



Pope Francis dies at age 88

First Latin American pontiff's death comes a day after he made his first prolonged public appearance following a serious bout of double pneumonia.

Report on
page 7

'Be more transparent in monitoring internet quality'

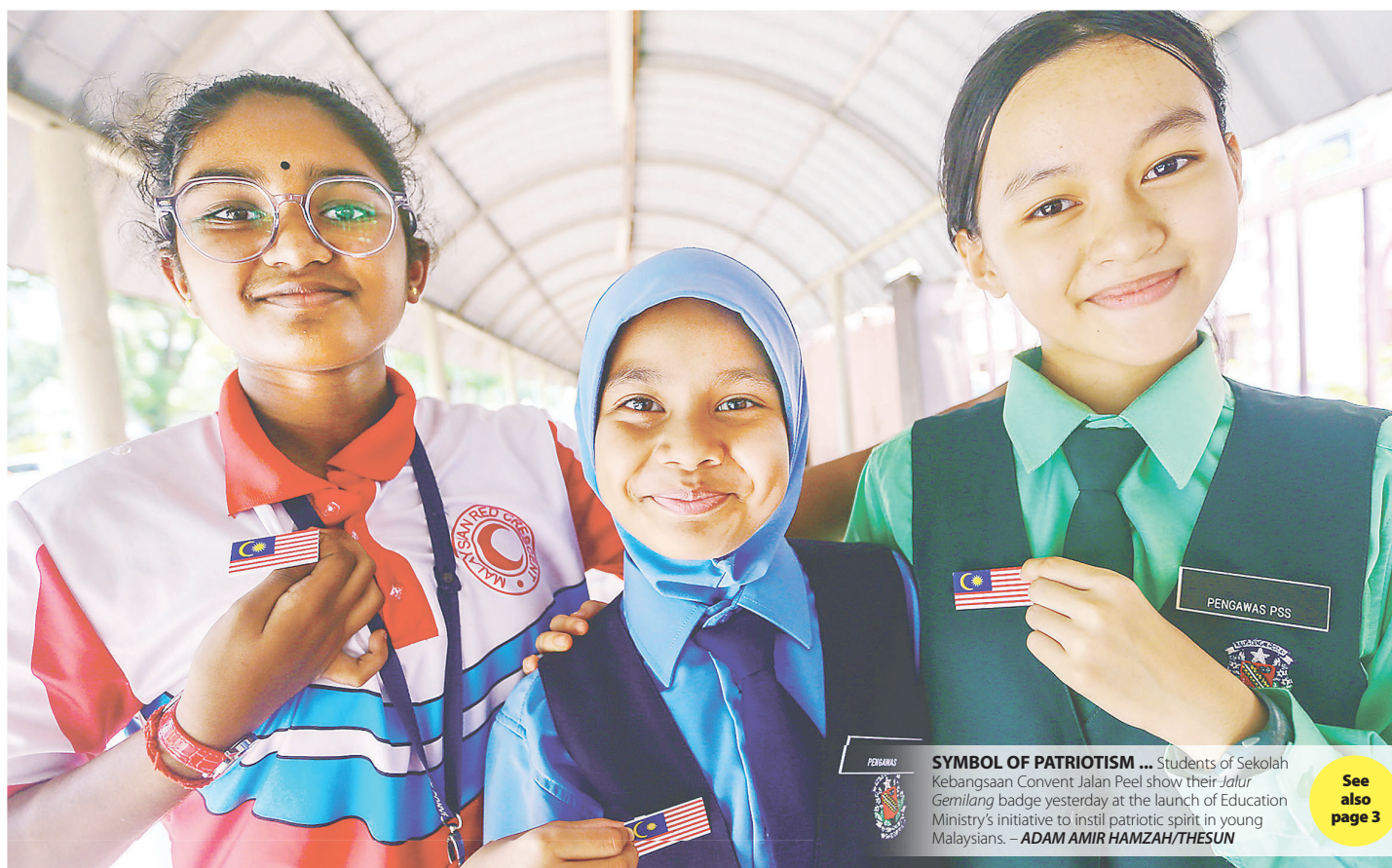
Time for MCMC to adopt data-driven strategy to thoroughly investigate, validate public complaints, says expert.

Report on
page 4

NGO takes 4PAWS plight to Penang govt

Non-profit animal shelter with 700 dogs faces eviction as the land it occupies is up for sale.

Report on
page 5



SYMBOL OF PATRIOTISM ... Students of Sekolah Kebangsaan Convent Jalan Peel show their *Jalur Gemilang* badge yesterday at the launch of Education Ministry's initiative to instil patriotic spirit in young Malaysians. — ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN

See also
page 3

Call for Senior Citizen Act

Experts say absence of comprehensive legislation results in weak accountability, growing vulnerability among elderly under a healthcare system already strained by severe shortage of geriatric specialists.

Report on
page 3

Sultan calls for stronger border security, Sg Golok buffer zone

KOTA BHARU: The Sultan of Kelantan Sultan Muhammad V has voiced serious concern over security along the Malaysia-Thailand border, urging swift action to construct a wall and establish a buffer zone in the Sungai Golok area.

Delivering his royal address at the opening of the third term of the 15th Kelantan State Legislative Assembly yesterday, the Sultan called for the proposal to be finalised without further delay.

He also highlighted the pressing need to resolve Kelantan's recurring flood problems, stressing the urgency of advancing all phases of the integrated river basin projects for Sungai Kelantan and Sungai Golok.

"Priority must be given to the construction of the Lebir Dam, as it is crucial in addressing Kelantan's flood challenges," he said.

Turning to agriculture, Sultan Muhammad V urged all relevant government agencies, departments and companies to stay focused on their core responsibilities while stepping up efforts to safeguard food security for the state and nation, reported Bernama.

"I strongly encourage both the government and public to explore and cultivate high-potential crops, such as coconut and durian, as viable income sources in the agricultural sector."

In line with the Kelantan Agricultural Development Enactment (2022), he called for the immediate establishment of a produce collection centre in Lojing to avoid missing out on key opportunities for revenue, investment, and economic growth.

On urban development, the Sultan pressed local authorities to ensure that towns across Kelantan remain clean, attractive and well managed.

"I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the National Landscape Department for its strong collaboration with the Kota Bharu Municipal Council Islamic City in successfully implementing the landscape project in Kota Bharu town.

"Additionally, I hope all local authorities, with full government backing, will tackle the issue of abandoned buildings and tap into the economic potential of our cities to further drive local development."

In addition, His Royal Highness stressed the importance of accelerating infrastructure

► 'Priority must be the construction of Lebir Dam as it is crucial in addressing flood challenges'



Sultan Muhammad V urged swift approval of a proposed wall and buffer zone along the Malaysian-Thai border in Sungai Golok during his royal address. Also present was Sultanah Kelantan Sultanah Diana Petra Abdullah. —BERNAMA PIC

development and offering competitive tax exemptions to attract greater investment into Kelantan.

"For example, the East Coast Rail Link project is set to bring strategic value to the state, particularly through the establishment of a cargo-oriented development zone in Pasir Puteh and a transit-oriented hub in the emerging township of Tunjong.

"Beyond enhancing Kelantan's transport network, the project is expected to generate significant economic multiplier effects for my people. It is therefore vital for the public to seize this opportunity and benefit from the spillover of such a major development."

He also urged the state government to explore alternative education platforms, especially in Technical and Vocational Education and Training to better meet current

industry demands.

"Key priorities should include developing the manufacturing sector to attract investment, upgrading clean water supply and road infrastructure, advancing agriculture and tourism, and strengthening other high-potential industries."

On federal-state cooperation, Sultan Muhammad V expressed satisfaction with the positive relationship between both levels of government, highlighting the federal government's role in advancing Kelantan's development.

"Priority should be given to infrastructure projects approved under the 11th and 12th Malaysia Plans, collaborative land-use strategies for agricultural productivity and the implementation of biodiversity conservation initiatives across the state."

No Cabinet shake-up despite losses in PKR polls: PM

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has firmly stated that PKR's internal elections have no bearing on the federal administration, brushing aside speculation of a Cabinet reshuffle.

"This is a matter of party leadership and the process went smoothly. If there are any concerns or confusion, they can be addressed within the party framework."

"The elections proceeded well, and we'll hold a special meeting this Wednesday. Again, this is strictly party business."

"There's no question of it affecting the state or federal governments. Everything is running as usual and smoothly."

Anwar, who is also PKR president, stressed that Cabinet positions are based on performance, not party politics.

"I assess them based on their work — not political manoeuvring," he told reporters at the Higher Education Ministry Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration.

Also present were Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir, his deputy Datuk Mustapha Sakmud, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar, and Public Service director-general Tan Sri Wan Ahmad Dahlan Abdul Aziz.

The PKR divisional elections, which concluded on Sunday, saw several members of Anwar's administration losing their party posts.

One of them was Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister and PKR vice-president Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad, who lost the Setiawangsa division chief post to actor-director Datuk Afdlin Shauki. Afdlin garnered 631 votes to Nik Nazmi's 563.

Youth and Sports Deputy Minister Adam Adli Abd Halim also failed in his bid to become Hang Tuah Jaya's deputy division chief, receiving 791 votes against Zamzizul Nordin's 1,905.

On Sunday, Energy Transition and Water Transformation Deputy Minister Akmal Nasrullah Mohd Nasir lost the Johor Bahru division chief post to Johor PKR Youth chief Mohamad Taufiq Ismail, who secured 709 votes to Akmal's 587. — Bernama

Zahid, Gibran discuss regional concerns

JAKARTA: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi paid a courtesy call on Indonesia's Vice-President Gibran Rakabuming Raka yesterday, during which they discussed several important issues, including halal matters, labour concerns, the welfare of fishermen, regional developments and the ongoing situation in Palestine.

Ahmad Zahid's productive 45-minute meeting with Gibran at the Vice-Presidential Palace in Central Jakarta was also attended by Agriculture and Food Security Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu and Malaysia's Ambassador to Indonesia Datuk Syed Mohamad Hasrin Tengku Hussin.

Regarding halal matters, the two leaders discussed opportunities for collaboration in the US\$1.3 trillion halal sector, as well as challenges that could be tackled jointly. These included the mutual recognition of halal certificates issued by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia and the Indonesian Ulema Council.

"We will coordinate and engage in detailed discussions not only regarding the production of halal products but also on marketing strategies," he said at a press conference after the meeting.

The two countries also agreed to enhance the process of sending workers from Indonesia to Malaysia through the One Channel System and to address the management of fishermen who encroach territorial waters, as outlined in a memorandum of understanding signed in 2012. — Bernama

Home-based classes OK during Asean summits: Minister

KEPALA BATAS: The Education Ministry is ready to implement the home-based teaching and learning (PdPR) approach during the Asean summits in May and October to help ease traffic congestion and to ensure the summits proceed smoothly.

Minister Fadhlina Sidek said the ministry is currently in the process of identifying the schools that will be affected.

"There is no issue. The matter has been thoroughly discussed within the ministry," she told reporters after attending the symbolic ceremony of wearing the *Jalur Gemilang* badge at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Datuk Haji Ahmad Badawi yesterday.

She was responding to a proposal by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan to implement work-from-home and PdPR arrangements during the summits — a proposal that will be brought to the Cabinet for consideration.

Mohamad reportedly said the proposal stemmed from the challenges and inconveniences faced by the public, particularly in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, due to road closures during the recent state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Malaysia.

In a separate event, Fadhlina also announced that the ministry is retraining more than 100,000 teachers nationwide in digital pedagogy and 21st-century teaching tools, in alignment with the Asean Work Plan on Education (2021–2025).

She said the initiative, which focuses on enhancing teachers' professional development, is being carried out in collaboration with Google for Education, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) and local universities.

"Malaysia recognises that the education sector must shift from passive knowledge transmission to active skills cultivation, creativity, critical thinking and lifelong learning. We are at a crossroads. The choice is between marginal adaptation and bold transformation. Malaysia is choosing the latter."

"The Asean Work Plan on Education (2021–2025) lays out a robust framework for cooperation and Malaysia is fully aligned with its vision," she said in her speech at the Empowering Education Summit 2025: Shaping Asean's Future Through Skills and Innovation.

Fadhlina said Malaysia is enhancing the collaboration between the Technical and

Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector and industry through the National TVET Empowerment Agenda, allowing public and private sectors to jointly create modular, industry-relevant training programmes.

She added that the ministry is also expanding Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) efforts, such as #MySTEMAmbassadors and STEM4ALL, for rural and underprivileged students.

"In 2024, more than 200,000 students took part in STEM boot camps and robotics competitions, but digital equity remains a challenge."

To tackle this, the ministry is setting up hybrid solar-powered classrooms and satellite internet in 180 schools across Sabah and Sarawak to bring innovation to all areas and reduce inequality.

Fadhlina said while Malaysia's bilingual system already includes Bahasa Melayu and English, the ministry is now adding elective languages such as Mandarin, Tamil and Asean languages such as Thai, Khmer and Vietnamese.

"Asean's strength lies in its cultural, linguistic and traditional diversity. To harness this, we must prepare our youth to be multilingual, adaptable and culturally competent." — Bernama

Call for legislation to protect ageing population

► Severe shortage of geriatric care, rising elderly abandonment highlight urgent need for legal safeguards: Expert

BY HARITH KAMAL
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PETALING JAYA: As Malaysia's elderly population continues to grow rapidly, experts are urging the government to introduce a Senior Citizen Act, warning that older adults remain vulnerable under a healthcare system already strained by a severe shortage of geriatric specialists.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing director Assoc Prof Dr Rahimah Ibrahim said the absence of comprehensive legislation has led to weak accountability and increasing vulnerability among the elderly.

Rahimah highlighted the critical shortage of geriatricians as one of the most pressing issues.

"As of 2024, there are only 60 such specialists nationwide. With Malaysia projected to have 5.49 million elderly citizens by 2030, we would need at least 549 geriatricians to meet the ideal ratio of one per 10,000 seniors.

"Currently, we're producing just eight geriatricians a year. That will only bring the total to 108 by 2030, far below what's needed," she said.

She explained that Malaysia's ageing population faces a range of challenges, including limited access to healthcare, weakening family support structures and increasing financial insecurity.

Noting a rise in elderly abandonment cases at hospitals and care homes, Rahimah said such incidents are often the result of urban migration, dual-income household pressures and the erosion of traditional family support systems.

She also referenced Employees Provident Fund data from October



Amalina stressed the need for legislation that protects senior citizens from neglect and abuse. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

2024, which showed that only 36% of active members met the Basic Savings threshold of RM240,000 by age 55, raising concerns about retirees' ability to support themselves.

Universiti Teknologi Mara senior lecturer Dr Nur Amalina Aziz echoed these concerns, observing that elderly individuals are increasingly being left at hospitals and welfare homes, sometimes permanently.

"When contacted, these families are often unreachable. Abandonment is frequently due to a lack of family support, financial hardship, strained relationships or disputes," she explained.

Amalina, who also researches issues affecting older persons, stressed the urgent need for legislation that explicitly protects senior citizens from neglect and abuse.

"The law must include clear obligations, mandatory reporting procedures and definitions of abuse, neglect and abandonment.

"It should also provide emergency shelters, professional medical support,

a dedicated helpline and a one-stop agency for the protection of older persons," she noted.

She pointed out that although Malaysia introduced the National Policy for Older Persons in 1995 and revised it in 2011, there is still no specific law prioritising the needs of senior citizens.

"Many rural areas lack proper facilities. Attention and resources remain concentrated in urban zones, leaving many older people underserved and at risk.

"The rights of the elderly are often generalised in existing policies, without tailored approaches to address their unique needs," she added.

Amalina highlighted Japan and Singapore as models in addressing the challenges of an ageing population.

"Japan's Elder Abuse Prevention Act and Employment Stabilisation Act help prevent mistreatment and promote job opportunities for older individuals.

"Singapore introduced the Vulnerable Adults Act in 2018 to

protect those, especially seniors, who are physically or mentally unable to care for themselves.

"Both countries go beyond welfare. They focus on freedom from abuse, financial security and access to lifelong learning and employment opportunities."

She emphasised that older Malaysians are not a burden and should be empowered to live independently, remain active and feel included in society.

"Older people have given so much to the country, yet many now feel unsafe and unsupported at home.

"Family and community support are key to preventing elder abandonment, but families need proper training to care for their ageing loved ones," she said.

"With the right knowledge, they can give better, more respectful care. Many elderly victims stay silent due to poor health or fear of losing their career, which is why public awareness and mandatory reporting are so important."

Schools urged to support Jalur Gemilang badge drive

KEPALA BATAS: Learning institutions outside the Education Ministry's purview are encouraged to take part in the initiative to wear the Jalur Gemilang badge on student uniforms.

Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek explained that the initiative aims to reach students nationwide and gain support across all sectors.

"Starting today, a total of 5.3 million school students under the ministry across Malaysia have begun wearing the Jalur Gemilang badge on their school uniforms. The official launch is being held simultaneously nationwide.

"We therefore urge educational institutions not under the ministry to join this effort, so the patriotic spirit fostered through this initiative is shared by all students and backed by all stakeholders," she said after officiating a symbolic badge-wearing ceremony at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Datuk Haji Ahmad Badawi yesterday.

The ministry had previously announced the phased rollout of the badge across all its institutions, effective yesterday.

The initiative involves government schools, government-aided schools, matriculation colleges and the Malaysian Teacher Education Institute, with the goal of instilling a strong sense of patriotism among students and educators alike.

Fadhlina stressed that students who do not wear the badge will not be penalised as the initiative is not punitive but intended to nurture a deeper love for the country.

The badges are provided free of charge, with teachers playing a key role in guiding students on their proper use and meaning. — Bernama

Early voting for police in Ayer Kuning by-election

TAPAH: The ballot box opens early today for 500 police officers and their spouses casting their votes ahead of the Ayer Kuning state by-election.

Assistant returning officer for early voting Mohammad Shahir Mohammad announced that three polling channels will be open at two locations.

The first, at Dewan Anggerik within the Tapah district police headquarters housing complex, will operate from 8am to 5pm.

The second, at Dewan Krekasi APR Transit, 3rd Battalion of the General Operations Force in Bidor, will open at 8am and close at noon.

"Tomorrow's early voting process involves 18 officers, including three escort policemen," he said after inspecting equipment and ballot boxes at the vote counting centre at Dewan Merdeka yesterday.

Mohammad Shahir also noted that 82 police officers are registered as postal voters, Bernama reported.

The Ayer Kuning by-election was triggered by the passing of incumbent Isham Shahrudin on Feb 22.

Only 10% of former teachers claimed provident fund

KUALA LUMPUR: Only 10% of former teachers who contributed to the Teachers Provident Fund (TPF) between 1962 and 1972 have come forward to retrieve their unclaimed money from the Accountant-General's Department (AGD) as of April 2025.

Tun Hussein Onn Teachers' Foundation chief executive officer Zahiruddin Mohammad Hanif said this figure represents 185 former teachers or their heirs who have made claims.

As a result, the unclaimed funds under the Unified Teachers Service (UTS) scheme have decreased to RM11.7 million from RM13.58 million in 2018.

"Since the announcement in 2018, not many heirs have come forward.

Out of 1,910 contributors, 1,725 have yet to make a claim. So far, fewer than 200 individuals have come forward, which is only about 10%.

"The contributors were UTS teachers who served between 1962 and 1972. They are not recipients of government pensions," he told Bernama.

Zahiruddin dismissed recent claims circulating online that the unclaimed TPF contributions of former UTS teachers have reached RM135 million.

He explained that contributions categorised as unclaimed funds remain with the AGD and may still be retrieved at any time.

Commenting on the delay in claims, he noted that many families

were unaware their relatives had contributed to the TPF and outdated contact information has made it difficult for the foundation to reach them.

"It's not that the families are intentionally delaying, but many simply don't know. The addresses we have are outdated, so notification letters are often returned. Without current contact details, we have no way of locating the contributors," he added.

Zahiruddin said the foundation will issue another media statement soon to encourage eligible next of kin to come forward and claim the funds.

He explained that contributors or their next of kin may initiate claims at the AGD which will verify their status

with the foundation.

Eligible individuals may check their status at egumis.anm.gov.my or contact the foundation at 03-8890 2427.

He stressed that the verification process is important to prevent misuse or fraudulent claims, and emphasised that the foundation has not appointed any third parties or agents to manage the claims.

"The list of contributors can be checked via a link uploaded on (the foundation's) official channels. That's the only authorised way to verify names.

"We've decided not to publish the names in media releases to prevent any risk of exploitation." — Bernama



Push for data-driven reforms ahead of internet speed hike

► Expert urges MCMC to address digital divide, improve transparency as 10Mbps minimum standard approaches

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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PETALING JAYA: As the government prepares to raise the Mandatory Standards on Quality of Service (MSQoS) for internet speeds to 10Mbps next year, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) has been urged to adopt a more transparent, data-driven approach to monitoring internet quality.

Sunway University wireless communication specialist Prof Dr Rosdiadee Nordin warned that the current benchmark is far from adequate in an era of rapid digital expansion.

He noted that with the internet now regarded as the "fourth utility" – an essential service all Malaysians depend on – it is time for the MCMC to adopt a data-driven strategy to thoroughly investigate and validate public complaints.

"With data analytics and machine learning now integral to our daily lives, we have entered an era of data-driven decision-making rather than process-driven decision-making."

"Another consideration is to move towards an open platform for monitoring that encourages transparency, especially directly from the subscribers or the public," he added.

According to MCMC, by November 2024 it had audited 4,172 locations (3,988 for 4G and 184 for 5G) based on complaints and received data, identifying 551 instances of non-compliance across 275 4G sites and 19 5G sites nationwide.

Rosdiadee explained that while the current minimum requirement of 7.5Mbps may suffice for basic smartphone app usage, it often results in a diminished user experience.

"Our drive test in Sunway City found that one major telco failed to meet the minimum speed for file downloads, while two others only slightly passed."

"In terms of mobile video streaming, over half of the collected data shows that cellular network subscribers can only achieve an average speed of 3Mbps, just enough for basic HD quality streaming on YouTube at 720p video resolution."

"Imagine the findings if we conducted a



With many countries already achieving over 200Mbps, Rosdiadee urged the telco industry to rethink how it designs and deploys new 5G towers to help Malaysia leapfrog beyond 10Mbps. – SYED AZAHAR SYED OSMAN/THESUN

similar data collection in suburban and rural areas, which could potentially reveal even lower data rates."

As Malaysia moves towards a digital economy, Rosdiadee highlighted that the current MSQoS sets a minimum 5G download speed of 100Mbps.

However, with many countries already achieving over 200Mbps, which he believes is now the global standard, he urged the telco industry to rethink how it designs and deploys new 5G towers to help Malaysia leapfrog beyond 10Mbps, which is still viewed as a "safe target."

"The telco equipment and network configurations should be optimised to ensure we can at least keep pace in coverage and data rates with our neighbours in Singapore and Thailand."

"Malaysia is still using the 5G non-standalone network based on 3GPP Release 15, which, although outdated, can deliver speeds above 10Mbps. However, the country has yet to fully adopt the more advanced 5G-Advanced technology (Release 18), which serves as a bridge between current 5G and the future 6G network."

He warned that if certain communities continue to be left behind in digital connectivity, the country risks deepening the

digital divide, leading to knowledge gaps, limited job opportunities and worsening income inequality.

Future generations from these underserved areas could face educational setbacks, despite the increasing availability of digital learning resources.

"This is reflected in our research in two locations, including the urban poor community in Desa Mentari, where economic hardship limits internet literacy and exposes vulnerable groups to online threats, and the remote indigenous settlement in Tasik Chini, Pahang – both highlighting serious digital exclusion."

Rosdiadee also urged telecommunications companies to regularly update the MCMC with reports on coverage and data rates, and to plan ahead to manage traffic and anticipate subscriber growth before congestion occurs.

On April 13, Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil revealed that based on a drive test conducted by MCMC on March 5, many areas still fail to meet the MSQoS, which currently requires a minimum speed of 7.5Mbps – set to increase to 10Mbps next year.

MCMC has reportedly directed all telcos in the country to proactively resolve internet access issues on a monthly, state-by-state basis, rather than waiting for customers to lodge complaints before taking action.

Ministry vows action over Segaliud river pollution

SANDAKAN: The Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Ministry (NRES) is taking seriously the issue of pollution in the Segaliud river in Sabah, the main source of treated water for more than 320,000 residents in the district.

In a statement, the NRES said Deputy Minister Datuk Seri Huang Tiong Sii attended an engagement and dialogue session with residents and government agency representatives on Sunday to discuss the matter.

According to an investigation by the Department of Environment (DOE), all palm oil mills operating around Segaliud river were found to comply with effluent emission standards under the Environmental Quality Act (AKAS) 1974.

The ministry said both NRES and the DOE have taken proactive steps by conducting continuous monitoring to ensure the water quality in Segaliud river remains safe and preserved for local residents.

It also warned that strict action would be taken against any premises found polluting the environment, in line with the amended AKAS 1974, which came into effect on July 7, 2024.

The amendment provides for fines ranging from RM5,000 to RM10 million and mandatory imprisonment of up to five years.

In line with the Malaysia *Madani* concept, the ministry emphasised that river sustainability is a shared responsibility requiring close cooperation between the government, private sector and the public.

"With the collaboration and commitment of all parties, the ministry is confident that river conservation efforts can be carried out effectively for the sake of environmental sustainability for future generations," it added. – Bernama

MCMC to roll out cyber safety initiative in schools

ALOR GAJAH: The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), in collaboration with the Malacca state education department, is coordinating the Internet Safety Campaign, which is expected to begin next month.

Science, Technology, Innovation and Digital Communication state executive councillor Datuk Fairul Nizam Roslan said the campaign would involve over 300 primary and secondary schools in Malacca to raise awareness of online safety and educate students about cyber threats.

"Today, even primary school students have access to social media, making them vulnerable to online dangers such as cyberbullying, paedophilia and scams," he said.

He added that the state is awaiting further instructions from MCMC at the federal level before proceeding with the campaign, which could begin as early as next month or by June at the latest.

He was speaking during the Rembia *Aidilfitri* open house on Sunday.

The campaign will also form part of the Wakil Rakyat Untuk Rakyat programme, aimed at increasing public awareness of cybercrime risks.

Fairul Nizam explained that the initiative complements existing efforts, including the Online Gambling, Fraud and Cybercrime Task Force, which is already active in schools with support from the police, Bank Negara, MCMC and the Department of Information.

"The internet safety campaign adds a new target group – schoolchildren under 13," he added. – Bernama

Penang LRT Mutiara Line powers ahead on schedule

PUTRAJAYA: The Penang Light Rail Transit (LRT) Mutiara Line project remains on track and is progressing according to schedule, according to project owner Mass Rapid Transit Corp Sdn Bhd (MRT Corp).

In a statement issued on April 21, MRT Corp reported solid progress over the past three months, with a key milestone being the recent approval of advance works under Section 20A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1976, granted on April 15.

"MRT Corp has also made significant headway in the land acquisition process, securing access to 86 plots to date and completing the gazettelement under Section 8 of the Land Acquisition Act 1960."

"This progress, achieved ahead of the original

October 2025 target, represents a major milestone in keeping the project on schedule," the company stated.

MRT Corp noted that SRS Consortium Sdn Bhd, the appointed main civil contractor for Package 1, is currently working to meet several post-award conditions outlined in the contract.

The official Notice to Proceed (NTP) will only be issued once all post-award conditions have been satisfactorily fulfilled.

"As the design-and-build contractor for Package 1, SRS must finalise the designs and construction drawings for the civil structures within the project scope after receiving the NTP."

"Another critical pre-construction task is the relocation of utilities, which must be completed before any station or viaduct-related

construction can begin," it added.

The clarification follows a recent news report quoting MCA vice-president Tan Teik Cheng, who questioned the project's status and highlighted that the official commencement notice had yet to be issued, despite its formal launch in January.

The 29.5km Mutiara Line will feature 21 strategically located stations and is designed to enhance connectivity across Penang Island and the mainland, easing traffic congestion and improving accessibility.

Its base alignment will link Island A of the Penang South Reclamation to both Penang Sentral and Komtar Station in George Town, with trains operating alternately along both routes for broader coverage. – Bernama

Penang govt urged to resolve land crisis of animal shelter

► Looming eviction could force dogs under care of NGO back onto streets: Animal association

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
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PETALING JAYA: The Persatuan Haiwan Terbiar Malaysia (SAFM) has urged the state government to step in and resolve the land crisis threatening the future of the Penang Animal Welfare Society (4PAWS) shelter in Teluk Bahang.

The non-profit shelter recently revealed via Facebook that the landowner intends to sell the property and has given the organisation until the end of next month to decide whether it can buy the land for RM2.2 million.

SAFM president Kalaivanan Ravichandran warned that with over 700 dogs in 4PAWS's care, the looming eviction poses a critical risk, potentially forcing the animals back onto the streets.

It has issued an urgent appeal, calling on Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow to immediately allocate permanent land to secure the shelter's future.

"Without government intervention, the fate of the rescued animals remains uncertain. These dogs are not just numbers – they are lives that have been saved from the streets and deserve safe, permanent homes."

"The state government must act now to prevent further harm to these animals," said Kalaivanan.

He expressed concern that the shelter's closure would disrupt the lives of the dogs that rely on 4PAWS for daily care and protection.

"The issue of land insecurity is not unique to 4PAWS. As urbanisation accelerates, many animal shelters across Malaysia are being displaced to make way for development."

He stressed that the lack of long-term land security is a growing

challenge for animal welfare NGOs, many of which are struggling to provide care for the country's rising stray population.

SAFM is calling for a dedicated support framework for such organisations, and urging state and federal governments to offer sustainable, long-term land or shelter solutions.

"Without stable premises, shelters face constant threats of eviction, which limit their ability to continue rescuing and caring for animals," said Kalaivanan.

SAFM has extended a call to other NGOs, the public and corporate players to unite in a collective appeal to the state government.

Kalaivanan said immediate action is essential to avoid forcing hundreds of animals back onto the streets.

"A swift and decisive intervention from the Penang government is critical to ensure a permanent solution for 4PAWS."

"It is not only about the welfare of the animals; it is about reducing public nuisance and managing stray populations more effectively."

SAFM highlighted the key role that corporate support could play.

Companies are encouraged to integrate animal welfare into their corporate social responsibility strategies, helping shelters sustain operations and rescue efforts.

SAFM is also urging Malaysians to step forward, whether through donations, volunteering or advocacy, to support shelters in continuing their essential mission.

"The role of the community is crucial in ensuring these animals get the protection and care they deserve," said Kalaivanan.

4PAWS founder Barbara Janssen voiced concern over the shelter's



Kalaivanan expressed concern that the shelter's closure would disrupt the lives of the dogs that rely on 4PAWS for protection. – PIC COURTESY OF 4PAWS

uncertain future.

"There are few locations that could accommodate the number of dogs we house. The heartbreaking reality is that we may be forced to release some or even all of them back onto the streets."

Despite fundraising efforts, the shelter has only managed to raise RM60,000 through public donations.

"This has been our home for 15 years. Relocating would be extremely difficult. Our fate lies in the hands of the community."

Siblings killed in road collision

JOHOR BAHRU: A 15-year-old rider and his 20-year-old sister were killed in a collision involving their motorcycle and a multi-purpose vehicle at the Simpang Empat Felda Ulu Tebrau traffic light junction in Ulu Tiram on Sunday.

Seri Alam district police chief ACP Mohd Sohaimi Ishak said the crash occurred at 9.50pm when the victims were travelling from Jalan Ledang towards Felda Ulu Tebrau.

He said the rider is believed to have turned right despite the red traffic light, Bernama reported.

"A vehicle driven by a 40-year-old man, who had the green light and was going straight, was unable to avoid the motorcycle and collided with its right side, causing the victims to be flung into the opposite lane."

"Both victims suffered serious head injuries and were pronounced dead at the scene."

He said the teenager did not possess a driving licence and the case is being investigated under Section 41(1) of the Road Transport Act 1987.

"We would like to remind the public to comply with traffic laws and regulations, and be courteous and obey traffic signals at all times."

"Anyone with information or who witnessed the incident may contact police at 07-386 4222 to assist in the investigation."

RM19m lost to online scams in Malacca

ALOR GAJAH: A total of 666 online scam cases were reported in Malacca between Jan 1 and April 20, resulting in estimated losses of about RM19.52 million, according to local authorities.

State Science, Technology, Innovation and Digital Communications Committee chairman Datuk Fairul Nizam Roslan said 157 cases were recorded by the National Scam Response Centre and 509 by police.

He said the scams involved various tactics, including online purchases, love scams and non-existent investments, with victims ranging from single mothers and civil servants to private sector employees.

"During the same period, 399 arrests were made and 231 charges filed."

"Most victims were aged between 25 and 40. Women were mainly targeted in love scams and online shopping fraud while men fell victim to fake investments."

Fairul Nizam was met at the Rembia state constituency's Ailiditri Open House.

He said nine cases were reported yesterday, with eight in Central Malacca and one in Alor Gajah, involving losses of over RM400,000.

He said the state government is stepping up efforts to address online fraud through talks, exhibitions and the establishment of the Online Gambling, Fraud and Cybercrime Task Force to raise public awareness. – Bernama

35,000 crashes on East Coast Expressway since 2004

KUANTAN: A total of 730 people have lost their lives in road collisions on the East Coast Expressway Phase 1 since it opened in 2004, the Pahang Legislative Assembly heard yesterday.

State Works, Transport and Health Committee chairman Datuk Razali Kassim revealed that the fatalities were part of 35,551 crashes recorded on the expressway up to December last year.

"There are no locations on the expressway categorised as blackspots

but there are several areas where crashes occur frequently. Improvement measures have been taken to reduce the risk of collisions at such locations, including at Km238.7 (westbound) and Km87 (westbound)."

He was responding to Datuk Wong Tat Chee (appointed assemblyman), who had asked for the number of crashes and fatalities recorded along the expressway route within Pahang since its opening, as well as collision-prone hotspots.

Razali said the Malaysian Highway Authority carries out annual analyses to identify crash-prone locations through the Highway Road Accident Analysis and Database System, enabling appropriate mitigation measures to be implemented to help reduce risks at those sites.

"The effectiveness of the mitigation measures will be monitored to ensure the crash rate can be reduced."

He said AFA Prime Berhad, the

company responsible for the operation and maintenance of the expressway, would continue to ensure the safety and comfort of highway users.

He also said measures that will continue to be implemented by AFA Prime include road safety audits, safety campaigns and advocacy sessions with users, as well as ensuring that information and public announcements are delivered quickly and clearly. – Bernama

Sabah Customs seizes over 70kg drugs worth RM2.4m

KOTA KINABALU: The Customs Department foiled a drug smuggling attempt and seized more than 70kg of various drugs valued at over RM2.4 million between Jan 3 and March 28.

Acting Sabah Customs assistant director-general Saidin Jalaluddin said

the latest seizure was made on March 28, involving four unmarked packages at Mas Kargo in Kota Kinabalu.

"Checks found that the packages are believed to contain methamphetamine, weighing 71.71kg and estimated to be worth RM2,295,008."

He said the team also seized a package at Pos Aviation Kota Kinabalu on March 1.

"The package contained items suspected to be ketamine, weighing 434g and estimated to be worth RM86,800."

He said in an operation conducted

from Jan 31 to February 28, four packages were seized at Mas Kargo.

"The packages are believed to contain 15.35kg of ganja, worth RM47,606.70," he said, adding that the cases are being investigated under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952. – Bernama

Business flaunts traditional calligraphy

➤ Owner produces each piece by hand, does not rely on digital sketch or template

KUALA LUMPUR: A request from a friend to create a wedding banner using traditional calligraphic or *khat* lettering became the starting point for Yusairah Hazrami, 29, to expand a business that she has been building since 2018.

What makes this mother of three's work captivating is that every banner she produces is entirely handwritten, making each piece uniquely artistic and rich in aesthetic value.

"I first learned *khat* while studying at a religious school in Shah Alam (in Selangor), where I had the chance to attend special calligraphy classes taught by an *ustaz* (religious teacher) from Yayasan Restu, a well-known institution in the field of calligraphy," she told Bernama.

When she first took up calligraphy, she used to write short phrases, such as "Assalamualaikum" or the names of customers, on items such as canvas

bags, bookmarks and pencil cases, which she sold online.

Her talent began to gain wider attention when videos of her work were widely spread from her TikTok account @yusbuatkhat with the hashtag #bannerjawi, leading to a surge in demand for her handwritten banners.

Yusairah, who also works as a part-time teacher at a private religious school, uses calico fabric as the base for her banners, with all writing done freehand using black acrylic paint and three brushes of different sizes. She does not rely on any digital sketch or template.

"When I first started (doing calligraphy), I would do pencil outlines but over time my hand became so familiar with the flow of the script that I do it straightaway with the brush, letting my creativity guide me.

"Should I make a mistake, I patch it up with a piece of fabric if it is a small error. In the case of a major error, I replace the entire banner," she said, adding that she can complete between eight and 10 banners a day, depending on the length of the text and the complexity of the calligraphy requested by the client.

To meet the growing demand for

her banners, Yusairah has enlisted the help of two homemakers to assist with adding patterns and decorations, ensuring the overall layout and design are balanced.

Despite having to juggle her banner business with her teaching responsibilities, she remains committed to delivering every order on schedule, Bernama reported.

"I hope more people, especially the younger generation, would learn to appreciate the art of *khat* writing as it represents our cultural identity and heritage. I want to make this art feel contemporary and relevant to society."

Makeup artist shares transformations online

KUALA LUMPUR: At first glance, the elaborate special effects (SFX) makeup created by Suzana Abdullah could easily be mistaken for the work of a professional artist, but the Johor native is entirely self-taught.

Driven by a lifelong interest in drawing and makeup, Suzana, a content creator in her 40s, shares her striking transformations on social media.

"I have loved drawing since I was little. Back then, it was on paper. Now, I draw on faces.

"I would watch SFX makeup tutorials by TikTokers, then try creating my own looks," she told Bernama.

With no formal training, she

honed her skills entirely through online resources.

She uses tools such as liquid latex, clay, prosthetic glue and contact lenses to create eerie, fantastical and sci-fi-inspired effects.

One of her recent projects, which was shared on her TikTok account @nanajer, drew attention for its surreal, doll-like appearance.

To achieve the look, she spent more than three hours covering her entire face, including her nose, with fine thread.

"My biggest challenge was breathing as my nose was completely covered and the thread had a strong odour.

"I had to breathe through

my mouth the entire time," said Suzana, who was intrigued by the idea of experimenting with a doll-inspired concept.

Despite the time and precision involved, she finds the creative process enjoyable and therapeutic.

For another project, she explored dramatic blood effects, although the content could not be fully shared online due to platform guidelines that flagged it as sensitive.

"Although I lack formal experience and have not worked on professional productions, I am open to opportunities," said Suzana, who creates content part-time while assisting with the family business. – Bernama



Despite the time and precision involved, Suzana finds the creative process enjoyable and therapeutic. – FACEBOOK PIC COURTESY OF SUZANA ABDULLAH

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Pope Francis, first Latin American pontiff, dies at 88

► Leaves legacy of humanity, justice, human fraternity

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis, the first Latin American leader of the Roman Catholic Church, has died, the Vatican said yesterday, ending an often turbulent reign marked by division and tension as he sought to overhaul the hidebound institution.

He was 88, and had survived a serious bout of double pneumonia.

"Dear brothers and sisters, it is with profound sadness I must announce the death of our Holy Father Francis," Cardinal Kevin Farrell announced on the Vatican's TV channel. "At 7.35 this morning the Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the house of the Father."

Francis' death comes a day after the pope had made his first prolonged public appearance since being discharged on March 23 from a 38-day hospital stay for pneumonia.

On Easter Sunday, Francis had entered St Peter's Square in a popemobile shortly after mid-day, greeting cheering crowds. He had also offered a special blessing for the first time since Christmas.

Leaders across the world were reacting to the pope's death with praise for his efforts to reform the church and offering condolences to the world's 1.4 billion Catholics.

"He inspired millions, far beyond the Catholic Church, with his humility and love so pure for the less fortunate," said European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.



Pope Francis greets cardinals as he unexpectedly appears during Palm Sunday Mass in Saint Peter's Square. — REUTERSPIC

Jose Ramos-Horta, the president of East Timor, where Francis had visited in September last year as part of the longest foreign trip of his papacy, said the pope "leaves behind a profound legacy of humanity, of justice, of human fraternity".

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected pope on March 13, 2013, surprising many church watchers who had seen the Argentine cleric, known for his concern for the poor, as an outsider.

He sought to project simplicity into the grand role and never took possession of the ornate papal

apartments in the Apostolic Palace used by his predecessors, saying he preferred to live in a community setting for his "psychological health".

He inherited a church under attack over a child sex abuse scandal and torn by infighting in the Vatican bureaucracy, and was elected with a clear mandate to restore order.

But as his papacy progressed, he faced fierce criticism from conservatives, who accused him of trashing cherished traditions. He also drew the ire of progressives, who felt he should have done much more to

reshape the 2,000-year-old church.

While he struggled with internal dissent, Francis became a global superstar, drawing huge crowds on his many foreign travels as he tirelessly promoted interfaith dialogue and peace, taking the side of the marginalised, such as migrants.

Francis appointed nearly 80% of the cardinal electors who will choose the next pope, increasing the possibility that his successor will continue his progressive policies, despite the strong pushback from traditionalists. — Reuters



A man lowering the Vatican flag in Jerusalem yesterday. — AFPIC

A voice for compassion and peace

VATICAN CITY: During his 12 years as head of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis was a voice for compassion and peace, reformed the Vatican government and took action against clerical child abuse.

Here are some of his main achievements.

Battle against sex abuse

Dealing with the scourge of sexual abuse by clergy and its cover-up was one of the biggest challenges for Pope Francis when he took office in 2013.

A 2018 trip to Chile proved a turning point. Francis initially defended a Chilean bishop against allegations he covered up the crimes of an elderly priest, demanding that the accusers show proof of his guilt.

He later admitted making "grave mistakes" in the case — a first for a pope. He summoned all of Chile's bishops to the Vatican, after which they all submitted their resignations. Later that year, he stripped the cardinal title from abusive US cleric Theodore McCarrick, and in 2019 removed his status as a priest.

Also in 2019, he held an unprecedented summit that heard from victims, where he promised an "all-out battle" against clerical abuse.

Concrete changes followed, from

opening up Vatican archives to lay courts to making it compulsory to report suspicions of abuse and any attempts to cover it up to authorities.

However, anything said in the confessional box remains sacrosanct — and activists say he did not do enough.

One campaigner, Anne Barrett Doyle, told AFP last year that the reforms had been "superficial".

"Structurally, they retain all the elements of cover-up: lack of transparency, lack of external oversight, lack of mandatory severe sanctions," she said.

Diplomacy

Francis travelled widely, making 47 trips overseas that gave priority to what he called the "peripheries", countries with small or marginalised Catholic communities.

He regularly called for peace in hotspots such as Sudan, Gaza and Ukraine, and promoted dialogue with other faiths, particularly Islam.

The Vatican operates behind the scenes in many countries, with diplomatic successes including mediating the rapprochement between the United States and Cuba in 2014.

In 2018, the Vatican agreed a

historic but also controversial deal with Beijing over the appointment of bishops in China.

But the pope's calls for peace in Ukraine failed to have any visible impact. Francis sparked outrage from Kyiv last year after praising those in the country who had the "courage to raise the white flag and negotiate".

His calls for an end to fighting in the Middle East fell flat and he drew criticism from Israel after condemning strikes on Gaza as "cruelty".

Compassion, social justice

He sought to forge a more open Church, particularly towards divorced, married and other members.

The approach angered traditionalists, in particular his decision to authorise blessings of same-sex couples in some cases. The Vatican was forced to clarify its position after an outcry in Africa and the United States.

The son of Italian immigrants to Argentina, Francis strongly defended the rights of migrants, including criticising US President Donald Trump's plans for mass deportations.

Francis was also a vocal campaigner for the environment. In his groundbreaking 2015 encyclical, he urged the world to act quickly to



A woman reacts at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. — REUTERSPIC

tackle environmental issues.

Reform

From decentralising power and increasing transparency to providing greater roles for lay people and women, Francis implemented fundamental reforms of the Roman Curia, the central government of the Holy See.

The reforms were consolidated in a 2022 constitution that reorganised the Vatican's dicasteries, or ministries.

Francis took aim at the murky finances of the Vatican, creating a secretariat for the economy in 2014,

clamping down on corruption and stepping up scrutiny of investments and the Vatican Bank, which led to the closure of 5,000 accounts.

He also revolutionised the Synod, a Catholic discussion body, by involving lay members including women. Since 2021 it has looked at the future of the Church, but key decisions, such as allowing women to become deacons, were not due until later this year.

In his institutional reforms, again, Francis faced strong opposition, with some critics accusing him of "tyrannical" behaviour. — AFP



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SCAN ME

Cyberscam 'cancer' spreading globally

► Crisis at inflection point, says UN report

BANGKOK: Asian crime syndicates behind the multibillion-dollar cyberscam industry are expanding globally including to South America and Africa, as raids in Southeast Asia fail to contain their activities, the United Nations said in a report yesterday.

Criminal networks that emerged in Southeast Asia in recent years, opening sprawling compounds housing tens of thousands of workers, many trafficked and forced to scam victims around the world, have evolved into a sophisticated global industry, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said.

Even as Southeast Asian governments have intensified a crackdown, syndicates have moved within and beyond the region, the agency said, adding that a "potentially irreversible spillover has taken place ... leaving criminal groups free to pick, choose, and move... as needed."

"It spreads like a cancer," said John Wojcik, a regional analyst for UNODC. "Authorities treat it in one area, but the roots never disappear; they simply migrate."

Conservative estimates indicate there are

hundreds of large-scale scam farms around the world generating tens of billions of dollars in annual profits, the UNODC said. The agency called on countries to work together and intensify efforts to disrupt the gangs' financing.

"The regional cyberfraud industry ... has outpaced other transnational crimes, given that it is easily scalable and able to reach millions of potential victims online, with no need to move or traffic illicit goods across borders," said Wojcik.

The United States alone reported more than US\$5.6 billion (RM24.3 billion) in losses to cryptocurrency scams in 2023, including more than US\$4 million in pig-butcher scams or romance scams designed to extort money from often elderly and vulnerable people.

In recent months, authorities from China, where many of the gangs originate, Thailand and Myanmar have led a crackdown on scam operations in lawless areas of the Thai-Myanmar border, with Thailand cutting power, fuel and internet supply to areas housing scam compounds.

But syndicates have adapted, shifting operations between "the most remote, vulnerable, and underprepared parts of Southeast Asia," especially in Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia, and beyond, exploiting jurisdictions with weak governance and high rates of corruption, the UNODC said.

Raids in parts of Cambodia where the industry is most visible "led to significant expansion in more remote locations," including the country's western Koh Kong province, as well as areas bordering Thailand and Vietnam, the UN agency said.

New sites also continue to be developed in Myanmar, it added.

Syndicates have expanded into South America, the UN agency said, seeking to enhance money laundering and underground banking partnerships with South American drug cartels.

They are increasingly establishing operations in Africa, including in Zambia, Angola, and Namibia, and in Eastern Europe including Georgia, the agency said.

Gangs have also rapidly diversified their workforce, recruiting people from dozens of nationalities, according to the agency, reflecting how the industry scams targets across the globe and has sought to evade anti-trafficking efforts.

Citizens of more than 50 countries – from Brazil to Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Uzbekistan – were rescued during recent crackdowns on the Thai-Myanmar border.

The international community is at a "critical inflection point," the UNODC said, urging that failure to address the problem would have "unprecedented consequences for Southeast Asia that reverberate globally." – Reuters

Vietnam tycoon has financial fraud life sentence reduced

HANOI: Vietnamese real estate tycoon Truong My Lan has had her life sentence for financial fraud and money laundering reduced to 30 years on appeal, in part due to the recovery of stolen funds, state media outlets reported yesterday.

Lan, the chairwoman of real estate developer Van Thinh Phat Holdings Group, still faces execution, however, after being sentenced to death in another case last year for her role in a US\$12 billion (RM52.65 billion) fraud case, Vietnam's largest on record. She lost her appeal in that case in December.

The *Dan Tri* newspaper said that in her appeal in the second case yesterday, the jury found Lan had many mitigating circumstances and had shown repentance, so the court reduced the life sentence to a fixed jail term.

"The court determined that the amount of money recovered and expected to be recovered was very large," the report said.

Lan's lawyers did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Lan was found guilty in October of obtaining property by fraud, money laundering and illegal cross-border money transfers.

She was accused of illegally transferring US\$4.5 billion into and out of Vietnam and laundering 445 trillion dong (RM79.4 billion), while her companies were accused of illegally raising over 30 trillion dong from issuing bonds to investors. – Reuters

Missiles add bite to US, Philippines drills

MANILA: The Philippine and US militaries yesterday kicked off three weeks of joint exercises that will simulate a "full-scale battle scenario," as the two allies seek to deter to Beijing's ambitions in the South China Sea.

Around 17,000 troops are expected to take part in the annual *Balikatan*, or "shoulder to shoulder" drills, which for the first time will include an integrated air and missile defence simulation to be attended by President Ferdinand Marcos.

Sophisticated US weapons including the "highly mobile" NMESIS anti-ship missile system will also be deployed, including near a crucial chokepoint in the waters separating the northern Philippines from self-ruled Taiwan.

"We will demonstrate not just our will to uphold our mutual defence treaty in existence since 1951 but our matchless capability to do so," US Marine Corps Lieutenant General James Glynn said yesterday at the *Balikatan* opening ceremony in Manila.

"Nothing builds bonds more quickly than shared adversity," he said, without specifying a common threat.

Philippines Major General Francisco Lorenzo said the exercises would reinforce the country's ability to address "contemporary security challenges".

The Philippines has been engaged in months of confrontations with Beijing over disputed areas of the South China Sea.

It has steadily deepened defence cooperation with treaty ally the United States since Marcos took office in 2022 and began pushing back on China's sweeping claims to the crucial waterway.

During a recent visit to Manila, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said Washington was "doubling down" on the alliance.

"Deterrence is necessary around the world, but specifically in this region, in your country – considering the threats," he said in late March.

While the bulk of visiting forces involved in *Balikatan* will be from the United States, countries including Australia and Japan are sending smaller contingents.



Activists protesting in front of Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City yesterday. – REUTERS/SPIC

Last year's *Balikatan* featured tests of the US Typhon mid-range missile system, which was left behind following the exercises.

The Philippine Army subsequently said it was planning to acquire the Typhon, sparking warnings from China of a regional "arms race".

Chief of Staff Romeo Brawner last month said the Philippines was indeed looking to upgrade its arsenal.

"We are looking at acquiring more missile systems to complete the integration of our air and missile defence," he told New Delhi's Raisina Dialogue, adding more warships and fighter jets were also being sought.

On April 2, the United States said it had approved the possible sale of US\$5.58 billion (RM24.48 billion) in long-coveted F-16 fighter jets to the Philippines, though Manila said the deal was "still in the negotiation phase".

A week later, the Philippines took possession of the first of two corvette-class warships with "advanced weapons and radar systems" acquired from Hyundai Heavy Industries.

Given the Philippines' proximity to Taiwan, Manila's cooperation would be crucial in the event of any US conflict with China.

On April 1, as Chinese ships and warplanes surrounded the island in a simulated blockade, Brawner said his country would "inevitably" be involved should the democracy be invaded.

While Manila later said Brawner's comments were primarily referencing efforts to retrieve Filipino workers in Taiwan, its Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement with Washington gives US forces access to nine bases in the country.

Two of those are located in Luzon's northernmost Cagayan province, which will host live-fire drills during *Balikatan* this year. – AFP

Yoon back in court for criminal trial

SEOUL: Former president Yoon Suk Yeol appeared in court yesterday for the second hearing of his criminal trial to defend himself against insurrection charges over his short-lived declaration of martial law.

Yoon was formally stripped of office earlier this month, after being impeached and suspended by lawmakers over his Dec 3 attempt to subvert civilian rule, which saw armed soldiers deployed to parliament.

He became South Korea's first sitting head of state to be arrested in January in connection with the criminal case against him, although he was later released on procedural grounds.

During the first day of his criminal trial last week, the ex-president defended himself in court, speaking for more than 90 minutes, denying that he had committed insurrection.

If found guilty, Yoon would become the third South Korean president to be found guilty of insurrection, after two military leaders in connection with a 1979 coup.

For charges of insurrection, Yoon could be sentenced to life in prison or the maximum penalty: the death sentence.

But it is highly unlikely that sentence would be carried out. South Korea has had an unofficial moratorium on executions since 1997.

Separately, last week police attempted to raid Yoon's former presidential office and his security detail as part of a probe into "alleged obstruction of an arrest warrant execution", but failed after presidential security denied them permission to enter the residence.

Yoon spent weeks holed up in his compound in January, protected by members of the Presidential Security Service.

His guards had installed barbed wire and barricades at the residence, forcing hundreds of police officers and investigators to use ladders and scale perimeter walls to reach the main building.

At the time, he was booked on charges of obstruction. – AFP

Pentagon chief shares sensitive info again

WASHINGTON: US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth shared details of a March attack on Yemen in a message group that included his wife, brother and personal lawyer, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters on Sunday.

The revelations of a second Signal chat raise more questions about Hegseth's use of an unclassified messaging system to share highly sensitive security details and come at a particularly delicate moment for him, with senior officials ousted from the Pentagon last week as part of an internal leak investigation.

In the second chat, Hegseth shared details of the attack similar to those revealed last month by *The Atlantic* magazine after its editor-in-chief, Jeffrey Goldberg, was included in a separate chat on the Signal app by mistake, in an embarrassing incident involving all of President Donald Trump's most senior national security officials.

The person familiar with the matter, who was speaking on condition of anonymity, said the second chat included about a dozen people and was created during his confirmation process to discuss administrative issues.

The chat included details of the schedule of the airstrikes, the person said.

Hegseth's wife, Jennifer, a former Fox News producer, has attended sensitive meetings with foreign military counterparts, according to images the Pentagon has publicly posted.

Democratic lawmakers said Hegseth could no longer stay in his job. – Reuters



A displaced Palestinian woman cooks near unexploded ordnance, with explosive materials removed and left behind by Israeli troops, near a police station turned into a shelter in Gaza City on Sunday. – AFPIC

'Medic killings were summary executions'

► Gaza civil defence agency rejects Israeli military report

GAZA CITY: Gaza's civil defence agency yesterday accused the Israeli military of carrying out "summary executions" in the killing of 15 rescue workers last month, rejecting the findings of an internal investigation by the army.

The medics and other rescue workers were killed when responding to distress calls near Gaza's southern city of Rafah early on March 23, days into Israel's renewed military offensive.

Among those killed were eight

Red Crescent staff members, six from the Gaza civil defence rescue agency and one employee of UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, according to the UN humanitarian agency OCHA and Palestinian rescuers.

"The video filmed by one of the paramedics proves that the Israeli occupation's narrative is false and demonstrates that it carried out summary executions," said Mohammed Al-Mughair, a civil defence official.

He accused Israel of seeking to "circumvent" its obligations under international law.

Following the shooting, the Red Crescent released a video recovered from the phone of one of the victims. It does not show executions, but contradicts the

version of events initially put forward by the Israeli military.

The video shows clearly that the ambulances were travelling with sirens, flashing lights and headlights on. The military had claimed the ambulances were travelling "suspiciously" and without lights.

The incident drew international condemnation, including concern about war crimes from UN human rights commissioner Volker Turk.

An Israeli military investigation report released on Sunday "found no evidence to support claims of execution" or "indiscriminate fire" by its troops, but admitted to operational failures and said it was firing a field commander.

It said six of those killed were militants, revising an earlier claim

that nine of the men were fighters.

The dead, who were buried in sand by Israeli forces, were only recovered several days after the attack from what the UN human rights agency OCHA described as a "mass grave".

The Palestine Red Crescent Society denounced the report as "full of lies".

"It is invalid and unacceptable, as it justifies the killing and shifts responsibility to a personal error in the field command when the truth is quite different," said Red Crescent spokesperson Nebal Farsakh.

The Israeli investigation said there were three shooting incidents in the area on that day.

In the first, soldiers shot at what they believed to be a Hamas vehicle.

In the second, around an hour later, troops fired "on suspects emerging from a fire truck and ambulances", the military said.

The investigation determined that the fire in the first two incidents resulted from an "operational misunderstanding by the troops".

In the third incident, the troops fired at a UN vehicle "due to operational errors in breach of regulations", the military said. – AFP

BRIEFS

GUNMEN ATTACK POWER PLANT SITE

SANTIAGO: Gunmen attacked a Chinese-owned hydroelectric plant under construction in Chile on Sunday, setting fire to dozens of trucks and heavy earth-moving equipment. The Rucalhue power plant is being built by Rucalhue Energia Spa, a unit of China International Water and Electric Corporation, and is projected to cost US\$350 million (RM1.5 billion). It is being built along the Biobio, one of Chile's main rivers, and is opposed by indigenous people who say it will harm the environment. The attackers burned 45 trucks and five pieces of earth-moving equipment, he said. Two security guards were wounded in the attack on the site, which is 550km south of Santiago. – AFP

WOMEN PROTESTERS TORCH MINE

BISSAU: Women protesters in Guinea-Bissau on Sunday attacked a Chinese-run site in the northwest of the country mining zircon, setting fire to equipment, the interior minister said. One protester said they had acted after the authorities failed to act on their complaints that the activity was damaging farms and ruining the environment. Several women and a village leader were arrested following the protest at Nhiquin, near the resort town of Valera not far from the border with Senegal. Protester Aissato Cadjaf said: "We told them we didn't want sand extracted without our consent. All our rice fields are destroyed. There are no more fish in the river near the site." – AFP

Russia, Ukraine accuse each other of violating truce

KYIV: Russia launched missiles and drones targeting Ukraine early yesterday, waking up Kyiv and the eastern half of the country, hours after the one-day Easter ceasefire declared by Russian President Vladimir Putin came to an end.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or major damages from the attacks, regional Ukrainian officials said on social media.

Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 96 drones and three missiles in overnight attacks targeting Ukraine, causing damage in the Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Cherkasy regions.

Air defence units shot down 42 Russian drones and another 47

drones were redirected by electronic warfare.

Both Kyiv and Moscow had accused each other of thousands of attacks that violated the truce that the Kremlin indicated on Sunday would not be extended.

Washington said it would welcome an extension of the truce, and President Volodymyr Zelenskiy reiterated several times Ukraine's willingness to pause strikes for 30 days in the war.

But Putin, who launched Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and who ordered on Saturday the halt in all military activity along the front line until midnight Sunday, did not give orders to extend it.

"There were no other commands," TASS cited Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying when asked whether the ceasefire could be prolonged.

Zelenskiy said early yesterday that his forces were instructed to continue to mirror the Russian army's actions.

"The nature of Ukraine's actions will remain symmetrical: ceasefire will be met with ceasefire, and Russian strikes will be met with our own in defence. Actions always speak louder than words," he said.

Russia's Voronezh region that borders Ukraine was also under air raid alerts for two hours overnight, and the borders regions of Kursk

and parts of Belgorod were briefly under missile threat as well, regional officials said.

While there were no air raid alerts in Ukraine on Sunday, Ukrainian forces reported nearly 3,000 violations of Russia's own ceasefire with the heaviest attacks and shelling seen along the Pokrovsk part of the frontline, Zelenskiy said.

Russia's Defence Ministry said on Sunday that Ukrainian forces had shot at Russian positions 444 times and said it had counted more than 900 Ukrainian drone attacks, saying also that there were deaths and injuries among civilians.

Reuters could not independently verify the battlefield reports.

COMMENT by Mark Beau De Silva

Power of immersive learning

IN today's rapidly evolving world, knowledge acquisition is no longer about passive absorption, it is about active engagement, critical thinking and application.

Yet, many educational practices remain anchored in traditional content delivery, assuming that information alone equates to learning. The reality, however, is far more complex.

Consider the experience of many educators – a well-planned lesson, rich in content and structure – met with disengaged students of bored expressions, distracted minds and a lack of meaningful interaction.

This disconnect is not due to a lack of effort from educators or interest from students but rather a fundamental misalignment between how information is taught and how it is best absorbed.

A growing number of educators worldwide are shifting their pedagogical approaches to embrace methodologies that foster immersive learning experiences.

One such approach is Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert, which positions students as active participants rather than passive recipients. This technique reimagines traditional teaching by placing learners in real-world or fictional scenarios where they take on expert roles, engaging deeply with

content in a way that fosters critical thinking and problem solving.

I first encountered the Mantle of the Expert in 2008, during a pivotal career transition. What was meant to be a dream job, blending my love for the arts and education, soon became a challenging experience.

Despite my passion and well-prepared lessons, I found myself grappling with disengaged students. No matter how structured or detailed my plans were, something wasn't clicking. The disconnect was clear: I was teaching but they weren't truly learning.

Determined to bridge this gap, I delved deeper into alternative pedagogical approaches – and discovered the Mantle of the Expert. The concept immediately resonated.

I began reworking my lessons, moving away from rigid dependence on ready-made texts and scripts, most of which were rooted in Western contexts, and instead turned to more relatable, local narratives. I started posing scenarios, asking questions and inviting students to imagine, create and dream.

The impact was especially profound in my writing classes. By encouraging students to approach their work from their own perspectives – as experts of their own experiences – their writing transformed. What emerged were

pieces that were deeply original, personal and culturally grounded. The students were not just completing assignments – they were owning their stories.

This approach is not limited to the arts. For instance, in a US secondary school, educators applied the Mantle of the Expert to Russian literature studies. Instead of merely reading Pushkin, Gogol, Tolstoy and Chekhov, students were immersed in 19th-century Russia, assuming roles as serfs, navigating societal hierarchies and debating ethical dilemmas.

This role-play transformed the learning experience, cultivating empathy and a nuanced understanding of historical and literary contexts, skills that extend far beyond the classroom.

Closer to home, this method can be seamlessly integrated across disciplines. Imagine first-year law students stepping into the role of practising lawyers, analysing cases in a gamified environment or honing their advocacy skills in a virtual reality moot court.

Picture biology students using HoloLens to explore human anatomy and navigate real-world medical scenarios, simulating the decision-making processes of experienced professionals.

By shifting the focus from teaching content to experiential discovery,



A growing number of educators worldwide are shifting their pedagogical approaches to embrace methodologies that foster immersive learning experiences. – **SUNPIC**

educators empower students to engage, analyse and innovate, skills that are crucial in an era where information is readily available but critical thinking remains paramount.

While textbooks, theories and structured instruction remain foundational, they should serve as tools for exploration rather than rigid directives. The future of education lies not in delivering more content but in creating environments where students take ownership of their learning.

If we are serious about developing the next generation of thinkers, problem-solvers and leaders, we must rethink how we view our students, not as passive learners but as experts in the making.

Mark Beau De Silva is a senior lecturer and award-winning playwright at the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Social Science and Leisure Management, Taylor's University. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Whiff of outrage over misunderstood advertisement

LETTERS
letters@thesundaily.com

IN the age of instant sharing and viral content, a single image can ignite a firestorm. Recently, an advertisement by Prasara became the centre of controversy, not because of its full content, but due to a cropped version that circulated on social media.

This partial image showed an

Indian man seated with two figures commenting on body odour, leading many to assume that he was depicted as the source of the smell. However, the complete advertisement depicted the odour emanating from another standing figure, whose ethnicity was ambiguous.

The Malaysian Code of Advertising Practice emphasises that advertisements should be legal, decent, honest and truthful, reflecting the multicultural character of the

population and advocating the philosophy of the Rukun Negara.

Prasara had shared a statement that the advertisement had adhered to these standards before its release. Yet, the uproar due to the misrepresented image forced them to retract the ad to maintain harmony.

This incident starkly illustrates the formidable influence and inherent risks of social media in shaping public perception. A context-deprived image can eclipse the full narrative, leading

to widespread misconceptions and unwarranted outrage.

Such scenarios underscore the critical need for robust media literacy among the populace. Without the skills to critically assess and interpret media content, individuals are more susceptible to accepting and propagating misinformation, with or without malicious intent.

This not only distorts public discourse but also poses significant challenges to social cohesion and

informed decision-making. Therefore, fostering media literacy is not merely imperative but necessary to navigate the complexities of the digital information landscape responsibly.

In conclusion, while the nose may detect odours, it is the mind that should discern the truth. Let's ensure that our reactions are informed, balanced and conducive to unity in our multicultural nation.

Prof Mohd Said Bani C.M. Din

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Legal coverage of Putra Heights blast

COMMENT by Dr Wilson Tay Tze Vern

THE recent gas pipeline explosion at Putra Heights on April 1 has raised pressing legal questions about Malaysia's preparedness, accountability structures and regulatory safeguards when industrial disasters occur.

With over 227 houses and 365 vehicles affected, and 87 homes reportedly written off as total losses, victims now face a long, complex journey towards compensation and recovery.

Gaps in protection

It is commonly assumed that homeowners can recover compensation through fire insurance policies. However, this is only possible if adequate home fire insurance has been purchased beforehand.

While fire insurance is generally a prerequisite for mortgaged homes, owners of older and fully paid-off properties may have little or no coverage, leaving them solely responsible for any losses.

Even where fire insurance exists, it typically covers only structural damage and fixed fittings. High-value movable items such as laptops, mobile devices and entertainment systems, are often uninsured and may be excluded from coverage. Items of sentimental value are irreplaceable. Moreover, long-term depreciation of property due to adverse publicity is generally not compensable.

For vehicles, owners who opted only for basic third-party insurance – common for older vehicles, motorcycles and commercial vehicles – are unlikely to be covered for fire-related damages. This potentially leaves many without financial recourse.

The explosion and subsequent

suspension of gas transmission in the area also disrupted operations at about 200 nearby factories, including food manufacturers and metal processing facilities. In legal terms, these are examples of “pure economic loss” – financial losses not arising from injury or physical damage but from the indirect consequences of the incident.

Under current Malaysian law, such losses are generally non-recoverable.

In the 2018 Federal Court decision of *Tenaga Nasional Berhad v Batu Kemas Industri & Anor*, it was clarified that even where negligence is established, damages for pure economic loss may not be recoverable.

This significantly restricts legal remedies for the affected industries and raises questions about whether existing laws adequately reflect the economic interdependencies of modern industrial zones.

Public scrutiny has turned to the roles played by the pipeline owner, the Energy Commission, and the local authority.

Several key statutes govern the responsibilities of these parties, including the Gas Supply Act 1993 (Act 501) (as amended in 2016), the Gas Supply Regulations 1997 [P.U.(A) 287], the Energy Commission Act 2001 (Act 610) and the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974 (Act 133).

As the licensed gas transporter in the affected area, the pipeline owner is responsible for the safety and maintenance of gas installations under Parts III and VI of the 1997 Regulations.

To date, there is no indication if the pipeline owner failed in these responsibilities.

The Energy Commission's duties are outlined in Section 4(1) of Act



The Putra Heights explosion is a sobering reminder that as Malaysia advances its infrastructure and industrial capacity, our legal and regulatory systems must keep pace. – AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUNDAY

501, including the mandate “to protect the public from dangers arising from the distribution of gas through pipelines” [Section 4(1)(f)].

Meanwhile, the local authority's responsibilities under Act 133 include the reported issuance of a permit for excavation works in the area prior to the incident.

However, statutory immunities complicate any imposition of liability. The Energy Commission is protected from certain legal actions under Section 37 of Act 501 while the local authority is protected under Section 95(2) of Act 133 as explained by the 2006 Federal Court case of *Majlis Perbandaran Ampang Jaya v Steven Phoa Cheng Loon*. These protections may limit the availability of legal recourse against the public authorities involved.

While contractor negligence

remains a possibility, it must be emphasised that legal liability cannot be determined until investigations are complete.

Even if such negligence is established, questions remain about whether the contractor would have the financial resources or insurance coverage to compensate victims on this scale. This underscores the importance of mandatory liability insurance and stringent regulatory controls for high-risk works near critical infrastructure.

Resilient legal framework

The federal government, alongside the Selangor state government and the pipeline owner, have extended commendable *ex gratia* financial assistance to the victims.

Nonetheless, it is also important

that stronger legal protections are developed to address the aftermath of similar industrial tragedies in the future.

The Putra Heights explosion is a sobering reminder that as Malaysia advances its infrastructure and industrial capacity, our legal and regulatory systems must keep pace. Strengthening protections, closing insurance gaps and ensuring accountability are no longer optional – they are essential to safeguarding lives and livelihoods.

Dr Wilson Tay Tze Vern is a senior lecturer and programme director of the Doctor of Philosophy in Law programme at the School of Law and Governance, Faculty of Business and Law, Taylor's University. Comments: letters@thesunday.com

The art of becoming who you want to be

COMMENT by Dr Nahrizul Adib Kadri

“**FAKE** it till you make it” – this is the kind of phrase you would expect from a self-help seminar or a motivational Instagram post.

However, this could actually be a solid approach to life, especially when you are feeling stuck, lost or unsure of what you want to be.

The world today is moving fast – trends come and go, opinions shift overnight and the pressure to have it all figured out can feel overwhelming.

Everyone seems to be an expert at something, trying to live their “best life” while you are just trying to decide what to order for lunch.

This is exactly where the problem lies. Many people don't know who they want to be. They scroll through social media, absorbing endless highlight reels of success and perfection and end up blindly following what is popular.

One day they want to be a fitness guru, the next a celebrity chef-cum-entrepreneur, then a travel vlogger, a food critic and reviewer, and before they know it, they are back to square one – still unsure, still searching for answers

that they believe is “out” there somewhere.

Let's simplify things and focus just on one thing.

Pick your path and walk it

If you are struggling with what you want in life, stop waiting for clarity to magically appear. Pick something that speaks to you – even if it's just a whisper of an idea – and start acting as if you are already on that path.

Want to be a writer? Start writing. Want to be a leader? Start leading. Want to be a more confident person? Start behaving like one. You don't need permission. You don't need an official title. You just need to start.

Think of it this way: when a young doctor starts practising medicine, they don't feel like a doctor right away. They may even experience imposter syndrome, questioning whether they're good enough. However, day after day, patient after patient, they become a doctor – not just in title but in skill and confidence. The same applies to any role in life. You grow into it by doing.

“The ones who make it in any field and in any aspect of life are not necessarily the most talented. They are just the ones who did not quit.”

This idea is not just some feel-good advice; there is actual psychology behind it. The self-perception theory proposed by psychologist Daryl Bem in 1972 suggests that we form our identities based on our behaviours. In other words, if you start acting like the person you want to become, your brain begins to accept it as reality.

There is also the Pygmalion effect – the idea that higher expectations lead to higher performance. If you expect to succeed in something and behave accordingly, chances are you will start meeting those expectations. It is not magic; it is psychology.

Some may say: “Isn't this just pretending?” Well, no. Pretending is putting on a false front for others. “Faking it till you make it” is about putting yourself through the process of growth.

Compare it to social media, where many people are actually pretending. They post filtered versions of their lives, carefully curating an image they want others to see but the problem is they aren't living it and they aren't growing into that person, they are just crafting an illusion.

That is not what we are doing here. What I'm talking about is consciously stepping into a role, taking small,

consistent actions every day and allowing yourself to become what you set out to be. There is a huge difference.

The tricky part is not trying to start; it is staying the course. Sticking to your path when things get hard, when self-doubt creeps in and when results don't show up immediately – that is the test.

The ones who make it in any field and in any aspect of life are not necessarily the most talented. They are just the ones who did not quit.

Look at any successful person – athletes, artists or entrepreneurs – they did not wake up one day with all the answers, they started somewhere, likely feeling unqualified and unsure but they showed up day after day until what once felt like faking it became second nature.

Whatever it is you want – pick it, commit to it and stay at it because one day without even realising it, you will look back and see that you made it. That is when you will know that you were not faking it after all – you were just becoming.

Dr Nahrizul Adib Kadri is a professor of biomedical engineering and the principal of Ibnu Sina Residential College, Universiti Malaya. Comments: letters@thesunday.com

Anthropology - the course less travelled

RECENTLY, Dr Vilasini Somiah, a Sabah-born senior lecturer at the gender studies programme, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Malaya made history with her election to the Southeast Asia Council (SEAC) of the Association for Asian Studies (AAS). In this role, she will also sit on the board of directors for the AAS, the governing body of the world's largest academic organisation dedicated to Asian studies.

It represents a significant milestone, not only for Universiti Malaya but also for Malaysia as Dr Vilasini becomes the first-ever Southeast Asian (SEA) scholar, based in this part of the world to chair SEAC since 1970. Also, this is the first time in AAS's 85-year history that the chair of SEAC will be a scholar from SEA, an accolade for Malaysia as well.

Recently I had the opportunity to chat with her and discovered that her mother is of Dusun origin from Sarawak and her father Indian. Her foray into anthropological studies, with extensive fieldwork across Sabah, Sarawak and other parts of Borneo, opened her eyes to the key role of women in indigenous

communities.

Why has anthropology become such a hot topic recently?

The study of human behaviour is under the spotlight again.

Simply put, global and regional economies have taken a beating in recent months and world order, if there is any, has undergone a 360 degree turn, and people all over the world are struggling to understand what is influencing all the change.

Be it in the boardroom or the world stock exchanges, it's all chaos and even the most qualified professionals are stumped as to what is going on.

Students making career choices are increasingly moving towards understanding human behaviour and anthropology has gained momentum as a course to be considered.

My next question on anthropology was then directed to another close friend, Dinesh Nair, a UK Chevening scholar, who completed his Masters in Social Anthropology from University of Manchester in 2023. Dinesh feels passionately about anthropology as a degree to be pursued by students, seeking

answers to their cultural identity and also pursuing a career in a multicultural and diverse society such as Malaysia.

"Many of the challenges facing Malaysian institutions - whether in education, corporate culture, or governance - are not just policy or strategy problems, but cultural and social ones.

"I am an active advocate of applied anthropology, which is used to solve real world problems and achieve organisational goals," said Dinesh.

Do you think students should be encouraged to take up anthropology?

Yes, students should be encouraged to take up anthropology. There is a common misconception that anthropology is primarily about studying communities, particularly indigenous tribes. In fact many do not realise that anthropology has evolved far beyond this traditional scope.

The versatility of the degree is one of its most valuable features. For example, the growing demand for corporate anthropologists highlights the value of anthropological methods - such as participant observation and ethnographic research - in addressing challenges that range

from understanding customer behaviour to enhancing data analysis and driving organisational transformation.

The same can be said about medical anthropologists, whose insights into patients' perceptions of illness, associated stigma and resistance to treatment are increasingly sought after globally to transform healthcare.

Another compelling reason for students to view anthropology as a possible course is the skills it cultivates. Firstly through rigorous training, students learn to set aside deeply held beliefs, biases and preconceived notions, enabling them to uncover authentic insights about a community and organisation.

This goes to the very heart of anthropology, which is to understand people on their own terms, without letting personal assumptions or judgements cloud their analysis.

Secondly, students learn to think holistically, by taking into account historical, socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. This allows for the development of solutions that are sustainable, culturally appropriate and ethnically sound.

Why do you think it is so important to consider human behaviour now?

Anthropology wants to analyse what

lies beneath surface-level behaviour. Anthropologists can uncover belief systems, values and social norms.

Today is the age of data overload, AI and automation, so human insight is a rare and valued skill.

Global tech players, including Microsoft which is one of the largest recruiters of anthropologists, are beginning to realise that while data may expose what people do, anthropology reveals why - offering the depth needed for strategic, informed decision making.

What do you personally find so fascinating about anthropology?

What fascinates me most about the subject can be summed up: *It makes the familiar strange and the strange familiar.*

It gives us the tools to step outside of our own world views and immerse ourselves in the perspective of others. It trains us to avoid tunnel vision. Ideas that seemed strange or distant begin to reveal their logic, reminding us that ideas which may appear foreign to us can be deeply meaningful to another.

This shift in perspective is what enables truly out-of-the-box thinking, whether applied in a remote community research setting or in a Fortune 500 corporate boardroom.



EDUCATION MATTERS
BY DHARSHINI GANESON

EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

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JS-SEZ set to strengthen Asean supply chain resilience

JOHOR BAHRU: The Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) is set to enhance Asean's supply chain efficiency and resilience, said Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

Additionally, he said, the proposed establishment of an Asean Industrial Park within the JS-SEZ will contribute towards improving regional economic integration and attracting high-value investments.

He believed that the proposed industrial park aligns with the aspiration to enhance supply chain efficiency and resilience.

"Ultimately, we want the JS-SEZ to be more than just a bilateral framework – it is a value proposition for the whole of Asean," he said in his keynote address at the JS-SEZ Joint Business and Investment Forum yesterday.

The two-day event, themed "JS-SEZ: Bridging Economies, Strengthening Supply Chains", is organised by the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry (MITI) in collaboration with Singapore's Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Johor state government.

According to Tengku Zafrul, the federal government supports the proposed regulatory sandbox to be located at Ibrahimi Technopolis and Ladang Air Manis in Kulai.

He said the initiative will be instrumental in unlocking new waves of sustainable, high-value investments that benefit both local stakeholders and international partners.

In the meantime, Tengku Zafrul said the heart of the Malaysia-Singapore relationship lies in the fact that the two countries are at their best when working together.

"Malaysia was Singapore's second largest trading partner, while Singapore was Malaysia's largest export destination and second largest trading partner globally in 2024.

"Our trade in 2024 was a robust

» Tengku Zafrul welcomes state's proposal to establish RCEP-focused Asean Industrial Park within Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone



Tengku Zafrul (right) together with Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Gan Kim Yong (centre) and Onn Hafiz Ghazi during a photo session at the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone Joint Business and Investment Forum in Johor Bahru yesterday.

US\$86.69 billion (RM382.3 billion), driven by electrical and electronics products, petroleum products, machinery, equipment and parts, agricultural, optical and scientific equipment," he added.

Tengku Zafrul noted that Malaysia is fully committed to securing a favourable resolution that preserves vital market access and supply chains, attracts continued foreign investment, and supports the well-being of its workers and businesses.

He stressed that alongside Asean colleagues, Malaysia will not introduce retaliatory tariffs against the United States.

"From Asean's perspective, retaliation is counterproductive. Rather, the region seeks to engage constructively with the US in a forward-looking manner to strengthen economic ties and address shared

challenges," he said.

Domestically, Tengku Zafrul said, the Malaysian government recognises the challenges the tariffs pose to workers, manufacturers and businesses. "We must and will find a mutually acceptable, fair and equitable solution to this issue, both bilaterally and multilaterally."

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi said the Johor state government is mooting the establishment of an Asean Industrial Park within the JS-SEZ. The industrial park is envisioned to be especially geared towards the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

"It will aim to attract strategic investments from RCEP member countries by focusing on high-value sectors such as advanced manufacturing, green technology and the digital economy," he said in his welcoming remarks at the forum.

He said the industrial park will drive technology transfer, boost competitiveness and diversify supply chains across Asean.

"We also hope that it will offer customised incentives such as tax breaks, simplified talent mobility and temporary relaxation of fund repatriation rules to make the industrial park attractive to foreign investors. The aim is to stimulate economic growth and job creation in the JS-SEZ and promote the region as a preferred destination for RCEP-related investment."

Onn Hafiz said JS-SEZ has spurred Johor investments. New approved investments reached RM27.4 billion in the first quarter of this year compared with RM48.5 billion in 2024.

"(This is) a powerful early signal of the momentum behind JS-SEZ. In fact, for April 2025, there is another RM23 billion worth of projects in the pipeline," he said.

"We have streamlined our investment processes via the Invest Malaysia Facilitation Centre-Johor (IMFC-J). With the Johor super lane, we have introduced a fast-track mechanism that significantly reduces bureaucratic delays for priority investments," Onn Hafiz said.

Since its launch in February this year, the IMFC-J has handled 252 investment enquiries with 42 high-impact projects now under accelerated processing, he said.

"What took 24 months from briefing to operations is achievable in just 13 to 14 months. This is not just about efficiency. It is a clear signal to investors: Johor is serious, responsive and ready," he said. – Bernama

U Mobile transfers merchant acquiring business GoBiz to NTT Data

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian network provider U Mobile Sdn Bhd has entered into a strategic agreement to transfer its merchant acquiring business, GoBiz, to NTT Data Cardpay, a subsidiary of NTT Data Payment Services Sdn Bhd.

In a joint statement yesterday, the companies said the move would enable U Mobile to focus its resources on accelerating 5G enterprise adoption.

Meanwhile, NTT Data Payment Services will ensure continuity for merchants and customers by maintaining existing service levels, support and user experience.

"As part of its enterprise drive, U Mobile will also explore potential collaborations with NTT Data Payment Services to enhance digital solutions for the SME market.

"By leveraging advancements in 5G, artificial intelligence (AI) and payment technologies, both companies seek to support businesses in adapting to the evolving digital landscape," it said.

U Mobile chief information officer Neil Tomkinson said the network provider remained committed to supporting Malaysia's goal of becoming a digitally enabled, high-income nation, with enterprise 5G adoption as a key enabler.

"U Mobile looks forward to accelerating enterprise digitalisation through AI, autonomous technology, internet of things, and more. This agreement paves the way for us to fully leverage our strengths to realise these ambitions, especially for the SME sector," he said.

NTT Data Payment Services group CEO Sean Hesh said the partnership marked a significant step in advancing digital transformation for enterprises, especially SMEs.

"By combining our expertise in payment solutions with U Mobile's Next Gen 5G and 5G-A technology, we aim to enable businesses with seamless digital payment solutions that enhance efficiency and growth. This collaboration underscores our commitment to driving innovation and supporting businesses in embracing the future of digital commerce, he added. – Bernama

Singapore aims to enhance special economic zone's value proposition

JOHOR BAHRU: Singapore will continue to strengthen the fundamentals of the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) to enhance its value proposition, according to Deputy Prime Minister and Trade and Industry Minister Gan Kim Yong.

He noted that the republic aims to improve the flow of goods and people between Singapore and Johor by simplifying clearance and customs procedures.

Additionally, efforts will be made to fortify the business ecosystem through streamlined approval processes, investment in talent development, and the establishment of a single touch-

point for businesses, he said.

"In particular, on Singapore's end, the Ministry for Trade and Industry, together with EnterpriseSG and Economic Development Board, have established a joint project office to support Singapore-based companies keen to expand and do more in the JS-SEZ and this will complement the Invest Malaysia Facilitation Centre-Johor established by Malaysia," he said in his keynote address at JS-SEZ Business and Investment Forum here yesterday.

Furthermore, Gan said Singapore would strengthen its network of economic partnerships with like-minded nations and economic blocs,

such as within Asean and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, as well as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union, to open up new markets and supply chain flows for businesses.

He also said the JS-SEZ presents an opportunity for businesses to explore ways to "strengthen their supply chain", so they can better respond to volatility and continue to grow their businesses.

"The JS-SEZ builds on the strong, longstanding economic partnership between Malaysia and Singapore to open a new frontier of opportunities for businesses," he said.

Gan said that some businesses in

Singapore may choose to expand their capacity in the JS-SEZ and develop new capabilities, while others may also decide to twin their presence in both Singapore and Johor, so that they can tap into their complementary strengths.

He highlighted that, for example, South Korea's SPC Group has chosen to site its halal manufacturing plant in Johor, while establishing a regional headquarters and innovation centre in Singapore that drives the research and development of new products.

"We also hope that we can attract and anchor new businesses which are not yet in Singapore or Malaysia to site their

new investments in the JS-SEZ," he said.

Gan also hoped that Malaysia and Singapore would team up with like-minded countries, double down on better connectivity and ease of doing business, and join hands with businesses and investors at a time of significant volatility, uncertainty and anxiety in the global economy.

"This way, both countries can further bridge our economies through the JS-SEZ and strengthen our supply chain, so that we can be more dynamic and resilient together and continue to create good jobs for people on both sides of the straits," he added. – Bernama

See also page 14



CIMB pledges **RM10b** financing to support JS-SEZ opportunities

➤ Bank introduces Asean Financial Passport to facilitate seamless cross-border banking experience

PETALING JAYA: CIMB Group Holdings Bhd yesterday announced a landmark commitment of RM10 billion in funding facilities to drive economic integration and unlock cross-border opportunities in the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ).

Leveraging its strong Asean footprint and comprehensive suite of financial solutions, CIMB launched its Asean Financial Passport, offering a one-stop approach to empower businesses with seamless cross-border banking experience, delivering end-to-end support, including local regulatory knowledge expertise across every stage of growth.

The group said in a statement that it is strategically positioned to catalyse growth across corporates and small and medium enterprises, while accelerating investment inflows in support of the transformative bilateral initiative.

CIMB Group CEO Novan Amirudin said: "The JS-SEZ represents a transformative move in regional economic collaboration, deepening connectivity and unlocking new avenues for sustainable growth between Malaysia and Singapore while strengthening the region's resilience against global uncertainties. This initiative fosters deeper regional integration by



From left: CIMB Group growth markets CEO Victor Lee Meng Teck, Novan, Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz, Singapore Deputy Prime Minister and Trade and Industry Minister Gan Kim Yong, Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi, CIMB Bank CEO Gurdip Singh Sidhu and CIMB Group commercial and transaction banking co-CEO Ahmad Shazli Kamarulzaman at the CIMB Showcase within the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone Joint Business and Investment Forum in Johor Bahru.

creating a seamless ecosystem for businesses and talent, as well as enabling efficient movement of goods, optimising costs and enhancing production efficiency for businesses.

"With clear complementary strengths, improved connectivity and highly structured bilateral coordination, we believe that JS-SEZ is set up for success."

As a leading Asean-focused financial institution, he added, they are committed to their purpose of

advancing customers and society, by capitalising the immense potential of the JS-SEZ through their integrated cross-border banking solutions, strategic advisory and extensive ecosystem of partnerships, backed by their strong on-ground presence in both Johor and Singapore.

In this heightened uncertain environment, Novan said, CIMB is committed to being a source of strength for their clients, as they have always been, in both good and challenging times, to help them

navigate this evolving landscape.

CIMB has set up a dedicated team comprising 30 experienced bankers in Singapore and Malaysia to accelerate market entry for clients in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, mainland China and Hong Kong to capture opportunities arising from JS-SEZ.

Complementing this, the bank also organises targeted seminars to equip businesses with practical tools and insights needed to navigate the JS-SEZ effectively.

CGS International revises Malaysia's 2025 GDP growth forecast to 4.2%

KUALA LUMPUR: CGS International Securities Malaysia Sdn Bhd has revised Malaysia's 2025 gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast to 4.2% year-on-year (y-o-y) from 4.6% previously, below the official 4.5-5.5% estimate.

In a note yesterday, it said the revision reflects the weaker-than-expected GDP performance in the first quarter of 2025 (Q1'25) and the balance of risks, which include a strong frontloading effect to extend further following the 90-day US tariff pause.

"Shipments to the US soared 50% y-o-y in March, and we expect this to continue in the next few months," it said.

On Friday, the Department of Statistics Malaysia expected Malaysia's economy to grow by 4.4% in the first quarter of 2025 based on advance estimates, easing from a 5% expansion in the previous quarter, backed by domestic activities and steady demand.

The finalised Q1'25 GDP data is still to be released on May 16.

CGS International opinionated that there is considerable strength in the domestic economy in 2025, following the government's efforts in labour reforms, such as wage hikes in tandem with low inflation.

Meanwhile, Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd has maintained its 2025 GDP growth forecast at 4.8%.

"The actual Q1 2025 GDP may beat the Department of Statistics Malaysia's advance estimate."

"We also expect frontloading activity in Q2 2025, spurred by the 90-day reciprocal tariff pause, which could boost near-term growth and partly cushion a potential second half of 2025 slowdown," it said. — Bernama

PEOPLElogy sets sights on expanding regional footprint

BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: PEOPLElogy Bhd, a provider of integrated people development solutions, will ramp up its regional expansion efforts, managing director Allen Lee said at the launch of the prospectus for the company's initial public offering (IPO).

He said PEOPLElogy is committing 14.86% of IPO proceeds to physical expansion and 15.24% to merger and acquisition opportunities.

"We will establish new training centres in Kota Kinabalu and Kuching within the next 12 months, and new regional offices in Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore."

"We see East Malaysia as a golden opportunity. Local B2B and B2G stakeholders are eager for committed providers to build digital talent pipelines. PEOPLElogy has already been in discussions with multiple stakeholders across Sabah and Sarawak," he said in a press conference held in conjunction with the prospectus launch yesterday.

Lee noted that a standout com-



From left: Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd head of corporate finance Alvin Ooi Yet Ming, corporate and institutional coverage director Datuk Kenny Yong, head of group investment banking and Islamic banking Datuk Roslan Tik, Lee, PEOPLElogy non-executive chairman Datuk Seri Garry Chua, CEO Cally Yau and chief operating officer Joey Lee at the prospectus launch.

ponent of PEOPLElogy's post-IPO strategy is the establishment of a Cyber Range simulation lab, which will absorb 32.38% of IPO proceeds.

"The lab is designed to simulate real-world cyber attack scenarios using immersive, gamified environments — an innovation PEOPLElogy believes will redefine how cybersecurity training is delivered in the region."

"Instead of traditional classroom training, our cyber lab uses environmental triggers, colours and even sirens to fully engage learners. It is not just technical training — it is an experience. And that makes a huge difference in how people retain and apply critical digital skills," he said.

The company, which is slated to be listed on the ACE Market of Bursa

Malaysia Securities on May 20, aims to raise RM26.25 million from the offering, which consists of 105 million new shares at an issue price of 25 sen each, valuing PEOPLElogy at RM102.93 million upon listing.

On potential acquisition targets, Lee said PEOPLElogy is in active conversations with players in Malaysia and Southeast Asia.

"We have spent time understanding the landscape, especially last year when I visited over 60 firms overseas. We are speaking with training providers, consulting firms, and tech companies that complement our 6D framework," he said, referring to PEOPLElogy's proprietary end-to-end talent development model.

Lee addressed investor concerns surrounding client concentration, notably the company's historical reliance on Yayasan Peneraju, which contributed 40% of its revenue in 2023.

"This figure has already declined significantly, from 70% in 2021 to 50% in 2024, reflecting its ongoing client diversification strategy. As shown in

our revenue segmentation, we have been expanding our B2C segment aggressively. The contribution from individual consumers is on a strong upward trend, alongside our traditional B2B and B2G streams."

"This is not just about reducing reliance on government clients, but also about tapping into new income streams that align with the future of work," he said.

For the 2024 financial year, PEOPLElogy recorded revenue of RM29.24 million, with profit after tax at RM5.47 million. Its services span digital certifications, soft skills and leadership training, talent consultancy and artificial intelligence-powered learning platforms such as PEOPLEAPS and SKILLSTURE.

Despite volatile market conditions, Lee said the company believes the timing of the listing is right. "There's never a perfect market. But our vision is clear, and the IPO is a step forward to scale our mission across Asean."

Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd is the principal adviser, sponsor, underwriter and placement agent for PEOPLElogy's IPO.

Foreign investors extend net selling on Asian markets

► Net outflow of US\$3.84 billion for week ended April 18, with only the Philippines and India posting gains among markets tracked: MIDF report

KUALA LUMPUR: Foreign investors extended their net selling in Asian markets for a third consecutive week, with a substantial net outflow of US\$3.84 billion (RM17 billion).

According to MIDF Amanah Investment Bank Bhd's Fund Flow Report for the week ended April 18, 2025, only the Philippines and India registered net foreign inflows among the markets tracked.

All other countries posted outflows, with Taiwan experiencing the steepest foreign selling.

India led regional inflows with US\$990.4 million, reversing a two-week streak of net selling. The return of investor confidence was attributed to easing inflation and a resilient domestic growth outlook.

"Consumer Price Index inflation fell to a 67-month low of 3.34% in March 2025, mainly due to food price deflation, while rural demand is expected to remain buoyant amid forecasts of a normal monsoon.

"Although Fitch trimmed India's GDP forecast to 6.4% on trade war risks, the Reserve Bank of India maintains a 6.5% growth target," the report said.

MIDF Amanah also noted progress in

India's trade talks with the US, with the country considering the removal of import duties on ethane and liquefied petroleum gas to enhance energy security and strengthen bilateral ties.

The Philippines ended a three-week selling streak with a modest net inflow of US\$6.5 million.

Indonesia, meanwhile, saw a net outflow of US\$1.26 billion, its second consecutive week of foreign selling.

Indonesia's palm oil sector is calling on the government to reduce export taxes and levies in response to reciprocal tariffs of 32% imposed by the US, which are expected to lower farm-gate prices by up to 3%, the report added.

In Korea, foreign investors extended their net selling for a fourth week, with outflows totalling US\$1 billion. The government has announced a US\$8.6 billion supplementary budget to support sectors hit by US tariffs, notably autos and semiconductors.

Vietnam posted US\$185.8 million in outflows, marking its 11th straight week of foreign selling. While President Xi Jinping's recent visit to Hanoi resulted in over 40

cooperation agreements, Vietnam steered clear of publicly aligning with China's anti-US stance.

Thailand recorded US\$26.9 million in net outflows, its 8th straight week of foreign selling. The Bank of Thailand warned that US tariffs could reduce GDP growth by up to one percentage point, with the full impact likely to be felt in the second half of the year.

On the domestic front, foreign net selling on Bursa Malaysia eased to RM330.5 million, sharply lower than the RM1.97 billion recorded the previous week.

Foreign investors were net sellers every trading day except Friday, which saw a net inflow of RM339.9 million. The largest outflow occurred on Wednesday at RM153.6 million, while other days ranged between RM16.2 million and RM120.6 million.

Friday's inflow followed five consecutive days of outflows. The sectors that saw net foreign inflows were telecommunications and media (RM119.5 million), consumer products and services (RM34.4 million), and property (RM2.45 million).

The top three sectors with the highest net foreign outflows were financial services (RM96.6 million), technology (RM87 million), and construction (RM80.8 million).

Local institutions continued to support the market, recording their 26th consecutive week of net buying, with inflows of RM356.2 million.

Local retail investors turned net sellers with outflows of RM25.7 million, reversing a two-week buying trend. - Bernama

Paradigm REIT inks underwriting deal for Main Market listing

KUALA LUMPUR: Paradigm Real Estate Investment Trust (Paradigm REIT), a local real estate investment trust, has signed an underwriting agreement with three investment banks ahead of its proposed listing on the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia.

Paradigm REIT said it has entered into the agreement with Maybank Investment Bank Bhd (Maybank IB), CGS International Securities Malaysia Sdn Bhd (CGSI) and AmlInvestment Bank Bhd (AmlInvestment).

The trust is scheduled to be listed with an initial fund size of 1.6 million units, of which 560,000 offer units will be made available to retail and institutional investors.

"The proposed offering comprises a retail tranche of up to 254.65 million offer units and an institutional offering of at least 305.34 million offer units," it said in a statement yesterday.

The listing will be underpinned by the injection of three premier retail assets: Bukit Tinggi Shopping Centre, Paradigm Mall Petaling Jaya, and Paradigm Mall Johor Bahru.

Paradigm REIT said the assets are being disposed of by the respective vendors for a total consideration of RM2.44 billion.

The consideration will be satisfied via the issuance of 1.6 billion units at RM1 per unit, alongside a cash payment of RM837 million.

Paradigm REIT Management Sdn Bhd CEO Selena Chua Kah Noi said the agreement formalises the next step towards the listing.

"With shareholder endorsement and the backing of our advisers and joint underwriters, Paradigm REIT is well-positioned to deliver a compelling investment proposition to both institutional and retail investors.

"Our high-quality asset base and future pipeline form a strong foundation for long-term, sustainable value creation. We look forward to delivering consistent returns and growth for our unitholders," she said.

Paradigm REIT's listing on Bursa Malaysia is expected to take place upon completion of regulatory approvals and the finalisation of the offering process.

Maybank IB is the principal adviser, lead bookrunner and sole managing underwriter. It is also joint bookrunner and joint underwriter alongside CGSI and AmlInvestment. - Bernama

Kenanga Investors scoops up 9 awards at Asia Asset Management event

KUALA LUMPUR: Kenanga Investors Group has solidified its standing as a top asset management firm by securing nine awards at Asia Asset Management's 2025 (AAM 2025) Best of the Best Awards.

The firm was recognised with the following accolades: Best Impact Investing Manager in Asean, Malaysia Best Impact Investing Manager, Malaysia Best Retail Asset Management Company, Malaysia Best Equity Manager, Malaysia Best Alternatives Manager, Malaysia Best ESG Engagement Initiative and Malaysia Fund Launch of the Year.

In addition to the above, executive director and CEO Datuk Wira Ismitz Matthew De Alwis was

awarded Malaysia CEO of the Year, marking this the sixth year that he has received this prestigious award. Simultaneously, chief investment officer Lee Sook Yee received her 8th Malaysia CIO of the Year title.

De Alwis said the Malaysia Best Retail Asset Management Company title reflects their commitment to delivering value through long-term growth opportunities and their ability to manage higher-return asset classes effectively with appropriate portfolio diversification methods.

"Our strong partnerships with global experts have boosted our ability to deliver innovative solutions for our clients. We're also proud to be recognised for our impact investing efforts in

Malaysia and the Asean region, highlighting the strength of our policies, products, and investment approach in driving real change," he added.

Driven by this, he said they will continue engaging with stakeholders and investee companies to raise awareness and fostering in-depth, two-way conversations focusing on enhancing existing practices and developing structured strategies.

Meanwhile, Lee said despite a robust domestic growth outlook, the market remains vulnerable to external challenges, including looming tariffs and trade restrictions.

However, she added, that the firm will remain focused on stock picking in 2025 to combat this.

Batik Air to offer direct KL-Melbourne flights all-year round from July

KUALA LUMPUR: Building on its successful seasonal service between Kuala Lumpur and Melbourne, Batik Air is set to launch year-round direct flights starting July 12.

This milestone strengthens the air bridge between the two countries, providing travellers with greater connectivity and convenience.

Operating four times weekly, this expanded service strengthens Batik Air's presence in Australia, reinforcing its commitment to the market by offering consistent, direct access between Kuala Lumpur and Melbourne.

With a growing footprint in the region, Batik Air said in a statement yesterday that it will continue to cater to increasing demand from both leisure and business travellers seeking seamless connections across its extensive network.

Batik Air CEO Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy said this expansion aligns with their commitment to strengthening connectivity between Malaysia and Australia.

Batik Air first introduced direct flights from

Kuala Lumpur to Melbourne in December 2022 with the Boeing 737, later expanding the service in December 2023 with the Airbus A330 to meet peak holiday demand.

"During our seasonal operations on this route, Batik Air's capacity has grown significantly, reflecting the rising demand for travel between the two countries," said Chandran, highlighting a steady increase in load factors - from 50% in 2022 to over 65% in early 2025.

In February alone, Melbourne Airport recorded 2.7 million passengers, including 930,356 international travellers, reflecting strong and increasing global travel demand.

This new regular service will be operated by Batik Air A330, featuring 12 business class seats and 365 economy class seats.

In addition to this direct service, Batik Air also offers daily flights via Denpasar, Bali (7 times weekly) utilising its B737, providing travellers with greater flexibility and more options to connect between Kuala Lumpur and Melbourne.



Batik Air will operate four weekly direct flights between KL and Melbourne, enhancing connectivity and strengthening its presence in Australia.



Presidential frontrunner vows to address 'Korea Discount'

SEOUL: South Korea's leading presidential candidate Lee Jae-myung pledged yesterday to revive legislation to curb abuses by controlling shareholders, as part of a plan to boost the stock market and eliminate the so-called "Korea Discount".

The liberal candidate announced his pledge to double the value of the country's main stock index, in an effort to woo the country's 14 million retail investors, widely known as "ants".

"I will end the 'Korea Discount' era and open the 'Korea Premium' era," said Lee, who is leading opinion polls for the presidential election in June.

The 'Korea Discount' refers to the lower valuations that South Korean companies typically trade on relative to their global peers partly due to the dominance of family-owned conglomerates, which have been criticised for putting their interests ahead of other shareholders.

South Korea's Parliament, controlled by the liberal Democratic Party formerly led by Lee, passed a revision of the Commercial Act in March that expanded the fiduciary duty of board members to include protecting the interests of minority shareholders.

But acting President Han Duck-soo vetoed the legislation, which he said could impede management's decision-making and create unnecessary confusion.

The country's business lobby groups also raised objections.

South Korea last year proposed a programme to boost the value of listed companies through voluntary measures, such as setting out their own plans to improve shareholder value.

The initiative has been criticised for being too weak, with analysts and investors say amending the Commercial Act would be a more effective way of improving corporate governance and tackling the Korea Discount.

Lee also promised to set out a roadmap for South Korea's domestic stock market to secure developed market status from global index provider Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI).

South Korea last month lifted a five year ban on short-selling, which MSCI had cited as a factor hindering foreign access.

Lee, who was an active stock investor in the past, also vowed to crack down on stock price manipulation.

South Korea's KOSPI index has been pressured by political instability stemming from the impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol, as well as US tariffs.

On Sunday, Lee won a landslide victory in the second round of primaries of the Democratic Party, which plans to pick its presidential candidate on April 27.

His popularity rating for the presidential election is over 50%, against 12% for conservative frontrunner Kim Moon-soo, according to a Realmeter poll. — Reuters

Beijing warns nations against 'appeasing' Washington

➤ **US pressures trading partners to freeze out China, report says**

BEIJING: China yesterday accused Washington of abusing tariffs and warned countries against striking a broader economic deal with the United States at its expense, ratcheting up its rhetoric in a spiralling trade war between the world's two biggest economies.

Beijing will firmly oppose any party striking a deal at China's expense and "will take countermeasures in a resolute and reciprocal manner", its Commerce Ministry said.

The ministry was responding to a Bloomberg report, citing sources familiar with the matter, that the Trump administration is preparing to pressure nations seeking tariff reductions or exemptions from the US to curb trade with China, including imposing monetary sanctions.

President Donald Trump paused the sweeping tariffs he announced on dozens of countries on April 2 except those on China, singling out the world's second largest economy for the biggest levies.

In a series of moves, Washington

has raised tariffs on Chinese imports to 145%, prompting Beijing to slap retaliatory duties of 125% on US goods, effectively erecting trade embargoes against each other.

Last week, China signalled that its own across-the-board rates would not rise further.

"The US has abused tariffs on all trading partners under the banner of so-called 'equivalence', while also forcing all parties to start so-called 'reciprocal tariffs' negotiations with them," the ministry spokesman said.

China is determined and capable of safeguarding its own rights and interests, and is willing to strengthen solidarity with all parties, the ministry said.

"The fact is, nobody wants to pick a side," said Bo Zhengyuan, partner at China-based policy consultancy Plenum.

"If countries have high reliance on China in terms of investment, industrial infrastructure, technology know-how and consumption, I don't think they'll be buying into US demands. Many Southeast Asian countries belong to this category."

Pursuing a hardline stance, Beijing will this week convene an informal United Nations Security Council meeting to accuse Washington of bullying and "casting a shadow over the global efforts for peace and development" by weaponising tariffs.

Earlier this month, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said nearly 50 countries have approached him to discuss the steep additional tariffs imposed by Trump.

Several bilateral talks on tariffs have taken place since, with Japan considering raising soybean and rice imports as part of its talks with America while Indonesia is planning to increase US food and commodities imports and reduce orders from other nations.

Trump's tariff policies have rattled financial markets as investors fear a severe disruption in world trade could tip the global economy into recession.

China stocks inched higher yesterday, showing little reaction to the Commerce Ministry comments, though investors have generally remained cautious on Chinese assets due to the rising growth risks.

The Trump administration also has been trying to curb Beijing's progress in developing advanced semiconductor chips which it says could be used for military purposes, and last week imposed port fees on China-built vessels to limit China's dominance in shipbuilding.

AI chip giant Nvidia said last week it would take US\$5.5 billion in charges due to the administration's curbs on AI chip exports.

China President Xi Jinping visited three Southeast Asian countries last

week in a move to bolster regional ties, calling on trade partners to oppose unilateral bullying.

Beijing has said it is "tearing down walls" and expanding its circle of trading partners amid the trade row.

The stakes are high for Southeast Asian nations caught in the crossfire of the Sino-US tariff war, particularly given Asean's huge two-way trade with both China and the United States.

Economic ministers from Thailand and Indonesia are currently in the United States, seeking trade negotiations.

Six countries in Southeast Asia were hit with tariffs ranging from 32% to 49%, threatening trade-reliant economies that have benefited from investment from levies imposed on Beijing by Trump in his first term.

Asean is China's largest trading partner, with total trade value reaching US\$234 billion in the first quarter of 2025, China's customs agency said last week.

Trade between Asean and the US totalled around \$476.8 billion in 2024, according to US figures, making Washington the regional bloc's fourth-largest trading partner.

"There are no winners in trade wars and tariff wars," Xi said in an article published in Vietnamese media, without mentioning the United States. — Reuters

Japan to voice concern over American trade deal inconsistency

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said yesterday Tokyo has no plan to terminate a trade deal struck with the US in 2019, but will keep voicing "grave concern" over inconsistency between the deal and

President Donald Trump's latest automobile tariffs.

During Trump's first term as president, the United States and Japan signed a bilateral trade deal in 2019 that cut tariffs on American

farm goods, Japanese machine tools and other products while staving off the threat of higher US car duties.

Although the agreement did not cover automobile trade, then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

said he had received assurances from Trump that the US would not impose "Section 232" national security tariffs on Japanese car imports.

"Between President Trump and I, myself, this has been firmly confirmed that no further, additional tariffs will imposed," Abe had told reporters.

Japan, however, was not exempted from Trump's latest 25% tariff slapped on all automobile imports in the US.

"Japan has grave concern over the consistency" with regards to the latest US automobile tariffs and the 2019 bilateral trade deal," Ishiba said.

"We will continue to convey our stance (to the US) from this standpoint," he said, although he said Japan has no plan to terminate the 2019 agreement altogether.

Japan's top trade negotiator, Ryosei Akazawa, visited Washington last week to kick off bilateral trade talks with the US. — Reuters



Ishiba (right) listening to Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof (left) delivering an opening address at the start of their meeting at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP/PPIC

Tariff worries spur record overseas demand for Japanese govt bonds

TOKYO: The longest-dated Japanese government bonds attracted record foreign demand last month as money shifted out of American debt in search of other safe havens as President Donald Trump's aggressive tariffs sparked concerns of a US recession.

Overseas investors scooped up some ¥2.18 trillion (RM67.7 billion) of

JGBs with maturities of more than 10 years in March, figures released by the Japan Securities Dealers Association showed yesterday, the largest amount since the data series started in April 2004.

Trump ramped up levies over the course of last month, including a 25% tariff on cars and parts, in the runup to

his April 2 announcement of sweeping duties that sent global markets into a broad tailspin.

At the same time, local insurers shed a record ¥645.8 billion of super-long JGBs in the month as they adjusted portfolios at the end of Japan's fiscal year, said Shoki Omori, chief desk strategist at Mizuho Securities.

Waning bets for near-term interest rate hikes by the Bank of Japan due to the uncertain global trade environment also made it easier for foreign investors to buy JGBs, Omori said.

The 30-year JGB yield stood at 2.76% yesterday, after a four-week period when it was whipsawed by tariff headlines, plunging to the lowest

since October at 2.195% on April 7, and then catapulting to a two-decade peak at 2.845% a week later.

Over the course of March, the 30-year yield rose some 17 basis points to 2.52%, hitting a then-19-year peak of 2.63% mid-month before starting their descent as market volatility escalated. — Reuters

Seoul finds increase in 'Made in Korea' breaches

► Some firms use false country-of-origin markings to bypass Trump's tariffs

SEOUL: South Korea has found increased attempts to disguise foreign products as Korean exports, primarily from China, to avoid US President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs, its customs agency said yesterday.

The Korea Customs Service said it has found 29.5 billion won (RM91 million) worth of violations related to country of origin from the first quarter, with US-bound shipments accounting for 97% of the total, after a special probe last month.

That compared to a total of 34.8 billion won worth of violations for all of 2024, among which US-bound shipments accounted for 62%.

Trump, who took office in January, has imposed significant tariffs on various products

and countries, including those on China that began to rise from February.

"There was a rise in disguised export attempts during Trump's first presidency and we expect there to be a similar trend," said Lee Kwang-woo, investigation planning director at the KCS.

Anticipating increased risks, authorities conducted the latest investigation preemptively to prevent illegal exports.

They have already found signs of such attempts to avoid Trump's tariffs from the first quarter, Lee said during a media briefing.

South Korean customs officials held a meeting with US officials yesterday to discuss joint investigation efforts.

South Korean officials have said there could be a rise in attempts by foreign companies, such as those in neighbouring China, to use South Korea, which is a major US ally and has a free-trade pact, as a bypass to avoid tariffs and regulations.

Trump slapped 25% tariffs on South Korea this month, among a new set of sweeping levies, which were later suspended for three months.

The US now imposes 145% tariffs on China after back-and-forth retaliatory actions, which economists say have severed trade between the world's two biggest economies.

Monday's findings include 3.3 billion won worth of cathode materials used for batteries, imported from China and shipped to the US with South Korea falsely marked as the country of origin, to avoid already high tariffs in January even before Trump's tariffs took effect.

In March, 19.3 billion won worth of surveillance cameras were imported from China in parts and reassembled in South Korea to bypass US restrictions on Chinese communication devices.

Some of the goods have been shipped abroad while others are still at the port.

The Korea Customs Service has launched a special task force to prevent attempts to illegally export such goods and plans to come up with more specific response measures to protect domestic companies.

Meanwhile, the violations discovered will be referred to prosecutors. — Reuters



An employee helping a customer to buy gold jewellery at a shop in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. — AFP/PIIC

Gold hits record high, dollar falls to three-year low

NEW YORK: Gold scaled a record peak yesterday, spurred by concerns over global economic growth amid the US-China trade war, while a weaker dollar further boosted the rally.

Spot gold advanced 1.9% to US\$3,391.02 an ounce as of 0641 GMT (2.41pm in Malaysia) after hitting a record high of US\$3,391.62 earlier in the session.

US gold futures firmed 2.2% to US\$3,402.80.

The dollar index hit a three-year low, making gold more attractive for other currency holders.

"Fundamentally, markets are pricing in heightened geopolitical risks, driven by US tariff tensions and stagflation concerns, while resilient central bank demand offers an added

tailwind for prices as well," said IG market strategist Yeap Jun Rong.

US President Donald Trump announced "reciprocal tariffs" on dozens of countries on April 2, and while his administration paused levies for some countries, it has ratcheted its trade battle with China.

Meanwhile, Trump launched a series of attacks against Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell, with his team evaluating whether they could fire Powell.

On the geopolitical front, Russia and Ukraine accused each other of thousands of attacks that violated the one-day Easter ceasefire declared by President Vladimir Putin,

with the Kremlin saying there was no order to extend the pause in frontline fighting.

These issues bode well for the safe-haven bullion.

However, gold's relative strength index (RSI) stands at 75, indicating that the metal is overbought.

"The next potential milestone for gold could be around the US\$3,500 level, though positioning may appear crowded in the near term and technical indicators suggest near-term overbought conditions," Yeap said.

Spot silver added 0.8% to US\$32.84 an ounce, platinum gained 1% to US\$976.60, while palladium fell 0.2% to US\$961.50. — Reuters

JD.com calls out anti-competitive pressures on food delivery couriers

SHANGHAI: Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com highlighted anti-competitive pressures on food delivery couriers in a social media post yesterday, alleging that other platforms were coercing couriers to avoid working with JD Takeaway.

JD Takeaway began onboarding restaurants in February with promises of "zero commissions all year round", marking its entrance into China's highly competitive food delivery space and threatening to disrupt the market share of leading players who rely on scale for success in this low-margin sector.

In the post on JD.com's official Weixin account, addressed to couriers working with JD Takeaway, the company said it was aware of pressures on them to not accept orders from JD.com and that it sympathised with their plight of being forced to choose between platforms.

JD.com did not name competing platforms in its post.

China's food delivery sector has long been dominated by giant Meituan, with Alibaba-owned Ele.me the second-largest player in the country based on market share.

Meituan and Ele.me did not immediately reply to an e-mailed request for comment on JD.com's post.

However, Meituan, in a post on its Weixin account, said it had punished one of its drivers for falsely claiming he had been banned by Meituan for taking orders from other platforms, describing the driver's claim as "pure fabrication".

JD.com has promised to provide sufficient orders to couriers banned by other platforms to ensure they can maintain their income level.

It also said it would double its recruitment aim for full-time riders to 100,000 from 50,000 in the next three months.

JD.com is the first platform to offer its full-time riders direct labour contracts, making them eligible to collect full insurance benefits. — Reuters

Second Boeing jet starts return from China, tracker shows

SEOUL: A second Boeing jet intended for use by a Chinese airline was heading back to the US yesterday, flight tracking data showed, in what appears to be another victim of the tit-for-tat bilateral tariffs launched by President Donald Trump in his global trade offensive.

The 737 MAX 8 landed in the US territory of Guam yesterday, after leaving Boeing's Zhoushan completion centre near Shanghai, data from flight tracking website AirNav Radar showed.

Guam is one of the stops such flights make on the 8,000km journey across the Pacific between Boeing's US production hub in Seattle and the Zhoushan completion centre, where planes are ferried by Boeing for final work and delivery to a Chinese carrier.

On Sunday a 737 MAX painted with the livery for China's Xiamen Airlines made the return journey from Zhoushan and landed at Seattle's Boeing field.

It is not clear which party made the decision for the two aircraft to return to the US.

Trump this month raised baseline tariffs on Chinese imports to 145%. In retaliation, China has imposed a 125% tariff on US goods.

A Chinese airline taking delivery of a Boeing jet could be crippled by the tariffs, given that a new 737 MAX has a market value of around US\$55 million, according to IBA, an aviation consultancy.

The plane flew from Seattle to Zhoushan just under a month ago.

The return of the 737 MAX jets, Boeing's best-selling model, is the latest sign of disruption to new aircraft deliveries from a breakdown in the aerospace industry's decades-old duty-free status.

Confusion over changing tariffs could leave many aircraft deliveries in limbo, with some airline CEOs saying they would defer delivery of planes rather than pay duties, analysts say. — Reuters



Indonesia March trade surplus **hits four-month high**

► Shipments beat estimates on strong palm oil and nickel exports

JAKARTA: Indonesia reported yesterday a US\$4.33 billion (RM19 billion) trade surplus in March, more than expected and the widest in four months as shipments beat estimates on strong palm oil and nickel exports as well as a rush to beat the start date for US tariffs.

A Reuters poll of analysts had expected a surplus of US\$2.64 billion in March.

The March surplus was the largest since November 2024, according to LSEG data.

Exports from the resource-rich country have rebounded from lows reached after the end of a commodity boom in 2022, but shipments could soon be affected by a dimming global growth outlook due to the trade war sparked by US tariffs.

Among the countries that US President Donald Trump targeted for tariffs above 10%, Indonesia was hit with a 32% levy, which has been paused for 90 days.

Several Indonesian ministers have been in Washington since last week to try to negotiate a deal to avoid the tariffs, presenting a proposal that includes buying more American products to reduce the trade gap with the US.

Exports rose 3.16% on an annual basis in March to US\$23.25 billion, official data showed yesterday, compared with a 3.4% fall expected by economists polled by Reuters.



A container is unloaded from a truck at Tanjung Priok Port in Jakarta. – REUTERS/PIC

Shipments of palm oil surged nearly 41% last month from the same month in 2024 to US\$2.19 billion, while nickel metals exports rose 12% to US\$2.38 billion.

They helped offset a drop in coal exports.

Total imports were worth US\$18.92 billion, the statistics bureau said, up 5.34% on a yearly basis, compared with the poll's prediction of a 6.6% rise.

Hosianna Situmorang, an

economist with Bank Danamon, called March's surplus solid, bolstered by rising US-bound exports.

"Exporters accelerated shipments ahead of Trump's reciprocal tariffs, causing heavy port congestion at Tanjung Priok, while freight bookings at Chinese ports plunged by 640-800K containers, signaling early spillover from trade tensions," she said, referring to Jakarta's main port.

Exports of electronics, footwear and knitted apparel to the US grew

more than 15% each on a yearly basis in the first quarter, the data showed. The three were Indonesia's biggest export products to the US.

The trade surplus with the US also was the biggest contributor to Indonesia's overall surplus in January-March 2025, standing at US\$4.32 billion, up from US\$3.61 billion in the same period in 2024.

Indonesia's overall trade surplus in the first quarter reached US\$10.92 billion. – Reuters

Thai Q1 rice exports fall 30% annually

BANGKOK: Thailand's rice exports fell 30% annually in the first quarter of this year to 2.1 million metric tonnes, an industry association said yesterday.

The decline was due to countries delaying buying decisions and India resuming rice exports, Thai Rice Exporters Association honorary president Chookiat Ophaswongse told reporters.

Full-year exports could fall below the forecast of 7.5 million tonnes, he said, but exporters were seeing more US orders after a 90-day pause on the imposition of steep new tariffs.

Exports in the second quarter would be similar to the first three months of the year, he said.

The tariff of 36% imposed on Southeast Asia's second-largest economy is among the higher rates imposed by US President Donald Trump's administration.

A delegation led by Finance Minister Pichai Chunhavanjira will meet US officials in Washington this week to seek lower tariffs.

Thailand is the world's second-largest rice exporter, but could lose that title if tariffs were higher than 10%, Chookiat said.

Last year, Thailand shipped 9.94 million tonnes of rice, with the US being its third-largest market by volume. – Reuters

LG Energy Solution pulls out of Indonesian EV battery investment

JAKARTA: South Korea's LG Energy Solution (LGES) has formally withdrawn from a 142 trillion rupiah (RM37 billion) project in electric vehicle (EV) battery making in Indonesia, the company said yesterday.

LGES and the Indonesian government signed a deal on the so-called Indonesia Grand Package project in late 2020, which include investments across the EV battery supply chain.

"Taking into account various factors, including market conditions, we have agreed to formally withdraw from the Indonesia GP (Grand Package) project," LGES said in a statement.

"However, we will continue to explore various avenues of collaboration with the Indonesian government, centring on the Indonesia battery joint venture, HLI Green Power," it added.

HLI Green Power is a joint venture led by LGES and Hyundai Motor Group.

The company last year inaugurated Indonesia's first battery cell production plant for EVs with annual capacity of 10 Gigawatt hours of battery cells.

The Investment Ministry as well as state companies Aneka Tambang and Indonesia Battery Corporation, which had planned to partner with LGES for the project, did not respond to requests for comment. – Reuters

Vietnam to finalise restructuring plan for lender SCB

HANOI: Vietnam's central bank is finalising a report, based on a plan from an unspecified investor, to restructure ailing Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank, the lender at the centre of the country's biggest financial fraud on record, local media reported.

Last month, Reuters reported that Vietnam developer Sun Group had proposed a rescue plan for SCB, which entailed the full reimbursement within 15 years of nearly US\$26 billion (RM114 billion) the central bank has pumped into SCB since October 2022 after a run on its deposits.

The State Bank of Vietnam has drafted a report about the rescue plan prepared by the unspecified investor, the Finance Ministry's *Dau Tu* newspaper reported during the weekend.

The draft is subject to changes after opinions from relevant state bodies, the paper said, giving no details on the plan or a timeframe for its submission.

Reuters has reported that Sun Group had been appointed by the central bank to prepare the restructuring plan for SCB.

The central bank, SCB and Sun Group did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

The State Bank of Vietnam placed SCB under its supervision to stem a run on the bank sparked by the October 2022 arrest of real estate tycoon Truong My Lan, who was later sentenced to death over her role in siphoning off from SCB the equivalent of billions of dollars in loans to shell companies she controlled.

In a separate trial over money laundering and the illegal issuance of corporate bonds, Lan yesterday had

an additional life sentence reduced to 30 years on appeal, according to state media.

SCB has been using cash injections from the central bank to cover cash withdrawals since October 2022, Reuters has reported.

The central bank and government have repeatedly sought help for SCB from the private sector, specifically calling on foreign investors, according to state media, despite restrictions such as a 30% cap on combined foreign ownership of Vietnamese banks. – Reuters

Keppel gets nearly S\$2 billion in capital commitments for its funds

SINGAPORE: Keppel, a Singapore-based manager and operator of assets such as data centres, said yesterday that it has secured close to S\$2 billion (RM6.7 billion) of capital commitments from global institutional investors for its flagship funds.

Keppel said in a statement that

the commitments were for its Keppel Data Centre Fund III, the Keppel Education Asset Fund II and its sustainable urban renewal strategy.

Christina Tan, Keppel's CEO of fund management and also its chief investment officer, said the

securing of capital reflected the resilient demand for alternative real assets anchored to macro trends including climate change and energy transition, urbanisation and artificial intelligence.

Keppel said the investors included pension and insurance

funds, as well as a sovereign wealth fund.

It did not name the investors.

Tan said the commitments bring Keppel closer to achieving its funds under management target of S\$100 billion by 2026 and S\$200 billion by 2030. – Reuters

MARKET ROUND-UP: APRIL 21

Bursa Trade Statistic

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

21 April 2025

Participation

Retail (25.14%)		Institution (43.55%)		Foreign (31.31%)	
Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)		Net (in RM mil.)	
-0.15		+101.29		-101.14	
Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
300.05	300.20	570.61	469.32	323.16	424.30

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

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Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE	
FBMEMAS	11,095.30	-26.11
FBMKLCI	1,499.47	+0.07
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	492.62	-2.19
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	144.03	-1.05
CONSTRUCTION	254.62	-0.41
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,009.10	-24.36
ENERGY	660.01	-5.86
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	484.68	+2.90
HEALTH CARE	1,860.97	-8.88
TRANSPORTATION	959.58	-1.16
PROPERTY	954.70	-0.61
PLANTATION	7,211.13	-15.25
FBMSHA	10,885.00	-25.06
FBMACE	4,566.20	-9.18
TECHNOLOGY	44.56	-0.42

TURNOVER: 1.535 bil

VALUE: RM1.193 bil

FBM KLCI ends flat, losers beat gainers on broader market

BURSA Malaysia's benchmark index closed flat to settle at slightly below the 1,500-mark yesterday as investors balanced persistent global uncertainties with signs of underlying domestic resilience, said an analyst.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI inched up 0.07 of-a-point to 1,499.47 compared to Friday's close of 1,499.40.

The benchmark index opened 2.68 points higher at an intraday high of 1,502.08 and hit an intraday low of 1,494.27 during the early afternoon session.

In the broader market, decliners outpaced gainers 512 to 308, while 463 counters were unchanged, 1,142 untraded, and 39 others suspended.

Turnover dwindled to 1.53 billion units valued at RM1.19 billion against Friday's 1.69 billion units valued at RM1.24 billion.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors Sdn Bhd head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan said while external headwinds, including trade negotiations and economic data variability, continued to shape sentiment, yesterday's market activity appeared to be a natural pause following last week's 3% rebound.

Among Bursa Malaysia's heavyweights, Public Bank added one sen to RM4.40, Hong Leong Bank increased 14 sen to RM19.98, CelcomDigi advanced eight sen to RM3.67, IHH Healthcare and Petronas Gas were flat at RM6.89 and RM16.90, respectively, Maybank declined four sen to RM9.98, while Tenaga Nasional and CIMB both eased two sen to RM13.48 and RM6.86, respectively.

As for the actives, NexG went up 2.5 sen to 34.5 sen, Magma rose by 7.5 sen to 37 sen, Peterlabs was 4.5 sen higher at 29.5 sen, Ingenieur Gudang and MY E.G. were flat at four sen and 91 sen, respectively. - Bernama

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [RM]	+/- [%]	VOLUME ('00)
INGENIEU	0.040	-	-	872,138
NEXG	0.345	+0.025	+7.81	395,304
TANCO	0.880	-0.010	-1.12	374,285
MAGMA	0.370	+0.075	+25.42	281,169
MYEG	0.910	-	-	251,389
SUMI	0.185	-	-	242,017
PLABS	0.295	+0.045	+18.00	228,766
YEWLEE-WA	0.240	-0.010	-4.00	218,071
VELESTO	0.150	-0.010	-6.25	206,190
TANCO-WC	0.740	+0.010	+1.37	204,000
GOCEAN	0.195	+0.005	+2.63	186,949
DATAPRP	0.120	-0.015	-11.11	179,859
INARI	1.710	-0.030	-1.72	172,411
PERTAMA	0.130	-0.010	-7.14	166,537
BPURI	0.345	-	-	164,905
NATGATE	1.200	-0.010	-0.83	159,529
SDCC	0.520	-	-	150,797
JIANKUN	0.030	-	-	137,871
NEXG-WB	0.210	+0.020	+10.53	135,183
TCHONG	0.315	+0.025	+8.62	130,724



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [RM]	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	80.500	+0.700	1,501
SP500-H53	1.730	+0.230	588
HLFG	17.000	+0.200	2,497
NDX/MACM PW 09.25	0.800	+0.190	1,780
ALIBABA-C41	0.395	+0.185	1
OIB	1.450	+0.170	7,785
PETDAG	19.500	+0.160	1,162
FACBND	1.270	+0.150	370
CVIEW	1.940	+0.140	315
HLBANK	19.980	+0.140	5,066
SHL	2.300	+0.140	96
NDX-HK	0.920	+0.130	3,173
UTDPLT	22.900	+0.120	8,325
GOLDFE	4.700	+0.110	1,913
KESM	2.980	+0.100	29
SP500/MACM PW 09.25	0.890	+0.090	308
AJI	14.000	+0.080	107
AXIATA	1.950	+0.080	94,052
CDB	3.670	+0.080	29,073
MAGMA	0.370	+0.075	281,169

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [%]	VOLUME ('00)
GENM-C3F	0.015	+200.00	39,082
YTL-CIA	0.015	+200.00	31
MAXIS-C51	0.060	+140.00	240
EAH	0.010	+100.00	16,860
PHB	0.010	+100.00	12,360
ALIBABA-C41	0.395	+88.10	1
ITMAX-CP	0.070	+75.00	500
MBSB-C77	0.035	+75.00	9,001
SGFCAP-WC	0.035	+75.00	97,194
JTISA-C3	0.070	+55.56	510
BURSA-C93	0.075	+50.00	318
NATGATE-CL	0.015	+50.00	31,000
XDL	0.015	+50.00	13,500
RHONEMA-WA	0.050	+42.86	15,640
SUNWAY-C36	0.050	+42.86	6,000
CMSB-C59	0.020	+33.33	250
HLBANK-C6	0.040	+33.33	100
HSI-CWCE	0.040	+33.33	380
MBSB-C75	0.020	+33.33	1,200
MOBILIA-WB	0.020	+33.33	50

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA [US]	39,142.23	-527.16	-1.33
S&P 500 [US]	5,282.70	7	0.13
NASDAQ [US]	16,286.45	-20.71	-0.13
NYSE [US]	18,367.12	121.47	0.67
EURO STOXX 50 [EUR]	4,935.34	-31.16	-0.63
FTSE 100 [UK]	8,275.66	0.06	0
DAX [GER]	21,205.86	-105.16	-0.49
NIKKEI 225 [JPN]	34,279.92	-450.36	-1.3
TOPIX INDEX [JPN]	2,528.93	-30.22	-1.18
HANG SENG INDEX [HK]	21,395.14	338.16	1.61
CSI 300 [CHN]	3,784.88	12.36	0.33
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	179.09	0.74	0.41
SHANGHAI SE COM [CHN]	3,291.43	14.7	0.45
KOSPI INDEX [SK]	2,488.42	5	0.2
SENSEX INDEX [IND]	79,448.85	895.65	1.14
ASX 200 [AUS]	7,819.14	60.23	0.78
ALL ORDINARIES INDX [AUS]	8,021.90	60.17	0.76
FBM KLCI	1,499.47	0.07	0
STRAITS TIMES INDEX [S'PORE]	3,763.16	42.83	1.15
WTI [US\$/BBL]	63.11	-1.57	-2.43
BRENT [US\$/BBL]	66.41	-1.55	-2.28
GOLD [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	3,405.60	77.2	2.32
SILVER [COMEX] [US\$/T OZ]	33.05	0.27	0.81
PLATINUM [US\$/T OZ]	975.32	2.31	0.24
COPPER [COMEX] [US CENTS/LB.]	482.85	3.8	0.79
COPPER 3MO [LME] [US\$/MT]	9,188.50	-15	-0.16
CORN [US CENTS/BU.]	493.25	3	0.61
WHEAT [US CENTS/BU.]	562.25	0	0
SOYBEAN OIL [CBOT] [US CENTS/LB.]	48.54	0.2	0.41
COCOA [ICE] [US\$/MT]	8,295.00	289	3.61
RUBBER [S'PORE] [US CENTS/KG]	168.6	2	1.2

As at 5pm, April 21

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [RM]	VOLUME ('00)
F&N	25.900	-0.840	591
DLADY	27.500	-0.500	75
MPI	15.100	-0.360	875
BKAWAN	18.740	-0.260	26
ALLIANZ	17.340	-0.240	196
KLK	19.920	-0.200	866
HEIM	26.500	-0.160	2,325
SAM	3.110	-0.140	7,742
HLIND	13.440	-0.120	79
LPI	13.980	-0.120	297
KSENG	5.230	-0.110	250
MBMR	5.540	-0.110	1,378
PENTA	2.170	-0.110	16,960
MATRIX-CQ	0.050	-0.100	1,000
LEBTECH	0.660	-0.090	36
196168	0.070	-0.080	6,000
AMBANK	5.120	-0.080	39,708
SP500/MACM Wt 09.25	0.530	-0.080	1,560
NIKKEI-HM	2.320	-0.080	25
AEONCR	5.900	-0.070	2,448

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING [RM]	+/- [%]	VOLUME ('00)
MATRIX-CQ	0.050	-66.67	1,000
196168	0.070	-53.33	6,000
CIMB-CIS	0.005	-50.00	500
HONGSENG	0.005	-50.00	1,423
INGENIEU-WB	0.005	-50.00	42,984
NDX-CJ	0.020	-50.00	12,500
PERMAJU-PA	0.005	-50.00	210
SNS-CB	0.005	-50.00	200
TOPGLOV-C5C	0.090	-40.00	200
99SMART-CB	0.010	-33.33	71,323
AHB-WC	0.010	-33.33	184
AMBANK-C50	0.030	-33.33	18,852
ARTRONIQ-WA	0.010	-33.33	555
DUFU-CZ	0.010	-33.33	2,000
ITRONIC-WA	0.010	-33.33	1,300
MTRONIC	0.010	-33.33	1,944
MSC-CR	0.010	-33.33	1,000
NATGATE-CK	0.010	-33.33	3,600
PENTA-C49	0.010	-33.33	1,000
PLANT/RHB Wt 10.25	0.100	-33.33	339

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**

Local banks remain attractive despite trade tensions: HLIB

KUALA LUMPUR: Hong Leong Investment Bank Bhd (HLIB) said Malaysian banks are expected to be among the more attractive sectors for investors seeking refuge from US President Donald Trump's trade war.

The investment bank said the sector's robust dividend yield of 5% presents a compelling carry proposition, offering a natural cushion against capital downside and providing an effective price floor amid market volatility.

"Moreover, valuations remain undemanding while the sector's earnings outlook is fairly resilient," it said in a note yesterday.

The bank cut its 2025 GDP forecast for Malaysia to 4% from 4.9%, and flagged that Bank Negara Malaysia may reduce the overnight policy rate (OPR) by 25 basis points to 2.75% in the second half of 2025 to support growth.

While banks typically face margin compression following an OPR cut, HLIB said the impact may be more limited compared to past unexpected reductions.

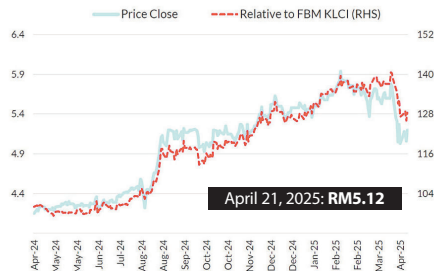
"This is primarily because banks are likely to take a more proactive stance in anticipation of easing by shortening fixed deposit (FD) tenures to allow quicker repricing at lower cost, and moderating FD growth to avoid overexposure ahead of adjustments.

"Also, we expect pricey campaign FD rates to moderate more substantially within six to nine months post-OPR cut, as banks capitalise on the opportunity to stretch their net interest margin (NIM) expansion," it said.

Still, HLIB estimates that every 25 basis point policy rate cut would compress sector NIM by 5.0 to 6.0 basis points. – Bernama

AMMB Holdings Bhd

Neutral. Target price: RM5.70



Source: Bloomberg

AMMB's relatively large exposure to the trade and manufacturing sectors potentially leaves it more exposed to US tariff-induced uncertainties, while recent M&A news flow – while unconfirmed presently – may also weigh on its share price. The stock has risen by >30% since the start of 2024, and we do not expect a similar performance in 2025. As such, we think it is a good time to take some chips off the table, for now.

RHB Economics has turned more cautious on the global macroeconomic outlook. In the base case (55% assigned probability), the US universal tariffs rise by another 10% to total 20% in 2H25, while a bad case (40% probability) sees the return of reciprocal tariffs being implemented in 2H25 at similar or higher to the rates introduced on April 2. Consequently, Malaysia's GDP growth projection has been lowered to 4.5% from 5%, with the balance of risks tilted towards a 3.5-4% print if tensions ramp up further. The trade and manufacturing sectors are expected to face increasing challenges but, for now, our Overnight Policy Rate (OPR) forecast remains at 3%.

Based on our channel checks, AMMB has a comparatively large share of trade-related loans (e.g. bills, trust receipts) and manufacturing loans vs the rest of the sector, which poses risks to AMMB's loan growth, should trade and manufacturing activity slow down. Working capital loan demand could also decrease in tandem with softer general economic activities. On the non-I side, investment banking, stockbroking and wealth fees could all be impacted by the challenging market environment, but these could be mitigated by enhanced trading and investment opportunities.

NEUTRAL with RM5.70 TP. – **RHB Research, April 21**

Ringgit nears six-month high on weak sentiment over US assets

THE ringgit jumped to its highest level in almost six months, against the US dollar at the close yesterday, touching the 4.36-level amid concerns over ongoing tariff tension.

At 6pm, the ringgit surged to 4.3670/3735 against the greenback, compared to last Friday's close of 4.4100/4175.

Previously on Oct 28, 2024, the ringgit hit a high of 4.3605/3640 against the greenback.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said the ringgit continues to gain strength against the greenback amidst heightened uncertainties over tariff issues.

"It appears that inconsistencies in policymaking as well as antagonising their allies have led to weak sentiments over US assets.

"In some sense, the current predicament has resulted in the acceleration in the de-dollarisation trend as reflected in the decline in foreign holdings of US treasury bonds and subsequently lower US treasury yields," he told Bernama.

Meanwhile, the ringgit traded mostly lower against a basket of major currencies.

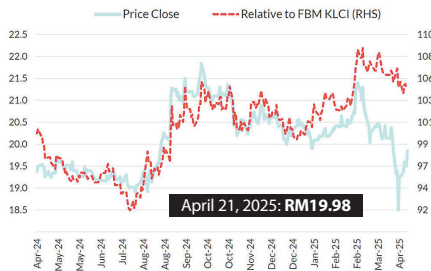
It weakened against the Japanese yen to 3.1046/1095 from 3.0971/1028 at last Friday's close, eased against the euro to 5.0408/0483 from 5.0133/0218 but was slightly higher against the British pound to 5.8513/8601 from 5.8516/8616.

The local note performed mostly higher against Asean currencies.

The ringgit firmed against the Singapore dollar to 3.3515/3570 from 3.3562/3601 at last Friday's close, and appreciated against the Indonesian rupiah to 259.8/260.3 compared with 261.2/261.8 previously.

Hong Leong Bank Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM24.30



Source: Bloomberg

WE promote Hong Leong Bank as a key defensive pick for the following reasons: i) The group's domestic- and household-centric portfolio with stable asset quality insulates it from a potential trade downturn; ii) near-15-year low valuations means the downside risks are capped. In our view, downside risks are mostly second order, and are largely in relation to associate Bank of Chengdu (BOCD) and the wider China economy.

HLBK's domestic and household-heavy lending portfolio, along with its solid asset quality, place it in a safer position to weather through the US tariff uncertainties. We also expect NIM to stay resilient, given the banking group's smaller regional exposure. In our view, the main earnings risk for HLBK stems from associate contributions, where BOCD faces NIM pressure amid a monetary policy easing cycle. In fact, the Bloomberg consensus' estimate for BOCD's FY25 (Dec) PATMI has been cut by 5% since the turn of the year. More broadly, should China's GDP growth be lower-than-expected (RHB Economics' bear case assumes that China's GDP growth will decelerate to <3%), negative sentiment could weigh on HLBK's share price, in our view.

HLBK's valuations have de-rated over the past two years, despite its ROEs having held up well. In fact, its current P/BV of 0.98x is near the 15-year low of 0.94x recorded during the Covid-19 pandemic. If the P/BV retreats further to that level, the resultant share price of RM18.80 would imply a 4% downside to the current level, i.e. not that substantial.

BUY with RM24.30 TP. – **RHB Research, April 21**

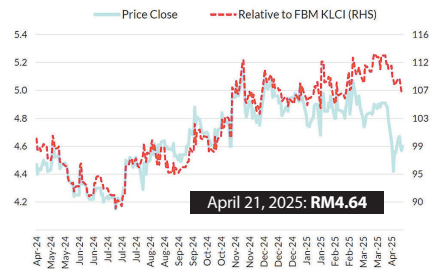
Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.4650	4.3310	4.3210
1 Australian Dollar	2.8700	2.7540	2.7380
1 Brunei Dollar	3.4170	3.3190	3.3110
1 Canadian Dollar	3.2280	3.1400	3.1280
1 Euro	5.1300	4.9640	4.9440
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.6730	2.5760	2.5600
1 Singapore Dollar	3.4170	3.3190	3.3110
1 Sterling Pound	5.9690	5.7800	5.7600
1 Swiss Franc	5.5430	5.3050	5.2900
100 UAE Dirham	122.9900	116.6100	116.4100
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.7510	3.4930	3.2930
100 Chinese Renminbi	61.6300	59.0300	59.0300
100 Danish Krone	70.4300	64.8100	64.6100
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.1300	55.2400	55.0400
100 Indian Rupee	5.3200	4.9900	4.7900
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0275	0.0248	0.0198
100 Japanese Yen	3.1700	3.0690	3.0590
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.8000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	43.8800	40.3500	40.1500
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6200	1.5200	1.3200
100 Philippine Peso	8.0100	7.5400	7.3400
100 Qatar Riyal	123.8500	117.5700	117.3700
100 Saudi Riyal	120.3000	114.2000	114.0000
100 South Africa Rand	24.6700	22.2900	22.0900
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5300	1.4100	1.2100
100 Swedish Krona	48.1900	43.8600	43.6600
100 Thai Baht	14.0600	12.4700	12.0700

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

SD Guthrie Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM5.65



Source: Bloomberg

SDG is collaborating with Eco World and Negeri Sembilan state investment arm NS Corp to develop a 1,195-acre industrial park. The park is to be developed within Parcel C of Malaysia Vision Valley 2.0 (MVV2.0) at Bukit Pelandok, Negeri Sembilan. This area, owned by SDG under its Bukit Pelandok Estate, is currently planted with oil palm. According to its latest annual report, SDG's landbank in the state has an average net book value or NBV of RM0.21/sq ft. The new park carries an estimated GDV of RM2.95 billion, and aims to attract local and foreign investments.

To be developed over nine years, the park will feature industrial lots, ready-built factories, and commercial properties that cater for high-growth sectors like aerospace, E&E, and logistics. Strategically near the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, major highways, and seaports – it provides excellent connectivity and logistical advantages that support business growth.

Eco World will be appointed as the development manager and will pay RM572.76 million to acquire the land from SDG – translating to an ASP of RM11/sq ft. A special purpose vehicle (SPV) will be set up for the development. Eco World will own 55% of this SPV while SDG will hold a 30% stake via its SD Guthrie Land Ventures unit. The remaining 15% will be held by NS Corp, acting as the state's coordinator and custodian for MVV2.0.

The RM11/sq ft selling price is reasonable, in our view, with recent transactions in the area in the RM8-12/sq ft range. Assuming the RM0.21/sq ft book value applies consistently for all land in Negeri Sembilan, SDG will stand to gain at least RM560 million from the land disposal (ex-taxes).

BUY with RM5.65 TP. – **RHB Research, April 21**



the Sun **LYFE**

TUESDAY | APR 22, 2025

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and leisure

SATURDAY

Food
and beverage

Time-off **for parents**

Micro-getaways key to healthy parenting - P22



Micro-getaways for stressed parents

► Tiny escapes become new form of self-care

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

BEING a parent today comes with an invisible, constant hum of noise, such as managing work, home, childcare and everything in between. And while the idea of a relaxing, week-long holiday sounds ideal, for many parents, it simply is not feasible. Between school runs, toddler moods, childcare duties or financial commitments, traditional vacations have quietly taken a backseat.

But, that does not mean parents are not carving out time for themselves. In fact, a new lifestyle trend is emerging among exhausted mums and dads, known as micro-getaways. These tiny escapes, sometimes as short as a few hours or a night away, are becoming an increasingly popular way for parents to rest, recharge and return to their families feeling just a little more human.

New way to rest

Unlike regular holidays that require extensive planning or saving up leave days, micro-getaways work because they fit into everyday life. It could be a solo staycation in the city, short drive to a nature retreat or even a luxurious afternoon spent at a spa or cafe with zero interruptions. For many parents, these short breaks offer something they rarely get at home – uninterrupted quiet time and a chance to focus on themselves without worrying about schedules or small hands pulling at them. There is also the growing understanding



Short trips boost energy and improve mood.

that rest does not need to come in big, expensive packages. Instead, the new form of self-care is about creating small, intentional pauses within a busy life, moments that are just for you, even if they are short.

Rise of daycations and nearby escapes

Hotels and resorts across Malaysia have caught on to this growing need for micro-getaways. In places such as Kuala Lumpur, many city hotels now offer day-use rooms or half-day spa packages specifically designed for guests looking for a quick reset rather than an overnight stay. Luxury hotels are popular choices for solo-stay parents seeking stylish comfort close to home. For just one night, parents can enjoy the rare luxury of sleeping in, ordering room service, watching television undisturbed or even soaking in a bath without rushing. Even nature retreats closer to the city have become favourite options for overnight micro-getaways surrounded by

greenery, away from the constant noise of urban parenting. Closer to home, lifestyle platforms offer curated spa days, cafe-hopping experiences or even hotel pool access without the need for overnight stays, all ideal for busy parents craving a quick recharge.

Recharging mentally

What makes micro-getaways particularly appealing is their ability to offer mental clarity without the stress of logistics. Unlike full-blown holidays that can sometimes feel like more work for parents, such as planning, packing, managing kids' moods, a micro-getaway is all about simplicity. This new approach to rest is also tied to the growing wellness



Micro-getaways give parents a short break from daily stress.

– ALL PICS FROM FREEPIK

movement among parents.

There is less guilt now around taking time away from family for personal well-being. In fact, many parenting coaches and wellness experts encourage short breaks as part of managing burnout and maintaining healthy relationships. It is no longer about “escaping” from your kids, but instead it is about returning to them calmer, happier and more present.

Rise of parenting shift

For many couples, micro-getaways work best with something called the “parenting shift”. It is a lifestyle approach, in which each parent takes turns getting solo time while the other stays home with the kids. This way, both parents get their breaks without needing external childcare. It creates balance without compromising family routines. In dual-working parent households or even in single-parent homes,

micro-getaways might look like booking a few hours at a co-working cafe with no kids in sight or simply scheduling a massage during school hours.

Micro-getaways are new luxury

Ultimately, micro-getaways reflect a wider lifestyle shift among modern parents. Luxury today is not about five-star holidays or faraway resorts. It is about time and space, even if that is just a few hours in a nearby hotel or a quiet brunch alone. Self-care does not have to look like grand gestures. Sometimes, all it takes is a little distance, a few kilometres from home or your phone, to feel like yourself again. For parents running on empty, micro-getaways are not just indulgent but essential.



Parents come back feeling calm and ready to handle responsibilities.

AI exposure for graduates

► TAR UMT intensifies AI training for students through workshops

TO cultivate a digital-centric ecosystem and support the Government's call in intensifying adoption of a STEM-related curriculum, Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT) has begun empowering secondary school students and educators through various AI educational workshops.

These workshops are not only to create interest among students and set them on a pathway towards AI or STEM-related studies, but also to equip school teachers with AI-related knowledge so they can guide students in learning AI.

Throughout the past year, Assoc Prof Dr Tan Chi Wee, a programme leader from TAR

UMT's computing and IT faculty spearheaded these workshops held at various secondary schools across Malaysia.

Some of the workshops were also held at national-level events, at the Kuala Lumpur Engineering and Science Fair (KLESF) and Program Duta Guru (PDG) Symposium by Yayasan Petronas and Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia.

"These workshops aim to demystify AI by introducing participants to the basic concepts in an engaging and accessible way while equipping them with essential AI knowledge and skills," said Dr Tan.

According to him, developing interest in AI and STEM at a young age is very crucial due to the increasing demand for tech-related skills.

"As AI reshapes industries, having a foundational knowledge in AI gives school students a competitive advantage. An early exposure to AI fosters a tech-savvy generation, help bridge the digital divide, ignite curiosity, and inspire innovation," he added.

The learning process for TAR UMT's

computing and IT students is not confined to classrooms alone.

Assoc Prof Dr Tew Yiqi, another programme leader in the computing and IT faculty, has been guiding TAR UMT students in the annual WorldSkills Malaysia Belia (WSMB) competitions under the Internet of Things (IoT) category.

Dr Tew's expert guidance has led to TAR UMT students winning various awards in WSMB, with the latest group of students winning the gold, silver, and bronze awards in WSMB 2024.

"Competing at the national level was an incredible experience. It challenged us to be

creative, adapt, think critically, and solve problems even when under pressure," said Kong Weng Cheng, who teamed up with his coursemate Yong Jia Ying to win the Gold award in WSMB 2024.

To find out more about TAR UMT's computing and information technology programmes, visit during Open Day from 26-27 April at TAR UMT KL Campus and/or all TAR UMT branches nationwide.

Prospective students can also call +6011-1075 8554 or visit www.tarc.edu.my to apply online. Various financial aid and merit scholarships are available for qualified students.



Dr Tan providing insights to school teachers on how to use AI and machine learning to enhance their STEM teaching strategies during a symposium in 2024.



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For over three decades, students' international achievements and providing world-class education have always been The One Academy's first priority. Receiving international recognition for our efforts, we pledge to continue holding steadfast to our "**Masters Train Masters**" teaching philosophy and together with our exceptional team of educators, provide unmatched creative education to boost Malaysia's creative economy and become Asia's creative hub.

MSU also garnered four silver awards in different categories of projects, one each from FISE, AICS, SenDI, and SPH: *"PIEZO-WALK: Harnessing piezoelectric generators for sustainable energy through walking-induced kinetic optimization"* led by Associate Professor Dr Safaa Najiah Saud Al-Humairi

Link with UK university

► The One Academy links with well recognised University of Hertfordshire for design studies

INSTEAD of going abroad to study and incur higher costs of living and tuition fees, students interested in pursuing design degree education from the UK can today study at The One Academy's (TOA) campus in Bandar Sunway.

The University of Hertfordshire, an established name in the UK design education scene and recognised for its outstanding work is now linked to TOA, providing 3+0 UK degree programmes in design in various fields of study.

Together with TOA's advantages in practical skills and creative prowess, this educational alliance has not only been able to cultivate students who are capable of creating high-quality work, but are also proficient in the implementation of creative ideas.

According to Tatsun Hoi, Founder and Principal of TOA, "In line with our 'Masters Train Masters' philosophy, the key to our teaching is to offer international quality education based on an industry-driven syllabus and practical coaching approach."

"With the extensive industry network of these two institutions and the foundation obtained at TOA, I am confident students will

benefit from any of our international degrees," he said.

Dr Stephen Partridge, University of Hertfordshire's Dean of School of Creative Arts said: "The creative industries are a huge growth area, one of the fastest expanding sectors, and its development will enable students to thrive within it."

"In this exhilarating era of rapidly evolving technology, concepts such as the metaverse, 6G, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), extended reality (XR), cloud computing, blockchain, big data, and game design are no longer futuristic ideas but are actively shaping how we live, work and interact."

"As digital transformation accelerates across all industries, it has become essential for individuals to immerse themselves in this revolution and adapt to the ever-changing digital landscape."

"In response to these technological shifts, TOA's trio of 3+0 UK degree programmes offered in collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire equip students with the critical skills, creative mindset, and technological fluency demanded by today's global market," he added.

The BA (Hons) Digital Media Design, the BA (Hons) Interior Architecture and Design and the BA (Hons) Graphic Design: Advertising and Branding are 3+0 UK degree programmes being offered at The One Academy's Bandar Sunway campus.

All three degree design programmes give students hands on experience and encourage innovation and experimentation.



(Top) University of Hertfordshire's de Havilland Campus in Hatfield, UK and (bottom) The One Academy campus in Bandar Sunway, Petaling Jaya.

These courses offer significant cost savings, as they eliminate two-thirds of the expenses typically incurred when studying in the UK. Moreover, students have the flexibility to complete their final year in either Malaysia or the UK, presenting opportunities for those seeking an overseas education experience, while ensuring a quality education.

In 2024, TOA achieved the prestigious title of World's No. 1 Creative School in the Rookies Global School Rankings - the ultimate benchmark for excellence in creative education.

For more information on The One Academy, visit www.toa.edu.my or call 03-7875 5510 or e-mail your enquiries to info@toa.edu.my.



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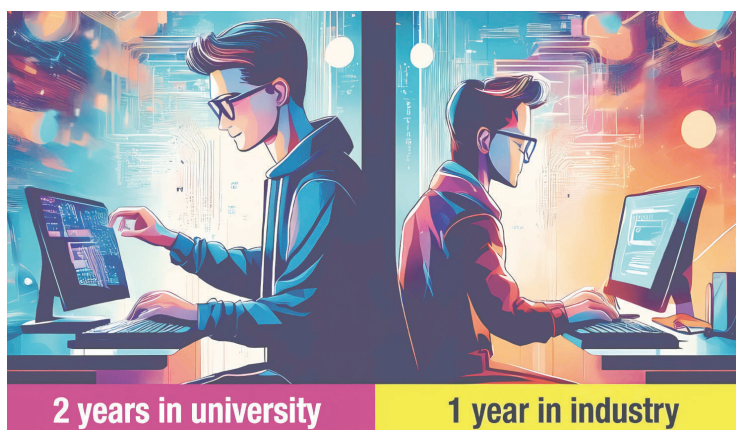
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► UTAR successfully combines study and industry experience for LKC FES graduates



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EMBARKING on a successful career in software engineering requires more than just theoretical knowledge; it demands practical experience and industry readiness.

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) addresses this need through its innovative '2u2i' study mode in the Bachelor of Science (Honours) Software Engineering programme, offered by the Lee Kong Chian Faculty of Engineering and Science (LKC FES) at its Sungai Long Campus.

The '2u2i' model, which stands for "2 years university + 1-year industry," is a structured approach designed to enhance students' employability. This learning model aligns with the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025, focusing on holistic education, industry exposure, and entrepreneurial capabilities.

Students engage in comprehensive coursework, covering essential topics such as programming and problem solving, application development, database system fundamentals, software design and testing, and web application development, building a solid foundation in software engineering principles, in the first two years of the course.

In the final year, students transition into a 12-month industry placement with UTAR's partners, such as Aemulus Corporation Sdn. Bhd., Advanced Micro Devices Inc., Payments Network Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., Plexus Manufacturing Sdn. Bhd., Robert Bosch Sdn. Bhd., Silverlake Innovation Partners Sdn. Bhd., and Worldline International (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd.

This immersive experience allows students to apply their knowledge in real-world settings, gaining invaluable practical skills and insights into industry practices.

UTAR's '2u2i' approach offers multiple benefits to students. The 12-month industry placement ensures that students graduate with valuable work experience, making them highly attractive to employers. Additionally, the programme provides financial support, as students receive stipends during their industry

placement, helping to ease financial concerns while they study.

Furthermore, it enhances essential soft skills by honing abilities such as teamwork, communication, and project management, all of which are vital for career progression.

With a combination of academic knowledge and industry experience, UTAR graduates are well-equipped to pursue various roles in the technology sector. They can excel as software engineers or architects, leveraging their expertise to design and develop innovative solutions. Additionally, they are well-prepared for roles as web or mobile application developers, creating dynamic and user-friendly applications.

With UTAR's '2u2i' software engineering programme, students can seamlessly transition from classroom to career, gaining the skills and confidence needed to thrive in the ever-evolving world of technology.

"At UTAR, we believe that education should not only focus on imparting knowledge but also on fostering adaptability and practical expertise. Our '2u2i' programme ensures that students are well-prepared for the dynamic demands of the software industry," said LKC FES Dean Prof Dr Yap Wun She.

UTAR offers over 140 programmes from foundation studies to bachelor, master's and PhD degrees in accounting, business, finance and economics, actuarial science, mathematics and process management, agriculture and food Science, arts, social sciences and education, Chinese studies, creative industries, digital animation, multimedia and design, engineering and built Environment, information and communication technology, life and physical sciences, and medicine and health sciences.

Visit UTAR Open Day on 10-11, 24-25 and 31 May - 1 June 2025 from 9am to 4.30pm at both Kampar and Sungai Long campuses. For more information, go to www.utar.edu.my or call 05-468 8888 (Kampar Campus), 03-9086 0288 (Sungai Long Campus).

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Piastri on top of the world

A lot more winning to do, says Aussie after taking chequered flag in Jeddah

OSCAR PIASTRI put Australia on top of the Formula One world championship for the first time since 2010 yesterday but the McLaren driver said he was still a long way from where he wanted to be despite his Saudi Arabian Grand Prix victory.

As he told reporters after the barrage of celebration fireworks had subsided over the Red Sea and the business of packing up had begun in the paddock, there was a lot more winning to do.

"I'm not that bothered by the fact that I'm leading the championship, but I'm proud of the work and the reasons behind why we're leading the championship," he explained with his usual calm.

"Melbourne wasn't a great

start to the year in terms of results. But from the moment I've hit the track this season, I felt like I've been in a good place.

"Leading

the championship is a result of all the hard work we've done in the off-season, the hard work I've done personally, the hard work the team's done.

"I'm more proud of all of those things than I am of the fact that I'm leading the championship because, ultimately, I want to be leading it after round 24, not round five."

Piastri, who started the season with ninth in his home race after

spinning off, was already the first repeat winner of the season and yesterday's success made him the first to take back-to-back victories.

He has now won three of the five races and leads teammate Lando Norris by 10 points, after starting the evening three behind.

The last Australian to lead the championship was Mark Webber, now the 24-year-old Melbourne manager, at Red Bull in 2010.

Four times world champion Max Verstappen, who started on pole and finished second for Red Bull after they went wheel to wheel into the first corner, was well aware what he is up against with that kind of assistance in Piastri's corner.

"People forget a little bit that last year was his second year," Verstappen said of the new leader.

"Now he's in his third year and he's very solid. He's very calm in his approach, and I like that. It shows on track.

"He delivers when he has to, barely makes mistakes - and that's what you need when you want to fight for a championship.

"And I think with Mark (Webber) by his side, he's helping him a lot. It's great. People learn from their own careers - that's what I had with my dad, and Mark is advising Oscar.

"At the end of the day, Oscar is using his talent, and that's great to see." - Reuters



McLaren F1 driver Oscar Piastri celebrates on the podium after winning the 2025 Saudi Arabia Grand Prix. - AFP/PIIC

Rune stuns Alcaraz in Barcelona

HOLGER RUNE denied red-hot favourite Carlos Alcaraz a third Barcelona Open trophy when he stunned the Spaniard 7-6(6), 6-2 in the final yesterday to lift his first title in two years.

Alcaraz had won the tournament in 2022 and 2023 but the top seed seemed to be struggling with an injury midway through the match, allowing Rune to capitalise and win his first trophy since the Bavarian Open in April 2023.

But the title was well deserved for Rune, who had also beaten second seed Casper Ruud in the quarterfinals, while Alcaraz dropped to third in the ATP rankings, below Alexander Zverev who won the Munich Open earlier yesterday.

"It means the world, it was such a

great match. In the beginning I was a bit stressed because Carlos obviously played big-time tennis and I had to breathe a lot and find my rhythm," Rune said.

Alcaraz was out of the blocks early in the opening set and he put on a show with his powerful baseline returns and the occasional drop shot that had Rune scrambling as the Spaniard broke to go 3-2 up.

But in a span of a few minutes, Rune broke right back to go level before going up 4-3 to stun the fans watching on at Spain's oldest tennis club. Alcaraz then found himself serving to stay in the set twice before forcing a tiebreak.

Alcaraz saved two more set points in

the tiebreak as Rune began to dictate points once again and the Dane finally converted his fifth set point when the top seed's return went long.

"When he broke me, I think I got more into the match and I played more of my tennis. It was a big battle in the first set," Rune added.

"I know how it feels to lose this kind of first set, it was super important to win it and gain the momentum. So I'm so proud of myself."

Alcaraz took a 2-1 lead in the second set before he took a medical timeout to deal with what seemed like an issue with his thigh muscle or groin. He did not fare any better on his return as Rune elevated his game. - AFP

Thomas wins in playoff to end drought

JUSTIN THOMAS won for the 16th time on the PGA Tour, yet it felt different Sunday in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

"I didn't realise how much I missed winning," he said of the emotions that accompanied the aftermath of the winning putt.

Thomas rolled in a birdie from 21 feet out on the first playoff hole to win the RBC Heritage at Harbour Town Golf Links, claiming a tournament title for the first time in nearly three years.

Thomas and Andrew Novak, who was seeking his first victory on the PGA Tour, were at 17-under 267 through 72 holes.

Novak was in the last pairing for the third time this season but couldn't find a way to win.

Thomas, a two-time major champion,

hadn't won since capturing the 2022 PGA Championship.

"Winning is hard. It's really, really hard," Thomas said. "I've worked my bu** off, stayed patient, stayed positive."

Thomas shot 3-under 68, ending his bogey-free round with three consecutive pars. Novak was off the mark on a would-be winning 8-foot birdie putt on the last hole of regulation and also had 68 for the round.

"I just missed on the reads there," he said.

Thomas has been in playoffs seven times on the tour, capturing victories in five of those. So it was another close call for Novak.

"Not so much as far as emotions," he said. "I'm not as frustrated as I thought I would be. I feel like I did a lot of good

things.

"I need to go out there and get a win at some point, but all of these finishes are great."

Thomas led after the first and second rounds. He went ahead on the 15th hole yesterday with a 24½-foot birdie putt, but Novak countered with a birdie from about 17 feet away on the 16th.

"I'm pretty proud of putting myself in that position when I really felt like I wasn't swinging it that great this week," Novak said. "The fact that I was able to scrap out almost a win with not really swinging my best."

Daniel Berger, Brian Harman, Maverick McNealy and Canada's Mackenzie Hughes tied for third place at 14-under. England's Tommy Fleetwood (70) was seventh at 13-under. - Field Level Media

SAUDI ARABIAN GP

RESULTS (Top 10)

1. Oscar Piastri (McLaren)
 2. Max Verstappen (Red Bull)
 3. Charles Leclerc (Ferrari)
 4. Lando Norris (McLaren)
 5. George Russell (Mercedes)
 6. Andrea Kimi Antonelli (Mercedes)
 7. Lewis Hamilton (Ferrari)
 8. Carlos Sainz (Williams)
 9. Alex Albon (Williams)
 10. Isack Hadjar (RB)
- DNF: Pierre Gasly (Alpine), Yuki Tsunoda (Red Bull).

STANDINGS (Top 10)

1. Oscar Piastri (AUS) 99pts, 2. Lando Norris (GBR) 89, 3. Max Verstappen (NED) 87, 4. George Russell (GBR) 73, 5. Charles Leclerc (MON) 47, 6. Kimi Antonelli (ITA) 38, 7. Lewis Hamilton (GBR) 31, 8. Alex Albon (THA) 20, 9. Esteban Ocon (FRA) 14, 10. Lance Stroll (CAN) 10.

CONSTRUCTORS (Top 5)

1. McLaren 188 pts, 2. Mercedes 111, 3. Red Bull 89, 4. Ferrari 78, 5. Williams 25.

BRIEFS

Verstappen bites his tongue

MAX VERSTAPPEN bit his tongue to stay out of trouble after clearly disagreeing with Formula One stewards over a costly Saudi Arabian Grand Prix penalty yesterday. Red Bull's four times world champion started on pole and finished second, 2.8 seconds behind McLaren's winner Oscar Piastri, after getting a five second penalty for a first corner incident. Team principal Christian Horner said the penalty was very harsh, producing a photograph for reporters to back up his argument. "I don't know where Max was supposed to go at that first corner. We've lost the race by 2.8 seconds, so it's tough," he said. Verstappen was reluctant to talk about it. "The problem is that I cannot share my opinion about it because I might get penalised also, so it's better not to speak about it." Asked later whether he felt frustrated at not feeling able to speak out, he said: "It's just the world we live in. You can't share your opinion because it's not appreciated apparently, or people can't handle the full truth."

Fourth was the best I could do: Norris

LANDO NORRIS said there was nothing more he could do after finishing fourth in yesterday's Saudi Arabian Grand Prix and losing his Formula One championship lead to winning McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri. Norris paid the price for a crash in qualifying that left him 10th on the starting grid and although helped by two of the cars ahead of him crashing out on lap one, he finished off the podium for the first time this season. "Nothing more I could do. The Ferrari was quick, Max was quick as well and clearly we did not have as much of an advantage," Norris told reporters. "If anything you would say Max was the quickest car out there today, which means we have some work to do. Clearly that was not an easy race."

322 Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT KUALA LUMPUR
IN THE FEDERAL TERRITORY OF KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
(COMMERCIAL DIVISION)
COMPANIES (WINDING-UP) PETITION
NO: WA-280CC-305-03/2025

In the matter of Section 465 (1) (e) read with Section 466 (1) (a) of the Companies Act, 2016

And

In the matter of the Companies (Winding-Up) Rules 1972

And

In the matter of ADVISEASIA PROJECT MANAGEMENT SDN. BHD.
(Company No.: 202001003758
(1360078-0))

BETWEEN

ELYSIUM WPC SDN. BHD.
(COMPANY NO.: 200601017145 (736897-V))
(formerly known as BCA MARKETING SDN. BHD.)

AND

...PETITIONER

ADVISEASIA PROJECT MANAGEMENT SDN. BHD.
(COMPANY NO.: 202001003758
(1360078-0))

...RESPONDENT

ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

NOTICE is hereby given that a Petition for the Winding-Up of the above-named Company by the High Court was on the 17.3.2025 presented by ELYSIUM WPC SDN. BHD. (COMPANY NO.: 200601017145 (736897-V)) AND that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at Kuala Lumpur on 26.03.2025 at 9.00 o'clock in the morning and any Creditor or Contributor of the said Company desiring to support or oppose the making of an Order on the said Petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his Counsel for that purpose and a copy of the Petition will be furnished to any Creditor or Contributor of the said Company requesting the same by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is at 16, Jalan Kawasan Perindustrian Ringan Martin 1/1, Kawasan Perindustrian Ringan Martin, 71700 Martin, Negeri Sembilan.

The Petitioner's Solicitors are Messrs. The Chambers of Cheong at 8-02-15, Sunway Nexis, No.1, Jalan PJU 5/1, Kota Damansara, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

The Chambers of Cheong
Messrs. The Chambers of Cheong

Note: Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the said Petition must serve on or send by post to the above-named Messrs. The Chambers of Cheong, notice in writing of his intention to do so. The Notice must state the name and address of the person or, if a firm, the name and address of the firm, and must be signed by the person or firm or his or their solicitors (if any) and must be served, or if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the above-named not later than 12.00 o'clock noon of 24.6.2025.

This Advertisement of Petition is prepared by The Chambers of Cheong, solicitors for the Petitioner whose address for service is at 8-02-15, Sunway Nexis, No.1, Jalan PJU 5/1, Kota Damansara, 47810 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.
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Real late show

Valverde stunner saves Madrid title hopes against Bilbao

FEDE VALVERDE'S superb 93rd minute strike kept Real Madrid on Barcelona's tail in the Spanish title race, earning the champions a 1-0 win over Athletic Bilbao yesterday.

Madrid stayed four points behind Barca after Valverde smashed into the top corner with a sliced, swerving effort.

After Champions League elimination by Arsenal it looked like Madrid were set for another devastating result until the Uruguay international's stoppage-time intervention.

"Fede has such a good shot... in training yesterday he shot a ball that looked like it was going out and then it picked up a curl like that and you go 'how do you shoot like that?'" said Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

"In training he does that once or twice a week."

Athletic Bilbao, who reached the Europa League semifinals on Friday by beating Rangers, rotated heavily.

Despite that, the Basque side proved a hard nut for Madrid to crack, especially with their top goalscorer Kylian Mbappe both suspended and recovering from an ankle problem.

The forward was whistled by some fans for his failure to help the team overcome Arsenal in the

Champions League quarterfinals in midweek when he was shown watching the game on the stadium screens.

"Valverde was key in this game because he scored the goal," said Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"The team was good, a bit slower in the first half but very good in the second."

"We wanted to win, we wanted to react after the elimination against Arsenal - the team came through and Fede was the key player."

Vinicius, who was previously criticised by Ancelotti for lack of defensive work ethic, was running hard on the

Real Madrid's Federico Valverde shoots during the Spanish La Liga match against Athletic Bilbao.
- AFP/PIC

Linesman hit during derby

SAINT-ETIENNE beat bitter rivals Lyon 2-1 yesterday in a Ligue 1 derby overshadowed by a 45-minute interruption after an assistant referee was dazed by a projectile thrown from the crowd.

Saint-Etienne stayed second from bottom but are only separated from potential safety by goal difference.

Lyon fell to sixth. Two of their rivals for Champions League places, Lille and Nice, won earlier in the day.

Lucas Stassin gave the hosts a 10th minute lead and then escaped a red card for a tackle on Corentin Tolisso which led to the Lyon midfielder being carried off on a stretcher.

Saint-Etienne were leading 1-0 when play was interrupted in the 45th minute.

Linesman Mehdi Rahmouni bent over and clutched his head on the touchline as visitors Lyon were about to take a throw at the Geoffroy-Guichard Stadium in Saint-Etienne.

Referee Francois Letexier ordered the players off.

After 35 minutes, Noel Mannino, the league's matchday representative, announced play would resume after Rahmouni had said he was not injured but only dazed and had taken a paracetamol tablet.

"We're going to restart the game because the assistant referee feels up to restarting," said Mannino.

Lyon fans were banned from travelling to the match between the bitter rivals. The announced attendance was 40,372 and the ground was still full as the teams re-emerged.

Once Rahmouni had recovered his dropped flag, play resumed.

"Operations to identify the person who threw the projectile began within a minute of the incident," sources close to Saint-Etienne told AFP.

Stassin doubled the lead after 67 minutes with a swerving drive. American Tanner Tessmann replied in the 76th minute but Saint-Etienne held out to provoke delirious celebration from their volatile fans. - AFP

Inter fall to late Orsolini stunner

INTER MILAN remained level with Napoli at the top of Serie A after Riccardo Orsolini fired Bologna to a last-gasp 1-0 win over the reigning champions yesterday.

Orsolini flashed home a scissor-kick in the fourth minute of stoppage time to bring the house down at the Stadio Renato Dall'Ara and move Bologna into fourth place.

Inter's tight battle for the Scudetto with Napoli looks likely to go down to the wire after a tired-looking team were punished for a low-key display, which came in stark contrast to their thrilling Champions League win over Bayern Munich.

Simone Inzaghi's team barely created a chance with nine of the 11 players who started against Bayern on Wednesday night on the pitch at kickoff.

"It's a defeat that hurts because we shouldn't have lost that match. We should have defended the throw-in better," said Inzaghi to DAZN.

"But it's not like our season finishes here, far from it. We need points on points and there are five matches left... it will be very difficult but we have plenty of faith."

Inter have only won one of their last six Serie A

matches away from home. Yesterday's defeat has given Napoli a clear opportunity to claim their second league crown in two seasons.

Napoli's final five matches are all against the division's also-rans while this weekend Inter take on Roma, a match which comes after the second leg of their Italian Cup semifinal with AC Milan and before their trip to Barcelona in the last four of the Champions League.

Inter lead Napoli on goal difference but a playoff will decide the destination of the title should the pair finish the season level on points.

Orsolini's 14th goal of a superb season boosted Bologna's hopes of returning to the Champions

left, which fans at the Santiago Bernabeu appreciated.

The Brazilian has struggled for form at times this season but was Madrid's brightest player against Athletic, giving Unai Nunez a difficult night.

Madrid played with intensity after their European elimination, trying to keep La Liga in their sights after Barcelona made a late comeback to beat Celta Vigo on Saturday.

Rodrygo Goes came close early in the second half before Athletic goalkeeper Unai Simon saved from Eduardo Camavinga.

The hosts began to push Athletic deeper and started to create better chances.

Vinicius bent a delicious cross with the outside of his boot into the six yard box for Jude Bellingham to meet, but Simon made an excellent save to tip over his header.

Fede Valverde fired narrowly wide of the near post and Vinicius did find the net but Endrick was offside in the build-up.

Bellingham appealed for a penalty after going down softly in the area and then fired over from close range in the final stages.

It was the kind of chance the England international managed to turn into late match-winning goals last season as he inspired Madrid to La Liga and Champions League glory.

Instead it was Valverde who took up that role with his sublime blast which left Simon with no chance.

"Valverde has an extraordinary shot," said Athletic coach Ernesto Valverde. "We had a really good game (but) they are individually very good, Vinicius was very good." - AFP

League with fifth-place Juventus a point behind ahead of their clash with Parma overnight.

Bologna could well face Inter in the Italian Cup final as they have a 3-0 lead heading into the decisive second leg of their semifinal with Empoli on Thursday.

Orsolini has been a key part of Bologna's surge since the turn of the year under coach Vincenzo Italiano, who was sent off in the 56th following a touchline row with Inzaghi's assistant Massimiliano Farris.

"I was a bit behind the fullback and as soon as I saw that the ball was going past him I coordinated myself," said Orsolini.

"I try it quite a lot, but nine times out of 10 you don't get the ball. This time it went well and I'm happy, for the importance of the goal and because

the match was basically over at that point." - AFP

Leverkusen draw puts Bayern on cusp of Bundesliga crown

BAYER LEVERKUSEN were held 1-1 at St. Pauli yesterday, leaving Bayern Munich needing just five points from their remaining four games to win the Bundesliga title.

Leverkusen took the lead when Alex Grimaldo floated in a freekick and Patrik Schick jumped high to score after 32 minutes.

The visitors shut up shop in the second half and Pauli laid siege to Leverkusen's goal.

Morgan Guilavogui's 74th-minute strike seemed to have levelled things up, but it was chalked off for handball.

The hosts kept pushing and scored just three minutes later, Carlo Boukhalfa tapping in after Lukas Hradecky spilled a corner.

The result leaves Bayern eight clear of Leverkusen. Bayern can wrap things up as early as this week, if they win and Leverkusen lose.

Leverkusen also have other concerns, with reports that manager Xabi Alonso, who took the club to their first-ever German title last season, could be on his way to Real Madrid in the summer.

"Mathematically it's not over," Alonso told reporters, "but we know we hardly have a chance," adding his team were "simply not good enough" in decisive moments.

"Too many differences (in results) this season, which is why Bayern's lead is so large. The season isn't over yet, but we have to accept the moment we're in. We want to do better."

"It was a very intense game (against St. Pauli). We didn't start well but then we reacted well, with more control and pace."

"In the second half, they increased the pressure and we conceded the equaliser after a few set-pieces," Alonso explained.

Promoted St. Pauli pulled eight points clear of the relegation places. Their survival this season has been built on a sturdy defence, with only Bayern and Leverkusen conceding fewer goals.

"We have to be honest, the chance is gone," Leverkusen's Schick told DAZN.

"We're lacking energy. We've already dropped two points again. Last season was incredible, but this season is unfortunately different."

Borussia Dortmund came from a goal down to beat Borussia Moenchengladbach 3-2, keeping alive their slim hopes of reaching the top four.

Serhou Guirassy, who scored a hat-trick in Tuesday's 3-1 win over Barcelona, was again key, scoring one and setting up another for Dortmund.

"We're much more secure and much more stable - that's extremely important," Pascal Gross told DAZN. "We've got four finals to go." - AFP

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Saka injury nothing serious: Arteta

BY PHILIP DUNCAN

MIKEL ARTETA said he hopes Leif Davis' "dangerous" red-card tackle on Bukayo Saka will not stop his star winger from playing in Arsenal's Champions League semifinal against Paris Saint-Germain.

Saka was withdrawn just 10 minutes into the second half of Arsenal's 4-0 win at Ipswich and had an ice pack applied to his right ankle following Davis' late challenge.

Davis was shown a straight red card and VAR did not intervene with referee Chris Kavanagh's decision after it was adjudged that the Ipswich defender had "endangered Saka's safety".

Saka limped towards the tunnel at the conclusion of the game. However, Arteta is confident the England international, who has only just returned from a near four-month injury layoff following hamstring surgery, will be fit to face PSG in the first leg at the Emirates next week.

"I don't think it is intentional but it was dangerous," said Arteta.

"I do (worry) with the numbers that we have right now, especially when the player has his back to goal, because that is the moment when the foot

is planted, your weight is there, and you cannot really react.

"He cuts him from the back. The referee made a decision, and that it is clear. He was a bit sore, but it's nothing serious, so it's good."

Just four days after they sealed their place in the semifinals with a remarkable 5-1 aggregate victory over Real Madrid, Arsenal were a goal to the good inside 14 minutes when Leandro Trossard converted Saka's cross.

Gabriel Martinelli doubled their advantage before the half-hour mark before Davis was dismissed. Trossard completed his brace on 69 minutes with Saka's replacement, Ethan Nwaneri, adding a fourth in the closing moments.

And Arteta continued: "We are really happy, really happy with the performance. The first 35 minutes is one of the best we have played this season."

"We really dominated, with a very high intensity and understanding what we had to do to win."

"When they got the red card, the context of the game changed, and we were much more in control, scored another two goals, and were then able to make certain rotations. It was a very positive afternoon." – The Independent

Emery happy with Watkins' response

ASTON VILLA boss Unai Emery was delighted by the way Ollie Watkins channelled his anger at his bit-part role against Paris St Germain with a man-of-the-match display in the 4-1 thrashing of fellow Champions League contenders Newcastle.

The long-serving 29-year-old started both legs of the quarterfinal clash with the French champions on the bench, making late substitute appearances in the 3-1 loss in Paris and Tuesday's 3-2 win at Villa Park.

Watkins returned to the starting line-up in Saturday's key encounter with Newcastle and opened the scoring inside 33 seconds, before teeing up Ian Maatsen to put Villa back ahead after Fabian Schar levelled.

Dan Burn's own goal and a stunning Amadou Onana effort completed a statement 4-1 win,

with star man Watkins using anger at being benched against PSG as fuel.

"I'm not going to lie I was fuming. I weren't playing and I let him (Emery) know that, but, look, he's the manager at the end of the day and you've got to respect his decisions. But I'm not one of these players that's happy to sit on the bench."

Watkins' comments were put to boss Emery after Saturday's mighty impressive triumph.

"This is the competitive way I want. With Watkins, it was a very good conversation. And, of course, when he is responding like today I'm so, so happy for him, for the team, for our objective, how we are getting through them and through their demand as well."

"It's really fantastic, but every player for me is the same. I'm trying to support and to help them." – The Independent

Devils frustrate Amorim

We lack a lot of things, says United manager after defeat to Wolves

BY SIMON PEACH

RUBEN AMORIM admitted Manchester United "lack a lot" as their ongoing struggles in front of goal saw them return to earth with a bump in yesterday's Premier League defeat at home to Wolves.

Three days on from the dramatic 5-4 Europa League quarterfinal comeback win against Lyon, the rotated Red Devils' positive performance counted for nothing due to their futility in the final third.

Out-of-sorts Rasmus Hojlund and his teammates were unable to find the net at Old Trafford, where substitute Pablo Sarabia's freekick secured a 1-0 triumph as Wolves won five consecutive top-flight matches for the first time since 1970.

Amorim, by contrast, has only won six of his 22 League matches since taking charge in November and his frustration was palpable after United's 15th loss of the season – a club record in the Premier League era.

"If you look at the game, we were the better team but in the end it doesn't matter," the head coach said.

"If we don't score goals, nothing matters because in the end it is the result that counts, especially in these kinds of moments."

"We create a lot of chances, we controlled the game. We blocked some good players from the opponent and then one set-piece changes the game and that's it. It's really frustrating to end the game like this."

"We say to the fans the truth – that we lack a lot of things in our team, that we miss chances, that if we don't score goals we are not going to win."

"We have a lot to do and to focus on in improving the team step by step and understanding that until the end of the League it's going to be like this and then we need to do something."

Europa League semifinal opponents Athletic Bilbao will not be overly concerned by United right now, especially with striker Hojlund having scored just once in 28 games.

Asked if he could take him out of the spotlight, even with Joshua Zirkzee's season-ending injury, Amorim said: "No. I think if you look at the games, we have several players that miss big chances, not just Rasmus."

"But of course, Rasmus, the aim is to score goals because he's a striker, but it's a team thing. I already said that."

"Our team should score more goals and it's not just Rasmus missing chances."

"The only way I know is to work on him, show him the videos. Like you said, he needs to score a goal – he will not score if he is out (of the team) so I try to manage that during games. But he needs to score one. Maybe that's all a striker needs."

Wolves moved level on 38 points with 14th-placed United as Vitor Pereira oversaw the club's first double in this fixture since 1979-80.

"Today was not the best game that we played," he said. "But it was a game with a true spirit."

"The players inside the pitch, outside the pitch, because the players that came from the bench came to help the team."

"Sometimes if we don't play in our level, we must win with our hearts, with our souls, with our spirit and that's what happened today. And in the right moment, when we had the chance, boom, we won the game." – The Independent



Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim reacts after the match. – REUTERS/SPIC

Wolves' Pablo Sarabia (left) celebrates scoring their first goal with Matheus Cunha yesterday. – REUTERS/SPIC

ENZO MARESCA claimed Chelsea's players deserved the chance to enjoy the acclaim of their fans after he made an abrupt exit following their dramatic 2-1 win at Fulham on Sunday.

Maresca has endured stinging criticism from Chelsea supporters in recent weeks after a series of erratic performances marred by his conservative tactics. But the hostility directed towards the Italian evaporated at Craven Cottage after Pedro Neto's superb strike in stoppage-time completed a stirring Chelsea fightback to keep alive their bid to qualify for the Champions League.

Neto's bolt from the blue could prove a pivotal moment in Chelsea's season, coming after 18-year-old Tyrrique George hauled them level with his first

Premier League goal in the 83rd minute.

Chelsea had been facing a damaging loss in the race for a top five finish since Alex Iwobi blasted Fulham in front midway through the impressive first half.

Maresca could have been expected to join the jubilant celebrations on the pitch after the west London derby success.

Yet the former Leicester boss was quick to disappear to the dressing room, insisting he was not making a point to the fans, but merely letting the players take their moment in the spotlight.

Maresca leaves celebration to players

"It was a moment for the players. They deserved to share that moment with the fans. That's the reason I left the pitch," he said. "I celebrated when we scored the second goal and they gave me a yellow card."

Maresca was targeted for abuse by frustrated fans during recent home matches, including Friday's Uefa Conference League quarterfinal second leg defeat to Legia Warsaw – which did not stop their progress to the last four – and the previous Sunday's home draw with lowly Ipswich.

The atmosphere has soured as the Blues' bright

start to the season has given way to mixed results and a style of play that has failed to excited supporters.

However, Pedro's winner changed the picture in the Champions League race, with Chelsea now in fifth place, two points behind third-placed Newcastle with five games left.

"The goal from Pedro doesn't change my view of the season," said Maresca. "This season we've spent all season in the Champions League spots."

"I was quite positive at 1-0 down because I think the team was creating chances. Sometimes you also have to be a little bit lucky. I think Tyrrique's goal gave us energy, an extra boost, but the team was performing well." – AFP

RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Fulham 1 (Iwobi 20) Chelsea 2 (George 83, Neto 90+3), Ipswich 0 Arsenal 4 (Trossard 14, 69, Martinelli 28, Nwaneri 88), Leicester 0 Liverpool 1 (Alexander-Arnold 76), Manchester United 0 Wolves 1 (Sarabia 77).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	32	23	7	2	74	31	76
Arsenal	33	18	12	3	61	27	66
Newcastle	33	18	5	10	62	44	59
Man City	33	17	7	9	64	42	58
Chelsea	33	16	9	8	58	40	57
Nottm Forest	32	17	6	9	51	38	57
Aston Villa	33	16	9	8	53	47	57
Bournemouth	33	13	10	10	52	40	49
Fulham	33	13	9	11	48	45	48
Brighton	33	12	12	9	53	53	48
Brentford	33	13	7	13	56	50	46
Crystal Palace	33	11	11	11	41	45	44
Everton	33	8	14	11	34	40	38
Man Utd	33	10	8	15	38	46	38
Wolves	33	11	5	17	48	61	38
Tottenham	32	11	4	17	60	49	37
West Ham	33	9	9	15	37	55	36
Ipswich	33	4	9	20	33	71	21
Leicester	32	4	6	22	27	72	18
Southampton	33	2	5	26	24	78	11

LA LIGA: Valladolid 2 (Moro 49, Sylla 66-pen) Osasuna 3 (Budimir 9, 60-pen, Garcia 34), Villarreal 2 (Pino 7, Perez 60) Real Sociedad 2 (Oyarzabal 19-pen, 49), Sevilla 1 (Peque 12) Alaves 1 (Garcia 45+2), Real Madrid 1 (Valverde 90+3) Athletic Bilbao 0.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	32	23	4	5	88	32	73
Real Madrid	32	21	6	5	65	31	69
A. Madrid	32	18	9	5	53	27	63
A. Bilbao	32	15	12	5	49	26	57
Villarreal	31	14	10	7	55	42	52
Real Betis	31	13	9	9	42	39	48
Mallorca	32	12	8	12	31	37	44

SERIE A: Bologna 1 (Orsolini 90+4) Inter Milan 0, Empoli 2 (Fazzini 59, Anjorin 87) Venezia 2 (Yeboah 68, Busio 85), AC Milan 0 Atalanta 1 (Ederson 62).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter Milan	33	21	8	4	72	32	71
Napoli	33	21	8	4	52	25	71
Atalanta	33	19	7	7	66	30	64
Bologna	33	16	13	5	52	37	60
Juventus	32	15	14	3	49	30	59
Roma	33	16	9	8	48	32	57

BUNDESLIGA: St Pauli 1 Bayer Leverkusen 1, Dortmund 3 B. M'gladbach 2, Augsburg 0 Eintracht Frankfurt 0.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B. Munich	30	22	6	2	87	29	72
B. Leverkusen	30	18	10	2	65	35	64
E. Frankfurt	30	15	7	8	58	42	52
RB Leipzig	30	13	10	7	48	38	49
Freiburg	30	14	6	10	43	47	48
Mainz	30	13	8	9	48	36	47

FRENCH LIGUE 1: Lille 3 Auxerre 1, Nice 2 Angers 1, Brest Lens 3, Reims 1 Toulouse 0, Saint-Etienne 2 Lyon 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	29	24	5	0	82	27	77
Marseille	30	17	4	9	62	42	55
Monaco	30	16	6	8	57	35	54
Lille	30	15	8	7	47	32	53
Nice	30	14	9	7	56	38	51
Lyon	30	15	6	9	58	41	51

CHAMPIONS RELEGATED

Chong Wei tells shuttlers to walk the talk

NATIONAL badminton legend Datuk Lee Chong Wei stresses that shuttlers must prove their capabilities on the court first before demanding lucrative salaries.

Commenting on claims that a handful of shuttlers are asking for lucrative salaries from the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM), Chong Wei said this would not be a big problem if the players perform at a level that translates to success.

"I'm not saying shuttlers cannot ask for high salaries, can... but what is important is that they must first prove it (in terms of performance). They must be committed and contribute to the association."

"These days I always say that our shuttlers are pampered but if they are committed, no matter how much (salary) they ask for, the association will try to assist," he said when met at the Ministry of Youth and Sports Aidilfitri Open House 2025 celebration at the Axiata Arena in Bukit Jalil yesterday.

Chong Wei, 42, said problems arise when players who have yet to reach a certain level in their careers start making unreasonable demands.

"Some have yet to reach a high level but are already asking for a high salary. When they don't get it, they say they will turn professional," he said. The three-time Olympic silver medalist,

however, hopes that the new leaders set to helm BAM will review the issue of players' salaries and make positive changes.

Meanwhile, Chong Wei expressed his amazement at the determination and drive of national track cyclist Datuk Mohd Azizulhasni Awang, who has decided to quit the national team and ride as a professional.

Chong Wei, who is a committee member of the Road to Gold (RTG) programme, said he fully supported the decision made by the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games silver medalist.

"We hope he will win more gold medals (in upcoming championships)," added the three-time world championships runner-up. - Bernama

Sabah end season with defeat ... while Terengganu beat Kedah, NS go down at home and KL City hit Kelantan for five

IT WAS an uneventful night for Sabah FC as they lost 1-0 to Perak FC in their final fixture of the 2024/25 Super League season which took place at the Likas Stadium in Kota Kinabalu on Sunday night.

Sabah struggled throughout the match as their attacking line was thwarted by the strong defensive play by the visitors and to make matters worse, skipper Rawilson Batuli latched the ball into his own net in the 29th minute while trying to clear a cross from Muhammad Farris Izdiham Awang Kechik.

The situation became even more difficult for the hosts after defender, R. Dinesh was shown a red card in the 42nd minute for rough play on Ahmad Daniel Hakimi Ahmad Azmil forcing Sabah to play with 10-man for rest of the match.

Although "The Bos Gaurus" continued to

press in the second half, the score remained 1-0 until the end of the game but the defeat did not affect Sabah's position which remains in third place for the 2024/25 season with 40 points behind champions Johor Darul Ta'zim with 70 points and second placed Selangor, who finished with 52 points.

Meanwhile, Terengganu FC (TFC) won 3-0 over Kedah Darul Aman FC (KDA FC) in the match which took place at the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium (SSMZA).

The opening goals came through team captain Muhammad Safawi Rasid in the 45th before Muhammad Ubaidullah Shamsul Fazli doubled the advantage in the 74th minute and Nurillo Tukhtasinov confirmed the victory in the final minute of the match (90th).

Meanwhile, Negeri Sembilan FC's (NSFC)

hopes of winning at home in the final fixture were dashed when they lost 3-1 to Kuching City FC at the Tuan Ku Abdul Rahman Paroi Stadium in Seremban.

Kuching City opened the scoring with a penalty kick scored by their sensational striker Jordan Mintah as early as the 15th minute due to a mistake by a NSFC defender who brought down the opposing player and confirmed by the video assistance referee (VAR).

NSFC continued to be punished when another defensive error saw Petrus Shitembi seize the opportunity to snatch the ball and push neatly into the net in the 36th minute, putting Kuching City comfortably in front in the first half.

The second half saw NSFC increase the intensity of the match and managed to get a goal when Selvan Anbualagan cleverly took advantage of the opportunity from a chaotic situation in front of the Kuching City goal in the 71st minute.

Kuching City continued to add to the woes of home side in injury time (90+6') when a penalty kick was awarded and completed by Mintah.

Meanwhile, Kuala Lumpur City FC closed the season in style by defeating Kelantan Darul Naim 5-2 at the Kuala Lumpur Football Stadium in Cheras with midfielder Zhafril Yahya opening accounts for the hosts, thanks to Jovan Motika's beautiful pass from the left side of the field in the 24th minute.

Shocked by the goal, the visitors equalised through Adam Danial Md Zaid's header in the 45th minute but Zhafril stole the spotlight again with his second goal of the night in the 45th minute.

As soon as the second half started, both teams were in the hunt for goals before Mohamad Fazrul Amir Md Zaman equalised for Kelantan Darul Naim in the 53rd minute.

But the hosts were undaunted and continued to press with a number of dangerous tries before midfielder Brendan Gan's pass was completed by captain Paulo Josue in the 71st minute followed by substitute Muhammad Haqimi Azim Rosli's goal which extended the lead four minutes later (75th).

KL City defender Ryan Lambert did not miss out on his name as a scorer after blasting his team's fifth goal in the 88th minute. - Bernama



Sabah's Darren Lok (right) competes with Perak's Shivan Asokan in the Super League match on Sunday. - BERNAMAPIC.

Speedy Tigers to warm up for Nations Cup Down Under

THE national men's hockey team will play warm-up matches in Perth during a scheduled tour of Australia, as part of their preparations for the FIH Nations Cup campaign in Malaysia this June.

National men's hockey head coach Sarjit Singh said the friendly matches would serve as valuable experience for his players, as they would be playing high-intensity games.

"This tour must be utilised fully by

the selected players. With the high intensity of the matches and the opportunity to face a top-quality team like Australia, this is the best chance for them to showcase their abilities.

"The team also want the young players on this tour to make the most of this invaluable experience to continue improving themselves," he said in a statement issued by the Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) yesterday.

The team, nicknamed the Speedy Tigers, will kick off their campaign against Western Australia tomorrow and Thursday before taking on the Australian national team on April 28 and 29 as well as May 1 and 2 at the Curtin University Hockey Stadium in Perth.

According to Sarjit, the main focus of the tour is to assess tactical execution, team cohesion and the players' resilience under pressure and

high-tempo conditions.

He added that he would also evaluate his players' decision-making in both attack and defence, while testing various strategies and combinations in a competitive environment.

"It's also a chance for us to finalise our best squad, assess fitness levels, and reinforce the tactical structure we want to carry into the Nations Cup," he said.

The Speedy Tigers are also set to compete in several other major tournaments this year, including the Asian Cup in India from Aug 27 to Sept 7, which offers an automatic slot to the World Cup, the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup from Nov 22 to 29, and the SEA Games in Thailand from Dec 9 to 20.

A 22-man squad were selected for the tour following a training camp that began on March 3, involving 30 players. - Bernama



the Sun Sports

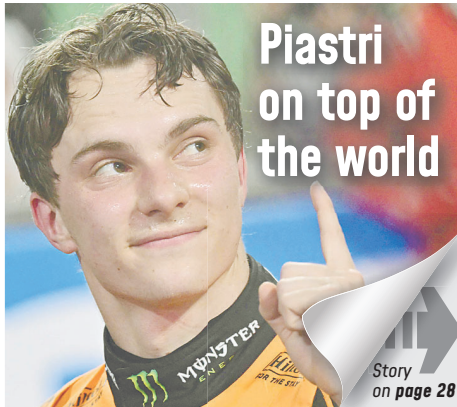
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Piastri
on top of
the world

Story
on page 28



Real late
show

Story
on page 29



Devils
frustrate
Amorim

Story
on page 30

BY JONATHAN VEAL

LIVERPOOL defender Trent Alexander-Arnold says his late winner at Leicester, which put his side on the brink of the Premier League title, will live with him forever.

Alexander-Arnold made a stunning return from injury as he climbed off the bench to score the decisive 76th-minute goal in the visitors' 1-0 triumph at the King Power Stadium.

It relegated Leicester and left the Reds needing just three more points to get their hands on a 20th top-flight title and a second in the Premier League era.

It remains to be seen whether the right-back, who is out of contract in the summer, will follow Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk in signing a new deal amid strong links to Real Madrid, but if he does leave he ensured his legacy by scoring such an important goal.

Asked about his future, he said on *Sky Sports*: "I've said all season, I'm not going to speak on my situation. I'm not going to go into details.

"But days like these are always special. Scoring goals, winning games and being close to winning titles are special moments that will live with me forever. I'm glad to be part of it.

"I'm eager to play and I was happy to contribute with the goal - it was a big one. I think we're one win away now, very close."

Alexander-Arnold faced strong criticism when reports suggested he had settled on a move to the Spanish capital, with pundit and former Reds defender Jamie Carragher one of the strongest voices.

But boss Arne Slot, who is on the verge of delivering title success in his first season in charge at Anfield, said his player's commitment to the club cannot be questioned.

He said: "The headline should be today the goal he scored and not about his contract.

"But what I can say is it would be ridiculous if someone argues his commitment for this club because the work-rate he has put in today.

"To be back and score such an important goal, and all the work he has done for this club in all the years that he is here, no-one should, in my opinion,

'Moment will live with me forever'

Alexander-Arnold's heroics at Leicester provide crowning glory for champions-elect Liverpool



Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk (right) and Trent Alexander-Arnold celebrate after the match. - REUTERS/SPIC

argue with his commitment for this club.

"Let the headlines be his great goal and not his contract situation."

The goal means the Reds could be crowned champions if Arsenal fail to beat Crystal Palace on Thursday (3am Malaysian time).

Liverpool fans will surely be hoping the Gunners do not slip up as it would mean they get the chance to see their side win the title at Anfield against Tottenham on Sunday (11.30pm) - something they were robbed of in 2019-20 as their success under Jurgen Klopp was secured behind closed doors due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The only thing the fans want is us winning the game," Slot added. "After one League title in 35 years with them not being involved because of Covid, every moment that it happens it would be special for them.

"We're definitely looking forward to next week because I assume Arsenal will win in the week. We probably have to do it ourselves."

Leicester's 23rd defeat of the season condemns them to a second relegation in three years as they head back to the Championship.

Boss Ruud van Nistelrooy, who has lost 16 of his 20 Premier League games in charge, has been non-committal about his future and says he needs to sit down with the hierarchy.

Asked when that will take place, he said: "I hope soon. It is important, I can only wait.

"I am focused on and taking my responsibility to do the best things for this football club, taking it into the future, next season.

"We have to take responsibility for the next five weeks then after that we have to see.

"I will keep doing that for the remainder of the season. In a situation like this we have to sit with the club and discuss matters." - The Independent