and Declan Rice were on the scoresheet as the Gunners drew 2-2 with PSV Eindhoven at the Emirates Stadium to win 9-3 on aggregate after dealing the Eredivisie side a 7-1 drubbing in the reverse fixture.

They next face Real Madrid, who won a dramatic, controversial penalty shoot-out 4-2 to beat rivals Atletico Madrid and continue the defence of their European crown.

Arteta said: “We have to value that and recognise that it is very difficult to do it (back-to-back).”

“We’ve done it consistently, and now we want to make the next step, which is going to be very difficult, but we are very capable.”

Zinchenko opened the scoring after six minutes before Ivan Perisic gave the spirited PSV supporters something to cheer about when he fired in an 18th minute-equaliser – the first time Arsenal have conceded at home in the competition this season.

Rice nodded the Gunners back in front before the break, but Couhaib Driouech drew PSV level with 20 minutes remaining.

Asked why he was particularly proud of the Gunners’ consistency, Arteta added: “Why is it important? Because we want to win.”

“You’re going to have to go through the stages, and because the club needs it. We are a club, a team, that wants to be the best and want to be competing with the best clubs in the world.”

“In order to do that, you constantly have to be there. And it’s very difficult, but we’ve done it for two years in a row and we have the capacity and the ability



PSV Eindhoven's Armando Obispo (centre) in action with Arsenal's Mikel Merino (left) and Ben White during their Uefa Champions League last 16 second leg match yesterday. – REUTERS/PIC

that haven’t had a lot of minutes, recently.

“You could tell in the second half that we lacked physical capabilities to make certain efforts and arrive to certain spaces in the right time, but overall I am very happy that they got the minutes and they responded.”

Chelsea loanee Sterling will miss the first leg of the quarterfinals through suspension, however, after he was booked late on, his third yellow card of the tournament.

Arteta agreed he could see the 30-year-old’s confidence coming back after his involvement in the first goal.

He added: “Yeah, and then the second one, and then he does the last final action as well that he (could have) scored the third goal, and the keeper makes the save.”

“The way he tracked back after the corner in the last action when he got booked, that’s the kind of play we want to see.”

After yesterday’s stellar performance, Sterling believes he has “still got a big part to play” in Arsenal’s chase for silverware this season.

“It was nice to be out there and contribute to the team,” player of the match Sterling told *TNT Sports* via *BBC Sports*.

“I know what I am capable of. You just want to be playing. You are at a top club with top players and you just have to wait for your moment. And that is what I am doing.”

“I am still faithful that I have still got a big part to play,” he added.

“You can only control what you can control. I have not had as many minutes as I would have liked but I have had the opportunities.”

“It is down to myself to keep knocking at the door. I believe within myself that I have a lot to play here, whether it is 10 minutes, 45 or a start. I just need to be ready and try and help the team as much as possible.” – The Independent/Agencies

to do it even better.”

Arteta overhauled his line-up, making seven changes from Sunday’s Manchester United draw, while there

were five alterations for PSV head coach Peter Bosz from the first leg.

Raheem Sterling, who earned a start, provided the assists for both

Arsenal goals and nearly added one of his own in second-half stoppage time.

Arteta added: “I was happy for him and for a lot of individuals as well

