



Healing hand for troubled souls

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Community learning circle shares stories of individuals pulled back from brink of self-destruction with moral and emotional support.



EXEMPLARY EMPLOYEE ... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim presenting the National Outstanding Worker Award (Person with Disability category) to Dr Ahmad Shamsuri Muhamad at the national Labour Day celebration at Axiata Arena in Bukit Jalil yesterday. Also present were (from left) Human Resources Minister Steven Sim and deputy prime ministers Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof. — **AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN**

'Silent sacking' under radar of Malaysian employment laws?

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Term not clearly defined in legislation, but any act causing employees to feel sidelined or unfairly treated tantamount to breach of regulation.

Asbestos still widely used despite carcinogenic risks

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Without urgent and coordinated action, Malaysians will continue to face life-threatening health consequences: Experts

Gig Workers Bill to be tabled in July

Initially scheduled for introduction last October but delayed due to need to rectify several shortcomings, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

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NEW RESPONSIBILITY ... Tun Ramli Ngah Talib, accompanied by his wife Toh Puan Raja Noora Ashikin Raja Abdullah, taking his oath of office during his swearing-in ceremony as the 9th Yang di-Pertua Negeri of Penang at Dewan Sri Pinang yesterday. — **BERNAMA/PIC**

Gig Workers Bill to be tabled in Parliament in July

BY IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE
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BUKIT JALIL: All issues concerning the welfare and rights of gig workers will be promptly addressed through the introduction of the Gig Workers Bill in Parliament in July, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"There are still several shortcomings that need to be rectified, particularly in terms of ensuring adequate protection for those in the gig economy."

The Bill was scheduled to be tabled in October last year but was delayed.

"God willing, any shortcomings faced by gig workers will be addressed," said Anwar at a Labour Day celebration held at Axiata Arena yesterday.

Also present were both deputy prime ministers Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, Human Resources Minister Steven Sim and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar.

Anwar said the Malaysian workforce is the

► Legislation scheduled for introduction in October last year delayed due to need to rectify several shortcomings, says PM

backbone of the country that helps form a great and competitive nation, and every individual in the workforce in all sectors plays an important role in driving changes in the country.

"We as a nation still face various challenges. Our days are faced with major issues such as the crisis in Palestine and global uncertainties, including arbitrary actions by major powers such as the United States."

"However, we can still progress if everyone works diligently, sincerely and with full commitment."

"No matter which sector, workers who hold onto the values of sincerity and trust in the country would definitely contribute to the formation of a great nation."

Reminiscing about his struggle as a politician, he said he is thankful to the Malaysian workforce in helping him become

prime minister.

On a separate issue, Anwar said Madani Employee Card holders would enjoy discounts of up to 30% for various products and services offered by more than 100 companies.

These include Mydin, Jakel, Marrybrown, Genting, Old Town White Coffee, Zus Coffee, Socar and Bateriku.

"The Madani Employee Card is intended to provide union members who hold this card with discounts."

Anwar reiterated the importance of the proposed Urban Redevelopment Act that is planned to be tabled in Parliament in July.

"There are houses in the Klang Valley that were built in the 50s and 60s that only have one bedroom and one bathroom," said Anwar, stressing that this is not a livable condition for families with children.

Ministers pay tribute to workers on Labour Day

KUALA LUMPUR: In conjunction with Labour Day yesterday, several Cabinet ministers expressed appreciation via social media for the contributions of workers across all sectors to the nation's development.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said this year's theme "Pekerja Kesuma Bangsa" is a well-deserved tribute to all who dedicate their energy and effort daily for the country's progress.

He said the government remains committed to championing worker rights and welfare while strengthening a fair, progressive and competitive work ecosystem.

"We want every drop of sweat to be rewarded with opportunity, recognition and justice," said

Zahid, who is also Rural and Regional Development minister.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof said in facing current challenges, the role of workers is increasingly vital in supporting fair and inclusive decision-making.

"The contributions, services and ideas of workers across sectors are the foundation of national development and progress."

Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil said the government recognises and values the contributions of workers in both the public and private sectors, who form the backbone of national development.

He added that the hard work of workers not only supports their families but also contributes

to the prosperity of society and national stability.

"Let us continue to uphold worker rights and welfare while nurturing a work culture that is productive, trustworthy and full of integrity."

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin said every worker plays a vital role in building the nation, and the progress and prosperity enjoyed today would not be possible without workers.

"This includes members of the Armed Forces. Without our patriots who serve the country at all times, we would not experience true freedom and peace."

Economy Minister Datuk Seri Rafizi Ramli described May 1 as a significant and symbolic date to honour workers. — **Bernama**

Unicef lauds Malaysia's timely help in Myanmar

PUTRAJAYA: The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) has expressed appreciation for Malaysia's swift humanitarian response to the recent earthquake in Myanmar, describing it as timely and impactful in assisting affected communities.

Unicef Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific June Kunugi said the Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (Smart) arrived early on the ground, despite it being the Aidilfitri holiday period, and was among the first to assist in the rescue mission.

"I worked in Myanmar for three and a half years, so I know many of our staff who were there. Some of them lost their homes and everything."

"Malaysia responded very quickly with Smart, and they went in during the festival period and saved lives. There was real gratitude from the people on the ground."

She said the prompt response from Malaysia, Thailand and China demonstrated the importance of people-to-people support.

Following the 7.7-magnitude earthquake that struck Myanmar, a 50-member Smart contingent was deployed to Naypyidaw, engaging in search and rescue operations amid challenging conditions, including aftershocks and infrastructural damage.

The quake resulted in significant devastation, including in Mandalay and surrounding areas, leading to over 3,700 fatalities and more than 5,000 injured.

Highlighting the broader impact of climate-related disasters in the region, Kunugi said East Asia and the Pacific are among the hardest hit globally, with two out of three children experiencing four or more extreme climate events annually.

She said there is a need for greater investment in climate-resilient infrastructure and services, particularly in sectors that impact children, such as education, health, water and sanitation.

"This includes building schools that can withstand floods, solarising healthcare facilities and improving cold chain systems for vaccines."

"These spaces serve as safe environments for children and families, offering medical care, hygiene facilities and counselling. In crowded or unfamiliar settings, these are critical to ensuring their protection."

"Climate change is here with us, and we must be prepared."

"What Malaysia has shown in Myanmar is not only commendable but also an example of the kind of leadership and regional cooperation we need moving forward." — **Bernama**

'UN could help ease Pakistan-India tension'

JOHOR BAHRU: Malaysia is closely following the tense situation between Pakistan and India and has expressed hope that the United Nations (UN) could play a role in easing tensions, said Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin.

"Both countries are friendly countries to Malaysia so we do not want the two to go to war because if there is a war, it would certainly have bad consequences, especially for both countries."

He was speaking at the 56th Johor State Annual Representative Conference of the Malaysian Armed Forces Veterans Association yesterday, **Bernama** reported.

Pakistan reportedly reiterated the warning of a credible intelligence team and claimed that India was planning to launch a military attack on the country in the near future.

This follows the escalation of tensions between the two nuclear-armed countries following a bloody attack that killed 26 tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir on April 22.

Unemployment rate hits decade low at 3.1%

BUKIT JALIL: Malaysia's unemployment rate fell to 3.1% in February, the lowest in the past decade, Human Resources Minister Steven Sim announced.

He noted that the number of employed Malaysians rose to 17.34 million by the end of 2024, compared with 16.91 million a year earlier.

"Female participation in the workforce also increased to 56.8%," he said during the 2025 National Labour Day celebration at Axiata Arena yesterday.

The event was attended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Deputy Prime Ministers Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, along with Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar.

Sim also highlighted that for the first time in the nation's history, Malaysia's median monthly wage has surpassed RM3,000 – rising from about RM2,700 to RM3,045.

"Yes, the workers' struggle still has a long way to go, but we cannot deny the victories that have been achieved," he said.

Sim further announced that the government had finalised the draft of the Gig Workers Bill, which is expected to be tabled in Parliament this July.

He said the draft was developed through consultations with about 3,000 stakeholders in the industry.

This year's National Labour Day celebration drew more than 10,000 workers from both the public and private sectors. – **by Ikhwan Zulkaflee**

Integrity units must be set up by Aug 31: MACC

KUALA LUMPUR: All local authorities are required to establish an integrity unit (IU) by Aug 31 as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen administrative integrity.

In a statement yesterday, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) said to streamline the reporting structure, all liaison officers serving in local councils must now report directly to the IU at the state secretary's office instead of to the local council president.

"This approach is aimed at enhancing reporting autonomy and governance transparency at the state level," read the statement posted on MACC's official Facebook page.

MACC added that the measure was among the decisions made during the National-level Governance Committee meeting held on Wednesday at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

The meeting, chaired by Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar, also emphasised the need for compliance with the MACC Report. – **Bernama**

'Silent firing' sparks legal poser over workplace practice

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
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PETALING JAYA: The practice of "silent firing" is drawing attention on social media as questions arise over whether it is legally permissible or could be considered constructive dismissal under Malaysian employment law.

Growing concerns over workplace fairness and job security have fuelled the debate.

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan's professor of human resource management and industrial relations Prof Dr Balakrishnan Parasuraman has warned that silent firing – where employees are systematically pushed out through isolation, lack of opportunities or deliberate neglect – may amount to constructive dismissal under Malaysian law.

"Depending on the circumstances, this can indeed fall under constructive dismissal. Constructive dismissal means the employee ends the contract themselves due to unfair treatment."

"They feel forced to resign because the working environment becomes intolerable. While not common, it does happen, especially in SMEs or companies

➤ **Sideline employees without due process may constitute constructive dismissal under Malaysian law, says professor**

lacking proper human resource structures," he said.

In contrast, he noted that larger corporations typically offer voluntary separation schemes or mutual separation schemes as legal and fair exit routes.

Employees who believe they are victims of constructive dismissal can bring their case to the Labour Department.

If conciliation fails, the matter may proceed to the industrial court.

"It's important for employees to understand that they have legal options. They can seek advice and, if necessary, take the matter to arbitration."

Malaysia's legal framework, particularly the Employment Act 1955 and the Industrial Relations Act, provides protection regardless of age, race, gender or religion.

An amendment to the Employment Act in 2022 introduced an anti-discrimination clause, further

strengthening protections across Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

Although silent firing is not explicitly defined in legislation, any act that causes an employee to feel sidelined or unfairly treated without due process could constitute a breach of the law.

"No employee should be demoted, dismissed or pressured to resign without following proper procedures. That includes conducting domestic inquiries, giving sufficient notice and maintaining documented performance appraisals."

Balakrishnan said performance issues are often cited in such cases but these must be addressed fairly.

"Yes, employees might underperform due to health or personal reasons, especially as they age. But that doesn't justify pushing them out without explanation or support."

"If performance is a concern it must be evaluated fairly, with proper documentation and opportunities for improvement."

Drawing from his comparative research, he pointed to workplace models in Japan where some companies operate seven days a week – five days with younger staff and two days with older workers.

"This balance keeps all generations engaged and helps reduce age discrimination. We need similar inclusive strategies here."

He also urged the government to consider raising the retirement age to 65 and introducing policies that support the reintegration of older workers, especially those from low-income backgrounds.

"It's not just about economic survival, it's about dignity, contribution and national progress."

On the recent launch of a one-stop centre at the Human Resources Ministry in Putrajaya, Balakrishnan praised the move as a step in the right direction.

"This is a good initiative. Employees must know their rights and the government must actively protect them, especially those vulnerable to silent dismissals."

He called for tripartite cooperation between employers, trade unions and the government.

"We must prioritise employee welfare, and make Malaysia a progressive and happy place to work."

Meanwhile, a Malaysian employee who wished to remain anonymous shared that after breaking his ankle and becoming unable to perform certain tasks, his hours were gradually reduced until he was no longer scheduled at all.

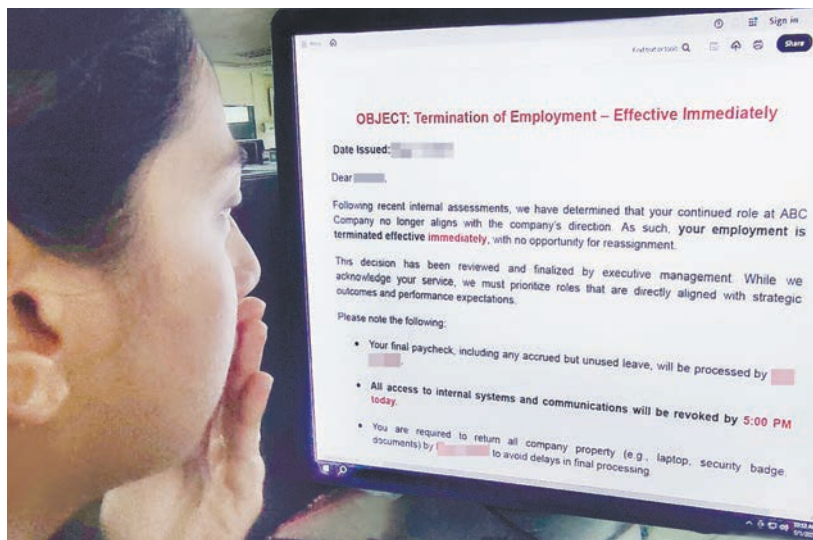
"It felt like I was being pushed out," he said.

"When I gave my two-week notice, my name was immediately removed from the roster. I was already leaving, but the way they handled it was disheartening."

Another employee said he was excluded from key virtual meetings while working remotely and later reprimanded for being "late" to sessions he was never invited to.

"My boss kept hinting I should come into the office, even though he knew about my health condition. I had to rely on others for support."

He noted that after his manager was reassigned, the situation improved.



Balakrishnan urged employees who believe they are victims of constructive dismissal to bring their case to the Labour Department. – **SYED AZAHAR SYED OSMAN/THESUN**

Security drills to begin ahead of Asean Summit

KUALA LUMPUR: Security training and simulation exercises ahead of the 46th Asean Summit, scheduled to be held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) from May 26 to May 27, will take place from May 5 to May 7, between 8am and 6pm.

National Security Council deputy director-general (strategic security) Datuk Baharuddin Ahmad said the exercises are intended to ensure the highest level of safety for international leaders and guests as well as to test the

preparedness of Malaysia's security forces.

"There are some simulations for ambushes and during this training, one or two roads will be closed. It will involve a large amount of machinery, including Federal Reserve Unit (FRU) troops. So, I urge anyone in the KLCC area to remain calm."

"This training will mirror real-life situations. For example, we are deploying a helicopter from a base – we want to test which base is most suitable

and how long it takes to mobilise it for a rescue operation," he said during an interview on Bernama Radio.

He explained that preparations for the summit involve more than 13 agencies, including the police, Armed Forces, Fire and Rescue Department, and various other ministries and departments.

Baharuddin added that detailed preparations also cover communications, cyber security and resource distribution to prevent any

sabotage attempts that could tarnish the nation's image.

"The objective of the Madani government and Malaysia, as host, is to ensure the summit runs smoothly and delivers positive outcomes in economics, politics and technology between Asean countries and external partners."

Malaysia will host the 46th Asean Summit from May 26 to May 27, while the Asean Summit with Dialogue Partners is scheduled for the end of

October as part of its Asean Chairmanship.

The summit is expected to gather all 10 Asean member state leaders to discuss regional issues, foster economic cooperation, and champion principles of inclusiveness and sustainability.

The theme of Asean 2025, "Inclusivity and Sustainability," reflects the region's collective commitment to shaping a resilient and equitable future through regional and global engagement. – **Bernama**



Hazards of cracked cell phone screen protectors

➤ Apart from finger injuries, wounds from fine glass shards could cause bacterial infections, says specialist

KUALA LUMPUR: Cracks on smartphone screen protectors are often taken lightly by users, who tend to delay replacing them.

However, did you know that a cracked screen protector could lead to more serious injuries than most people think?

Not only could it pose a risk of finger injuries, but it could also cause bacterial infections due to cuts from fine glass shards.

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Hospital Canselor Tuanku Muhriz Department of Orthopaedics and Traumatology Hand and Microsurgery Specialist Prof Dr Shalimar Abdullah said cracked screen protectors could cause seemingly harmless cuts.

"It is even more dangerous if tiny fragments, which are not visible, enter the skin as they can cause infections and pus buildup."

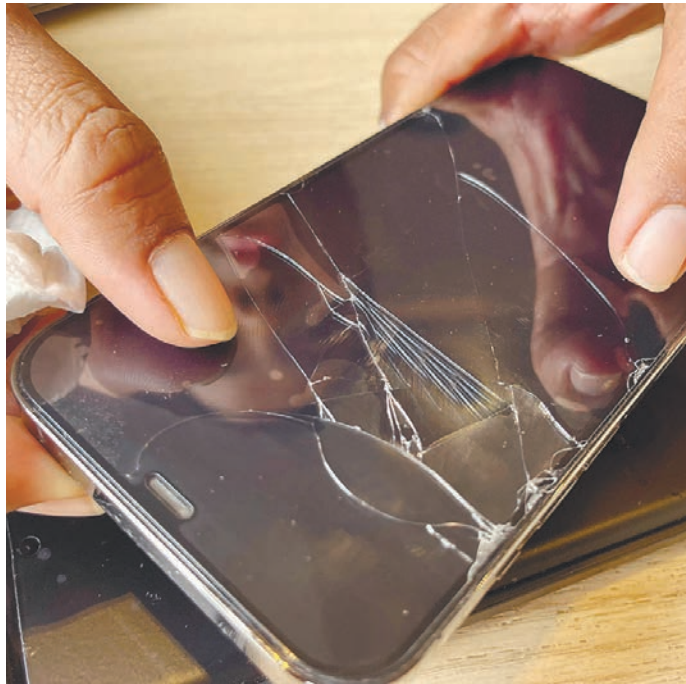
Previously, a case was widely circulated on social media about a phone repair shop worker who had to have part of his arm amputated due to a bacterial infection after fine glass shards entered a wound while repairing a customer's LCD screen.

Shalimar said if a minor wound is not treated properly, there is a higher risk of complications such as internal infections, tissue damage and the need for minor surgery to remove the fragments.

"In most minor cases, cuts from cracked glass can be cleaned with antiseptic and securely bandaged."

"However, if symptoms such as swelling, redness or pus appear, seeking immediate medical attention is the best step to prevent the infection from spreading."

She said compared with injuries caused by large glass pieces, which are more visible and easier to treat, small fragments are more concerning due to the difficulty in



Many smartphone users delay replacing cracked screen protectors, which could lead to serious injuries. – AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN

detecting them.

She added that if the fragments could not be removed manually, the patient may require a minor procedure at the hospital to thoroughly clean the wound, Bernama reported.

Shalimar said injuries caused by cracked screen protectors are very rare.

"More commonly observed problems are 'text neck' syndrome – pain in the neck,

shoulders and back due to prolonged downward head position, and 'trigger thumb' or locked thumb condition."

Smartphone user Juwita Halim, 40, admitted that she had used a cracked screen protector for a long time to save costs, only replacing it when the cracks became severe enough to interfere with her daily use.

"Thankfully, I have not experienced any finger injuries."

Atom Malaysia focused on driving safe use of nuclear technology

SEPANG: As it marks its 40th anniversary, the Department of Atomic Energy (Atom Malaysia) is ready to step up its role as the national regulator of nuclear energy and ionising radiation, driving the safe and peaceful use of nuclear technology in the country.

Its director-general Noraishah Pungut said Atom Malaysia initially focused on regulating radioactive materials.

She said its role today has expanded to include nuclear safety, radiation protection and the peaceful application of nuclear technology, in line with the growing and diverse use of atomic energy in Malaysia.

"Currently, we oversee over 2,000 active licences covering major industries such as oil and gas exploration, manufacturing as well as research and medical institutions. These are regulated in collaboration with the Health Ministry."

"These activities involve high-risk materials or equipment that must be legally and effectively regulated, in accordance with international best practices to ensure safety, security and proper usage."

"For example, hospitals seeking to use radiotherapy or companies wanting to import materials like iridium must obtain approval and comply with Atom Malaysia's strict standards," she said in a recent interview in conjunction with the department's 40th anniversary.

Noraishah said many people may not realise that nuclear technology is already widely used in Malaysia, from cancer treatment and crop research to engineering inspections, all of which rely on ionising radiation.

She said one of Atom Malaysia's key missions is to raise public awareness about how the government regulates this technology, to help shift negative perceptions often linked to the term "nuclear".

"We need to rebrand nuclear technology. It's not about bombs or disasters. It's clean and efficient technology, as long as it's properly managed. Atom Malaysia plays a key role in enforcing legal controls to ensure safety, security and responsible use."

She said with Malaysia targeting net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, nuclear energy could realistically complement the country's energy mix.

"As part of long-term preparations, we are reviewing amendments to (the law) and working to ratify several key international agreements, including the Convention on Nuclear Safety. If Malaysia is serious about developing a nuclear power plant, these foundations must be in place first."

She said one of the biggest challenges is ensuring a skilled workforce in the nuclear field.

"We need to train more people such as nuclear scientists and safety engineers. These roles require specialised training."

"Nuclear safety is not the responsibility of one party alone. It requires cooperation from industry, government, academia and the public."

Noraishah said Malaysia has yet to fully tap into the potential of nuclear technology, particularly in managing naturally occurring radioactive materials in agriculture, environmental protection and advanced materials development.

"In other countries, nuclear technology is used to purify contaminated water and create new materials. We can do the same if there's awareness and investment," she said, adding that progress in this field must be built on strong legal and safety frameworks. – Bernama

Manufacturing sector in Penang records RM17b investments

GEORGE TOWN: Penang recorded approved investments in the manufacturing sector worth RM17.3 billion in 2024, strengthening its position as Malaysia's leading technology investment and innovation hub, said Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow.

In his Labour Day message, Chow said this comprised 182 projects that created about 16,000 job opportunities last year.

"Along with sustainable economic growth and encouraging investment performance, the labour market in Penang continues to strengthen, with the latest data from the Labour Force Survey for the fourth quarter of

2024 showing the state's unemployment rate at 2.2%.

"Penang recorded a labour force participation rate of 73.2%, thus proving that people are increasingly optimistic about the labour market, encouraging them to look for jobs."

Chow said the state has also strengthened its reputation as a focal point for international trade, particularly in the electronics and semiconductor sectors, which are experiencing rapid growth.

In conjunction with Labour Day, Chow said the state government would continue to

champion the rights and welfare of workers through inclusive policies, skills training programmes and creating more high-value job opportunities.

He said the development of digital, green and smart technology sectors would continue to be given priority so that workers remain relevant and competitive.

"I also urge all employers to continue to maintain harmonious and fair relationships with their employees as the long-term success of an organisation depends not only on profits, but also on the well-being and happiness of its workforce." – Bernama

Health Ministry issues 43,000 smoking-related compound notices

KAJANG: The Health Ministry has issued 43,455 compound notices with fines totalling RM10.4 million for various offences as of April 20 under the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 since the law came into effect on Oct 1, 2024.

According to Public Health Development Division director Dr Zulhizam Abdullah, three

investigation papers were opened during the period under Section 7(1) for offences related to the prohibition of advertising smoking products, and five under Section 9(1) on the promotion and sponsorship of smoking products.

"In addition, 20 investigation papers have been opened under Regulation 3 of the Control

of Smoking Products for Public Health (Control of Sale) Regulations 2024 for offences involving the online sale of smoking products.

"For offences under Section 15(1), which relates to the packaging of products that resemble toys or food, a total of 46 investigation papers have been opened," he said. – Bernama

Asbestos still in use despite known dangers

► Experts call for nationwide ban, stronger enforcement to protect public from long-term health risks

BY HARITH KAMAL
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PETALING JAYA: Even two decades after Malaysia banned asbestos in government buildings, the hazardous material remains a silent threat.

Despite its well-documented carcinogenic risks, asbestos continues to be widely used in private construction and industrial sectors.

Experts warn that without urgent, coordinated action, Malaysians – especially those in vulnerable communities – will continue to face life-threatening health consequences.

Even low-level or brief exposure to asbestos can cause severe, irreversible lung damage.

Negeri Sembilan-based Safe Asbestos Sdn Bhd managing director Hisham Yahaya said asbestos is still commonly found in older homes, particularly in ceiling boards and roofing sheets, and remains in use across various industries.

"It is still used in panel boards, insulation and gaskets. The problem is people often do not realise they're being exposed, and even when they do, the cost of proper removal deters them.

"Many simply break it apart and dispose it improperly, which is extremely dangerous."

He added that although safer alternatives such as metal roofing, cellulose fibre boards and modern insulation materials are available, adoption has been slow.

"Industries and small contractors often choose the cheapest option. Without financial support or strict enforcement, they won't change."

International Islamic University Malaysia Department of Community Medicine associate professor Dr Muhammad Zubir Yusof said part of the issue lies in regulatory gaps and inconsistent enforcement.

"Malaysia banned crocidolite asbestos, a particularly dangerous form known for its fine, easily inhaled fibres, in 1999.

"The ban was extended to all government building projects by 2005. But this restriction doesn't apply to the private sector.

"Chrysotile, the most commonly used type, is still allowed in products such as brake pads."

Also an expert in environmental and occupational health and safety research, he added that the continued use of asbestos –



Hisham said asbestos is still commonly found in older homes, particularly in ceiling boards and roofing sheets, and remains in use across various industries. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

particularly crocidolite – is largely driven by its low cost and durability compared with alternatives such as cellulose fibre cement sheets.

"While crocidolite is especially hazardous, chrysotile also poses significant risks.

"There's no such thing as safe asbestos exposure. Both types can cause long-term health damage."

He called for an immediate nationwide ban on asbestos, but stressed it must be accompanied by effective enforcement.

"We need a trained, certified workforce for asbestos removal, financial incentives to support the use of safer materials and stronger penalties for illegal use or mishandling."

Beyond regulation, he emphasised the need for public education.

"People in rural areas and those working in construction or manufacturing often don't fully understand the risks.

"A national awareness campaign, culturally sensitive and tailored to vulnerable groups, is essential."

From a clinical standpoint, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Specialist Centre respiratory physician Assoc Prof Dr Ng Boon Hau echoed these concerns.

"Inhaling asbestos fibres, even for a short time, can result in permanent lung damage.

"These microscopic fibres get lodged deep in the lungs and are nearly impossible for the

body to remove."

He explained that long-term consequences include lung scarring, asbestosis and cancer.

"Mesothelioma, a cancer of the lung lining, and lung cancer are directly linked to asbestos exposure.

"These conditions can take decades to develop, making early detection and treatment extremely difficult."

Ng also supported the call for a complete asbestos ban, alongside stronger oversight of industries.

"There is no safe level of exposure. Employers must take their responsibilities seriously.

"They are legally and morally obligated to protect workers from harmful substances and that includes complying with guidelines from the Department of Occupational Safety and Health."

On Jan 11, Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad announced that the government is considering a full asbestos ban.

He said the Department of Environment is studying the health and environmental impacts of industrial asbestos use and reviewing existing legislation to identify any gaps.

However, there have been no further updates on the proposal.

RM980,000 assets linked to drugs seized

KUALA TERENGGANU: Terengganu police have seized three luxury vehicles, cash and jewellery worth a total of RM981,500, believed to be proceeds from drug trafficking activities.

State police chief Datuk Mohd Khairi Khairuddin said this followed the arrest of a 35-year-old local man, who owns a cosmetics shop, during a raid in Kampung Paya Keladi on April 28.

Among the seized assets were an MPV, a hatchback, an SUV, RM7,700 in cash and several gold bracelets and necklaces.

Police also seized from the man a packet containing 1.02kg of syabu (methamphetamine), believed to be meant for distribution to drug addicts in the district.

Initial investigations revealed the suspect has no prior criminal record but a urine test returned positive for Nimetazepam, a controlled substance.

The suspect has been remanded for seven days, from April 29 to May 5, as investigations continue.

The case is being investigated under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952, which carries the death penalty or life imprisonment, with a minimum of 12 strokes of the cane upon conviction.

Police are currently pursuing leads to identify and dismantle a wider drug syndicate believed to be operating in the area.

Meanwhile in Miri, Sarawak police arrested two men and seized drugs worth more than RM123,000 in two separate raids on Sunday.

Miri district police chief ACP Mohd Farhan Lee Abdullah said in the first raid at an entertainment centre at about 12.10am, a 27-year-old foreign man was arrested.

"In the raid, police seized drugs suspected to be ecstasy powder weighing 1.3kg, ecstasy pills weighing 37g, ketamine weighing 10.2g and a pod containing drugs weighing 66.9g, with a total value of RM25,620.

The amount of drugs seized is estimated to be enough for 1,500 doses. Initial screening tests found the suspect positive for methamphetamine.

In a second raid the same day at about 1.25pm at a house, a 35-year-old local man was arrested and police seized 31.4kg of ganja worth RM97,340.

Also seized was a hatchback, estimated to be worth RM20,000.

The drugs are estimated to be sufficient for 155,000 doses.

Both cases are being investigated under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952, which provides the death penalty or, if not sentenced to death, life imprisonment and no fewer than 12 strokes of the cane upon conviction. – Bernama

Factory operator loses RM440,000 in scam

IPOH: A factory operator in Taiping has lost RM449,100 after falling victim to a non-existent online investment scheme.

Taiping police chief ACP Mohamad Nasir Ismail said the 69-year-old man lodged a report at the Taiping district police headquarters on Tuesday.

"The victim had clicked on a link on Facebook before being added to a WhatsApp chat group on Feb 16.

"The syndicate offered him a plan that promised high returns based on the share market. He was also instructed to instal an app to monitor his investments."

The victim then made 19 transactions to five different bank accounts between Feb 16 and April 12.

He was told that in order to receive profits, he must complete payments over a three-month maturity period and avoid withdrawing any funds before the term ended.

However, Mohamad Nasir said the victim became suspicious after failing to receive any updates or replies to his queries via WhatsApp. – Bernama

'Ah Long' threatens single mum over ex-husband's debt

IPOH: A single mother in Ipoh is living a nightmare after receiving death threats from a loan shark over her former husband's unpaid loan.

The woman, who wished to be identified only as Lau, 47, said she began receiving threatening phone calls from an individual who claimed her former husband had borrowed RM1,000 – a sum which has allegedly ballooned to RM10,000.

Lau, a teacher, said the syndicate threatened to kill her, her four children aged between 10 and 17, and her two younger

sisters if she failed to settle the debt.

"Our nightmare began last Monday when I started receiving threatening calls and messages from an 'Ah Long' demanding I pay my ex-husband's debt.

"The 'Ah Long' also posted a picture of me and my children on Facebook, along with a threatening message," she said during a press conference at the Perak MCA building on Wednesday.

She added that since receiving the threats, she has been living in constant fear for her family's safety.

"I've told them I am no longer married to my ex-husband and have no knowledge of his debts, but they still insist I pay them.

"I filed a police report at the Ipoh district police headquarters last Monday. I also lodged a report with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission on April 25. The Facebook post has since been taken down."

Meanwhile, Perak MCA public service and complaints bureau chief Yuen Chan How urged the authorities to track down those responsible and take appropriate action. – Bernama



Conference to facilitate societal support system

PETALING JAYA: "Akasha" means "space" or "the vast expanse" in Sanskrit, referring to the boundless, empty void in which everything exists.

"I chose this word to reflect my life's work because I received my training in India. It is a reminder of where I got the concept of a learning community," said Akasha Learning Companionship Association of Malaysia founder and CEO Lim Joon Seong, adding that this year marks the 20th anniversary of Akasha's voluntary community work.

"To commemorate this occasion, we will be hosting a five-day conference in Puchong in late May.

"We are not merely organising an event. We are creating a societal support system in which people get together to make progress on the problems they are facing and learn how to overcome challenges," he told theSun.

Lim, popularly known as "Teacher Nandor", said the conference is a natural extension of Akasha's core belief that sustainable change starts with personal transformation.

"We've always believed that you (must) change your own life first. That's how you begin to change society."

The upcoming conference reflects this ethos. Unlike traditional events built around keynote speeches, it places participants at the centre. Through personal storytelling, silence and dialogue-based sessions, Lim said Akasha hopes to foster a deeper sense of belonging and purpose among attendees.

There will be three interconnected themes – the companionship of life, which promotes cooperation over competition; the reconciliation of life, which involves healing from personal and collective trauma; and trust in life, which encourages embracing life's uncertainties with confidence.

"We use simple, human methods to address things such as life education, emotional resilience and community support. It's not flashy, but it's real."

Among the unique sessions planned is the Living Library, during which participants will read life stories from 30 individuals representing different cultures, challenges and

triumphs. Each attendee will be invited to select two life stories to listen to while enjoying a drink in a relaxed setting.

Other sessions include Quiet Time for inner reflection, Open Space Technology for group dialogue and co-creation, and cultural events such as Creative Night and Flow of Love, during which participants will share childhood games and performances from around the world.

"This is not just a cultural exercise. It's an exercise in building relationships and forming good communications with one another," said Lim.

Akasha plans to hold this conference every two years for the next decade, with the first three instalments based in Malaysia and the final ones overseas.

"The long-term goal is to share Malaysia's experience with other countries in need of similar support systems."

Akasha president Isabelle S.K. Fam said the conference aims to build "globally-minded" learning communities that can work together across borders in mutual support and development.

Organising committee chairperson Karen Hoo said Akasha has since expanded to Bandung and Jakarta in Indonesia, the Songjiang district in Shanghai, China, and is also supported by the Family EQ Development Association in Tainan, Taiwan.

The 2nd Learning Community International Life-Work Conference, themed "Remaking My Life: Together, We Move Forward," will be held from May 29 to June 2 at the Espira Kinrara Resort Hotel in Puchong, Selangor.

The conference is open to participants from Malaysia and abroad and will be conducted in both English and Mandarin.

Those interested in joining may register online at forms.gle/7mbZw3YNSaVHVJEz8.

For more information, visit en.myakasha.org/lciliwc2025. Enquiries in Chinese can be directed to 03-8958 6877 or 016-331 8763, and English enquiries to +62-8775240478.

– by T.C. Khor

Giving broken lives new lease of life

➤ Friendship movement offers moral and emotional support to individuals traversing dark times

■ BY T.C. KHOR
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: For some, healing begins in silence. For others, it comes with tears, questions or the courage to reach out.

At Akasha Learning Companionship Association of Malaysia, healing is not a solitary path. It is one walked together, through pain, growth and rediscovery.

From a small community learning circle in Malaysia, the non-profit organisation founded by Lim Joon Seong, has grown into something much larger, with a vision to create a global friendship movement focused on peace, harmony and unity within society.

This year marks its 20th anniversary and Akasha will host its 2nd Learning Community International Life-Work Conference from May 29 to June 2 in Puchong.

There are numerous success stories of people whose lives have been transformed.

In 2013, Alvin P.H. Loke stood on the rooftop of a 22-storey apartment, ready to end his life.

Now at 42, the Seremban-based artist and farmer still remembers the moment vividly.

After a tumultuous life marked by bad company, a failed three-year marriage and the death of both



Loke is now a farmer and artist living a calm and contented life.

– T.C. KOH/THESUN

parents, Loke spiralled into drugs, smoking, drinking and gambling.

"The guilt, disappointment, dissatisfaction and self-hatred made me want to end my life. I made one phone call to Akasha and that call changed everything."

"What followed was not a miracle, but something gentler and just as powerful... presence."

"They didn't try to fix me. They just listened. They didn't give me answers. They gave me back a sense of who I was," Loke said, adding that being heard was the most important thing that changed him.

Isabelle S.K. Fam, 49, a business owner in Kepong, did not set out to be part of a movement. In fact, she resisted it.

Her introduction to Akasha in 2008 came through her mother, who signed up the whole family for its programmes.

"For the first seven years, I was just there because she made me."

Her turning point came after her mother died in 2014. Grieving and overwhelmed, she struggled to keep their family-run organic store afloat.

"I was exhausted, directionless and about to collapse."

She said the Akasha community then stepped in to provide moral and emotional support, and was there when she needed answers.

It was then that she finally understood why her mother had devoted herself so deeply to the learning circle.

"She didn't leave behind wealth. She left something better, a space for people to grow through connection."

"Akasha taught me that healing isn't just about fixing the past. It's about building a new future."

"Through systematic learning, we hope to cultivate more healthy adults who do not become part of the problem, but part of the healing process," said Fam, who took on the position of Akasha president in 2022.

At 57, Loke Mun Ling is no stranger to pain. Born into a traditional Chinese New Village family, she witnessed early on how hardship can lead people down dark paths.

"My parents turned to alcohol and gambling. And later, I did too."

Her life became a repetition of the chaos she experienced during childhood, until her husband and young daughter asked her to leave. That request was the jolt she needed.

In 2011, her path to recovery led her to Akasha, where she began unpacking her trauma and unconscious emotions.

"I learnt that even as adults, many of us remain stuck in childhood, reliving the same trauma in different ways."

Now, faced with her husband's terminal illness and her own declining health, she is learning to embrace the concept of "letting go."

"I'm learning how to say goodbye to my body, my loved ones and eventually, to myself"

EDUCATION

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Pakistan claims India planning military strike

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan said on Wednesday it had "credible intelligence" that India was planning a military strike and vowed to retaliate.

Already frosty relations between the nuclear-armed neighbours have plummeted further since New Delhi blamed its arch-rival Pakistan for last week's assault on tourists in Pahalgam in Indian-administered Kashmir, the deadliest attack on civilians there in a quarter of a century.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave the military "complete operational freedom" to respond to the attack during a closed-door meeting on Tuesday, a senior government source told AFP.

Pakistan's government has denied involvement in the shooting and vowed that "any act of aggression will be met with a decisive response".

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he had protested "India's escalatory and provocative behaviour" in a phone call with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who told Sharif of the "need to condemn the attack".

Rubio "urged Pakistani officials' cooperation in investigating this unconscionable attack", said State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce.

The United States has close relations with India and has voiced solidarity.

In a call with India's top diplomat Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Rubio "encouraged India to work with Pakistan to de-escalate tensions and maintain peace and security in South Asia", said Bruce.

In a sign of mounting tensions, New Delhi on Wednesday closed its airspace to Pakistani airplanes, after Islamabad banned Indian planes from overflying.

Muslim-majority Kashmir, a region of around 15 million people, is divided but claimed in full between Pakistan and India, which have fought three full-fledged wars since their separation at birth in 1947.

Both sides said on Wednesday they had repeatedly traded gunfire for a sixth straight night across the Line of Control (LoC), a heavily fortified zone of high-altitude Himalayan outposts that represents the *de facto* Kashmir border.

Another Pakistani security source told AFP that two drones were shot down on Tuesday near the LoC "after violating our airspace".

The two sides discussed the violations in a weekly call on Tuesday, Pakistani army spokesperson Lt-Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry told a press conference on Wednesday, adding that the details of the routine call are not usually made public.

A defence source in India confirmed that the directors-general of military operations for both countries talked over a hotline.

Modi vowed last week to pursue those who carried out the attack and those who had supported it. — AFP

Singapore parties make final push as polling day nears

➤ Efforts include house visits, walkabouts, podcast appearances, social media campaigns and physical rallies

SINGAPORE: With days to go before polling, political parties contesting Singapore's general election are ramping up efforts to win over more than 2.75 million eligible voters.

Since campaigning began following the close of nominations on April 23, parties and candidates have launched full-scale outreach efforts, including house visits, walkabouts, podcast appearances, political party broadcasts, social media campaigns and the highly anticipated return of physical rallies, which were last held during the 2015 general election.

The rallies, held from 12pm to 3pm and 7pm to 10pm, have drawn sizable crowds.

The Workers' Party (WP) has been particularly successful in attracting large turnouts, with its venues reaching maximum capacity for at least two consecutive nights.

The events are livestreamed on social media platforms, including by mainstream media, garnering strong online viewership.

Pacific Research Centre of Malaysia principal adviser Dr Oh Ei Sun observed that social media has been used for political propaganda well before the official campaign period, noting that the opposition appears to have greater

access to mainstream media.

"It remains to be seen if all this would have an impact on the election."

The cooling-off period begins at midnight today and lasts until the close of polls, during which all forms of campaigning are prohibited.

Police issued permits for 11 rallies to six parties and one independent candidate on the last day of campaigning yesterday.

Bread-and-butter issues, such as the cost of living, housing, job security and GST, have taken centre stage in rally speeches.

At times, pointed criticisms of rival parties and candidates have added drama to what is typically a civil political discourse in Singapore.

Helmi, 60, a voter in the five-seat Tanjong Pagar Group Representation Constituency (GRC), said Singaporeans tend to be pragmatic when deciding on the country's and their children's future.

He and his wife Angela took leave from work to attend a rally, saying it was an opportunity not to be missed as it allowed them to get a sense of the "pulse", to listen and get up close to the candidates.

"The cost of living is an issue because I help in social services and I see that there are people who are struggling. While the majority might be able to cushion the cost of living and inflation in the short term, we must not forget those in the lower-income group who may not have that capacity."

"Who I choose is the one that I believe will take care of these people," he said, adding that his mind is already made up ahead of the polls tomorrow.

The father of two said party manifestos, speeches and track records were key in shaping his decision.

It is a different story for Bala and Merchan, who are undecided about who to vote for.

Working in the finance sector, they said the candidates, the

parties and their manifestos are equally important in making their decision.

"I have not read all the manifestos but I read everything that is reported in the media," said Bala, adding that job security is his key concern.

For Merchan, it is about ensuring "Singapore continues to be what it is today", especially in terms of the economy.

Singaporeans will go to the polls tomorrow, with 92 out of 97 parliamentary seats being contested.

A surprise walkover for the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) occurred in the five-seat Marine Parade-Braddell Heights GRC on nomination day.

In total, 206 candidates from 11 political parties and independents are vying for the remaining seats across 32 constituencies, comprising 17 GRCs and 15 Single Member Constituencies (SMC).

According to Oh, all eyes will be on East Coast GRC, where PAP had a narrow win in the 2020 general election, and several newly created SMC to see if the opposition can make further inroads after their absence in Marine Parade-Braddell Heights GRC surprised many.

Another hotly contested area is the newly formed four-seat Punggol GRC, which will see a straight fight between the PAP slate led by Deputy Prime Minister Gan Kim Yong and WP's team of four newcomers, including lawyers Harpreet Singh and Siti Alia.

The five-seat Tampines GRC, won by PAP in the 2020 general election, is also expected to be closely watched as it features a face-off between two Malay-Muslim figures — PAP Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Masagos Zulkifli and WP's Faisal Abdul Manap.

Other notable mentions include Singapore Democratic Party secretary-general Dr Chee Soon Juan, a perennial candidate and activist who has been part of the country's political landscape since 1992.

He is contesting the newly created Sembawang West SMC.

In the last election, PAP won 83 out of 93 seats, with the remaining seats going to WP.

Polling stations will open at 8am and close at 8pm, with results expected to start coming in after 10pm. — Bernama



Singapore Prime Minister and PAP secretary-general Lawrence Wong posing with residents of Tampines estate during a campaign event. — AFP/PC

Myanmar army lets post-quake truce expire

YANGON: Myanmar's military government allowed a truce declared to spur aid efforts after last month's earthquake to expire yesterday, a ceasefire that monitors have said it consistently violated with air strikes.

The March 28 7.7-magnitude quake in Myanmar's central belt killed nearly 3,800 and left tens of

thousands homeless as the summer monsoon season approaches.

The military government, which snatched power in a 2021 coup that sparked a multi-faceted civil war, declared a ceasefire on April 2 and extended it last week as aid groups warned of a long road to recovery.

It expired at midnight on

Wednesday (1730 GMT on Tuesday), with the military government information team making no announcement of an extension.

Its spokesperson could not be reached for comment on Wednesday.

Monitors from the Britain-based Centre for Information Resilience logged 65 air attacks by the military

during the proclaimed ceasefire period, many clustered in regions worst-hit by the quake.

When the military pledged to pause offensives, it warned the myriad anti-coup and ethnic armed groups it is battling that it would strike back if they advanced.

During the ceasefire period,

opposition armed groups besieged towns on a lucrative eastern trade route to Thailand, according to locals, who said fighting had forced many civilians from their homes.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies predicted that it would take two years to fully recover from the quake. — AFP



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SCAN ME

EU states seek exemptions to increase defence spending

BRUSSELS: Sixteen European Union (EU) countries will seek exemptions from the bloc's public debt rules so that they can ramp up defence spending, the EU said on Wednesday.

With the continent looking to re-arm following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and US President Donald Trump's stance on European security, the European Commission

said it would give member states more wiggle room on spending.

In an easing of its once strict rule on budget deficits, Brussels will allow states to spend up to 1.5% of national output on defence for four years without fear of breaching its strict public debt limits.

Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Estonia,

Greece, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Slovakia and Finland have decided to trigger the budget exemption clause, an EU statement said.

EU countries had until the end of April to inform the bloc of their decision to opt in to the suspension.

Twelve countries have formally requested exemption and four have

committed to do so, according to the European Commission and European Council.

In March, the EU forecast that the suspension could unlock defence spending worth up to about EUR\$650 billion (RM3.17 trillion).

France, Spain and Italy are among countries to stay away from the exemption but they have pledged to

boost their defence spending.

"We remain open for more requests" for exemptions, European Economic Affairs Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis said on Wednesday, quoted in a press release.

Since 2021, military spending by the 27 EU members has risen by more than 31%, reaching EUR\$326 billion last year. – AFP

Ex-VP Harris calls Trump's America 'self-serving'

► 'Conservatives using president to twist nation to own advantage'

SAN FRANCISCO: Former US vice-president Kamala Harris slammed US President Donald Trump and his backers on Wednesday in her first major speech since losing November's election.

The defeated Democrat told supporters that the apparent chaos of the last three months was actually the realisation of a long-cherished plan by conservatives, who are using Trump to twist the United States to their own advantage.

"What we are witnessing is a high velocity event in which a vessel is being used for the swift implementation of an agenda that has been decades in the making," she told an audience in San Francisco.

"An agenda to slash public education. An agenda to shrink government and then privatise its services. All while giving tax breaks to the wealthiest.

"A narrow, self-serving vision of America in which they punish truth-tellers, favour loyalists, cash in on their power and leave everyone to fend for themselves."

Trump's first 100 days in power have been marked by a dizzying array of executive orders addressing everything from immigration to foreign aid to showerhead pressure.

Critics have been appalled at what they say is a vengeful administration carelessly overstepping democratic and constitutional norms, including by clashing with the courts.

While Trump supporters have cheered some of the rapid-fire changes, recent polls have shown that a majority of the country is becoming disenchanted with the political and economic tumult, particularly from his off-changing tariffs.

Harris, who is thought to be mulling a run for governorship of her home state of

California next year or a possible White House run in 2028, has largely stayed out of the limelight since leaving Washington in January.

On Wednesday, she was a guest speaker at an event run by Emerge, a political organisation that recruits and trains Democratic women to run for public office.

She told the crowd that Trump was targeting universities and courts because he wanted to cow the opposition.

"Trump, his administration and their allies are counting on the notion that fear can be contagious.

"They are counting on the notion that if they can make some people afraid, it will have a chilling effect on others."

She said nevertheless, there are judges, academics, politicians and regular people who were standing up to the government.

"Fear is not the only thing that is contagious. Courage is contagious. The courage of all these Americans inspires me." – AFP

US eyes migrant deals with other nations

WASHINGTON: After a controversial deal with El Salvador, the United States is negotiating more arrangements to send migrants to third countries, President Donald Trump's administration said on Wednesday, with Rwanda apparently on the list.

"I say this unapologetically. We are actively searching for other countries to take people from third countries," Secretary of State Marco Rubio told a Cabinet meeting.

"We are working with other countries to say: 'We want to send some of the most despicable human beings to your countries'"

Two people familiar with negotiations, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Rwanda is among the countries in talks with the United States.

El Salvador has been taking in its own citizens as well as Venezuelan migrants as Trump carries out a mass deportation drive.

The arrangement has faced backlash, especially after a US official acknowledged that authorities mistakenly expelled Salvadoran Kilmar Abrego Garcia but that the United States could not bring him back.

The US Supreme Court has ordered the government to facilitate the return of Abrego Garcia, who has not been charged with any crime and had a judge's order against deportation. – AFP

Libya to close 25 diplomatic missions

ANKARA: Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibeh on Wednesday announced plans to close 25 of the country's diplomatic missions abroad in a bid to reduce public spending, Anadolu Ajansi reported.

The decision is part of a series of cost-cutting measures, according to a statement by the Government of National Unity.

The statement said a committee would be formed to review staffing levels and working conditions at remaining diplomatic missions.

The government has also halted the issuance of new overseas education scholarships and current scholarships will not be renewed.

Funds previously allocated for scholarships abroad will be redirected to support students and researchers within Libya, as well as to develop the National Electronic Library project. – Bernama-Anadolu

Yoon indicted for abuse of authority

SEOUL: South Korean prosecutors have indicted former president Yoon Suk Yeol for abuse of authority, Yonhap news agency said yesterday.

The indictment is in addition to an ongoing trial on insurrection charges, brought against Yoon over his brief imposition of martial law in December last year.

The latest indictment is without arrest, Yonhap said, citing the prosecutor's office.

An official at the prosecutor's office could not be immediately reached for comment. – Reuters



Demonstrators during a protest in Washington DC marking Trump's first 100 days in office. – REUTERS/PIC

Brazilian nun aged 116 dies as world's oldest person

BRASILIA: The world's oldest person, Brazilian nun Inah Canabarro Lucas, died on Wednesday at the age of 116.

The title now passes to Ethel Caterham, a resident of Surrey in England who is 115 years old, according to the US

Gerontological Research Group and the LongeviQuest database.

The Congregation of Teresian Sisters of Brazil in Porto Alegre announced Canabarro's passing in a statement in which it gave thanks "for the dedication and devotion" she had

shown in life.

In an obituary, LongeviQuest said Canabarro had been a frail child and "many doubted she would survive".

She became a nun in 1934 at the age of 26, between World Wars I and II. – AFP

U.S. WARNS IRAN AGAINST SUPPORTING HOUTHIS

NEW YORK: US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth warned Iran on Wednesday that it would face consequences for supporting the Houthis, a group that controls northern Yemen and has struck shipping in the Red Sea in what it says is solidarity with Palestinians. "We see your lethal support to the Houthis. We know exactly what you are doing. You know very well what the US military is capable of, and you were warned. You will pay the consequence at the time and place of our choosing." – Reuters

RUSSIAN STRIKE KILLS TWO, INJURES FIVE IN ODESA

KYIV: A Russian drone strike killed at least two people and wounded five others in a residential area of Odesa, the Ukrainian region's governor Oleg Kiper said yesterday. "Emergency and utility services are working on the ground to eliminate the consequences of the attacks and provide the necessary medical assistance to the victims," said Odesa mayor Gennadiy Trukhanov. – AFP

CANADA PM REITERATES COMMITMENT TO UKRAINE

OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday and underscored Canada's commitment to supporting Ukraine in achieving lasting peace and security, Carney's office said. They agreed that peace can only be achieved with Ukraine at the table, Carney's office said. – Reuters

Israel targets Syria in hit against extremist group

➤ Army says strike makes good on promise to defend Druze community

JERUSALEM: Israel said it carried out a strike in Syria against "an extremist group" that attacked members of the Druze community, following through on a promise to defend the minority group as deadly sectarian violence spread near Damascus on Wednesday.

A Syrian Foreign Ministry statement rejected "all forms of foreign intervention" in Syria's internal affairs, without mentioning Israel, and declared Syria's commitment to protecting all Syrian groups, "including the noble Druze sect."

This marks the first time Israel has announced a military strike in support of Syrian Druze since Bashar al-Assad was toppled, reflecting its deep mistrust of the Sunni Islamists who replaced him and posing a further challenge to interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa's efforts to establish control over the fractured nation.

A Syrian Interior Ministry source told

Reuters that Israeli drone strikes targeted government security forces, killing one of their members, in the mainly Druze town of Sahnaya on the outskirts of Damascus.

In a statement, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said the Israeli military had carried out "a warning operation and struck an extremist group" as it prepared to continue an attack on Druze in Sahnaya.

"A message was passed on to the Syrian regime. Israel expects it to act in order to prevent harm to the Druze."

Sharaa, who was an al-Qaeda commander before renouncing ties to the group in 2016, has repeatedly vowed to govern Syria in an inclusive way. But incidents of sectarian violence, including the killing of hundreds of Alawites in March, have hardened fears among minority groups about the dominant Islamists.

The sectarian violence began on Tuesday with clashes between Druze and Sunni gunmen in the predominantly Druze area of Jaramana. It was ignited by a voice recording cursing the Prophet Mohammad, which Sunni militants suspected was made by a Druze.

More than a dozen people were reported dead on Tuesday before the violence spread to Sahnaya on Wednesday.

In a statement on state news agency Sana, the director of security for the Damascus countryside said a ceasefire was reached in Jaramana but outlaws had escalated attacks in the Sahnaya area on Wednesday, killing 16 security forces members.

Security sources said hundreds of Interior Ministry troops were deployed in and around Sahnaya following an agreement with Druze elders.

Residents said the situation has largely calmed after intense fighting, with only sporadic gunfire heard.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which reports on conflict in Syria, said at least 22 people were killed in Sahnaya, including six Druze fighters and 16 members of government security forces or fighters aligned with them.

The Interior Ministry said it is investigating the origin of the audio recording.

United Nations special envoy to Syria Geir Pedersen called for immediate measures to ensure the protection of civilians and prevent incitement of communal tensions.

The Islamist-led leadership in Damascus has called for all arms to fall under their authority but Druze fighters have resisted, saying Damascus has failed to guarantee their protection from hostile militants. – Reuters

Student held over Palestinian advocacy released

NEW YORK: Columbia University student Mohsen Mahdawi was released from US immigration custody on Wednesday after a judge ruled that he should be free on bail to challenge the Trump administration's efforts to deport him over his participation in pro-Palestinian protests.

Mahdawi was arrested earlier this month upon arriving for an interview for his US citizenship petition. A judge swiftly ordered President Donald Trump's administration not to deport him from the United States or take him out of Vermont.

After two weeks in detention, Mahdawi walked out of the federal courthouse in Burlington, Vermont, following US district judge Geoffrey Crawford's order that he be released.

Crawford said Mahdawi did not pose a danger to the public and was not a flight risk, drawing parallels between the current political climate and the Red Scare and McCarthyism eras of the last century when thousands of people were targeted for deportation due to their political views.

Trump administration officials have said student visa and green card holders are subject to deportation over their support for Palestinians and criticism of Israel's conduct in the war in Gaza, calling their actions a threat to US foreign policy.

Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said Mahdawi's privilege of studying in the United States on a green card should be taken away.

"When you advocate for violence, glorify and support terrorists that relish the killing of Americans, and harass Jews, that privilege should be revoked and you should not be in this country. No judge is going to stop us from doing that."

Trump's critics have called the effort an attack on free speech rights under the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

"Every individual in this country, citizen and non-citizen alike, deserves the due process rights afforded them by law," said a Columbia University spokesperson.

Crawford said Mahdawi had exercised his right to advocate a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Gaza.

Even as a non-citizen resident, Mahdawi enjoys the same First Amendment free speech rights as US citizens, he said. – Reuters



Mahdawi leaving the courthouse after he was released on bail. – REUTERS/SPIC

University, governor sued over arrests at demonstration

AUSTIN: Four current and former University of Texas at Austin students sued the college and Texas Governor Greg Abbott on Wednesday, alleging that they faced unlawful arrest and retaliatory discipline for demonstrating against Israel's assault on Gaza.

The lawsuit is among a wave of legal actions against US universities, law enforcement and state leaders over their handling of pro-Palestinian student protests that erupted last year.

Filed in the US District Court in San Antonio by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) on behalf of the students, the lawsuit accuses university president Jay Hartzell, Abbott and law enforcement officers of intentionally suppressing pro-Palestinian speech at an April 24, 2024 campus protest.

According to the filing, Abbott, with the consent of Hartzell, ordered state police in riot gear to carry out mass arrests, violating protesters' First Amendment rights to assemble and express their opinions.

University spokesperson Mike Rosen referred to statements the university made after the arrests, saying it had acted to preserve campus safety, enforce protest rules and most arrests were of people from outside the university.

Abbott's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In a post made during the arrests, Abbott said: "Antisemitism will not be tolerated in Texas."

Dozens of demonstrators were taken into custody at the protest and released two days later after the Travis County Attorney's Office said charges were dropped due to a lack of probable cause.

All students arrested faced university disciplinary action, according to the lawsuit.

ADC director Abed Ayoub said most Americans, especially Texans, backed free speech for pro-Palestinian protesters.

"Governor Abbott and others are underestimating how much Americans value their First Amendment rights." – Reuters

Reshaping outdated work mode

COMMENT by Elman Mustafa El Bakri

EVERY year, as Labour Day rolls around, we pause to honour the contributions of workers and reflect on the struggles that shaped today's workplace.

It is a tradition built on the fight for fair hours, safe working conditions and the right to a decent living – victories earned by generations before us.

But here's a question worth asking in 2025: In a world where our jobs follow us home – ping-pong our phones, spilling into our evenings and encroaching on our weekends – what exactly are we celebrating? More importantly, is the traditional nine-to-five work model still something worth preserving?

The simple answer is: no. And it is a reality that many young workers, particularly those from Gen Z, are quietly but firmly reshaping.

For decades, the standard eight-hour workday, five days a week, was seen as the gold standard of employment. Anything outside those hours was seen as either a luxury or part of the hustle. But the digital age blurred those neat boundaries.

Technology promised us efficiency but instead, it has tethered us to our jobs like never before. The office may close at five but the emails, Slack notifications and team pings keep rolling in long after dinner.

While some workers have come to accept this as the price of modern employment, Gen Z – those born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s – aren't buying it. Raised with the internet and entering adulthood in the aftermath of a global pandemic, this generation does not see nine-to-five as a sacred institution but as a

system in desperate need of rethinking.

It is not laziness; it is life

Gen Z's pushback against rigid work hours is not a rejection of hard work. It is a rejection of outdated structures that fail to account for how people actually live and work today.

Flexibility, autonomy and meaningful output have replaced time-clock punching as the new measures of productivity.

This generation values balance, mental health and personal growth alongside career ambition.

They have seen firsthand how burnout can devastate morale and how performative busyness can often mask inefficiency.

So instead of chasing overtime, many young professionals prefer roles where they are judged by the quality of their work – not by the hours they log or how often they stay late.

The pandemic opened the door to conversations about remote work, hybrid models and the value of asynchronous schedules. It turns out you don't always need to be in an office from nine to five to get things done.

In fact, many employees – across all generations – reported increased productivity and job satisfaction when given the freedom to structure their workday around when they are at their best.

Gen Z did not start this conversation but they are refusing to let it die quietly. They are asking tough and necessary questions, like: "Why should creative, knowledge-based work be confined to fixed hours?" "Why should success be measured by desk time rather than



Gen Z values balance, mental health and personal growth alongside career ambition. – SUNPIC

outcomes?" and "If technology allows for smarter, faster and more collaborative work, why are we still clinging to models designed for factory floors in the 1920s?"

This isn't rebellion for rebellion's sake – it is an opportunity for companies to evolve.

Forward-thinking organisations are already experimenting with four-day workweeks, results-only work environments and outcome-based KPIs. And unsurprisingly, they are seeing gains not just in employee well-being but in innovation, retention and business performances.

The truth is, whether leaders like it or not, the traditional nine-to-five is

becoming less relevant – and clinging to it will only risk alienating not just the Gen Z group but the broader workforce craving for a healthier relationship with work.

If Labour Day was once about fighting for the eight-hour day, perhaps its modern meaning should expand to fighting for autonomy, dignity and balance in a digital world. It should honour not just the right to work but the right to rest, disconnect and be valued for contributions rather than availability.

In 2025, maybe what we should be celebrating is not the nine-to-five but the courage to question it.

Because here's the thing: work will

always matter. It shapes our societies, identities and futures. But how we work – and how we value one another in that process – is long overdue for a rethink.

If Gen Z has taught us anything, it is that old models are not sacred and that better ones are possible. And isn't that the kind of labour movement truly worth cheering for?

Elman Mustafa El Bakri is CEO and founder of HESA Healthcare Recruitment Agency and serves on the Industrial Advisory Panel for the Department of Biomedical Engineering, Universiti Malaya. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Steering clear of temptations for a happier marriage

UNDER ONE ROOF

Q: My wife and I have been married for almost three years but we are both unhappy, and honestly, we have had plenty of other options. What is your suggestion before we make a decision to split up?

Focus on the Family Malaysia: The fact that you are even asking this question, instead of just divorcing, is a good sign. It means there is still something worth examining, and perhaps, preserving.

Consider this: research has showed that two-thirds of unhappy couples who chose to stay together reported that their relationship significantly improved within five years. However, to achieve this, it will require intentional and strategic decisions from both partners.

This is a metaphor from classic literature. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus encounters the Island of the Sirens – creatures whose hauntingly beautiful songs lure sailors off course, trapping them forever. But Odysseus, knowing the danger

ahead, takes precautions. He orders his crew to plug their ears with wax and has himself tied to the mast of the ship, so he can endure the temptation without giving in.

The point is this: sometimes the hardest part of a relationship is not the presence of difficulty but the willingness to navigate through it – deliberately, together, with a shared sense of purpose.

If you and your spouse can commit to understanding the "Sirens" in your own marriage – the distractions, frustrations or unmet needs – you may still find a way forward.

In today's culture, marriage can feel increasingly transient. Too often, couples walk away at the first sign of trouble. But marriage isn't just a contract; it is a covenant – a deeply rooted commitment meant to carry us through life's most difficult circumstances.

It is a vow that sometimes calls us to "tie ourselves to the mast" – to stand firm, even when everything around us tempts us to abandon ship. That means learning to silence

the voices that suggest divorce is the easier or only way out.

If your marriage is unhappy, that does not mean it is beyond repair. It is not too late. Choose to commit your relationship to a path of growth and healing.

With intention and effort, you and your spouse may rediscover not just what first brought you together, but also the kind of partnership you have always hoped for.

Q: I have been happily married for six years and have a few close male friends at work. Occasionally, things get a little flirty – nothing serious – and I'm pretty sure my husband experiences the same with some of his female coworkers. As long as nothing physical happens, is it still harmless?

Focus on the Family Malaysia: You may not think of infatuation as a mind-altering drug but counsellor Dave Carder, who has spent over 30 years studying the roots of infidelity, would argue otherwise.

He believes infatuation can be as powerful and disorienting as any substance.

According to Carder, most people

don't wake up one day and decide, "I think I'll destroy my marriage today". Affairs rarely begin with a clear, intentional decision.

Instead, they tend to develop gradually – through subtle emotional connections, innocent conversations and casual flirtation – until people find themselves in territory they never meant to enter.

People caught up in infatuation often do irrational things. They behave as if they are under the influence of a mind-altering substance.

As Carder points out, infatuation can intoxicate the mind. It clouds judgement, overrides logic and dulls awareness of how one's actions affect others.

To protect your marriage, it is essential to watch for the early warning signs that your emotional boundaries may be slipping. It often begins subtly, like finding yourself saving certain conversations for someone outside your marriage because, in your mind, they understand you better than your spouse does.

You may start sharing personal or intimate details about your marriage with this person. And when you

begin looking forward to seeing them more than your spouse, it is a clear sign your feelings have crossed a line.

These red flags are often subtle – but they matter. Every marriage goes through dry spells; it is part of being in a long-term relationship. And during those times, you are more vulnerable to emotional drift.

Infatuation can cloud your judgement to the point where reason disappears – and at that stage, little stands in the way of a full-blown affair.

To avoid making one of the most painful mistakes of your life, stay aware of your emotional attachments and keep your boundaries strong. Protect your marriage by staying honest – with yourself and with your spouse.

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



the Sun **LYFE**

FRIDAY | MAY 2, 2025

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Solo Leveling's second
season lacks stakes



Enjoy serenity amid tea plantations.

FROM a month of fasting to a whirlwind of reunions, house-hopping and festive feasting, the Raya season is as joyful as it is hectic. After the celebrations, a quick weekend getaway could be a chance to rest and recharge.

With several long weekends ahead, it is time to kick off a holiday after the holidays. Here are some of the best destinations for pressing "reset" and finding balance:

Perak – Hot springs, healing waters

After weeks of gatherings, nothing soothes the body and mind like a rejuvenating soak in nature's own spa. Perak, home to some of Malaysia's renowned natural hot springs, offers the setting for a wellness retreat. Nestled among lush greenery and limestone hills, these geothermal springs provide a therapeutic escape, as they are known for their mineral-rich waters that ease muscle tension and promote relaxation.

Tenggol Island – Beachside bliss

Malaysia has an abundance of sandy beaches, making it a splendid escape from bustling family gatherings. Trade the noise for the soothing scent of saltwater and feel the ocean breeze on Tenggol Island in Terengganu, a lesser-known island compared to Perhentian or Redang. It offers the peace and quiet that are much needed after the festivities.

Cameron Highlands – Highland haven

For those who find solace in nature, take a slow drive up to Cameron Highlands and soak in its therapeutic scenic views of rolling tea plantations and misty hills. After the lively buzz of family reunions, swap laughter-filled rooms for the calming sounds of rustling leaves and crisp mountain air to fully immerse in nature's tranquility.

Kuala Lumpur – Urban oasis

If your travel quota is maxed out, a weekend in Kuala Lumpur can offer just as much downtime as an out-of-town escape. The city is home to hotels that offer more than just a place to stay – think calming interiors with lush indoor greenery, wellness-focused spaces with yoga and meditation sessions, and artist-inspired rooms designed for quiet reflection. Whether it is indulging in a spa session, enjoying a leisurely brunch, or simply staying in bed all day with room service and a good book, a city break can be just as calming as a sojourn into nature.

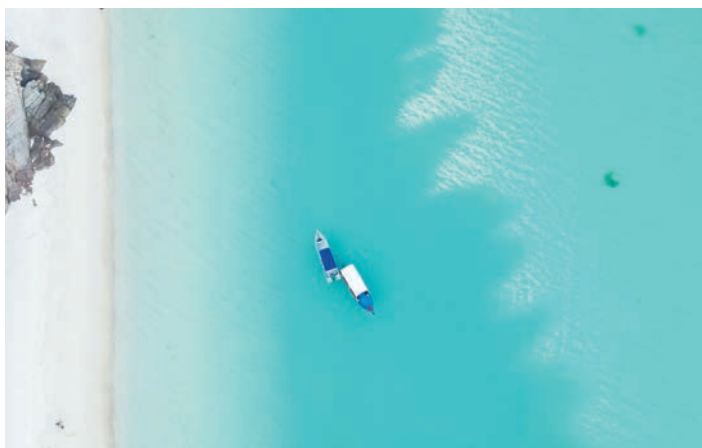
Malaysians looking for a well-earned break can browse over five million holiday properties worldwide and more than 300,000 activities on Agoda, ensuring a seamless transition from festive mode to full relaxation.



A brief staycation in KL can offer some respite from busy schedules.

Post-Raya holiday

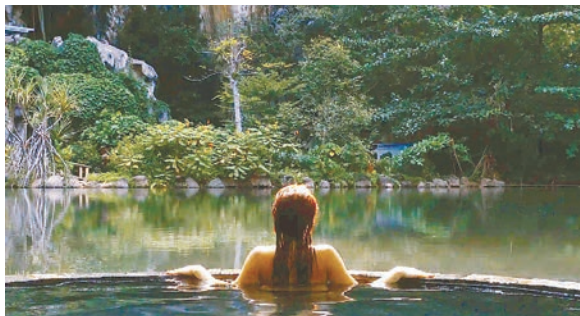
➤ Where to unwind after hectic festive season



Tenggol Island's clear waters are a sight to behold.



Perak offers a host of natural attractions.



Embracing nature is one of the best ways to de-stress.



Malaysia has an abundance of island retreats to entice travellers.



Start your day with yoga to set the mood.



Malaysia's official reserve assets at US\$117.49b as of end-March

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's official reserve assets amounted to US\$117.49 billion (RM507.2 billion) as of end-March, 2025, while other foreign currency assets stood at US\$4.3 million, according to Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM).

The central bank said the detailed breakdown of international reserves provides forward-looking information on the size, composition and usability of reserves and other foreign currency assets, in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (IMF-SDDS) format.

It also provides guidance on the expected and potential future inflows and outflows of foreign exchange of the federal government and BNM over the next 12-month period.

"Overall, the detailed breakdown of international reserves under the IMF SDDS format indicates that as at end-March 2024, Malaysia's international reserves remain usable," it said in a statement.

BNM said that for the next 12 months, the pre-determined short-term outflows of foreign currency loans, securities, and deposits, which include, among others, scheduled repayment of external borrowings by the Government and the maturity of foreign currency Bank Negara Interbank Bills, amounted to US\$11.99 billion.

"The net short forward positions amounted to US\$26.84 billion, reflecting the management of ringgit liquidity in the money market," it added.

In line with the practice adopted since April 2006, the data excludes projected foreign currency inflows arising from interest income and the drawdown of project loans, BNM said, adding that the projected foreign currency inflows amount to US\$2.58 billion in the next 12 months.

It said the only contingent short-term net drain on foreign currency assets is government guarantees of foreign currency debt due within one year, amounting to US\$419.0 million. — Bernama

'Malaysian hotels must think digital to remain competitive'

■ BY **JOHN GILBERT**
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KUALA LUMPUR: As the nation gears up for Visit Malaysia Year 2026, domestic hotels must be proactive and have a unified digital strategy and robust payment platform, particularly for international guests, that can integrate seamlessly into their operations and offer the agility to adapt to shifting trends.

Adyen country manager for Malaysia Lee Soon Yean (pic) said many international travellers, especially those from China, rely on platforms such as Alipay, WeChat Pay and UnionPay — methods that are not only preferred but, in some cases, the only options available.

He said the limited reach of credit cards such as Visa and Mastercard in China causes inconvenience for Chinese tourists during check-in or payment processes.

"The absence of relevant payment systems forces hotels to fall back on cash deposits, creating an outdated and cumbersome guest experience. Real-time digital payments reduce cash handling, eliminate currency exposure, and accelerate settlement in preferred denominations.

"Whether the guest is paying in ringgit, US dollar or renminbi, hotels receive prompt and accurate reconciliation, improving cash flow and minimising risk," Lee

➤ Ensure seamless integration of all operations, ranging from reservations and payments to security and convenience, to enhance guest experience: Adyen country head

told *SunBiz*.

He said if Alipay dominates this year, WeChat Pay surges next year, and switching or adding a payment system should be as simple as toggling on a feature, not building a system from scratch.

Beyond payments, Lee said hotels must think ecosystem-wide — tomorrow's bookings might come via TikTok Shop or through a Facebook campaign.

A digital-first mindset, supported by technology partners capable of managing omnichannel engagement, is key to staying competitive, he added.

"While global trade tensions, such as the US-China trade war, may not directly affect tourist flows, they do influence consumer behaviours, particularly around currency usage and trust in cross-border systems.

"Hotels that remain rigid in their payment acceptance may find themselves alienating key market segments.

"To make the most of this opportunity, hotels must leave their comfort zones and commit to building seamless, flexible, and guest-centric operations. The world

is watching and Malaysia must be ready," Lee said.

He pointed out another growing concern — fraud, particularly third-party booking fraud.

In some cases, he said, illegitimate agents use stolen cards to book hotel rooms for unsuspecting travellers. When the cardholder's bank eventually flags the transaction, the reservation gets cancelled — but the guest has already paid the fraudulent intermediary and now faces the prospect of being double charged at check-in.

To prevent such incidents, Lee said, hotels must implement robust risk management processes at the point of booking. This includes advanced fraud checks and adopting card tokenisation, where the real card number is replaced with a secure, encrypted version that systems can use but humans cannot see.

This makes the entire payment journey safer for both guests and hotels, he said.

"Tokenisation, once considered cutting-edge, is now being embraced by major platforms like Apple Pay and Google Pay. In these ecosystems, each card has a virtual version tied only to the app, adding another layer of security.

"Mastercard and Visa, recog-

nising the importance of this technology, are actively encouraging hotels and merchants to adopt tokenisation as a new standard," Lee said.

Hotels should therefore choose technology partners that provide tokenisation as part of their core offering and not treat it as a lock-in tactic. "The goal is to enhance guest trust, not increase long-term vendor dependency," he added.

As Visit Malaysia Year 2026 approaches, Lee said the hospitality industry finds itself at a pivotal point.

Rising tourist expectations, evolving payment preferences and digital-first travel habits are reshaping how hotels must operate.

Hotels must ensure seamless integration across reservation systems, property management, food and beverage, and in-premises experiences to deliver a secure and frictionless guest journey.

"Security and convenience are now paramount. Guests expect their data and card details to be protected, charged accurately, and processed without delays. Manual interventions at check-in or billing errors erode confidence and diminish the overall experience.

"Tokenisation — the process of replacing sensitive card data with encrypted identifiers — offers a secure, invisible layer of protection.

"Done right, it revokes human access to card data while still allowing smooth transactions, reducing fraud risk, and improving operational efficiency," Lee said.



Fintech company Bee Informatica to offer syariah-compliant financing

■ BY **AIMIE SHAZRIE**
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Fintech company Bee Informatica Sdn Bhd plans to expand its financial services by introducing syariah-compliant lending solutions, and to increase financial inclusion among Muslim entrepreneurs and businesses.

Founder and CEO Fumiko Inada (pic) said the move aligns with the company's broader strategy to enhance accessibility, ethical finance and market reach.

"Set to launch in 2026, Bee Informatica's syariah-compliant offerings will cater to businesses seeking ethical financing options that adhere to Islamic principles. The initiative is expected to attract a wider customer base, particularly in Malaysia and other Muslim-majority markets," she told *SunBiz*.

Inada said the goal is to create a

financing ecosystem that respects Islamic financial values while ensuring broader access to capital. "This expansion will help us support more businesses, particularly women-led enterprises, through ethical and inclusive financial solutions."

She highlighted that a key focus of the initiative is empowering women entrepreneurs, who often face barriers in accessing business financing.

"Bee Informatica aims to provide tailored financial solutions, ensuring that women-led businesses have the capital they need to scale. Through dedicated programmes, financial literacy training, and access to business networks, the company seeks to bridge the gender gap in entrepreneurial financing," Inada said.

She added that Bee Informatica is committed to fostering a supportive ecosystem for women in business.

"The company is developing a business community where female entrepreneurs can connect, share knowledge, and access mentorship from industry professionals. This initiative aligns with the company's broader mission to create a more inclusive and sustainable financial landscape, enabling women to thrive in the digital economy," Inada said.

In addition to its new syariah-compliant lineup, Bee Informatica is focusing on financial literacy, digital lending and community building.

"The company aims to strengthen its position as a key player in Southeast Asia's growing fintech sector, with plans for geographic expansion into neighbouring Muslim-majority countries," Inada said.

Furthermore, Bee Informatica is introducing a unique incentive programme to encourage responsible borrowing and good credit behaviour among its clients.

Inada said, "The company plans to issue digital certifications to borrowers who consistently repay their loans on time for six months. These certifications will serve as a mark of financial discipline and reliability, helping borrowers build trust with lenders.

"Borrowers who achieve this milestone will receive a 1% discount on their next loan, making access to capital more affordable for those who demonstrate responsible financial habits."

Beyond financial rewards, Bee Informatica is focusing on education and awareness to reinforce the benefits of maintaining good credit.

"Through webinars and network events, borrowers will gain insights into how credit scores impact their



ability to secure better loan terms, lower interest rates, and long-term financial stability. By integrating financial literacy with tangible incentives, Bee Informatica aims to create a culture of responsible borrowing, ultimately fostering greater financial inclusion and economic growth," Inada

explained.

She said the move comes amid increasing demand for syariah-compliant financial products, driven by Malaysia's push for Islamic finance innovation and digital transformation.

"By integrating ethical lending practices with advanced fintech solutions, Bee Informatica seeks to bridge financial gaps and create sustainable growth opportunities for underserved entrepreneurs."



Malaysia gets sustained interest from US investors

KUALA LUMPUR: There is sustained interest coming from US companies looking to invest in Malaysia amid trade tensions between the United States and China.

American Malaysian Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) CEO Datuk Siobhan M. Das said the chamber sees interest coming from sectors that traditional investments were attracting.

"I think the attractiveness over the last five years which we have seen grow exponentially is still going to continue. It is a question of what will land in Malaysia. So I think the US-China tensions again go back to providing opportunities."

"The amount of investments that have landed in Malaysia is significant. The US is probably the largest investor (in Malaysia) right now," she told Bernama in an interview.

Siobhan was a guest on Bernama TV's *The Nation* programme entitled "In Focus: Malaysia-US Trade Relations" hosted by Jessy Chahal on Wednesday.

Currently, more than 600 American companies have established a presence in Malaysia.

Siobhan said that over the last five years, the sectors that had consistently attracted American investments were the ones of high value, high technology and sectors that required specialty and quality to come out of their investments, which Malaysia is perfectly placed to do.

"Malaysia is perfectly equipped to be able to deliver in that space. The sectors, including E&E (electrical and electronics) of which semiconductors is a part of, remain paramount. Building on that medical technology, you have seen a massive influx of medical technology companies that are here, aerospace, chemicals and of course ICT (information and communications technology) are growing as well," she added.

Beyond that, Malaysia has a lot of opportunities for new industries such as critical minerals.

According to Malaysia's trade performance report, trade with the US rose by 29.9% in 2024 to RM324.91 billion compared to 2023. Trade with the US accounted for 11.3% of Malaysia's total trade, with exports to the US in 2024 reaching a new record high, surging 23.2% to RM198.65 billion.

Siobhan said AmCham's strength came from its ability to gather the information

► AmCham CEO believes country's attractiveness, which has grown exponentially over the last five years, is going to continue



Siobhan says the amount of US investments that have landed in Malaysia is significant. —BERNAMAPICT

from its members and be able to convey them to the government while also working in collaboration with the government.

Asked whether AmCham foresees any rollback or continuation of tariffs under future US administrations, she said that with negotiations and with the understanding that Malaysia is a good partner, there could be some break in the level of tariffs.

"These are very early days. We don't know which direction they are going to go. And a lot of times the tariffs will not necessarily be direct, it's not necessarily a direct negotiation. There are other factors in play. We will have to wait and see how the whole relationship develops," Siobhan said.

Earlier during the programme, she said ties between the US and Malaysia had

been constantly resilient on the back of diverse economic relationships between both countries.

She noted that the Malaysian government right now was being extremely pragmatic, and it was taking the right approach in understanding what the US needs, and trying to formulate what is the offering for a business match.

"And that is very pragmatic, and I congratulate the government for doing that. But I think there are things that we could be doing ourselves."

"It is what we can do on the ground here to make ourselves more competitive, to actually understand what we have in Malaysia, and to make sure that we are focused on those high-value areas, so that we are bringing the right investments into the right sectors, lowering the attrition rate," Siobhan said.

Shafiq Abdul Jabbar appointed Maybank group CFO effective July 7

PETALING JAYA: Malayan Banking Bhd (Maybank) has appointed Shafiq Abdul Jabbar (pic) as group chief financial officer (CFO) with effect from July 7.



Shafiq will play a key role in partnering the president and group CEO (PGCEO) to drive value creation and strategic decision making. He is also expected to lead transformation within group finance towards a more forward looking set of capabilities, leveraging on technology and data.

In close collaboration with the group executive committee (exco) team members, Shafiq will focus on enhancing shareholder value, operating at the highest standards of governance, reporting, and controls to ensure the group's sustainable growth and long-term impact. He will report to the PGCEO of Maybank and be a member of the group exco.

With over 25 years of experience, Shafiq brings broad leadership and diverse expertise from senior roles in banking, media and professional services. He began his career at KPMG Melbourne in 1999, later joining PwC in 2003 where he served in both the Kuala Lumpur and London offices, specialising in assurance and advisory services for financial institutions.

Shafiq has held senior roles including head of business finance advisory, country CFO and group financial controller of CIMB. In 2017, he joined Astro Malaysia as group CFO, initially overseeing strategy and finance, and thereafter expanded to include group data and media sales – gaining strategic, consumer and digital experience in a structurally disruptive media industry.

Most recently, in February 2024, Shafiq assumed the role of group CFO at AmBank, where he was instrumental in driving the group's financial performance through balance sheet management, improved revenue growth and strategic cost optimisation.

Maybank PGCEO Datuk Khairussaleh Ramli said, "Shafiq's strong financial leadership and experience across various industries will be key in supporting Maybank's strategy for sustainable growth and value creation. The group offers our congratulations to Shafiq as he joins our management team under my leadership, to drive Maybank forward towards being the most positively impactful financial institution."

Public Mutual declares total distribution of over RM96m for 4 funds

PETALING JAYA: Public Mutual, a wholly owned subsidiary of Public Bank, has declared distributions totalling more than RM96 million for four funds for the financial year ended April 30, 2025.

In a statement, the unit trust manager said the gross distributions declared are 1.25 sen per unit for both the Public Ehsan Mixed Asset Conservative Fund and the Public Select Mixed Asset Conservative Fund.

The Public Islamic Asia Dividend Fund and Public Islamic Dividend Fund will each receive 0.50 sen per unit.

Public Mutual also said that the Islamic Dividend Fund distributes semi-annually, while the rest of the funds are on an annual basis.

Public Mutual manages over 180 unit trust funds and nine private retirement scheme funds nationwide. — Bernama

BPMB completes acquisition of Exim Bank and SME Bank

PETALING JAYA: Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Bhd (BPMB) yesterday announced the successful acquisition of shares in Export-Import Bank of Malaysia Bhd (Exim Bank) and Small Medium Enterprise Development Bank Malaysia Bhd (SME Bank) from Minister of Finance (Incorporated).

The transaction was completed based on the net tangible assets of Exim Bank and SME Bank as of Dec 31, 2023. BPMB Group, now with Exim Bank and SME Bank as its subsidiaries, forms a unified entity to better deliver impact capital through a developmental financing ecosystem, in alignment with key national policies – Malaysia Madani Economic Framework, New Industrial Master Plan, National Energy Transition Roadmap, 12th

Malaysia Plan and Bumiputera Economic Transformation Plan 2035.

Backed by the existing combined workforce of over 2,000, BPMB Group enhances its capacity to deliver greater impact at scale.

The group said in a statement that it remains committed to maintaining its full workforce and enabling meaningful roles, recognising human capital as central to national development efforts.

Following the completion of the acquisition, the three banks are better positioned to expand and strengthen their existing mandates to bridge the country's developmental funding gap.

Key pillars in addressing this gap include, among others, support for Bumiputera

entrepreneurs, financing for SMEs, fostering inbound and outbound transactions, and advocating sustainability for growth. Collectively, for 2025, BPMB Group has an allocation of RM8.3 billion to be deployed for national development through its combined strategic programmes.

This acquisition is expected to generate revenue and cost synergies over time as the three institutions increasingly integrate their resources and expertise to support the growth of Malaysian businesses, both large and small.

Moving forward, BPMB Group said it will implement a holistic integration plan that leverages the strengths and resources of each entity to effectively support the three distinct market segments.

Risda eyes new revenue source by 2026

➤ Study on green rubber fuel nears completion, with biofuel innovation led by TR4NG group

KUALA LUMPUR: The Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (Risda) is finalising a preliminary study on the development of biofuel products based on scrap rubber, with a target to announce its effectiveness for widespread use by early 2026.

Chairman Manndzri Nasib said that the initiative, known as "green rubber fuel," is the result of the transformation for new generation (TR4NG) innovation group's pilot project under the Risda district office in Tanah Merah, Kelantan.

"This move is described as a strategic and creative approach to address the challenges facing the country's rubber industry, including market price volatility, declining

global demand and the tendency of smallholders to switch to other crops.

"This innovative initiative has the potential to elevate the name of Risda and change the perception that the rubber industry is no longer a sunset industry, but rather 'the new rising renewable sector,'" he said in an exclusive interview with Bernama.

The potential of the rubber biofuel project was highlighted by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who described it as capable of becoming a high-impact rural development model and driving the transformation of the rubber sector towards a sustainable and competitive future.

Manndzri said the nine-member TR4NG group has introduced a

unique technology that converts scrap rubber into biofuel through a controlled combustion and staged distillation process.

"As a result, three types of fuel were produced namely a liquid that closely resembles the properties of petrol, white fuel and butane gas, which have been successfully tested on motorcycles, mini tractors, lawnmowers and lorries without any additives.

"Laboratory tests also confirmed that the chemical components in the fuel have high potential for practical and safe use with more comprehensive studies," he said.

Manndzri said he had witnessed the process himself during his recent working visit and tried out the resulting biofuel.

He said that an estimated 1kg of scrap rubber can produce up to five litres of biofuel oil, which can indirectly open up new opportunities for income generation for more than

500,000 Risda smallholders, as well as providing added value to the industry.

Manndzri said this biofuel oil not only offers a sustainable solution to the challenges of the rubber industry, but also has the potential to contribute to the country's renewable energy agenda and efforts to reduce carbon emissions.

He, however, stressed that the development of "green rubber fuel" needs to be carried out collaboratively, involving more government agencies and stakeholders, such as Sirim, knowledge and research institutions, the industry and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti).

"We welcome all interested parties to collaborate with Risda – and likewise, with Mosti – to develop the potential of this biofuel oil so that it can become a national asset and contribute to national income," he said.

He said next steps include funding prototypes, building lab facilities, and launching rural innovation programmes.

"In addition, (we are considering efforts such as) patent registration and intellectual property protection as well as promotion and commercialisation at the national and international levels," he said.

Manndzri said the efforts of Risda members proved that the transformation of the rubber sector is not only achievable, but could position Malaysia as a leader in biofuel energy innovation based on agricultural products.

"With continued support and trust from the government and stakeholders, this project is expected to be a catalyst for sustainable and high-impact rural development, in line with the aspirations of Desa Madani.

"From scrap rubber to fuel – rubber biofuel is a symbol of rural innovation and future energy," he said.



Syed Mohamad (fifth from left) and Sasedharan (seventh from left) with ferry crew during the 5 million Ferry Ridership Milestone event.

Penang Port celebrates 5 million ferry passengers milestone

BUTTERWORTH: Penang Port Sdn Bhd (Penang Port) celebrated its 5 million ferry riders on Wednesday.

The celebration, held at Pangkalan Sultan Abdul Halim (PSAH) ferry terminal, recognised the public's unwavering support and the dedication of the ferry crew. To express gratitude to the passengers who contributed to this remarkable milestone, Penang Port distributed goodie bags to ferry riders.

"Reaching 5 million ferry riders is a testament to the vital role the ferry service plays in

connecting Penang Island and the mainland. This achievement reflects the trust and reliance the community places in our service, and we are committed to continuously enhancing the ferry experience," said Penang Port chairman Datuk Seri Syed Mohamad Syed Murtaza.

Meanwhile, Penang Port CEO Datuk Sasedharan Vasudevan said, "We are immensely grateful to our passengers for their continued patronage and to our dedicated crew for their tireless efforts. This milestone motivates us to improve our services further

and ensure a safe and efficient transportation option for everyone."

In addition to celebrating the ridership milestone, Penang Port also took the opportunity to express its appreciation to the ferry crew for their dedication and hard work. Tokens of appreciation were presented to the crew, acknowledging their crucial role in providing reliable and safe ferry services.

The Penang ferry service remains a vital transportation link, serving thousands of commuters and tourists daily.

Moomoo Malaysia named top broker at Bursa awards

KUALA LUMPUR: Moomoo Securities Malaysia Sdn Bhd (Moomoo Malaysia) has been named Top Broker (Overall) at the Bursa Malaysia Retail Salesforce Awards 2024, securing accolades for the highest number of new accounts opened and the highest traded value from new investors.

This recognition marks a major milestone in Moomoo Malaysia's journey, reflecting the platform's rapid adoption, commitment to innovation, and growing influence in reshaping the financial behaviours of a new generation of Malaysian investors.

"We are honoured to be recognised at the Bursa awards, but more importantly, we are proud to be part of a broader transformation," said Moomoo Malaysia chief operating officer Indy Lau.

"Our achievements in 2024 go beyond metrics. They represent a fundamental shift – one where investing becomes more strategic, disciplined, and data-driven. We are proud to be enabling that transition for Malaysian investors," she added.

The year 2024 presented investors worldwide with formidable challenges. Persistent inflationary pressures, heightened geopolitical tensions, and shifting US trade policies contributed to widespread market volatility. Despite this, Malaysian retail investors demonstrated resilience, increasing participation across diverse asset classes.

Against this backdrop, Moomoo Malaysia delivered record platform growth and deepened its role as a key enabler of investor participation:

- Over 600,000 new users onboarded, and established itself as the No. 1 trading app in Malaysia by download and daily active users.
- Expansion of multi-market access, providing Malaysian investors seamless entry into local and global equities, including US, Hong Kong, Singapore, and China A-share markets.
- Introduction of fully digital IPO subscription service, democratising access to primary market opportunities for local retail investors.
- Launch of AI-driven analytics and investment tools to make investing smarter and simpler, such as visualised financials, institutional tracking, real-time candlestick pattern analysis, real time data, news and much more.
- Over 700 free educational resources delivered, with more than 2.7 million cumulative views, highlighting the increasing demand for financial literacy resources and education among Malaysians.

For 2025, Moomoo Malaysia anticipates a sharper divide in global and local market movements.

WTK Holdings disposes of logging unit for RM23.5 million

KUALA LUMPUR: WTK Holdings Bhd has entered into a sale and purchase share agreement with Huang Qian Wen to sell its 100% stake in Song Logging Company Sdn Bhd (SLCSB) for RM23.5 million.

In a Bursa Malaysia filing, it said the proposed disposal entailed selling 2.51 million ordinary shares in SLCSB, which is mainly engaged in extracting and selling logs and timber products in Sarawak.

WTK said the group is undergoing a strategic shift to focus on more commercially sustainable and profitable business segments.

Given the challenges faced by the timber sector, the group aims to prioritise its plantation and food operations, which have demonstrated stronger growth potential and profitability in recent years.

"Divesting non-core timber assets allows

the group to streamline its focus and allocate resources more effectively for sectors with long-term growth prospects.

"The proposed disposal will enable WTK Group to optimise its profitability by shedding non-core and less profitable businesses. (This) is expected to enhance operational efficiency and improve the overall financial health of the group," it said. – Bernama



American economy unexpectedly shrinks in Q1

► White House blames Biden, calls GDP 'backward-looking indicator'

WASHINGTON: The US economy unexpectedly contracted in the first three months of the year on an import surge triggered by Donald Trump's tariff plans, although the president pinned the blame squarely on his predecessor.

The sharp increase in imports was a reflection of businesses and consumers stockpiling foreign goods to get ahead of Trump's sweeping trade levies, which went into effect earlier this month.

All three major Wall Street indices fell on the economic news, before paring losses to close mixed, while oil prices extended their losses.

At a Cabinet meeting in Washington, Trump insisted the growth downturn was the legacy of former president Joe Biden's policies.

"That's Biden, that's not Trump," he said.

Striking a more positive tone, he highlighted the "whopping" 22% rise in gross domestic investment during the first quarter.

Annual economic growth stayed above 2% in every year of Biden's presidency, reaching 2.8% in 2024.

The gross domestic product (GDP) of the world's largest economy decreased at an annual rate of 0.3% in the first quarter, after growing 2.4% in the final months of 2024, according to Wednesday's first estimate from the US Commerce Department.

This was sharply below the market consensus estimate of 0.4% growth and marked the first quarterly contraction since 2022.

The Commerce Department said in a statement that the contraction was in large part down to an "upturn in imports," aided by a decline in consumer and government spending.

In a statement, the White House called GDP a "backward-looking indicator."

"It's no surprise the leftovers of Biden's economic disaster have been a drag on economic growth," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said.

"But the underlying numbers tell the real story of the strong momentum President Trump is delivering."



Tesla CEO Elon Musk gesturing while wearing a cap with the words 'Gulf of America' as he attends a cabinet meeting held by Trump at the White House. – REUTERS/PIC

The GDP figures were published on the 101st day since Trump returned to White House, along with fresh data showing a slowdown in the US Federal Reserve's favoured inflation gauge last month.

Trump's introduction of sweeping tariffs against most countries sparked a selloff in financial markets, sending volatility to levels not seen since the Covid pandemic.

"This decline in GDP is a blaring warning to everyone that Donald Trump and Congressional Republicans' failed MAGA experiment is killing our economy," top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said in a statement.

Following the dramatic market movements in early April, the Trump administration announced a 90-day pause on the higher tariffs for dozens of countries to allow for trade talks, while maintaining a baseline 10% rate for most countries.

But the administration has also added to the tariffs on China, with the level of duties introduced since January now totaling 145% – with some sector-specific measures pushing

levies even higher.

Beijing has responded with its own steep, targeted measures against US goods.

At the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Trump said China was getting "hammered" by the tariffs, and said he still hoped to make a deal with Beijing, whom he referred to as "the leading candidate for the chief ripper-off" of America.

"Maybe the children will have two dolls instead of 30 dolls," Trump said, arguing that the United States did not need many of the things China produced.

"And maybe the two dolls will cost a couple of bucks more than they would normally."

Economists at Wells Fargo wrote in an investor note that the US economy is at a greater risk of recession now than a month ago, "but this 0.3% contraction in Q1 GDP is not the start of one."

"It reflects instead the sudden change in trade policy that culminated in the biggest drag from net exports in data going back more than a half-century." – AFP

Bank of Japan holds rates, lowers growth forecasts

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan (BoJ) revised down its growth forecasts and held interest rates steady yesterday, warning that trade tariffs are fuelling global economic uncertainty.

Since taking office in January, US President Donald Trump has embarked on a hardball campaign to rectify what he says are unfair trade imbalances.

His administration has imposed hefty levies on trading partners and imports including steel and automobiles.

"The introduction of wide-ranging tariffs is expected to impact global trade activity," Japan's central bank said, without mentioning the United States directly.

"Heightened uncertainties regarding policies including tariffs are likely to have a large impact on business and household sentiment around the world and on the global financial and capital markets."

The BoJ said it now expects Japan's gross domestic product (GDP) to rise 0.5% in fiscal 2025, which started in April – down from its previous estimate of 1.1%.

In fiscal 2026, it expects GDP in the world's fourth largest economy to expand 0.7%, down from 1% previously forecast.

"Japan's economic growth is likely to moderate, as trade and other policies in each jurisdiction lead to a slowdown in overseas economies and to a decline in domestic corporate profits and other factors," the bank said.

However "factors such as accommodative financial conditions are expected to provide support" and "thereafter, Japan's economic growth rate is likely to rise."

The BoJ's decision to stand pat on interest rates – holding them at around 0.5% – following a two-day policy meeting had been widely expected.

Its key rate is still much lower than the US Federal Reserve's 4.25%-4.5%. – AFP

US wants to start talks with China: State media

BEIJING: The United States has approached China seeking talks over President Donald Trump's 145% tariffs, a social media account affiliated with Chinese state media said yesterday, potentially signalling Beijing's openness to negotiations.

"The US has proactively reached out to China through multiple channels, hoping to hold discussions on the tariff issue," Yuyuan Tiantian said in a post published on its official Weibo social media account, citing anonymous sources.

Beijing has made little effort to contain its anger at the tariffs, which it says are tantamount to bullying and cannot stop the rise of the world's second-largest economy.

Instead, it has directed its fury at rallying public and global condemnation of the import curbs – showing no interest in a reprieve.

That said, alongside leveraging its propaganda machine to hit back at the duties, China has quietly created a list of

US-made products it will exempt from its retaliatory 125% tariffs – including select pharmaceuticals, microchips and jet engines – Reuters has reported, to ease the duties' impact.

Once Trump's tariffs topped 35% they became prohibitively high for Chinese exporters.

Nomura Securities said that some 16 million Chinese people could lose their jobs once the long-term ripple effects of a 50% drop in Chinese exports to the US work their way through the economy.

Still, Beijing has been adamant it will stand and fight, rather than rush to the negotiation table – with the Foreign Ministry likening yielding to Trump's tariffs to "drinking poison".

"Before the US takes any substantive action, China has no need to engage in talks with the US," the post from Yuyuan Tiantian added, citing anonymous experts.

"However, if the US wishes to initiate

contact, there is no harm at this stage for China to engage."

"China needs to observe closely, even force out the US' true intentions, to maintain the initiative in both negotiation and confrontation," it concluded.

Trump said in a US media interview published last Friday that his administration was talking with China to reach a tariff deal and that Chinese President Xi Jinping had called him.

Beijing last week repeatedly denied such talks were taking place, accusing Washington of "misleading the public".

Guo Jiakun, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, said on Wednesday: "As far as I know, there have been no consultations or negotiations between China and the US on tariffs."

Chinese officials have consistently stated that Beijing is open to talks, with the caveat that "dialogue and negotiation must be based on equality, respect and mutual benefit" – Reuters

South Korea posts April exports gain driven by chips

SEOUL: South Korea's exports rose in April, driven by strong semiconductor sales, trade data showed yesterday, as trade tensions over US tariffs persist.

The country, Asia's fourth largest economy, remains one of Washington's key trading partners and home to powerhouse chip and auto industries.

Its exports in April totalled US\$58.2 billion (RM251 billion), up 3.7% year-on-year, according to Korea Customs Service.

According to other data released by the Trade Ministry, exports of chips rose 17.2%, the largest jump in four months and the highest ever for the month of April.

Also performing well were wireless communication devices including smartphones and

biopharmaceutical products, with increases of 26.5% and 21.8%, respectively.

Seoul and Washington are working to craft a "trade package" intended to roll back US President Donald Trump's new levies ahead of a July 8 expiration of his administration's tariff freeze.

Washington implemented a 25% tariff on steel imports in early March, followed by a 25% tariff on auto imports.

In addition, a 10% blanket tariff went into effect in early April, and higher "reciprocal" tariffs targeting major countries, including South Korea, were suspended for 90 days.

Shipments of cosmetic and beauty products rose by 20.8%, while exports of agri-food products also went up by 8.6%. – AFP

Tesla chairman **denies** plans to look for new CEO

► WSJ reports EV maker's board contacted search firms for Musk replacement

SAN FRANCISCO: Tesla chair Robyn Denholm yesterday denied a *Wall Street Journal* report that said board members had reached out to executive search firms to find a replacement for CEO Elon Musk.

The WSJ had reported on Wednesday that Tesla's board members had reached out about a month ago to several executive search firms to find the company's new CEO, citing people familiar with the discussions.

Denholm said on X that the report was "absolutely false" and said that the EV maker's board is "highly confident" in Musk's ability to "continue executing on the exciting growth plan ahead".

Musk also said on X that the report was a "deliberately false article".

Musk said last week he would cut back

significantly on the time he devotes to Donald Trump's administration and spend more time running Tesla.

Musk's work at his Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), where he has led efforts to cut federal jobs, has been one of the most controversial aspects of the Trump presidency, and his time away from Tesla has been an additional concern for investors as sales of its aging EV lineup have been on the decline.

His embrace of far-right politics in Europe has also led to protests against Musk and the company as well as vandalism at its showrooms and charging stations across the US and Europe.

The board members met Musk and asked him to acknowledge publicly that he would spend more time at Tesla, the WSJ report said.

But it was unclear if Musk – also a member of the board – was aware of succession planning, or if his pledge to spend more time at Tesla has affected the efforts, the report added.

Tesla is at a crucial juncture.

Amid rising competition globally, Musk has pivoted from his promise of making a new affordable EV platform to rolling out driverless taxis and humanoid robots, highlighting Tesla's

future as an AI and robotics company instead of an automaker.

Much of the company's valuation is based on that vision, and some investors believe Trump will help further it.

Last week, federal regulators eased rules for testing autonomous vehicles, boosting Tesla's stock.

Some Tesla directors, including co-founder JB Straubel, have been meeting with major investors to reassure them the company is in good hands, the WSJ said.

Activist investors have long accused Tesla's board of lacking independence and failing to rein in Musk.

Denholm, hand-picked by Musk whose controversial pay package she defended, has also drawn criticism for her own pay package along with questions about whether that compromised her oversight of Tesla and Musk.

Denholm has dismissed the allegations and a spokesperson has said her pay was fair.

The eight-person Tesla board, which also includes Musk's brother Kimbal Musk and James Murdoch, son of media mogul Rupert Murdoch, has been looking to add an independent director, the WSJ report said. – Reuters

Meta profit climbs despite big cloud spending

SAN FRANCISCO: Tech giant Meta reported quarterly profits well above expectations on Wednesday, brushing aside market worries that its heavy investments in cloud computing and artificial intelligence would hamper growth.

The company reported a US\$16.6 billion (RM71.6 billion) profit in the first three months of the year on revenue of US\$42.3 billion, with business spending on ads remaining strong.

Shares in the social media giant – which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp – rose more than 3% in after-market trades.

"We've had a strong start to an important year, our community continues to grow and our business is performing very well," said Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg.

"We're making good progress on AI glasses and Meta AI, which now has almost one billion monthly active."

Meta this week unveiled its first standalone AI assistant app, challenging ChatGPT by giving users a direct path to its generative AI models.

Zuckerberg said in an Instagram video post

that the app "is designed to be your personal AI" and could be primarily accessed through voice conversations with the interactions personalised to the individual user.

Embracing the company's social media DNA, the app features a social feed allowing users to see AI-made posts by other users.

The solid performance comes as Meta defends its "family" of apps in a US antitrust case that could end with the tech firm ordered to spin off WhatsApp and Instagram.

Some 3.43 billion people use apps in the Meta family daily, the tech firm said in the earnings report.

Zuckerberg has denied in court that his company bought rival services Instagram and WhatsApp to neutralise competitive threats as alleged by the Federal Trade Commission.

The earnings also come in the wake of significant shifts in Meta's content policies intended to endear the company to US President Donald Trump.

Analysts were keen to see whether Trump's

tariffs would lead to businesses cutting online advertising budgets, weakening Meta's main source of revenue.

"Meta robust earnings show that the company's advertising business remained healthy in Q1, proof that the controversial ending of its fact-checking programme hasn't done much to deter advertisers," said Emarketer analyst Minda Smiley.

"But investors and onlookers alike will be much more concerned with what's to come in Q2 and beyond considering the wildly different economic environment the company now operates in because of Trump's tariffs."

Looking ahead, Meta has laid out plans for massive infrastructure investments, with expected capital expenditures of US\$64 billion to US\$72 billion for 2025, primarily supporting AI initiatives.

Zuckerberg has warned on previous earnings calls that building AI to serve billions of people will be expensive, and that it could take years to reach the goal. – AFP

Microsoft reports strong results driven by cloud and AI

SAN FRANCISCO: Technology giant Microsoft posted robust quarterly results on Wednesday, with revenue rising 13% to US\$70.1 billion (RM302 billion), powered by a strong performance in its cloud computing and artificial intelligence businesses.

The results, which solidly beat analyst expectations, drove Microsoft's share price more than 8% higher in after-hours trading.

The Redmond, Washington-based company also allayed worries that it would suffer due to the high tariff policies of President Donald Trump's administration, offering a good outlook for the ongoing quarter.

Microsoft has remained more discreet in its support for Trump than its rivals, many of which contributed money to the president's inauguration fund and announced major investments in the United States.

The firm, which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, saw net profits climb 18% to US\$25.8 billion, compared to the same period last year.

Crucially, Microsoft Cloud revenue reached US\$42.4 billion, growing 20% year-over-year, which chief financial officer Amy Hood attributed to "continued demand for our differentiated offerings."

Microsoft was one of the first tech giants to double down on AI when the launch of ChatGPT in 2022 rocked the tech industry.

Like its rivals, it has spent massively on building the infrastructure necessary to power the AI revolution, with analysts keeping a close eye on the return on investment.

The company in January said it was on track to pump about US\$80 billion into capital and infrastructure this fiscal year.

But CEO Satya Nadella said that even if "I feel very, very good about the pace" of investments, the company was always tweaking its spending.

He added that finding enough power sources for its AI data centre needs was a priority. – AFP

US judge says Apple defied order in App Store case

SAN FRANCISCO: A US judge on Wednesday accused Apple of defying an order to loosen its grip on the App Store payment system to the point that criminal charges could be warranted.

US district court judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers found that Apple "willfully" violated an injunction she issued at trial, with the company instead creating new barriers to competition with the App Store and even lying to the court in the process.

"That it thought this court would tolerate such insubordination was a gross miscalculation," Gonzalez Rogers said in an order allowing Epic Games to enforce the injunction against Apple.

"As always, the cover-up made it worse. For this court, there is no second bite at the apple."

Fortnite-maker Epic launched the case in 2021 aiming to break Apple's grip on the App Store, accusing the iPhone maker of acting like a monopoly in its shop for digital goods or services.

After a trial, Gonzalez Rogers ruled that Apple's control of the App Store did not amount to a monopoly, but that it must let developers include links to other online venues for buying content or services.

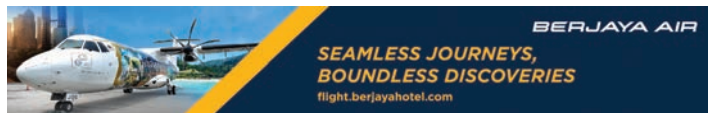
The judge also found at the time that the 30% commission Apple charges on App Store sales allowed it "supracompetitive operating margins" that were anticompetitive, according to the injunction.

Apple's response to the trial order included charging a commission on purchases made linking out of its app store, according to the judge.

Apple also imposed new barriers and new requirements including "scare screens" to dissuade people from buying digital purchases outside of its App Store, the judge concluded. – AFP

Meta corporate headquarters in Menlo Park, California. – AFP/IC





7-Eleven Japan owner, Couche-Tard agree to talks

► Unlocking value for stakeholders remains top priority: Seven & i

TOKYO: The Japanese owner of 7-Eleven has signed a non-disclosure agreement to advance talks with Canada's Alimentation Couche-Tard – which wants to buy its convenience store rival – the companies said yesterday.

Seven & i, the parent company of 7-Eleven, last year rebuffed a takeover offer worth nearly US\$40 billion (RM173 billion), but ACT has since vowed to pursue a mutually agreed transaction.

It would be the biggest foreign takeover of a Japanese firm, merging 7-Eleven, Circle K and other franchises to create what ACT's CEO has described as a "global champion of convenience stores".

ACT said in a statement yesterday it had signed the non-disclosure agreement with Seven & i "to progress transaction discussions, facilitate due diligence, and collaborate on plans to engage with regulators".

"There can be no assurance that these discussions will result in a transaction," it cautioned.

Seven & i called the agreement "a positive step in the constructive engagement process with ACT" and said it would "facilitate the sharing of information" between the pair.

"Unlocking significant value for shareholders and other stakeholders remains

Seven & i's top priority," it said.

"A standalone plan" of "well-defined management initiatives" led by incoming CEO Stephen Hayes Dacus is another option it will pursue, the Japanese company said.

Seven & i has for two decades wholly owned 7-Eleven, the world's biggest convenience store brand which operates around 85,000 outlets worldwide.

Around a quarter of 7-Eleven outlets are in Japan where they sell everything from concert tickets to pet food and fresh rice balls.

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

To fend off the ACT buyout, Seven & i has taken measures including a huge share buyback, an IPO of its US unit and appointing its first foreign CEO. – AFP



A pedestrian walking past a 7-Eleven convenience store in Tokyo. – REUTERS/SPIC

Australia's Woolworths to focus on own-brand offers

CANBERRA: Australia's largest supermarket chain Woolworths said cost-conscious shoppers were increasingly looking for cheaper alternatives amid rising living costs, spurring its push into more private-label offerings, similar to rival Coles.

Cost-of-living pressures loom as a key issue for Australians voting in a general election tomorrow.

Woolworths, which sells more than one-third of Australian groceries, posted better-than-expected third-quarter sales yesterday, as price cuts boosted volumes in its core grocery business.

Woolworths' home-label brands remained popular among customers, especially in categories offering discounts of over 40%, CEO Amanda Bardwell said.

"We're seeing a lot of value-seeking across our grocery areas and that's where we're seeing an increasing number of products for own-brand perform particularly well," Bardwell told reporters on a call.

Group sales rose by 3.2% to A\$17.31 billion (RM48 billion) in the third quarter compared to A\$16.77 billion the prior year.

Own-brand and e-commerce increased by 5.7% and 15.7% respectively during the period.

Jesse Moors, portfolio manager at Spatium Capital, said the year-on-year growth in online sales was not a surprise given more people were opting to stay indoors, and "receiving the spending dopamine-hit via their mobile devices".

Analysts at Jefferies highlighted a stronger-than-expected third quarter for both Woolworths and Coles, suggesting an improvement in market conditions.

While the results showed resilience in a challenging retail landscape where cooling inflation has limited pricing power, Bardwell said customers remained concerned by rising living costs and managing budgets.

Woolworths has lowered prices on over 340 products, reducing them by an average of 1.2% on everything except fruit, vegetables and tobacco.

"Overall, our prices are competitive against our main competitors but there is this ongoing work we need to do," Bardwell told analysts on a conference call. – Reuters

Schroders hit by client withdrawals from China

LONDON: British fund manager Schroders reported £7.4 billion (RM42 billion) of net outflows in the first quarter yesterday, as customers withdrew cash from its joint venture funds in China.

Schroders said its flows were impacted by £8.5 billion cashed out from its joint ventures in the three months to end-March, primarily from money market funds in China, where it operates two ventures with local bank Bank of Communications.

Analysts at JPMorgan called the first quarter performance "lacklustre", with its flows and the market performance of its funds falling short of the analysts' forecasts.

Schroders shares fell more than 3% in early trading.

China has been at the centre of deteriorating global trade relations with the United States, although the quarterly figures pre-dated US President Donald Trump's main barrage of tariffs on April 2.

Reuters reported last month that Schroders cut about one-sixth of staff at its separate fully-owned China fund manager, the latest global asset manager to trim operations in the country as it seeks to cut costs under new CEO Richard Oldfield.

Oldfield unveiled a strategy update for the 221-year old firm in March aimed at rebooting its flagging performance, including by shedding £150 million of costs and sharpening its focus on wealth management.

Schroders also reported total assets under management of £758.4 billion at the end of March, down nearly 3% from the end of 2024.

The FTSE 100 firm said that excluding the joint venture withdrawals, it attracted £1.1 billion of net inflows, driven by its wealth management arm and private markets business Schroders Capital. – Reuters

Adani Ports sees higher FY26 revenue growth on robust volumes

MUMBAI: India's Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone issued a higher year-on-year revenue growth forecast for fiscal 2026 yesterday, citing strong port volumes, after posting a better-than-expected quarterly profit.

The country's top private port operator said it expects revenue to grow in the range of 15.8%-22.2% for the fiscal year that started on April 1. Its revenue grew 16% last fiscal.

For fiscal 2025, the firm's revenue from its ports business, its biggest, climbed 12%, while its logistics business jumped 39%, led by higher container and bulk cargo volumes.

The firm added that it expects revenue from its third-biggest marine services division, which surged 82% to 11.44 billion rupees in fiscal 2025, to treble in two years.

Private port operators including Adani Ports and smaller rival JSW Infrastructure have benefited from steady cargo movement across Indian borders, especially during the fourth quarter, which typically sees increased construction activity due to favorable weather.

However, US President Trump's erratic tariff policies have threatened to disrupt trade and pile additional risks on India's slowing economy.

On Wednesday, JSW Infrastructure reported a higher quarterly profit and shrugged off concerns over US tariff-led trade uncertainties.

Adani Ports reported a consolidated net profit of 30.14 billion rupees (RM1.5 billion) for the quarter ended March 31, beating analysts' average estimate of 25.71 billion rupees.

Cargo volumes rose 8% to 118 million metric tonnes in the reported quarter, driving overall revenue nearly 24% higher to 84.88 billion rupees. – Reuters

Huawei: Bridging digital skills gap in M'sia

MALAYSIA'S digital prowess will be accelerated by two pillars: Skilled tech talent and world-class infrastructure that will turn innovation into reality. When human expertise meets cutting-edge connectivity along with robust smart infrastructure, the nation will unlock its full potential as Asean's digital capital.

The building blocks of this future start in the classroom. Schools and universities must align curricula with industry needs to equip students with relevant tech competencies. As an ICT leader, Huawei actively bridges this gap through strategic partnerships with educational institutions, providing cutting-edge training programmes, certifications, and resources.

The Huawei ICT Academy serves as one of this initiative's cornerstone, offering students hands-on experience in 5G, 5.5G, AI, cloud computing and cybersecurity. This practical approach ensures graduates meet industry demands while supporting Malaysia's digital economy.

Technical upskilling & digital leadership in national workforce development

While nurturing new talent remains crucial, Malaysia's digital transformation equally depends on upskilling its existing workforce. Huawei Malaysia is collaborating with the Human Resources Ministry (MoHR) to integrate advanced technologies like AI, cloud computing, 5G and IoT into national Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes ensuring TVET instructors, students and industry workers remain up-to-date and competitive in the digital economy.

Notably, the collaboration has resulted in the newly launched JTM-Huawei TVET Centre at Institut Latihan Perindustrian Kuala Lumpur. The innovative centre was unveiled in February 2025 and was developed in partnership with the Department of Manpower under the Human Resources Ministry. It is a concrete step in workforce development, aiming to train the first batch of 1,000 talents through Huawei-certified courses. As of now, over 400 trainees have



received onsite hands-on training.

Parallel to this technical upskilling initiative, Huawei's partnership with the National Institute of Public Administration continues to strengthen digital leadership capabilities across

the civil service, driving more efficient and citizen-focused government services.

These efforts build on the success of the inaugural Digital Leadership Excellence (DLE) Programme developed together with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. The first cohort of 50 leaders from the government, academia and industry graduated in a ceremony officiated by Communications Minister Datuk Fahmi Fadzil in February 2025.

They underwent an eight-month hybrid programme which included a study visit to Huawei's headquarters in Shenzhen, where participants developed practical digital solutions through capstone projects addressing real industry challenges as well as via visits to leading global tech companies.

Launched in March 2024, the DLE Programme was conceived as a direct response to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's call at the 2023 Malaysia ICT Summit hosted by Huawei Malaysia to bridge the gap between leadership and technology. The programme is set to develop 300 Malaysian Digital Leaders by 2026. Its primary aim is to equip leaders with the knowledge and tools to spearhead digital transformation within their organisations and improve operational efficiencies. The second chapter of the DLE Programme aims to engage 100 participants, while the third and final chapter will target 150.

Bridging the talent gap

The government has allocated a record RM82.1 billion in Budget 2025 – including RM7.5 billion specifically for TVET – to cultivate homegrown ICT talent. However, closing the digital talent gap requires collaboration between industry, government, and academia to build a sustainable talent pipeline.

As a committed long-term partner, Huawei Malaysia maintains dual investments in both critical infrastructure and human capital development. Our numerous initiatives – including the expansive Huawei ICT Academy

network and the transformative DLE Programme – demonstrate this dedication.

Huawei has now established 45 ICT academies in public and private institutions of higher learning. We are proud to say we have surpassed our five year training target from 2021 – which was a target of 50,000 – by qualifying over 54,000 Malaysian professionals. These milestones underscore Huawei's 24-year legacy of nurturing local talent and fortifying Malaysia's digital ecosystem.

Together with the DLE programme and the Huawei ICT Competitions at the local, regional and global levels, these efforts form a powerful ecosystem of digital advancement – where upskilled workforces, visionary leaders, and cutting-edge infrastructure converge to propel Malaysia's position as Southeast Asia's premier digital economy.

Talent alliances

A multi-faceted approach is needed to address ICT talent gaps including cross skilling, upskilling and reskilling initiatives. These cannot be done in silo.

This is where public private partnerships with educational institutions and government agencies are crucial.

Only by working with the industry will the gaps between what is required and what is produced be addressed. In terms of government, a rapidly evolving global ICT landscape requires government personnel to constantly be abreast of technological advancements in the industry.

Huawei Malaysia will continue to innovate, invest and collaborate to drive Malaysia's digital ambitions forward and turn potential into reality across all communities.

After all, it is the talent, rather than machines, that keeps us connected and Huawei is ensuring that the right people are in the right place to ensure the right change for the nation.

This article is contributed by Huawei Asean Academy vice-chancellor Oliver Liu (pix).

Meeting the AI challenge: Six practical, green approaches

"THE best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago, and the second-best time is today." This saying is more relevant than ever in the race to develop sustainable data centres, especially with the rapid rise of AI. This transformative technology is driving energy demand to unprecedented levels, threatening global sustainability goals.

AI mirroring energy use

The numbers tell a sobering story. The rise of AI is fueling demand for high-volume processing, with data centres projected to consume 2% of global electricity in 2025 – about 536 TWh – doubling to 1,065 TWh by 2030. Malaysia is fast becoming a heavyweight in the data centre arena, and Johor exemplifies this rapid expansion. In early 2021, the state's data centre capacity stood at just 10MW. By 2024, this capacity has surged to over 1,500MW, according to DC Byte.

Generative AI is the driving force behind this expansion, with investment in mission-critical infrastructure expected to rise from US\$125.35 billion (RM547 billion) in 2024 to US\$364.62 billion by 2034. While this growth unlocks new possibilities across the world, but also raises pressing sustainability concerns, requiring a fundamental shift in how data centres source, manage, and consume energy.

What's at stake

AI is reshaping industries and is projected to add US\$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030. However, it's a double-edged sword. Malaysia's Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad has cautioned against these environmental impacts, prompting the government to adopt a more selective approach to tech investments.

Johor's AI-driven data centres illustrate this concern, with projections of electricity demand hitting over 5,000 MW by 2035 and applications for supply already surpassing 11,000 MW – nearly 40% of Peninsular Malaysia's power capacity. While AI increases productivity, it also intensifies power consumption, heat generation, and emissions, requiring advanced cooling solutions.

Simultaneously, data centre infrastructure management solutions integrated with AI analytical power can proactively simulate and address enterprise data centre challenges. In the face of growing global attention on sustainability, inaction is no longer an option. With Malaysia's focus on sustainability, the industry has a clear mandate: embrace sustainability and efficiency as environmental imperatives as well as smart business strategies. The good news is there are tremendous benefits to this approach.

Six practical solutions

Above all else, a commitment to sustainability must be practical. To curb AI's environmental impact, operators must tackle three core challenges: strengthening sustainability strategies, addressing Scope 3 emissions, and meeting regulatory demands. Here's how:

- Evaluate infrastructure for efficiency: Identifying inefficiencies in cooling systems, server utilisation, and energy management for significant improvements.
- Adopt efficient infrastructure: Transitioning to modern servers, advanced cooling systems and renewable energy sources to reduce carbon footprint. Designing facilities with energy efficiency in mind and retrofitting older infrastructures can further optimize energy usage and contribute to

substantial savings.

- Collaborate with sustainable suppliers: Sustainability isn't achievable in isolation. By collaborating with suppliers committed to decarbonising their supply chains, operators can effectively address Scope 3 emissions, the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions for businesses.
- Leverage advanced reporting tools: Real-time monitoring enables operators to identify inefficiencies and implement corrective measures promptly, optimising energy use.
- Leverage AI for optimisation: AI can play a significant role in efficiently allocating resources, predicting maintenance requirements, and integrating renewable energy – ultimately minimising waste and lowering emissions.
- Continuously reassess and improve: Sustainability is an ongoing effort – regular assessments, benchmarking against industry standards, and adopting best practices will drive lasting progress.

Second best time

You can't go back in time to plant a tree, but you can do the next best thing and plant one today. The time to rethink your sustainability agenda is now. As AI accelerates growth in the data centre industry, it is crucial to take immediate action to rein in carbon emissions. While expertise and resources may be limited, companies can collaborate with vendors offering sustainability services to craft comprehensive strategies for a greener future.

This article is contributed by Schneider Electric country president for Malaysia, Eugene Quah (pix).



LAST year was marked by transformative trends, innovative advancements, and a few surprises along the way. Malaysia has solidified itself as a leading data centre hub, setting the stage for greater progress in 2025.

For the second consecutive year, Malaysia ranked first among Southeast Asian nations in Knight Frank's SEA report with an impressive annual data centre take-up of 429 megawatts, thanks to strategic investments from major tech giants like Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, and Google.

Alongside this growth, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly expanded throughout 2024 transforming computing needs, fuelling growth and innovation. Recognising the urgency of staying competitive in the AI race, it's encouraging to see Malaysia taking proactive step by establishing the National AI Office last year, serving as a centralised authority to provide direction in this wave of innovation and address uncertainties surrounding AI's rapid development.

At the core of this AI development are data centres, accelerated computing infrastructure, and the power and cooling solutions required to support surging AI workloads. However, this raises a critical question: how sustainable are these resource-intensive investments? Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad very recently emphasised that while Malaysia attracts tech companies, the government remains cautious and become more selective in approving projects due to the strain on energy and water resources. To address these challenges, demand-management strategies are in the sights of government, working towards net-zero carbon goals.

Looking ahead, with the continued surge in AI demands and digital infrastructure trends shaping 2024, 2025 is set to be another transformative year filled with innovation, growth, and sustainable advancements in several areas. For instance, the concept of agentic AI has garnered significant attention in recent discussions for its ability to autonomously performing complex tasks.

The trends outlined below closely align with those shared by my colleague – Steven Carlini, chief advocate, data centres and AI vice-president for Schneider Electric's Secure Power division.

AI and power demand to drive data centre changes

The art of grid balancing

IDC projects that by 2027, data centres will consume 2.5% of global electricity, with the remaining 97.5% allocated across sectors like buildings, manufacturing, transportation, and energy. This growing demand for power is already being felt in regions such as Johor, where the city council mayor points out that, despite the expansion of data centres, water and power supply continue to pose significant challenges. The increasing energy consumption from data centres adds pressure to local infrastructure, underscoring the need for sustainable solutions in both energy and water management. Looking ahead, collaboration between utilities and data centres will expand, leveraging AI to optimise power profiles and manage off-grid operations using backup sources.

This collaboration is also expected to gain momentum, driven by the need to stabilise renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, and the integration of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) into data centres. Data centre operators in Malaysia stand to gain from the upcoming Large Scale Solar programme, with the government offering third-party concession agreements for the installation of BESS, creating opportunities for more reliable and sustainable energy solutions.

Charting new energy frontiers

In response to data centre's growing energy demand, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof recently said that Malaysia will be reviewing its nuclear energy initiatives based on informed research and international standards to enable them to be more energy self-sufficient. This comes as major tech companies like Google and Amazon secure stable energy sources, with some already acquiring nuclear power plants as of late last

year. While natural gas turbines may be a near-term addition to these sites, the future could see the adoption of small modular reactors (SMRs). Once approved, SMRs offer a cost-effective and flexible alternative for energy generation, particularly in areas with specific power needs.

AI unleashed – it's impact beyond 2025

As AI companies ramp up investments, data centre operators and co-location providers are shifting their focus toward accelerated computing capacity tailored specifically to AI requirements. This trend underscores the growing adoption of AI across businesses, governments, and industries, driving the need for expanded data centre infrastructure. In Malaysia, AI is also making inroads into traditional sectors with a palm oil mill in Kuala Kangsar recently upgraded into a smart facility, leveraging AI-powered sensors, advanced technology, and predictive tools to enhance palm oil processing efficiency.

AI is set to revolutionise the data centre industry, driving both immediate changes and long-term advancements. Realising this potential requires a collective commitment to sustainable practices and harnessing AI's potential for efficiency. This is especially timely, as Malaysian companies must also prepare for stricter compliance with the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act 2024, which aims to regulate energy consumption and promote energy conservation across various sectors.

Bending the curve of energy consumption

In response to the evolution of AI, Schneider Electric has introduced a science-based approach to "bend the curve" of energy consumption. At the heart of our efforts is the concept of "energy intelligence for sustainable

AI," which integrates AI-driven applications into data centre infrastructure to support sustainability goals.

We also accelerated our AI-ready data centre solutions through several new announcements, including our partnership with NVIDIA to develop a data centre reference design optimised for liquid-cooled AI clusters. To tackle the rising temperatures associated with high-density workloads, we entered into an agreement to acquire a majority stake in Motivair Corporation. This move expands our liquid cooling portfolio and bolsters our capabilities in direct-to-chip liquid cooling and high-capacity thermal management solutions.

While we drive AI innovation, we are to remain committed to enabling AI anywhere with a true end-to-end infrastructure solution. A key milestone is the Galaxy VXL UPS, Schneider Electric's latest breakthrough in UPS technology. Building on 50 years of Galaxy innovation, the Galaxy VXL is the industry's first compact, high-density UPS designed for AI data centres. This 1.25-megawatt modular UPS delivers more power while achieving 70% space savings. Its scalable design supports evolving AI workloads, offering AI load tolerance, peak power capabilities, and peak shaving operations.

The energy and environmental footprint of AI is expanding at an unprecedented rate, making it essential to reduce this trajectory by innovating new approaches to decarbonise data centres and digital infrastructure. Achieving this vision demands a comprehensive strategy that spans from the grid to the chip, the chiller, and beyond.

This article is contributed by Schneider Electric secure power business vice-president for Malaysia, Adrian Koh.

CACEIS makes Malaysia its Asia-Pacific hub for financial services

PUTRAJAYA: CACEIS, a global asset servicing provider and a subsidiary of Crédit Agricole S. and Santander, intends to reinforce its position in Malaysia as the strategic hub for financial services in the Asia-Pacific region.

Since moving its Asian office to Malaysia, the company continues to build on its long-term commitment and strategic growth in Asia-Pacific.

CACEIS specialises in added-value financial services for all asset classes for institutional investors. CACEIS Malaysia officially established its presence in Malaysia on July 3, 2023, following the acquisition of RBC Investor Services' European asset servicing activities. It now services CACEIS Group's European entities and has plans on expanding in the Asia Pacific (Apac) region.

CACEIS Malaysia CEO Wilson Sunny said on Tuesday, the new office marked a significant milestone in the company's long-term commitment to the region and its strategic growth in Asia-Pacific with a strong focus on innovation, sustainability, and employee well-being.

"The new office, a Green Building Index (GBI)-certified facility, is currently supporting 1,200 employees and has room to grow. This reflects CACEIS's commitment to sustainable operations," he added.

CACEIS Malaysia has also demonstrated strong results in job creation and talent development, where some are currently undergoing leadership development programmes, and international training opportunities across Europe and Asia, with the company already investing around RM1.2 million on its training programmes.



The launch of CACEIS Malaysia office by Cruau (centre) and key representatives of CACEIS and CACEIS Malaysia.

Aligned with Malaysia's ambitions as a financial hub, CACEIS Malaysia has a particular focus on expanding its IT and technology footprint in the coming year.

"This reinforces its commitment to

supporting the region's evolving financial landscape while enhancing its capabilities to better serve clients across Apac.

At CACEIS Malaysia, one of our key focusses is to invest in our greatest asset: our people. As

we expand our digital and technological capacities, this investment ensures that our team is ready to meet the evolving needs of the industry and our clients," Wilson said.

Minister of Investment, Trade, and Industry Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz was quoted through a video recording which was played during the event on Tuesday.

"This new office signifies our shared ambition to build a more dynamic and future ready economy that provides high value opportunities for our people and businesses. This milestone reflects not only the company's growth in the region, but also Malaysia's rising prominence as a strategic hub for financial services in the Asia Pacific.

"I look forward to seeing this new office grow into a regional leader, supporting not only the group's missions, but also contributing meaningfully to Malaysia's financial sector," he stated.

The Ambassador of France to Malaysia Axel Cruau was quoted saying, "I take particular pride in witnessing the continuous growth of French companies in Malaysia, especially institutions like CACEIS. It is proof of trust in Malaysia's investment environment and future growth — which we can achieve together through the country's established financial ecosystem, regional connectivity, and openness to global corporations. Malaysia is an ideal home for foreign companies to establish their presence."

With this launch, CACEIS Malaysia reinforces its mission to be a key regional centre of excellence, supporting the group's ambition to be the leading asset servicing provider in Europe and beyond by 2030.

Peak period travel

➤ Surge in trips expected for China holidays

TRIP numbers are set to reach a three-year post-Covid high during China's May Day (Labour's Day) public holidays, travel firms said.

The holiday, which began yesterday and lasts for five days, is a prime time for travel, with pleasant spring weather making it more appealing than the wintery Lunar New Year break.

Domestic travel in China has boomed since the end of the country's pandemic-era restrictions, but while more people are taking a holiday, many are keeping a tight rein on spending amid an economic slowdown and concern about employment and wage stagnation.

Liu Xiaoting, a 32-year-old bank employee, plans to travel to Hebei, a province close to her home in Beijing.

"I will drive with friends to Handan to visit the grottoes there," she said, adding that part of the appeal of the trip was the minimal spending required.

She shared hotels in Handan cost about 300 to 400 yuan (RM178-237) even during the holiday.

"As the Chinese saying goes, we want to 'spend a little, accomplish a lot'."

The tighter budgets have led to a surge in visits to more affordable smaller cities and villages, as well as road trips and camping holidays.

Chinese online travel agent Tuniu reported as of mid-April, domestic travel bookings for May Day were more than double compared with last year.

Beijing-based travel operator UTour Group said as of April 15, the gross merchandise volume (GMV, a common measure of online sales) on its platform had increased by about 65% year-on-year.

Travel information provider Umetrip also said as of April 17, the number of domestic flight tickets booked for the May Day holiday was more than 3.33 million, marking a 36% increase compared with last year. International flight ticket bookings on Umetrip have risen by about 25%.

International travel, meanwhile, is dominated by short-haul routes, with Japan and the UAE emerging as popular destinations according to pre-holiday data.

Even a warning last month from



The number of domestic flight tickets that has been booked for the May Day holiday is more than 3.33 million. — PICS FROM PEXELS

China's embassy urging Chinese travellers to enhance safety precautions and pay attention to personal and food hygiene does not seem to have deterred holidaymakers.

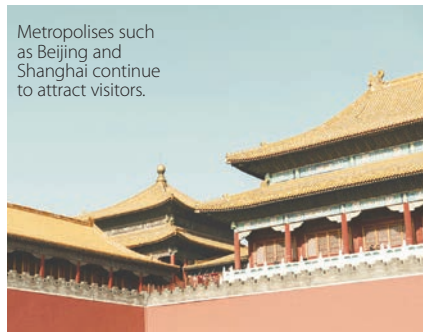
"Japan has long-established a reputation of being clean, mature and safe. Our tourists are not impacted by the warnings, especially those who have visited Japan before," said Moment Travel founder Su Shu.

Domestically, while metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai continue to attract

visitors, county-level tourism is rapidly gaining traction.

Trip.com Group data showed the popularity of searches for smaller cities has increased by 25% year-on-year, with growth rates 11 percentage points higher than in China's biggest cities.

Searches for small and remote places such as Bortala, an autonomous prefecture in Xinjiang populated with ethnic minority Mongol people, and Puer, a famous tea-producing area in Yunnan, have surged by more than 50%, it said. — Reuters



Metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai continue to attract visitors.



Searches for small and remote places have boomed.



Take a tram ride and immerse in Hong Kong's rich cultural heritage.

Ding Ding Qipao Tour

HOTEL Lanson Place Causeway Bay, Hong Kong is collaborating with Hong Kong Tramways (Ding Ding) to launch the Ding Ding Qipao Tour on weekends, commencing on May 17.

Travelling from Sheung Wan to Causeway Bay, the tour invites participants to step back in time to experience the vibrant heritage of Hong Kong.

Originating from the Qing dynasty (1644-1912), qipao is the hallmark of Chinese identity, renowned for their elegance and historical significance. Their popularity surged in Hong Kong during the 1960s due to a significant influx of Shanghaiese immigrants.

Ding Ding Qipao Tour offers the opportunity to put on a traditional qipao, available for rental from the clothing boutique Yan Shang Kee in Central. With a variety of styles for women, men and children, this experience is for couples, friends and families eager to embark on an off-the-beaten-path travel adventure. They will then board a restored 1920s-style open-top tram, gliding through the bustling streets of Hong Kong while savouring the

nostalgia of a bygone era.

The photogenic journey does not end there. Participants are invited to visit Salon Lanson within Lanson Place, where they can enjoy a special cocktail inspired by The World of Suzie Wong, a romantic classic film set in 1960s Hong Kong.

The Ding Ding Qipao Tour pass for HK\$580 (RM322.69) per person includes:

- 🕒 A one-hour journey on the TramOmatic Tour (one way)
- 👗 Rental of a qipao from Yan Shang Kee. Garment to be returned the following day.
- 🍸 A glass of The World of Suzie Wong at Salon Lanson for an additional HK\$68.

To enhance this adventure, Modern travellers may take advantage of the hotel's Chronicles of Nostalgia accommodation package, which includes a one-night stay along with two Ding Ding Qipao Tour passes. Each pass features qipao rental and a tram journey. Guests will also enjoy two glasses of its signature cocktail at Salon Lanson. This package starts from HK\$2,430 per room per night and is available on weekends from May 17 to Aug 17.



Shuanghuai site in Gongyi, Zhengzhou.

Spotlighting historical Zhengzhou

ZHENGZHOU in central China's Henan Province recently launched the documentary series *Zhengzhou in Cultural Relics* for global distribution, digitally bringing the brilliance of Central Plains civilisation to worldwide audiences.

Curated from the 50-episode documentary *Zhengzhou in Cultural Relics*, the 10-episode series highlights major cultural heritage sites in Zhengzhou, including the Shuanghuai Tree "Heluo Ancient Kingdom", Peiligang Site and the Pagoda Forest of Shaolin Temple. Using animation, reenactments and other techniques, it brings these ancient sites to life.

The capital of Henan Province Zhengzhou sits at the heart of China. A key cradle of Chinese civilisation, it ranks among the

nation's eight major ancient capitals. The city has two World Heritage Sites, 83 national-level key cultural relics protection sites and nearly 10,000 immovable cultural relics. Its archaeological finds have been listed in China's "Top 10 New Archaeological Discoveries" 16 times, more than any other Chinese city.

Zhengzhou in Cultural Relics, jointly produced by Zhengzhou's Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and Xinhua News Agency, took five years to craft. In 2024, the documentary was named an "Excellent Project for Chinese Cultural Relics New Media Dissemination" by the National Cultural Heritage Administration, making it Henan Province's sole honoree that year.



Sustainable sailing

► British start-up offers experiential alternative to ferries

THE crossing may be “a bit choppy”, Captain Andrew Simons warned a dozen of his passengers waiting in the French port of Boulogne to cross the Channel with only wind to get them to England.

SailLink is a British start-up that aims to offer sailing as a low-carbon alternative to ferries. It recently made its first paid crossings of the English Channel on its catamaran, a route that will soon become daily.

Despite the swell and icy gusts, Johannes Schneider, 67, fully enjoyed the crossing in the catamaran. He paid £85 (RM491) for the privilege, more expensive than a pedestrian ferry crossing.

“Really interesting to really be able to live it, rather than being on a big ship, where you see nothing, or a plane, where you see even less,” he said.

SailLink’s catamaran is 17m long and can carry up to 12 passengers.

To compensate for sometimes rough seas, the crew offers its passengers mint tea to combat motion sickness, and pastries and blankets in the cabin, where they can shelter from the spray.

Experiencing sea

SailLink was born in the summer of 2019 when Simons, who was about to board a ferry to England with his daughter, looked at the Cherbourg marina in northern France and

wondered why its moored little boats could not be used instead for the crossing.

He found ferries polluting and impractical with their out-of-the-way terminals.

Simons imagined a new mode of cross-Channel transport “offering that experience of the sea to people who are not travelling with a car”.

His initial idea of a co-navigation platform – a sort of BlaBlaCar for boats – proved too complex to implement.

So Simons modelled his approach on the existing ferries, offering pedestrians and cyclists a fixed, daily route with set schedules.

He had to raise €500,000 (RM2.4 million), including €350,000 to buy the boat, which he raised from a handful of private investors “who really believed in it”.

Sail passenger routes already exist in France. Sailcoop has run a route between Saint-Raphael on south coast to the Mediterranean island of Corsica since 2022.

Another company Iliens has since 2021 run a route between Quiberon, on France’s Atlantic coast, to the little island of Belle-Ile-en-Mer.

Only real alternative

A few kilometres before reaching the English coast, a container ship blocked the catamaran’s way and Simons and his team had to briefly

use a motor to move away.

Navigating one of the busiest seas in the world is no easy task, with about 700 to 800 commercial vessels and around 1,400 fishing boats using the strait every day.

SailLink still managed the crossing to Dover from Boulogne-sur-Mer in less than four hours. That is faster than the scheduled five hours, but much longer than the 1.5 hours ferry journey – excluding waiting time.

“It is a new relationship with speed, a new relationship with the landscape,” appealing to fans of “slow travel”, said researcher Sylvain Roche, who saw “a direct link between the resurgence of sailing boats” and that of “night trains”.

While only marginal for the moment, sail-powered transport could grow in coming years.

Today, sailing is the only real alternative to fossil fuels, said Roche, as other technologies for decarbonising maritime transport, such as hydrogen, are currently “absolutely immature”.

Maritime transport accounts for nearly 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the International Maritime Organisation.

But a ferry journey still emits almost three times less greenhouse gases per passenger than a plane, according to the European Environment Agency. – AFP



To compensate for sometimes rough seas, the crew offers its passengers mint tea to combat motion sickness. – PEXELSPIC

South Africa’s ‘cradle of humankind’ caves reopen to public

SEATED on sandbags in a knee-deep grid dug in South Africa’s Sterkfontein caves, where one of our earliest ancestors was found, Itumeleng Molefe swept ancient soil into a blue dustpan, each brushstroke hunting for hidden clues.

Nearby, visitors marvelled at the weathered limestone rocks hanging from the ceiling of the caves, millions of years old.

Located 50km northwest of Johannesburg, the caves closed nearly three years ago due to flooding and reopened last month with a new experience bringing tourists closer to the scientific action.

The complex is housed within the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, a rich source of artefacts for palaeontologists since it was first discovered.

“My aim is to find important bones here,” said the 40-year-old Molefe.

His most prized find since joining the excavation team in 2013 was an early human hand bone.

His father was part of the team that uncovered South Africa’s most famous find, a skeleton dubbed “Little Foot” in the caves.

Deriving its name from the size of the bones first discovered in the 1990s, it is the most complete specimen of a human ancestor yet discovered, estimated to be between 1.5 million and 3.7 million years old.

Little Foot is from a branch of the human family tree called



The complex is housed within the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site. – AFP/PPIC

Australopithecus, Latin for “southern ape” – considered the ancestors of modern humans, with a mixture of ape-like and human characteristics.

“This reopening represents a significant evolution in how we share the story of human origins,” said Nithaya Chetty, dean of the University

of the Witwatersrand faculty of science, which manages the caves and the nearby museum.

“Visitors now have unique

opportunities to engage with active live science and research, all happening in real time,” said the professor.

At their peak before the Covid-19 pandemic, the caves received up to 100,000 tourists a year.

The closure had left a lingering feeling of sadness, said Witwatersrand archaeology professor Dominic Stratford, recalling busloads of schoolchildren and inquisitive visitors. “Everyone felt like we were missing something,” he said.

A temporary exhibit of the fossils has been set up at the museum, where visitors will also get a chance to see “Mrs Ples”, the most complete skull of an *Australopithecus africanus*, found in South Africa in 1947.

Guiding helmet-clad visitors through the 2.5km of caves bathed in soft blue LED lights, Trevor Butelezi gestures toward a shadowy passage that leads to an underground lake.

“It is actually a beautiful cavity,” said the 34-year-old tourism graduate, his voice echoing gently off the walls.

“Africa gave rise to humanity and it is not a small thing,” he said, paraphrasing a quote from the South African palaeontologist Phillip Tobias.

For now, those hoping to glimpse the original Little Foot will have to wait for heritage month in September. The skeleton, which took two decades to excavate and assemble, is only displayed on special occasions. – AFP



Mechamoto is being used to promote Selangor at the Expo 2025 Osaka in Kansai, Japan.

All systems go

► Selangor gears up for World Expo 2025 Osaka with promotional video launch

SELANGOR is set to take centre stage at Expo 2025 Osaka in Kansai, Japan, with its Selangor Week, happening from next Monday to next Friday at Malaysia's Pavilion.

In collaboration with Monsta Studios Sdn Bhd, a Selangor-based global animation company with a strong Japanese following for its hit animated series *Mechamoto*, the state has produced a dynamic 3D animated promotional video to mark this global event.

Unveiled earlier this week, the 30-second promotional video offers an exclusive first look into Selangor's showcase under the theme "Building a Resilient Future". Featuring cutting-edge visuals and an engaging narrative, the video also includes a special appearance by Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari, alongside *Mechamoto*, joining forces to promote Selangor Week at Expo

2025 Osaka.

"Selangor Week at World Expo 2025 Osaka will be a pivotal moment for us to present Selangor as an investment powerhouse and a hub for future-ready industries. Our promotional video encapsulates the essence of what makes Selangor the ideal destination for business, trade and innovation," said Exco for Investment, Trade and Mobility Ng Sze Han.

Selangor's participation in Expo 2025 Osaka aligns with its focus on digital transformation and sustainable development, reinforcing its position as a leading economic driver in the Asean region. Selangor aims to attract international investors, foster collaborations and enhance trade opportunities with Japan and beyond.

The promotional video may be streamed on Invest Selangor and Monsta's YouTube channel and Monsta's TikTok.



Travellers can now cancel their AirAsia flights up to 48 hours before departure and receive the money back in 10 days. — PEXELS/SPIC

AirAsia Move introduces 'Easy Cancel' for flexible travel

CHANGING travel plans just got more convenient as AirAsia Move introduces "Easy Cancel", a new add-on feature on its app that allows guests to cancel their AirAsia flights up to 48 hours before departure and receive the money back in 10 days.

Whether it is an unexpected schedule conflict or a simple change of heart, the new feature provides flexibility, making travel planning easier and more adaptable to customer needs.

Travellers can also choose refund options between 80% and 100% coverage, including for add-ons such as baggage, meals and other fees.

The "Easy Cancel" feature must be purchased during the booking

process and cannot be added later via the "Manage Booking" section.

To add the "Easy Cancel" option to their booking, after selecting preferred flights and entering passenger details, guests simply need to click "Continue to Add-Ons", proceed by clicking "Continue" once more, and then select the "Easy Cancel" option from the available choices.

The new add-on feature is available on all AirAsia routes, except South Korea-bound and Indonesia domestic routes. For AirAsia X (D7) flights, such as those from Kuala Lumpur to Almaty and Sydney, "Easy Cancel" will be available by end of May.

Discover world's most walkable cities

WALKING is a great way to get around. It has no impact on the environment and encourages people to stay active while limiting the risk of cardiovascular disease. In Europe, certain destinations are particularly well suited to exploring on foot.

Walking is good for your health and that does not just apply to walks in the forest or a hike through the countryside. In the city, too, there is nothing like getting out and about on foot to minimise the risk of developing cardiovascular disease. A walk in the city could be just as beneficial as an equivalent walk in nature, as *The Guardian* recently pointed out, based on the words of Annabel Streets on the occasion of the publication of her book *The Walking Cure*, which is based on scientific research. By observing the nave of a cathedral, for example, we could develop our capacity for empathy and creative thinking. Between visual stimuli and cultural discoveries, urban walking is much more than a simple exercise in endurance.

This can be applied to the place where you live and to a city-break. And it is just as well, since the Skyscanner flight comparison service has created a "walkability" index to determine cities in the world that are easiest to discover on foot. The index takes into account not only the size of the destination, but also the distances separating its major monuments and tourist attractions. The average elevation has also been taken into account, as has the average time it takes to reach each point of interest. Skyscanner has added air quality and pollution data to the calculation, as well as safety levels, distinguishing between daytime and nighttime visits.

Europe is home to the majority of destinations in the top 10, based on the 30 destinations studied by Skyscanner, all outside of America and excluding well-trodden city-break hotspots such as



Cordoba comes up tops as Europe's most walkable destinations. — AFP/PC

Dubrovnik (Croatia) and Berlin (Germany). With this in mind, Andalusia, and Cordoba in particular, is the place to be if you are looking for a walkable destination.

According to this analysis, it takes just 26 minutes to reach all the tourist attractions in this southern Spanish city, including the famous La Mezquita mosque. The second most walkable European destination is Reggio Calabria, at the very southern tip of Italy, with a view of Sicily.

Another recommended spot in Italy is Bolzano, the capital of the South Tyrol province. You will have to head all the way north of the country to enjoy a walking tour of this city,

located at the gateway to the Dolomites, well known to skiers. — AFP

Skyscanner's top 10 walkable cities across the world:

1. Cordoba (Spain)
2. Nagasaki (Japan)
3. Hiroshima (Japan)
4. Reggio Calabria (Italy)
5. Monte-Carlo (Monaco)
6. Tartu (Estonia)
7. Bursa (Turkey)
8. Bolzano (Italy)
9. Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
10. Victoria (Canada)

BUZZ SPOTS

Just landed

➤ Check out hottest new outlets in Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru



TMT by Thunder Match @ Sunway Pyramid
Technology retailer TMT by Thunder Match recently launched its largest Megastore at Sunway Pyramid.

Designed as a comprehensive tech hub, the Sunway Pyramid TMT Megastore features interactive zones where customers can experience the latest innovations. There are dedicated spaces for hands-on product demonstrations, immersive gaming experiences, smart home solutions and expert consultations, creating an environment that combines retail with education and exploration.

Spanning over 15,000 sq ft, the new outlet aims to elevate the customer experience with a selection of premium tech brands and a team of tech experts. With artificial intelligence (AI)-powered devices transforming the way people work, create and play, the Megastore provides the opportunity to explore firsthand how AI is shaping the future of technology.



Idea Live Arena @ 3 Damansara

Visitors to 3 Damansara can look forward to a fresh and immersive experience with the opening of a new international entertainment and live performances event hall.

Occupying a net lettable area of 61,000sq ft on level two, the international event hall operator will offer premium quality

multi-purpose spaces and facilities catering to a wide range of corporate, commercial and entertainment events.

With a seating capacity of up to 5,000 and equipped with state-of-the-art technology, Idea Live Arena is Malaysia's largest indoor arena within a shopping mall, promising to deliver unique and dynamic experiences for all attendees.

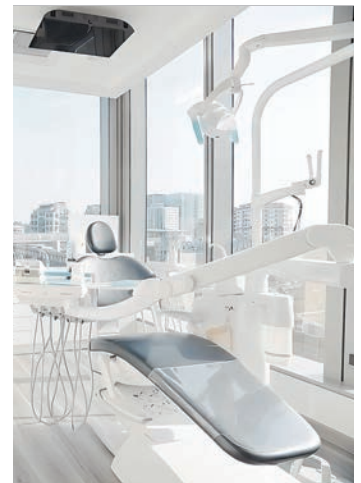
Alba Dental @ Pavilion Damansara Heights

Aesthetic dental clinic Alba Dental has opened its doors at Pavilion Damansara Heights. This clinic is a collaboration between aesthetic dentist Dr Kayla Teh and Australia's Dental Boutique group.

Alba Dental is one of the largest single-location dental clinics in the country. It is equipped with specialist dental technology imported from Germany, including advanced equipment being used in Malaysia for the very first time.

The clinic itself is designed as a wellness-inspired sanctuary – patients step into a serene, spa-like environment featuring plush comforts and soothing decor, rather than a typical clinical atmosphere. Every detail, from the spa-like waiting lounge to the digitally integrated treatment suites, blends comfort, clinical precision and digital innovation to elevate the patient experience.

Alba Dental offers a full spectrum of cosmetic and general dental services under one roof. Clients can receive everything from high-end aesthetic treatments to routine oral care with the assurance of top-tier quality.



Devialet Store Kuala Lumpur @ Pavilion Kuala Lumpur

French acoustic engineering company Devialet has opened its first branded outlet in Malaysia, located at Pavilion Kuala Lumpur. This new boutique provides a space where visitors can explore the brand's products, including the Devialet Phantom speaker and Devialet Dione soundbar.

The outlet mirrors the brand's sophisticated retail concept aesthetics seen in Singapore. Featuring monochromatic palette and contemporary materials, the interior architecture blends minimalism and refinement, creating an environment where design and innovation converge.

The listening room takes centre stage,

embodying Devialet's philosophy: To elevate every note and reveal the pure emotion of sound. Designed as an immersive space, it offers an intimate acoustic environment, allowing customers to appreciate Devialet products' sound signature within a bespoke architectural setting.

The highlight of this listening room is the Phantom Theater set-up: A 5.1 surround sound system composed of five Devialet Phantom speakers. Phantom delivers high-fidelity, ultra-dense sound with physical impact in a compact design.

The store will feature Devialet Phantom I and II speakers, Devialet Dione soundbar, Devialet Gemini II wireless earbuds and the Devialet Mania portable smart speaker.

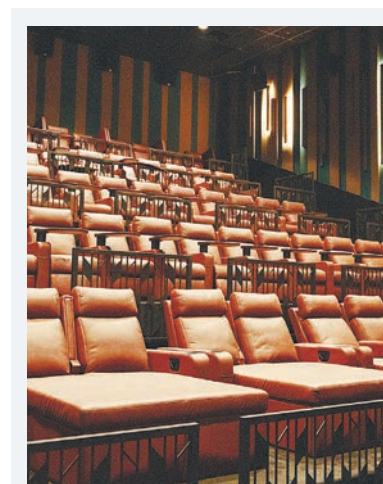


Sages @ Pavilion Embassy Kuala Lumpur

Sages is a one-stop wellness space designed to empower individuals to discover their purpose and foster growth. Combining ancient wisdom with modern technology, Sages creates an environment where individuals can focus on self-improvement and emotional development.

It was established with the vision of fostering collaboration among wellness professionals and empowering the community through opportunities for growth, healing and transformation. More than just a physical space, it offers a range of programmes and tools for self-knowledge within an inclusive and conducive environment. It serves individuals seeking personal growth, including self-improvement and emotional development, and corporations aiming to inspire their employees' well-being.

Located on the 28th floor of Pavilion Embassy in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, Sages spans over 1,800 sq ft. The space features a 1,376 sq ft hall and a 500 sq ft lounge area, accommodating up to 60 people standing or 30 people per workshop.



WoMei Cineplex @ R&F Mall Johor Bahru

Movie lovers in Johor Bahru now have a new option to enjoy the latest blockbusters, as WoMei Cineplex has recently opened at R&F Mall Johor Bahru. The new cinema introduces an elevated movie experience, combining advanced technology with luxurious seating to create an immersive entertainment hub.

WoMei Cineplex at R&F Mall features eight upgraded screening halls, each designed to provide exceptional visual and audio quality. The cinemas are equipped with an enhanced sound system, delivering crisp and immersive audio that brings every scene to life.

For ultimate relaxation, moviegoers can enjoy Luxe recliner seats, designed with adjustable backrests and footrests to provide maximum comfort. Additionally, VIP and couple seats offer a more private and exclusive viewing experience, making every visit a special one.

TV SHOW REVIEW



Jin-woo has the ability to extract and use the souls of those he defeats in his personal army.

Power fantasy ascends again

► *Solo Leveling's* second season delivers epic fights, lacks stakes

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

BUILDING on the success off the first instalment, *Solo Leveling's* second season has succeeded its predecessor on almost all fronts, placing itself firmly in the top echelons of modern anime.

Picking up directly from the previous season, Sung Jin-woo (Taito Ban) continues to clear the monster-infested Gates that appear in South Korea, all while experiencing exponential increases in not just his physical abilities, but also the numbers of soldiers in his "shadow army".

A bulk of the season involves the

growing threat on Jeju Island involving an army of powerful ants that have begun to take flight to the mainland and further out, eventually leading to a desperate war between the ants and a coalition of Hunters from South Korea and Japan.

In the background, Jin-woo inches closer to healing his mother's ailment and finding out more about the lingering mystery of how he is the sole Hunter that is able to "level up" as he quickly ascends to becoming one of the strongest Hunters in South Korea. Therein lies *Solo Leveling's* only and biggest problem: Narratively, Jin-woo is too strong and faces very little opposition.

In last year's first season, Jin-woo's journey from being the weakest Hunter to gaining and learning about his powers and abilities is very compelling. Most of the episodes often saw him being beaten within an inch of his life, only to get up from sheer willpower and resolve.

This character development effectively ends by the start of the second season as

Jin-woo's strength and abilities skyrocket to astronomical levels. By the end of the season, he barely breaks a sweat against the strongest enemy in the series so far. Each encounter, be it against humans or monsters, is a decisive win for him before it even begins.

Any tension is immediately drained, as instead of Jin-woo being in any danger, it is everyone and everything else who are on the losing end by default. By the end of the season, *Solo Leveling* devolves into a gauntlet of fights that are pure hype and excitement, but devoid of any substance.

Solo Leveling is obviously a wish-fulfilment power fantasy and though the action and animation is at the highest levels in the industry with the second season, it is certainly at the bottom of the barrel in terms of having actual stakes or developing its protagonist beyond making him move faster, hit harder and summon a bigger undead army.

Solo Leveling is streaming on Netflix.



True to the nature of power fantasies, Jin-woo will become stronger in the future seasons. — PICS FROM NETFLIX



More than ever, music is becoming a genuine source of mental health support. — PEXELSPIC

Song lyrics soothe heavy emotions

IN times of crisis, people often seek distractions or escapism. Some meditate, while others exercise or cook. But for many, it is music that becomes a refuge. And at the heart of this, it is not so much melodies that leave their mark, but lyrics.

A study, published in the journal *Frontiers of Psychology*, revealed how song lyrics can play a decisive role in the way we weather emotional storms. The research was conducted by Hebrew University Business School professors, Renana Peres and Adi Levy, in collaboration with Hebrew University of Jerusalem senior lecturer at the Department of Musicology Roni Granot.

Their analysis looked at over 2,800 "coping songs" chosen by people in 11 countries during Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. When asked about their experiences, they explained how certain lyrics echoed their emotions, sometimes better than their own words. When anguish took over, many turned to songs about loss. On the other hand, to soothe loneliness, songs celebrating human bonds and belonging took over.

In times of crisis, music becomes a precious source of comfort.

"This research offers a new perspective on how people use music not just for entertainment, but as a meaningful tool for emotional self-regulation. Lyrics embedded in music often give voice to emotions that are difficult to express — grief, remembrance and hope among them," explained Granot.

And contrary to all expectations, it is not the musical aspects such as tempo, tonality or harmony that most influence our feelings. It is the lyrics that move us, that resonate with us, that accompany us through these difficult times. The right words at the right time can become a lifeline.

This study is the first to empirically establish a link between lyrical content and emotional regulation strategies. For Peres, it is a lever for action.

"At a time when many are dealing with personal and collective trauma, understanding the emotional power of lyrics can help us better support mental health — individually and as a society," Peres said.

More than ever, music is becoming a genuine source of mental health support. New approaches are emerging, such as new music therapy techniques, playlists designed to accompany our moods and digital tools designed to promote well-being. All these initiatives highlight the power of song lyrics in echoing our emotions. — ETX Studio

Hits bonanza

► Memorable treat for Anuradha Sriram fans

ASTRO rewarded customers with an exclusive musical show Up-Close and Personal with Anuradha Sriram last Saturday at Brickfields Asia College, Petaling Jaya.

Over 300 fans of the legendary Indian playback singer, including customers, clients, media personnel and Astro employees, were given the opportunity to immerse themselves in her music.

Hosted by Raaga's very own talent Ahila, the show gave fans a chance to directly interact with the singer through Q&A sessions to make their musical experience even more memorable.

The show kicked off with the singer performing one of her hit songs *Malarodu Malarungu* (*Bombay*).

Subsequently, Anuradha performed many of her most popular songs, such as *Karu Karu*

Karupayi (*Eazhaiyin Sirippil*), *O Podu* (*Gemini*), *Oru Naal Oru Kanavu* (*Kannukkul Nilavu*), *Karupputhan Enakku Pidicha Colouru* (*Vetri Kodi Kattu*), *Lesa Lesa* (*Lesa Lesa*), *Anbendra Mazhaiyilae* (*Minsara Kanavu*) and more.

Fans were also treated to performances by renowned local talents such as Michael Rao, Thivya Chandran and Murty, who staged 2000s hits such as *Roja Poonthotam* (*Kannukkul Nilavu*), *Kaattu Sirukki* (*Raavanan*) and *Uyire En Uyire* (*Thotti Jaya*).

Up-Close and Personal with Anuradha Sriram was presented by Astro and Rocketfuel.

Having trained in music from the age of six, Anuradha is among the Indian film industry's most versatile singers. She has performed over 3,000 movie songs under leading music directors.



Anuradha performs for over 300 fans in Petaling Jaya.

B Praak to sing in M'sia for first time in June

B PRAAK, one of Bollywood's most beloved voices, is set to make his long-awaited regional debut in Kuala Lumpur this June 28 at Plenary Hall, KLCC.

This marks a major milestone not just in his career, but also for fans who have been waiting years to experience his show-stopping stage presence live.

Blending raw emotion with cinematic original soundtracks, B Praak has cemented his place as one of the defining voices in Bollywood and Desi contemporary pop.

Before stepping into the spotlight as a singer, he made tremendous strides in Punjabi music behind the scenes – composing and producing tracks for icons such as Jassie Gill, Harddy Sandhu, Amrinder

Gill, Gippy Grewal, Diljit Dosanjh and Ammy Virk.

His transition to singing earned him widespread acclaim, including multiple awards such as the National Film Award for Best Male Playback Singer in 2021. After captivating audiences across India, Sydney and Dubai last year with well-received performances, B Praak is finally set to make his concert debut in Southeast Asia.

Fans can look forward to a sensational evening as B Praak performs his greatest hits, including *Mann Bharryaa*, *Teri Mitti*, *Filhaal*, *Ranjha* and many more.

B Praak Live In Malaysia is organised by Hitman Solutions.

Tickets, ranging from RM198 to RM698, are available through official channels.



B Praak, an award-winning Bollywood singer and music producer known for his powerful vocals, will be making his Southeast Asian concert debut.

US director Payne to head Venice Film Festival jury

VENICE Film Festival organisers announced that US film director Alexander Payne would be president of the competition's jury this year.

Payne, 64, has won two Oscars and two Golden Globes for his screenplays, and is best known for films such as *Sideways*, *The Descendants* and *About Schmidt*.

"It is an enormous honour and joy to serve on the jury at Venice. I could not be more excited," Payne said in a statement released by the festival's organisers La Biennale di Venezia.

The Biennale's board of directors followed the recommendation of Venice Film Festival director Alberto Barbera, the statement said.

"Payne belongs to the small circle of filmmakers-cinophiles whose passion for cinema is

fuelled by knowledge of films of the past and curiosity about contemporary cinema, without boundaries or barriers of any kind," Barbera said, adding that the American was the "ideal" candidate for the role.

The jury at the 82nd Venice International Film Festival will decide who wins the Golden Lion for best film and other prizes.

Payne, who has never won a prize in Venice, made his feature film debut with *Citizen Ruth* in 1996.

Sideways won him an Oscar and a Golden Globe for best screenplay.

In the same category, he won an Oscar for *The Descendants* and a Golden Globe for *About Schmidt*.

The 82nd Venice Film Festival takes place in the watery Italian city from Aug 27 to Sept 6. – AFP



Payne has won two Oscars and two Golden Globes for his screenplays. – AFP/ICC

Cannes adds Kristen Stewart, Jennifer Lawrence movies

THE Cannes Film Festival added a new film starring Jennifer Lawrence and Robert Pattinson, as well as Kristen Stewart's debut feature as a director to its roster of movies that will premiere next month on the French Riviera.

US filmmaker Lynne Ramsay (*We Need to Talk About Kevin*) has been selected for the main competition with her thriller *Die My Love* starring Lawrence and Pattinson.

Out of the 21 films in the main competition this year, seven have been made by women directors, the joint highest total.

Iran's Saeed Roustaei is also set to compete for the main prize with his latest feature *Mother and Child*, three years after showing *Leila's Brothers* in Cannes, which led to him being sentenced to six months in prison in Iran.

The festival has also secured the world premiere for the first film directed by former *Twilight* star Kristen Stewart – *The Chronology of Water* – which will screen in the secondary *Un Certain Regard* competition.

Certain Regard competition.

The film follows a young girl "who grows up in an environment ravaged by violence and alcohol" who finds "refuge in literature", according to its producers.

Stewart will be up against fellow US actress-turned-director Scarlett Johansson whose first production *Eleanor the Great* has also been selected for the *Un Certain Regard*, which showcases emerging talents.

French screen favourite Juliette Binoche, who has won acting honours at Cannes, Berlin and the Oscars, will chair the jury judging the in-competition features which are vying for the coveted Palme d'Or.

This year's line-up of 21 films includes some heavy-hitting festival circuit favourites, including Wes Anderson, Iranian director Jafar Panahi, the Dardenne brothers from Belgium and veteran US independent filmmaker Richard Linklater. – AFP



Stewart's *The Chronology of Water* will screen in the secondary *Un Certain Regard* competition at the Cannes Film Festival. – AFP/ICC



CSK out of IPL playoff race

Chahal hattrick helps Punjab down Chennai by four wickets

A hattrick by Yuzvendra Chahal and skipper Shreyas Iyer's 72 helped Punjab Kings to a four-wicket win over Chennai Super Kings yesterday, officially ending their opponents' slim chances of reaching the playoffs.

Five-time champions Chennai made 190 all out after England's Sam Curran scored 88 off 47 balls but Punjab overhauled the total with two balls to spare.

Shreyas stood tall with his 41-ball knock and put on a second-wicket partnership of 72 with impact substitute Prabhsimran Singh, who made 54.

"I love chasing on any field," said player of the match Shreyas. "I feel like I thrive whenever there is a big total on the board."

"You need to take the charge and

momentum for the team for the rest of the batters to come and go full throttle."

Punjab climbed to second in the 10-team table as they hunt for a first IPL title.

The top four teams reach the playoffs, but bottom side CSK are already out of contention after suffering an eighth defeat in 10 matches.

Punjab were cruising to victory despite losing Prabhsimran and then Nehal Wadhwa to fall to 136-3 in the 15th over.

Shreyas picked up the pace alongside Shashank Singh, who made 23. But the Kings stuttered late on after Shreyas was bowled by Sri Lanka bowler Matheesha Pathirana to leave three required from eight balls.

The dismissal of Suryansh Shedge with one needed in the final over,

followed by a dot ball, created some late excitement at Chepauk stadium, but Marco Jansen inside edged Khaleel Ahmed for a boundary to seal his team's sixth victory of the campaign.

Leg-spinner Chahal's four wickets in the penultimate over of CSK's innings – including the IPL's first hattrick since 2023 – proved crucial as the hosts were bowled out in 19.2 overs.

Earlier, Chennai lost three early wickets, including Ravindra Jadeja for 17 in the sixth over, before Curran and Dewald Brevis, who hit 32, put on 78 runs for the fourth wicket.

"It was the first time we put enough runs on the board," said skipper MS Dhoni. "But was it a par score? I feel slightly short. Yes, a bit demanding from the batters but I feel we could've got slightly more." – AFP

Sinner considered quitting during doping controversy

WORLD NO. 1 Jannik Sinner, who is about to return to action after a three-month doping ban, thought about walking away from tennis even while successfully defending his Australian Open title, but is coming back with a new mentality.

Sinner accepted a three-month ban in February after a settlement with the World Anti-Doping Agency, who had appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport against an independent tribunal's decision in August to clear him.

The Italian had tested positive for anabolic agent clostebol which Sinner

said entered his system from a member of his support team through massages and sports therapy.

Sinner won the Australian Open in January, with the Wada case hanging over him, and was asked during an interview with Italian broadcaster RAI on Wednesday whether he had ever considered giving up tennis.

"Yes, yes. I remember before the Australian Open this year, I was not in a very happy moment because there was still that case of doping," Sinner said.

"I didn't feel really comfortable in the locker room, where I ate. It was a bit

like some players looked at me differently and I didn't like it at all. And there I said it's heavy to live tennis in this way."

"I didn't feel comfortable and then I said, maybe after Australia, a little bit of free time, in the sense where I take a little break it will do me good."

Sinner was then forced into a break by the ban, but is now back in training for the upcoming Italian Open next month.

"Slowly, I'm getting back into the rhythm of real training with a goal in front of me," Sinner said. – AFP

322 Notices

NOTICE APPLICATION FOR LICENSE TO SELL LIQUOR

It is hereby notify that Ku Chin Khean, I/C NO: 690807-07-5283 trading under the trade name of Mega Sunray Sdn Bhd (1027932-V) intent to apply to the Chairman, Excise Licensing Board of Langkawi District Office, Persiaran Putra, 07000 Kuah, Langkawi, Kedah Darul Aman for the sale of Liquor, Type Retail and Wholesale at JP11, Jalan Pelangi, Kelibang, Kuah 07000 Langkawi, Kedah.

Any Objection from the public should be forwarded to the said Board at the above address.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH SEYEN MALAYA DI KUALA LUMPUR
DALAM NEGARA WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA
GUAMAN SIVIL NO.: MA-AS28VCV-971-11/2024

ANTARA

Victor Thien Pk Sern (No. K/P: 791202-12-3017)

Plaintiff

1. MG Motorsport Sdn. Bhd.
(No. Pendaftaran: 201801022760 (1284779-0))
2. Yong Yen Chuan (No. K/P: 91031-14-5585)
3. Lim Wei Heng (No. K/P: 770711-08-1175)
4. Teh Eng Soon (No. K/P: 721214-14-5425)
5. Wong Shan Yaw (No. K/P: 740923-14-5843)
6. Teo Chee Hui (No. K/P: 760625-01-5811)
7. Kuang Chee Ming (No. K/P: 770320-14-5235)
8. Wong Shan Kik (No. K/P: 82061-14-5649)
9. Yap Bao Jian (No. K/P: 011009-14-9645)

Defendan-Defendan

(Mengikut Tindakan Asai)

DAN ANTARA

1. Teh Eng Soon (No. K/P: 721214-14-5425)
2. Wong Shan Yaw (No. K/P: 740923-14-5843)
3. Teo Chee Hui (No. K/P: 760625-01-5811)
4. Kuang Chee Ming (No. K/P: 770320-14-5235)

Plaintiff-Plaintiff

DAN

1. Victor Thien Pk Sern (No. K/P: 791202-12-3017)
2. MG Motorsport Sdn. Bhd.
(No. Pendaftaran: 201801022760 (1284779-0))
3. Yong Yen Chuan (No. K/P: 91031-14-5585)
4. Lim Wei Heng (No. K/P: 770711-08-1175)

(Mengikut Tututan Balas)

Kepada:

NOTIS

LIM WEI HENG
(No. K/P: 770711-08-1175)
703, Pangasapuri Sdn Bhd,
Jalan Sy. Besi Indah 2, Taman
Sy. Besi, 43300 Sri Kembangan,
Selangor Darul Ehsan

AMBIK PERHATIAN bahawa tindakan (melalui tututan balas) telah dimulakan terhadap kamu LIM WEI HENG (No. K/P: 770711-08-1175) oleh TEH ENG SOON (No. K/P: 721214-14-5425), WONG SHAN YAW (No. K/P: 740923-14-5843), 120 DREZ Sdn Bhd (No. K/P: 760625-01-5811) dan KUANG CHEE MING (No. K/P: 770320-14-5235) (kesemuanya diwakili selepas ini sebagai "Defendan-defendan Ke-4 hingga Ke-7"), yang mana tututan Balas berkenaan terhadap Ke-4 hingga Ke-7 dalam Pembelian dan Tututan Balas Defendan-defendan Ke-4 hingga Ke-7 bertarikh 10.11.2023 (Pembelian & TB terhadap kamu adalah seperti berikut –

- (a) untuk memberikan indemniti kepada Defendan-defendan Ke-4 hingga Ke-7 terhadap keseruan Plaintiff dan kos Tindakan asal atau sumbangan seangkatan sama keseruan tututan Plaintiff atau relif atau remedi yang dipikikan dalam Pernyataan Tututan dalam Tindakan Asai;
- (b) ganti rugi termasuk tetapi tidak terhad kepada –
 - (i) piutang yang ditanggung oleh Defendan-defendan Ke-4 hingga Ke-7 untuk menjawab surat-surat tututan, membiaya Tindakan Asai yang ditikikan oleh Plaintiff dan untuk memulakan Tututan Balas ini terhadap Defendan-defendan Pertama hingga Ke-3;
 - (ii) kerugian dan kerugian kewangan yang ditanggung akibat daripada –
 - (1) tekanan dan/atau kesaklitan;
 - (2) kesan buruk Kajianduan Jualan Ferrari Yang Didakwa dan Tindakan Asai terhadap nama baik, kedudukan komersial dan reputasi Defendan-defendan Ke-4 hingga Ke-7;
 - (c) Faedah pada kadar 5% setahun atas jumlah dituntut dalam sub-perenggan (a) dan (b);
 - (d) Kos Tututan Balas ini dan keseruan kos berkaitan dan/atau bertanggungjawab oleh Defendan-defendan Pertama hingga Ke-3 kepada Defendan-defendan Ke-4 hingga Ke-7, atas dasar indemniti penuh; dan
 - (e) Apa-apa relif selanjutnya sebagaimana yang ditikikan sesuai dan wajar oleh Mahkamah yang Mulia ini.

DAN SETELAH DIPERHATIKAN BAHAWA penyampaian Pembelian & TB dalam tindakan ini kepada kamu dilaksanakan secara penyampaian ganti secara pos dengan sudi pengposan di premis yang dikenal sebagai 703, Pangasapuri Sdn Bhd, Jalan Sy. Besi Indah 2, Taman Sy. Besi, 43300 Sri Kembangan, Selangor Darul Ehsan ialah merupakan antara alamat terakhir yang diketahui bagi Defendan Ke-3 dan juga dengan memasukkan pengiklanan Notis ini dalam satu (1) iklan keluaran akhbar tempatan "The Sun" dan bahawa segala pengposan dan pengiklanan setelah tamat tempoh tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh akhir pengposan dan pengiklanan tersebut adalah difikirkan sebagai penyampaian yang sempurna dan cukup bagi Pembelian & TB tersebut ke atas kamu, jika kamu bersetuju untuk membiaya dalam tindakan ini kamu mestilah dalam masa empat belas (14) hari dari tarikh tarisanyan iklan ini, termasuklah hari penyiaran itu memasukkan kehadiran di Pejabat Pendaftaran Mahkamah Tinggi Kuala Lumpur. Jika tidak memasukkan kehadiran, pengiklanan boleh diberikan atau diterbitkan atau bertampan dengan dengan dirinya sebagaimana yang ditikikan oleh dan satu masalah oleh Mahkamah.

Bertarikh pada 22 April 2025.

Pegawai Cara bagi pihak
Defendan-defendan Ke-4 hingga Ke-7
(Plaintiff-Plaintiff dalam Tututan Balas)

Notis ini disediakan oleh Yuetan Wilson Lim, Suite 19-9, Commerce One (Menara K1), Lorong 3/137C, Jalan Klang Lama, 50200 Kuala Lumpur, dengan cara bagi pihak Defendan-defendan Ke-4 hingga Ke-7 yang dinamakan di atas. (No. Tel: 03.7772.9090/No. Faks: 03.7772.9881) (No. Ruj: WU/MAO/514/2024)

322 Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYA AT
SHAH ALAM
IN THE STATE OF SELANGOR DARUL
EHSAN, MALAYSIA
(COMMERCIAL DIVISION)
COMPANIES WINDING UP
NO. BA-28MOC-165-93/2025.

In the matter of Section 464, Section
465(1)(e) and Section 466(1)(a)
Companies Act 2016

And

In the matter of I M BINA SDN. BHD.
[Company No: 19901006320 (197890-
K)]

BETWEEN

PRINCIPLE PERSPECTIVE ENGINEERING
SDN. BHD.
[Company No: 199701006152 (421648-
A)]

... PETITIONER

AND

I M BINA SDN. BHD.
[Company No: 19901006320 (197890-
K)]

... RESPONDENT

ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION

NOTICE is hereby given that a Petition for the Winding-Up of the abovesaid Company by the High Court was on 6th March 2025 presented by PRINCIPLE PERSPECTIVE ENGINEERING SDN. BHD. and that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at the Shah Alam High Court at 9.00 a.m. on 17th June 2025 and any creditor or contributory of the said Company desiring to support or oppose the making of an order on the said Petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself/itself or his/her Counsel for that purpose and a copy of the Petition will be furnished to any creditor or contributory of the said Company requiring the same by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is at Lot 2220, Jalan Kalsawari, Kg. Kebun Baru, Batu 10, Telok Panglima Garang, 42500 Kuala Langat, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

The Petitioner's Solicitor is Messrs Chia Hui Ming & Co. of Lot 4-401 & 4-402, Level 4, The Starting Mall, No. 6, Jalan SS 21/37, Damansara Utama, 47400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

-I-

Solicitors for the Petitioner
MESSRS CHIA HUI MING & CO.

Noted:-
Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the said Petition must serve on or send by post to the abovesaid solicitors, notice in writing of his/her intention so to do. The notice must state the name and address of the person, or, if a firm, the name and address of the firm, and must be signed by the person or firm, or his or her solicitors (if any) and must be served, or if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the abovesaid note, later than 12.00 noon of the 16th June 2025.

This Advertisement of Petition is taken out by Messrs Chia Hui Ming & Co., solicitors for the Petitioner abovesaid whose address for service is at Lot 4-401 & 4-402, Level 4, The Starting Mall, No. 6, Jalan SS 21/37, Damansara Utama, 47400 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.
Tel: 03-7880 0832
(Our Ref: 2024/0306)

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF
COMPANIES ACT, 2016
AND
IN THE MATTER OF
MAHAFOKUS MARKETING
SDN. BHD.

Registration Number :
200501007314 (684361-W)

[IN MEMBERS'
VOLUNTARY WINDING UP]

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459 of the Companies Act, 2016 that a Final Meeting of the Company will be held at 0-26-A1 Gurney Tower Office, 18 Persiaran Gurney, 10250 Georgetown, Pulau Pinang on 5 June 2025 at 10.00 am for the following purposes:

1. To receive an account from the Liquidators showing the manner in which the winding up has been conducted and to hear any explanations that may be given by the Liquidators.
2. To consider, and if thought fit, pass the following resolution as an Ordinary Resolution:-

"That the books, accounts and documents of the Company and of the Liquidators, shall be kept by the Liquidators at 0-26-A1 Gurney Tower Office, 18 Persiaran Gurney, 10250 Georgetown, Pulau Pinang, for a period of three (3) months from the date of Final Meeting and that thereafter such books, accounts and documents may be destroyed by the Liquidators."

Dated this
2nd day of May, 2025

LIM LAI HUAT
and LIM LAI KEAT
Liquidator

PRESS STATEMENT / FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Voluntary Recall of ELONIDE Nasal Spray 50mcg/dose

HOE Pharmaceuticals Sdn. Bhd. is initiating a voluntary recall of ELONIDE Nasal Spray 50mcg/dose (MAL12015004AZ) as a precautionary measure following the detection of bacterial contamination in several batches distributed locally in Malaysia.

This product contains Mometasone Furoate (50mcg/dose), a corticosteroid used as a nasal spray to relieve symptoms of hay fever and year-round nasal allergies including nasal congestion, discharge, itching, and sneezing, in adults, teens, and children aged 3 and older. It is also used 2 to 4 weeks before pollen season to help prevent allergy symptoms in individuals with moderate to severe hay fever. Additionally, ELONIDE Nasal Spray is used to treat nasal polyps in adults aged 18 and above, and to relieve symptoms of short-term rhinosinusitis in patients aged 12 and above, provided there are no signs of a serious bacterial infection.

To date, no adverse events related to this issue have been reported. However, as a precautionary measure, HOE Pharmaceuticals Sdn. Bhd. is proactively removing the affected batches from the market to ensure the continued safety and well-being of our consumers.

Consumers are advised to check the batch number printed on the packaging of their ELONIDE Nasal Spray 50mcg/dose product which they are currently using. If the product corresponds to any of the affected batch numbers listed below, they should discontinue use immediately and return the product to the place of purchase whether a hospital, clinic, or pharmacy. Returned products will be replaced through our existing distribution channels.

The affected batches are as follows:

Manufacturing Year: 2022			
05866206	07157206		1283C206
06387206	07167206		1320C206
06367206	1223C206		1321C206
06357206	1224C206		1222C206
06377206	1225C206		
Manufacturing Year: 2023			
00711304	01132306		11428306
00721306	01292306		11438306
01102306	01302306		02483306
01112306	1051A306		
01122306	1052A306		
Manufacturing Year: 2024			
1598C406	1590C406		1591C406

This voluntary recall is being conducted with the agreement and under the supervision of the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA), Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH).

Should any unusual symptoms occur following the use of this product, consumers are advised to seek medical advice immediately. Those with questions or require additional information may consult healthcare professionals such as doctors or pharmacists.

For further information or assistance, please contact our Customer Care line at Tel: 603 7958 1077 or email: enquiry@hoepharm.com.my.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused and remain committed to maintaining the highest standards of product quality and safety.

HOE Pharmaceuticals Sdn. Bhd.
24-Apr-2025





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Sabalenka survives Kostyuk test

Belarusian world No. 1 battles past Ukrainian into Madrid Open semis

LAST YEAR'S runner-up Aryna Sabalenka survived a gritty Marta Kostyuk and an untimely rain interruption to complete a 7-6(7-4), 7-6(9-7) win over the Ukrainian and reach the Madrid Open semifinals for a fourth time yesterday.

The top-seeded Sabalenka needed 84 minutes to take the opening set before securing the win in cold, breezy conditions.

Kostyuk saved a match point and broke to take the second set into a tiebreak. At 5-4 in the breaker, it started to rain and play was halted briefly to close the roof of the Manolo Santana stadium.

Upon resumption of play, Sabalenka saved three set points and eked out the win, her third over her rival in as many meetings.

"Honestly, that was a battle and conditions were incredibly tough. It wasn't about tennis, it was about the way you handled your emotions," said the Belarusian world No. 1, who hit 48 unforced errors.

"I think I did really well and I'm super proud I was able to handle myself in such a difficult situation."

Sabalenka next takes on another Ukrainian in the form of Elina Svitolina, who extended her winning streak to 11 consecutive matches with a swift 6-2, 6-1 rout of Japan's Moyuka Uchijima in

just 52 minutes.

A champion in Rouen last week, Svitolina is undefeated on clay this season and is the first Ukrainian woman to reach the semifinals in Madrid.

The 30-year-old has won her last 22 consecutive sets on the red dirt.

Svitolina has a three-year-old daughter, is running a foundation that has taken over the responsibilities of the Ukrainian national tennis team both financially and from a managerial side, and is on an incredible run that will see her re-enter the top 15 in the rankings.

"I have a lot on my plate, but I draw energy and motivation from my people," said the former world number three.

"When I go back to Ukraine, I just get so much energy from all the people that are right now over there having a tough time. I'm just trying to keep it up and bring some wins for Ukraine."

Earlier in the day, Iga Swiatek kept her Madrid Open title defence alive, as she avenged her Australian Open defeat to Madison Keys with a 0-6, 6-3,

6-2 win against the American in the quarterfinals.

The second seed will next square off with Coco Gauff, who beat 18-year-old Mirra Andreeva for the third time in as many meetings, 7-5, 6-1.

Searching for her first title of the season, the second-seeded Swiatek recovered from a poor opening set to improve her clean record on clay



against Keys to 4-0 and reach a third consecutive Madrid semifinal.

On court in the Arantxa Sanchez stadium, Gauff saved two set points while receiving at 4-5 before seizing a one-set lead after 63 minutes of

play against Andreeva. Gauff cruised in the second set to dismiss the seventh-seeded Russian and reach her first semifinal of the year. "I think I played really well and stayed composed, even when facing those set points," the fourth-seeded American said. - AFP

Aryna Sabalenka reacts during her quarterfinal match against Ukraine's Marta Kostyuk (not pictured) yesterday. - REUTERS/SPIC

Scheffler eyes first Byron Nelson title

SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER had a good reason for skipping the CJ Cup Byron Nelson in 2024: the birth of his first child.

Scheffler seemingly has won everywhere on the PGA Tour since his breakthrough in 2022, but only once in his home state of Texas and not at the Byron Nelson.

He makes his return to the tournament - where he's the overwhelming favourite to finally land his first title of 2025 - on today in McKinney, Texas.

The tournament has bounced around a few courses in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and made its latest home at TPC Craig Ranch in 2021. Scheffler grew up in Dallas, and the tournament's namesake Nelson was raised in Fort Worth.

"This event obviously means a lot

to me with it being Mr. Nelson's hometown and being my hometown," Scheffler said.

TPC Craig Ranch, a par-71, 7,569-yard layout, will undergo a renovation after the tournament. For now, players are noticing a higher level of difficulty in part because the fairways have been overseeded with rye.

"I think this golf course, the knock on it would be that it was a little bit too easy the last two years," Scheffler said. "There wasn't a ton of rough, and the fairways were too generous."

"So having the overseeded rough and bringing in some of the fairways, I think brings a challenge to the course."

The CJ Group, a South Korean conglomerate, became a title sponsor last year, and the tournament has drawn a deep contingent of Korean

participants.

After Scheffler, the next three highest-ranked golfers in the field are Koreans Sungjae Im (No. 20), Byeong Hun An (No. 37) and Tom Kim (No. 38).

Even before CJ's involvement, K.H. Lee (2021, 2022), S.H. Kim (2019) and Sangmoon Bae (2013) all won the event.

"I think a lot of the Korean players are more accurate than a lot of certain players," Tom Kim said. "And I think when you can hit a lot of fairways and a lot of greens."

"The greens are always really good here - so once that putter gets hot, you'll make a ton of birdies, and that's what you have to do out here."

"When you consider all the top Korean players, we're pretty decent ball strikers. I think that's why our guys have had success." - Field Level Media

Rahm out to break 2025 win drought

FORMER world No. 1 Jon Rahm said yesterday he had not done himself "any favours" in his winless start to the season ahead of LIV Golf's South Korea debut.

The Spaniard has endured an indifferent 2025 by his own lofty standards, admitting "small mistakes" had cost him.

He failed to mount a serious challenge at last month's Masters and he vowed to clean up his game in South Korea with the second major of the year, the US PGA Championship, only two weeks away.

"I'm just not doing everything I need to do right," Rahm said ahead of LIV Golf Korea, which will also feature US Open champion Bryson

DeChambeau, who played alongside eventual winner Rory McIlroy in the final group at Augusta.

"Sometimes you also need a little bit of luck in your favour, not that I haven't been lucky."

"I just haven't done myself any favours on the golf course, I would say it like that," added Rahm.

The two-time major winner will tee off in today's first round at the Jack Nicklaus Golf Club in Incheon alongside the in-form Joaquin Niemann of Chile, who won his third LIV tournament of the season in Mexico last weekend.

The 2023 Augusta champion had a frustrating time at this year's Masters, starting poorly with a 3-over

75 and leaving himself with too much to do heading into the weekend.

He picked up his game but the damage had been done as he finished eight shots behind McIlroy for a share of 14th place.

Rahm was second in the Saudi-backed breakaway circuit's season-opening event in Riyadh and has finished in the top 10 in all six tournaments, which have a field of 54 players.

"While I like having top 10s and I like being a good player week-in and week-out, winning obviously is what matters more," he said.

"I would gladly give up some of those top 10s for more wins." - AFP

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PITLANE

Mexico City to host F1 races until 2028

MEXICO CITY will host high-altitude Formula One races for at least three more years after a contract extension was signed on Thursday. "We are very excited to announce that the Mexico City Grand Prix will continue to be part of our calendar until 2028," F1 chief executive Stefano Domenicali said. "Formula 1 is energy, passion and emotion, and every year the unique atmosphere created by our fans in Mexico City is one of the most incredible and energetic experiences of our championship," he added. The Mexican capital "is the home of Formula 1," its mayor Clara Brugada said. The Mexico City Grand Prix is expected to generate about US\$1.1 billion (RM4.95b) in 2025, Brugada said. "The Grand Prix not only attracts motorsports fans, but also stimulates the local economy of this great city, strengthens the tourism infrastructure, and generates pride," she said. Mexico City is more than 2,200m above sea level and the rarefied atmosphere has an effect on turbos, cooling systems and brakes as well as delivering less drag. Formula One returned to Mexico City's Autodromo Hermanos Rodríguez racetrack in 2015 after a 23-year absence, to the delight of fans in the Latin American nation. This year's Mexico City Grand Prix will be held Oct 24-26.

Lewis told to 'forget' 8th world title

EX-F1 DRIVER Christian Danner has delivered a brutal verdict on Lewis Hamilton's hopes of becoming world champion again. "Honestly, Lewis Hamilton can forget an eighth title in a Ferrari," he said. "Talking about Lewis publicly is tough, he polarises opinion. He knows he's underperforming. Yes, he needs time to adjust to the team and the car, that's fair. But whether he's prepared to put in the energy, patience, and political maneuvering it will take, I don't know. It's a huge ask at this stage in his career."

Newey backed to boost Alonso

FORMER world champion Emerson Fittipaldi has backed Fernando Alonso to challenge for the title with Aston Martin next year following the arrival of Adrian Newey. "Fernando has the head and the will to win, he still has the physique to win. For many years to come," Fittipaldi told AS. "At the age he is, physically he's fine, mentally he's fine. If you have the will, you can win. Aston Martin, next year, with Adrian Newey, can have a very competitive car."

Vettel 'banned' from making F1 return

SEBASTIAN VETTEL has poured cold water on the possibility of returning to F1 after being "banned" by his three children. He walked away from the sport in 2022 but rumours of a potential comeback have refused to die down. Quizzed on the prospect of coming out of retirement, Vettel told *Sky Sport Germany* that it would not be happening any time soon. "My children have indicated that I am not allowed to drive anymore," said Vettel. "They really like me being there, and of course that's great to hear. I've managed to find a rhythm outside of F1, well, and I have managed to keep the sweet peace in the family. I've gotten used to my new life."

From hunter to hunted

Piastri heads into Miami GP as the man to beat



Piastri celebrates after winning the Bahrain GP. - REUTERS/SPIC

FORMULA ONE'S high-octane show rolls into the Sunshine State this weekend for the sixth round of the 2025 season, the Miami Grand Prix, with McLaren's Oscar Piastri holding a slender lead in the Drivers' Championship.

Piastri, the 24-year-old Australian, arrives in Miami fresh off his third victory of the season in Saudi

Arabia, where he outpaced Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and reigning champion Red Bull's Max Verstappen.

Piastri is on 99 points with teammate Lando Norris, who won at Miami last season, 10 points behind and Verstappen, who won the first two races around Hard Rock Stadium, on 87 points.

The consistency of McLaren's MCL39, coupled with Piastri's cool-headed approach, has made him the man to beat, but Miami's tight, twisty layout and scorching temperatures will be a tricky test.

The Miami weekend also includes the second of six sprint races this season - the 100km dash offering eight points that could influence who heads to Emilia Romagna in the lead.

For the first time in his F1 career, Piastri is now the hunted rather than the hunter but he says he is relishing the competition.

"I'm excited to be getting back to business this weekend in Miami and will be aiming to execute another strong all-round weekend before we head into the European swing of the season," he told the team's official website.

"I love the city, the atmosphere and the people and it's a track that I'm feeling very positive about. It's also a Sprint weekend, so there

will be plenty of opportunities to keep the current momentum and energy building," he added.

Team principal Andrea Stella expects the battle in the heat to be fierce.

"This is a special race for us as it's where Lando took his first F1 race win, which was a key turning point in our journey to becoming (constructor) world champions last year.

"This year, the level of competition is potentially even greater than last season, so we go to Miami focused on maintaining momentum and consolidating our progress," he said.

A five second penalty in Jeddah cost Red Bull dearly and the absence of only one hour of practice, due to the sprint race schedule, limits their time to get the car set up for the showdown.

Although Charles Leclerc picked up Ferrari's first podium of the season in Saudi Arabia, it was been a disappointing start to the season for the Scuderia and Leclerc's new teammate Lewis Hamilton.

The week off before Miami has given Ferrari the chance to make adjustments but major changes are not expected until the circuit moves to Europe.

"We need to keep pushing to the maximum and hopefully upgrades are coming soon in order to improve the car," Leclerc said after moving up fifth in the standings, 52 points behind Piastri. - AFP

Hamilton awaits relief for F1 misery

FERRARI are reportedly preparing a "giant upgrade package" to land after the new technical directive comes into effect at the Spanish Grand Prix.

This will be welcome news for Lewis Hamilton, who has struggled to extract consistent performance out of his new machinery.

Both Hamilton and teammate Charles Leclerc have bemoaned the ill-handling SF-25, which has struggled to produce the speed required to fight McLaren, Mercedes and Max Verstappen.

After five rounds of the 2025 season, Fred Vasseur's drivers sit fifth and seventh in the Drivers' Championship standings, respectively.

In Saudi Arabia last time out, Hamilton's race was particularly miserable. While Leclerc was able to extract the absolute maximum out of the car with the team's first podium of the season, the Brit was stuck down in seventh position.

After the Grand Prix, the seven-time world champion cut a dejected figure in the paddock.

"I think I'll struggle also in Miami," Hamilton said. "I don't know how much longer I'll struggle for, but it's

definitely painful.

"At the moment, there's no fix. So, this is how it's going to be for the rest of the year. It's going to be painful."

Fortunately for Hamilton, some relief could be on the horizon. According to a report from the Italian publication *AutoRacer*, Vasseur's squad will implement "small" changes at the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix, and this will be followed by a "giant package" later in the season.

There could also be a revised "rear end" of the SF-25 in Spain.

This news will be music to

Hamilton's ears as the 40-year-old continues to chase success with his new squad.

Addressing his fans at an event in London before this weekend's Miami Grand Prix, he said: "Please keep your fingers crossed. I won't give up. We'll continue to improve. Still we rise, right?"

Hamilton will also be grateful to have

Vasseur's unwavering support. The

Frenchman hedged his bets by bringing the legendary Brit to Maranello and dropping Carlos Sainz in the process, and while the move hasn't paid off yet, he is not giving up hope.

"I will be 2000% behind him," Vasseur said after the race in Jeddah. "I think the potential of the car is there and we will try to solve it." - Express Newspapers



Lewis Hamilton. - REUTERS/SPIC

Norris' McLaren future at risk, says Schumacher

RALF SCHUMACHER believes that Lando Norris' future with McLaren is far from guaranteed if the Briton doesn't rectify his sluggish start to the 2025 campaign.

In fact, according to the former Williams racer, his prospects among other front-running teams are also taking a significant hit.

Norris entered the 2025 season as the bookmakers' favourite following a strong pre-season test in Bahrain.

The Brit was beaten to the 2024 crown by Max Verstappen, but the Dutchman has been hamstrung by the RB21's fluctuating performance.

After winning the season opener

in Australia with a commanding drive in challenging conditions, Norris looked good value for his pre-season billing, but things have since unravelled for the 25-year-old.

Heading to Miami this weekend, he sits 10 points behind teammate Oscar Piastri, who has won three of the last four Grand Prix.

He also arrives in the United States looking to brush off a qualifying crash that scuppered his weekend in Saudi Arabia.

"That can happen, but of course, that shouldn't happen when you're racing for the World Championship," Schumacher told the *Backstage Boxengasse* podcast.

"No question about it, you have to take a closer look at that. Of course, we don't see the data, but yes, it looks like a mistake on his part. That shouldn't happen when you're racing for the World Championship.

"But, one thing is also clear, he already knows what's going on, right? And he knows that if he doesn't perform this year, it will be difficult for him (to move to) other teams at some point."

Schumacher went on to add: "You know how it is in the paddock; once they think that you're a rubbish driver or not mentally strong enough to become world champion, then of course, you no longer have

access to the other top teams."

Despite Schumacher's harsh verdict, Norris is still highly regarded in the paddock, and particularly within his own organisation.

Zak Brown believes that he has two drivers capable of fighting for Drivers' Championship titles and refuses to place his faith in one over the other.

"We've got our two No. 1's," said ahead of the Miami GP. "I think they're equal, they race each other hard."

"I think we've yet to see them really have an epic battle. I think that day's coming. I'm looking forward to it." - Express Newspapers



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BY JAMIE BRAIDWOOD

ARSENAL had a "fear to win" against Paris Saint-Germain and must have a "shift in mentality" to reach the final, according to four-time Champions League winner Clarence Seedorf.

PSG will take a 1-0 lead back to the French capital after silencing the Emirates in the semifinal first leg on Wednesday, with Ousmane Dembélé's early goal settling the contest.

Arsenal had chances to equalise – with Gianluigi Donnarumma making two excellent saves to deny Gabriel Martinelli and Leandro Trossard – but PSG were able to control the game against Mikel Arteta's side.

The Gunners knocked out Real Madrid in the

Arsenal had fear to win against PSG: Seedorf

quarterfinals, winning at the Bernabeu, and they will have to come from behind against PSG to advance to the Munich final.

But Seedorf, who won the Champions League with Ajax, Real Madrid and Milan, believes Arsenal have to take another step if they are to progress.

"Winning some matches is one thing and winning the Champions League is another," Seedorf told *Amazon Prime Video*. "I think the fear to win kicked in."

"I am an Arsenal fan in terms of how they have played over the years but I've always said for them

to elevate to that winning club, there has to be a shift in mentality.

"I saw Paris Saint-Germain doing what I expected Arsenal to do, knowing when to press high, go low and sit back and wait for the opponent to force a pass and then counter attack."

"This is how you have to play in the Champions League and I didn't see that at all from Arsenal."

Seedorf's comments were echoed by former Manchester United striker and Champions League winner Wayne Rooney, who pointed to

Arsenal's near-misses in the Premier League over the last couple of seasons.

"I think for Arsenal, there's a fear," Rooney said. "Over the last few years there's a fear, psychologically there's a fear of just not getting over the line."

"We've seen it, they've run Manchester City close a few times in the League, they've run Liverpool a little bit close, now they've beat Madrid, there's a hurdle they have to get over. You need to be successful to build." – The Independent

Pioli blames mistakes for Al-Nassr's exit

AL-NASSR coach Stefano Pioli blamed an error-strewn display for his Saudi Pro League side's semifinal exit from the Asian Champions League Elite yesterday as the Riyadh-based outfit were handed a 3-2 defeat in Jeddah by Japan's Kawasaki Frontale.

The Cristiano Ronaldo-led team had gone into the meeting at the King Abdullah Sports City Stadium as favourites to progress only to be dumped out of the competition by the J-League side, who will face Al-Ahli in tomorrow's final.

"We have made a lot of mistakes and this has cost us the match," said Pioli. "It is always very difficult to lose in a semifinal."

"Our opponent surprised us, they played at a very high level and the problem was that we were not disciplined. We committed a lot of mistakes and we didn't play at our full capacity."

Kawasaki had gone into the game with one day less rest than Al-Nassr after their respective quarterfinals in the centrally hosted finals series, but came out looking sharper and quicker to the ball.

Tatsuya Ito's 10th-minute volley put Kawasaki in front but Sadio Mané's deflected effort levelled the scores 18 minutes later.

Yuto Ozeki put Kawasaki in front again four minutes before the interval and substitute Akihiro Ienaga netted 14 minutes from time at close range to ensure Aiman Yahya's long-range strike was too little, too late for Pioli's team.

The Italian's decisions throughout the game will come under scrutiny as Al-Nassr's wait for a first Asian Champions League crown goes on for at least another year.

"I understand the criticism of the tactics and at this kind of level we knew the style of our opponent, but we were not good at applying the tactics and the style we trained on," said Pioli.

"We played the same style, we were no different than in the previous match. We didn't do anything different. This is the reality. It's difficult for everybody, for the team, for the players, for the coach and the fans of Al-Nassr."

– Reuters

Miracle man Conte

Napoli eye Scudetto as Inter hope for post-Barca bounce-back

NAPOLI are closing in on a second Serie A title in three seasons ahead of their trip to struggling Lecce tomorrow (12mn Malaysian time), the first of four matches against modest opposition which could confirm a stunning league crown.

Coach Antonio Conte has repeatedly stated that Napoli's position as Inter Milan's main rivals for the *Scudetto* would have been "unthinkable" at the start of the season.

And it is true that Conte has performed a minor miracle in taking a club still reeling from the worst title defence in Serie A history to three points clear at the top of the league with less than a month left in the season.

No-one would have imagined Napoli even challenging for the Champions League

positions when, as Conte said, they began this season by melting "like snow in the sun" in a humiliating 3-0 defeat at Verona.

But Conte, aided by the key signings of Romelu Lukaku and Scott McTominay late in the summer transfer window, has created a new team on the ashes of the one which broke a three-decade title duck two years ago.

Napoli have already guaranteed at least a top-four finish but Conte can taste his fifth *Scudetto* as coach after a hat-trick with Juventus and the 2021 title won with Inter.

"It's all in

our hands," said Conte after last weekend's 2-0 win over Torino, earned with a McTominay double.

"We worked really hard and are seeing the fruits of that labour... Seeing where we started from, that's remarkable."

It hasn't been all been easy going at Napoli however as Conte has made it very clear he wants serious investment in the team if he is to stay in Naples.

Conte is well aware of the advantage he has had by not having any European commitments in his first season at Napoli, as reigning champions Inter wobble under the weight of an exhausting campaign.

Inter held Barcelona to a thrilling 3-3 draw yesterday and will probably be without captain Lautaro Martinez after he was forced off just before half-time in Catalonia with a thigh problem.

Just below Napoli and Inter the battle for the two remaining Champions League spots is extremely tight with six points separating Atalanta in third and eighth-placed Fiorentina.

Atalanta should at least stay four points clear of fifth spot as Gian Piero Gasperini's team take on doomed Monza, and also have the luxury of not playing at home where they have won just one domestic fixture since the turn of the year. – AFP



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal (left) fights for the ball with Inter Milan's Alessandro Bastoni. – AFP/PIIC

Phenomenons like Yamal born every 50 years: Inter's Inzaghi

INTER MILAN coach Simone Inzaghi lavished praise on Barcelona's teenage winger Lamine Yamal after a thrilling 3-3 Champions League semifinal first leg draw yesterday.

Yamal, 17, scored a superb solo goal on his 100th Barcelona game as the Catalans came back from two goals down and terrified Inter's defence throughout.

"Yamal is clearly a talent of the type born every 50 years, talents like this I've never really seen before," said Inzaghi.

"I saw him tonight for the first time and he created problems for us, we doubled up him... and then we lacked players elsewhere on the pitch..."

"(Our performance) is a reason for great pride, and Yamal is a phenomenon of the kind born every 50 years."

Inter kept Yamal quiet for some parts of the second half, which Inzaghi said was the objective after the teenager's first half display.

"We adjusted something, we had to be better on Yamal, which is not very simple,"

continued the coach.

Inzaghi also said he had "some doubts" whether captain Lautaro Martinez, who went off injured at halftime, would be ready for the second leg.

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick also hailed winger Yamal, who rejected comparisons to all-time great Lionel Messi on the eve of the game, but scored a goal the Argentine would have been proud of.

"I'm really happy that this talent that comes every 50 years plays for Barca," said Flick, when Inzaghi's words were put to him.

The German coach said Yamal sparked his team's comeback.

"Lamine in the first half was so important for us, he created so many positive things and got the first goal," the German coach told reporters.

"In the big matches you see the quality of this player and he showed it today, it's really good to have him..."

"He's special, he's a genius... you see all the details and it's unbelievable how he does this." – AFP

SHORTS

Lawn bowls squad makes country proud

THE national lawn bowls squad continued to create a sensation when it brought home four golds and one silver in the 16th Asia Lawn Bowls Championship and the 14th Asian U-25 Lawn Bowls Championship in Clark, Philippines on Wednesday.

The excellence began in the senior category when the pair of Muhammad Soufi Rusli-Amirul Danial Abdul Rahim defeated Hong Kong's representatives 21-10 in the men's pair final to bring home the gold medal.

The momentum continued in the men's triple squad through Izzat Shameer Dzukeple, Muhd Naufal Azmi and Muhammad Idham Amin Ramlan who beat the Thai squad 16-8 in the final.

Not only that, Malaysia also won gold in the women's singles event through Nurul Alyani Jamil after defeating host bowler Rosita Bradborn 21-11.

The national squad also brought home the silver medal in the women's four event after the home team defeated Malaysia 15-12 in the final.

For the U-25 category, Ain Nurnajwa Norhisham took home the gold after defeating Hong Kong representative Gloria Ha 21-11 in the final.

Meanwhile, Malaysia Lawn Bowls Federation (MLBF) president Datuk Awalan Abdul Aziz hopes the national squad can continue its excellent performance in the second round.

"We are on the right track to retain the overall championship in the Asia Lawn Bowls Championship, with the hope of achieving better results than last year in Pattaya.

"I hope the national team maintains its excellent momentum and is not in a comfort zone in facing the second round which will start tomorrow," he said.

KLHA to select Sukma players based on league form

THE Kuala Lumpur Hockey Association (KLHA) will use the KLHA-Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) Hockey League as the platform to select players to represent the contingent in next year's Malaysia Games (Sukma).

KLHA vice-president Datuk Rosal Azimin Ahmad said the selection of players for the Federal Territories (FT) contingent bound for the Sukma, to be held in Selangor next year, is still open and not finalised yet.

"All the coaches appointed for Sukma will be present at every game to look at the players.

"We already have a list of the players but we will still evaluate (them) at this tournament," Rosal Azimin, who is also the FT hockey team manager for Sukma at a media conference for the KL Hockey League.

The KL Hockey League, featuring 19 teams, will be held at the National Hockey Stadium in Bukit Jalil and the Tun Razak Hockey Stadium here from May 3-6.

He added that the KL Hockey League, last held in 2023, is set to be more competitive with the involvement of national players.

At the 2024 Sukma in Sarawak, the Federal Territories men's hockey team crashed out in the semifinals after losing 4-3 to Perak in a shootout after both teams were tied 3-3 in regulation time.

National mixed doubles pair Chen Tang Jie (left) and Toh Ee Wei in action against Japan's Hiroki Midorikawa and Arisa Igarashi (not pictured) yesterday. - AFP/PIIC



WHAT began as a dream start quickly turned into heartbreak for Malaysia, as they ended their Sudirman Cup 2025 Group C campaign with a 2-3 defeat to Japan, finishing as runners-up in Xiamen, China, yesterday.

After racing to a commanding 2-0 lead, Malaysia's momentum slipped away at the Xiamen Fenghuang Gymnasium, as Japan responded strongly by taking the next three matches and ensured they stormed into the quarterfinals as the Group C champions.

World No. 2 women's doubles pair Nami Matsuyama-Chiharu Shida turned hero for the third seed team, surviving a tense battle that lasted one hour and 23 minutes to prevail against national No. 1 duo Pearly Tan-M. Thinaah, 21-18, 18-21, 21-18.

Matsuyama-Shida's win not only sealed the tie for Japan but also extended their dominant head-to-head record to 13 victories in 14 encounters against the Malaysians.

Speaking after the game, Thinaah admitted that lapses in focus at key moments cost them the match.

"I think our gameplay in the beginning was okay, but towards the end, we gave in too much to the opponents. When we did that, they



took the opportunity to be more aggressive," she said in an audio recording shared by the Badminton World Federation to the media today.

Earlier, Malaysia drew first blood when national mixed doubles pair Chen Tang Jie-Toh Ee Wei saw off scratch combination Hiroki Midorikawa-Arisa Igarashi 21-19, 21-18 in 39-minutes.

Riding high on the momentum of Tang Jie and Ee Wei, national men's singles shuttler Leong Jun Hao rose to

the occasion and delivered another blow to Japan to double Malaysia's lead in the next game.

The world No. 26 shocked world No. 8 Kodai Naraoka with a gritty 21-8, 13-21, 21-18 victory in a pulsating 68-minute clash.

Jun Hao described yesterday's action against Naraoka as one of his best performances throughout his career.

The 25-year-old said that he stuck to the same tactical approach that

has consistently worked for him against the Japanese ace, a strategy that has now earned him four wins in five encounters with Naraoka.

However, Malaysia's downfall began in the next match as Japan's women's singles shuttler Tomoka Miyazaki reduced the gap to 2-1, thanks to a straight set victory over professional player Goh Jin Wei, 21-14, 21-17.

In a post-match interview, Jin Wei, the former two-times world junior champion, conceded that she was outplayed by Miyazaki in every aspect throughout the 38-minute match.

The newly-crowned Badminton Asia Championships 2025 winner Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik then missed out on a chance to deliver the winning point for Malaysia as they squandered the first set win before coming up short against Takuro Hoki-Yugo Kobayashi 21-12, 20-22, 21-23, in 69-minutes duel.

Such magnificent display from Hoki-Kobayashi had inspired Matsuyama-Shida, to get the job done against Pearly-Thinaah.

Malaysia opened their campaign as they demolished France 5-0 on Monday and confirmed their last eight berth through a 4-1 victory over Australia, the day after. - Bernama

New framework needed for M-League

ALL parties involved, including the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) and the Malaysian Football League (MFL), have been urged to prepare a new framework to ensure that all competing football teams have stability and strong finances for a better Malaysia League (M-League) ecosystem.

Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports Adam Adli Abdul Halim said the effort is seen as necessary given that the issue of salary arrears faced by teams in the Super League is still recurring, affecting their chances of competing in next season's competition, with some even withdrawing from competing in the league.

"The Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS) views this issue of salary arrears seriously and it is very disadvantageous if a football club is unable to continue competing in the league and it will certainly disappoint fans and supporters who want to see club from their respective states

being represented.

"We want football in our country to be able to produce more professional players and for that, a new framework such as finding funds, sponsorship or increasing team income through the sale of souvenirs, needs to be created to ensure that each team can move forward and thus guarantee continuity in the local football league competition," he told reporters at the Hang Tuah Jaya Aidilfitri Open House Ceremony in Melaka on Wednesday night.

Further commenting, Adam Adli said the extension of the period for Super League clubs to complete the 2024-2025 national club licensing documentation should be used as a space to resolve the issues faced in order to be able to play in the league.

He said that apart from that, the club operators and football associations involved also need to have a higher sense of responsibility to

try to find a way out and resolve the salary arrears issues that have hit their teams.

On Wednesday, the media reported that the MFL extended the deadline for Super League clubs to complete the 2024-2025 national club licensing documentation.

First Instance Body (FIB) committee chairman Sheikh Mohd Nasir Sheikh Mohd Sharif said that this decision was made following several official applications from clubs requesting additional time to upload documents in the Asian Football Confederation (AFC CLAS) system.

The media also reported that several state football giants such as Perak, Kedah and Pahang decided to withdraw from the 2025/26 Super League competition while the fate of Kedah Darul Aman FC and Kelantan Darul Naim FC now depends on the club licensing decision after struggling with the issue of salary arrears. - Bernama



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Epic battle

Barca fight back against Inter in sensational semifinal draw

BARCELONA AND Inter Milan shared a compelling 3-3 draw in a high-octane Champions League semifinal first leg clash yesterday, with teenage star Lamine Yamal shining bright.

The Italian side raced into a two-goal lead with superb strikes from Marcus Thuram and Denzel Dumfries, before the unstoppable Yamal pulled Barca back into it with a sublime solo effort.

Ferran Torres levelled for the five-time champions and although Inter nosed ahead through Dumfries again, a Yann Sommer own goal left the tie on a knife-edge at the halfway stage.

"Letting in that many goals (here) is unacceptable, but we also have to give Inter credit, they did very well," said Raphinha, whose fierce drive forced the own goal.

"The important thing is we leave with a result where everything can happen."

Despite losing three domestic

games in a row and seeing their treble hopes crumble, Inter showed resilience and quality in Catalonia.

"After three defeats in a row we saw the real Inter tonight, we played with heart and I'm proud," Dumfries told Amazon Prime Video.

Inter were desperately hoping Thuram would be fit to play after a thigh injury and he showed precisely why, scoring the fastest ever Champions League semi-final goal after 30 seconds.

Dutch wide man Dumfries aimed a low cross towards Thuram and Inigo Martinez slipped at just the wrong time, allowing the France striker room to finish with an impudent back-heel flick.

Quadruple-chasing Barcelona seized control and pushed forward, roared on by the nervous Olympic stadium crowd.

Yamal, on his 100th Barcelona

appearance

was leading

the charge.

Against

the run of play Inter scored their second.

Francesco Acerbi nodded on a corner and Dumfries reached the dropping ball first to score with a stunning acrobatic effort for the 2023 runners-up.

Barcelona teams over the past few years may have crumbled but Hansi Flick's youthful side are not burdened by the series of European failures since they last won the competition in 2015.

Least of all teenage wizard

Yamal, who pulled

Barcelona back into

the game just

three minutes

later with a

wonderful individual

goal that

made him the youngest player ever to score in the semis.

On the eve of the game the Spaniard rejected comparisons to all-time Barca great Lionel Messi, but his goal was straight from the Argentine's playbook.

Yamal shook off Thuram, floated inside from the right flank and past Henrikh Mkhitaryan into the box, drawing defenders towards him but before they could stop him, stroked an inch-perfect shot in off the left post.

Minutes later Yamal nearly repeated the trick. This time he darted outside, pausing to let Federico Dimarco lunge past him and off the pitch.

From a tight angle the youngster flashed a shot that Sommer tipped onto the crossbar.

"We all know Barcelona, they have this tactic of a high line that has seen them already win two trophies and are challenging for another

two," said Inter coach Simone Inzaghi.

Barca pulled level when Pedri hooked a ball into the area for Raphinha to head across goal and Torres to convert from close range after 38 breathless minutes.

Kounde limped off before half-time in a blow for Barca, while Inter captain Lautaro Martinez also came off hurt, and Inzaghi said he "doubts" if he will be ready for the return.

Inter took the sting out of the game early in the second half and then sucker-punched Barca, scoring from another corner, with Dumfries' header bouncing in off Dani Olmo.

Barcelona equalised within two minutes, with Yamal stepping over a corner on the edge of the box, allowing it to run to Raphinha.

The Brazilian's rasping effort smashed against the crossbar and then in, off the back of the unfortunate diving Sommer's head.

Inter's Mkhitaryan had a goal ruled out for an extremely tight offside, later saying he would think about it "maybe for the rest of my life", and Yamal hit the bar again as the sides could not be separated.

"We will have our chance (in Milan)," said Flick. "This is our goal, we will fight for it."

The second leg takes place next week, with the winner to face Paris Saint-Germain or Arsenal on May 31 in the Munich final. - AFP



Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez (left) in action with Barcelona's Frenkie de Jong during their Champions League semifinal first leg match yesterday. - REUTERS/PIC

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