



Gen Z rewriting rules of engagement at workplace

Zoomers focus more on social impact, mental wellness and continuous self-development than job security or prestigious titles: Talent management expert

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Anwar conferred highest Kosovan civilian award

Order of Independence recognises Malaysia's support for statehood and post-independence development of Balkan country, and commitment of PM to enhancing bilateral ties.

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Toxic online labelling undermines national unity

Responsibility of government to provide space, platforms where sensitive matters can be addressed in meaningful, constructive way, says NGO.

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim accompanies Kosovo President Dr Vjosa Osmani Sadriu during the official welcoming ceremony at Dataran Perdana in Putrajaya yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

China buyers **keen** on M'sian property

Dynamic services and education sectors, GDP growth and robust domestic consumption make country top pick for rich individuals looking for upscale multi-million ringgit homes.

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■ BY AZURA ABAS

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PETALING JAYA: Ties between Malaysia and Kosovo took a major leap yesterday with the opening of Kosovo's first embassy in Kuala Lumpur, an event Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim described as "a significant milestone" in bilateral relations.

Anwar said the move marked a new era of cooperation and engagement between the two nations.

The embassy, officially launched at 6pm yesterday, is expected to strengthen strategic partnerships across multiple sectors, including trade, investment, education, culture and tourism.

"This will certainly facilitate greater collaboration across various sectors and of course includes the *halal* industry."

"Malaysia's *halal* certification is internationally recognised, and will not only ease the export of our products but also support Kosovo in promoting its own exports to Muslim-majority markets," said Anwar at a joint media conference with Kosovo President Dr Vjosa Osmani Sadriu.

The president said having the embassy in Malaysia marked a new chapter built on shared values and

Kosovo opens embassy in KL, marking new era in ties

► Move expected to strengthen strategic partnerships across multiple sectors, including trade, investment, education, culture, tourism and *halal* industry, says PM

deep trust.

Osmani also praised Malaysia's visa waiver for Kosovars as a gesture of friendship and vowed closer ties in cybersecurity, counterterrorism and disaster response.

"Our gratitude will never fade," she said, highlighting plans to deepen university partnerships and cultural exchanges.

Osmani is in Malaysia for a four-day visit. She arrived on Thursday and was accorded a formal welcome ceremony at the Perdana Putra Complex in Putrajaya yesterday.

Anwar also hosted an official luncheon in her honour at the Seri Perdana Complex.

He stressed the importance of boosting economic ties between the two nations, adding that Kosovo's connections with the European Union could open doors for broader cooperation.

"We can tap into Kosovo's strengths and its strong ties with the EU. I look forward to deeper engagements beyond just technical cooperation under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme."

"Please be assured, President, we do not see this as a routine diplomatic move. Malaysia is a true friend, and we are fully committed to this relationship."

The leaders discussed a range of international issues, particularly those involving sovereignty, human rights and peace.

"We had candid conversations about global issues. Both our nations believe deeply in the principles of independence, the protection of human rights and respect for human dignity," said Anwar.

He said shared concerns include the situation in Palestine and broader efforts towards global peace.

He added that Malaysia admires the resilience of the Kosovan people following the hardships of the 1990s.

"Malaysians, as many of you know, followed closely the events in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. When Tun Abdullah Ahmad

Badawi was prime minister, he took an early and courageous step in recognising the independent Republic of Kosovo."

Malaysia was among the first countries to do so after Kosovo declared independence in 2008. Diplomatic relations were formally established on March 18, 2011, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Osmani thanked Malaysia for its unwavering support during Kosovo's toughest times in 1999 and its early recognition of independence in 2008, calling the country "more than a friend – a true partner."

In 2024, total bilateral trade reached RM28.55 million, with Malaysian exports amounting to RM25.92 million and imports RM2.63 million. Key exports include palm oil, electrical and electronic products and manufactured goods, while imports mainly comprised raw materials and semi-precious stones.

Anwar conferred highest civilian honour

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was conferred the Order of Independence, Kosovo's highest civilian award, by the country's president Dr Vjosa Osmani Sadriu, in a ceremony held at the Perdana Putra Complex yesterday.

Earlier, Osmani, who is on a four-day official visit to Malaysia, was

accorded an official welcome, including an inspection of a guard of honour mounted by three officers and 103 personnel from the First Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment (Ceremonial), led by Mejar Muhammad Fikri Senan.

According to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office, the award is

the highest recognition granted by the Kosovo government to individuals who have made significant contributions towards the country's independence.

"The conferment recognises Malaysia's unwavering support for Kosovo's statehood and post-independence development, as

well as Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's steadfast commitment to strengthening bilateral ties between both countries," the statement said.

Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek, foreign diplomats and senior government officials were also present at the award ceremony.

The government of Kosovo will

also confer the award on late prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in recognition of his contributions during a pivotal moment in the country's history.

"Under his stewardship, Malaysia became one of the earliest countries to recognise Kosovo's independence on Oct 30, 2008." – Bernama

Malaysia's World Press Freedom ranking improves

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has improved its standing in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, rising 19 spots to 88th place, according to the latest assessment by Reporters Without Borders.

The country recorded a score of 56.09 this year, marking a rebound from 2024, when it dropped to 107th with a score of 52.07.

Within the Asean region, Malaysia holds the second-highest position, trailing just behind neighbouring Thailand, which ranks 85th.

Malaysia ranks higher than Brunei (97th), the Philippines (116th), Singapore (123rd), Indonesia (127th), Laos (150th), Cambodia (161st), Myanmar (169th) and Vietnam (173rd).

The World Press Freedom Index evaluates the state of media freedom in 180 countries by examining key indicators, including the political environment, legal safeguards, editorial independence, transparency and the safety of journalists. – Bernama



Dzulkefly (second from left) with Alexander (in blue) at the hospital in Butterworth yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC

Seberang Jaya Hospital becomes northern region cardiology centre

BUTTERWORTH: Seberang Jaya Hospital has been named the northern region's main referral centre for cardiology and paediatric cardiothoracic care following a RM371 million expansion.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the nine-storey

extension, managed by the Public Works Department, would ease congestion at the Penang General Hospital, Bernama reported.

"This will play an important role in decongesting other facilities in the region," he said after the handing over ceremony yesterday. Works Minister

Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi was also present.

The new block raises capacity to 729 beds and 11 operating theatres, with phased operations starting from May 5. It has subspecialties including ENT, paediatric cardiology and rehabilitative medicine.

Dzulkefly also unveiled 17 new healthcare projects worth RM9.42 million under Rolling Plan 5 of the 12th Malaysia Plan.

Another 19 projects totalling RM155 million are in progress, bringing total state healthcare investments to RM165 million.

PWD to carry out 66 new healthcare projects under 12MP

BUTTERWORTH: The Public Works Department (PWD) is implementing 66 new construction projects for the Health Ministry under the Fifth Rolling Plan of the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP), with a total allocation of RM2.4 billion.

Works Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi said PWD, through its Health Works Branch, has also been entrusted with 170 healthcare facility projects nationwide valued at RM16.47 billion.

"These include 62 projects in the pre-construction (planning) phase estimated at RM4.05 billion, 64 projects currently under construction worth RM7.88 billion and 44 completed projects in the post-construction phase involving RM4.54 billion," he said during the handover ceremony of the Multi-Storey Block Construction Project at Seberang Jaya Hospital yesterday.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad was also present at the event.

Nanta noted that from the Ninth Malaysia Plan to the 12MP, 12 projects valued at RM1.31 billion have been implemented in Penang under the Works Ministry.

In Penang, the pre-construction phase involves five projects estimated at RM139 million while the construction phase comprises five projects worth RM781 million.

Two completed projects fall under the post-construction phase, with a combined cost of RM396 million.

Commenting on the Seberang Jaya Hospital development, he said PWD was assigned the project in 2016 under a RM371 million design-and-build contract.

The nine-storey block includes a 77% increase in bed capacity – from 413 to 729 – along with new roads and parking facilities built on the hospital's existing field, spanning 1.32ha. – Bernama

New naval vessels to boost maritime defence

SUBANG: The Royal Malaysian Navy's (RMN) capability to safeguard national waters will be significantly strengthened with the procurement of five littoral combat ships (LCS) and three littoral mission ships (LMS) scheduled to begin next year, according to Deputy Defence Minister Adly Zahari.

He said construction progress for both classes of vessels was satisfactory, with the first LCS expected to be delivered in August next year and the LMS fleet by 2027.

"The government remains committed to enhancing the navy's capabilities by equipping it with new assets. We are also ensuring these ships are fitted with advanced technology to meet our defence needs," he said after launching a digital studio at Sekolah Kebangsaan TUDM Subang yesterday.

He was commenting on a news portal report highlighting the challenges faced by the RMN due to its ageing combat fleet.

Adly added that the first LCS is currently undergoing port and sea trials, while construction of the LMS is under way following the finalisation of its procurement from Turkish defence firm Savunma Teknolojileri Mühendislik in June last year. – Bernama

Mandatory medicine price display hailed as consumer win

KUALA LUMPUR: The implementation of mandatory medicine price displays at private healthcare facilities and community pharmacies effective May 1, has been welcomed as a step forward in strengthening consumer rights and promoting informed healthcare decisions.

National Consumer Action Council deputy president (international policy and strategy) Masrudi Abdul Rahman said the policy would allow consumers to compare prices and manage their healthcare budgets more effectively.

"This initiative can also act as an indirect form of health education and serve as a starting point for wider discussions on product effectiveness, safety and whether a

▶ New regulation lauded as it aims to boost transparency, informed choices at private healthcare facilities and pharmacies

particular medicine or supplement is necessary or simply part of a trend," he told Bernama.

The requirement is enforced under the Price Control and Anti-Profitteering (Price Labelling for Medicines) Order 2025, introduced under the Price Control and Anti-Profitteering Act 2011.

It applies to all medicines for human use, including controlled substances, prescription and non-prescription drugs, traditional medicines, health supplements and

extemporaneous preparations.

Public health policy researcher Dr Lim Chee Han from the People's Health Forum said a 2022 Medicine Price Monitoring study conducted by the Health Ministry found that high medical costs and medicine prices were primarily due to a lack of price transparency.

"Patients often learn the price of their medicines only after receiving the bill, which is unfair. This practice has become normalised in the medical sector.

"According to the study, price mark-ups could reach as high as 200% – a key factor behind high medical costs, which is unacceptable."

He expressed hope that the introduction of the medicine price transparency mechanism would help curb excessive pricing by enabling consumers to make better-informed comparisons.

Meanwhile, several consumer organisations issued a joint statement praising the new law as a critical move towards addressing long-standing issues of price opacity and wide price variation in the healthcare sector.

They stressed that the mechanism should not be mistaken for price control.

"It is the fundamental right of a consumer to be informed, to be heard, to choose and to be safe with the goods which they consume. Medicines are an essential good where there is information asymmetry in their provision and consumption."

The statement was jointly issued by the Consumers Association of Penang, Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations, Persatuan Pengguna Luar Bandar dan Ekologi Malaysia, Teras Pengupayaan Melayu and Persatuan Keselamatan Pengguna Kuala Lumpur.

They noted that the price display mechanism addresses the consumer's or patient's right to be informed about the product being purchased.

"This policy focuses solely on the pricing of medicines, not on the fees or income of healthcare professionals such as doctors.

"Doctors' earnings relate to consultation fees, operational costs and remuneration, which are separate financial considerations and fall under different ministries and policy frameworks," the organisations added.



Lim expressed hope that the medicine price transparency mechanism would help curb excessive pricing by enabling consumers to make better-informed comparisons. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

Public welcomes full disclosure of pricing

KUALA LUMPUR: The mandatory display of medicine prices at private clinics and hospitals has been welcomed by consumers who view the move as a sign of the government's commitment to ensure transparency in healthcare.

Many Malaysians see the initiative as empowering them to make informed purchasing decisions based on clear pricing – a fundamental consumer right.

Civil servant Norsyaliza Rosli, 48, from Kedah, hailed the move as timely and necessary.

"When the government enforced this action, private facilities can no longer manipulate the prices of medicine arbitrarily because they know that stern action will be taken against them. As consumers, we have the right to choose, so this is something we should support," she told Bernama.

Government retiree Mohd Yasin Zamri, 67, from Pendang, said the initiative would help the less

fortunate make comparisons before buying medicine.

"Sometimes, when buying medicines, prices differ on different days. It's as if they are manipulating the prices. This is not right because everyone has the right to know the actual price of the medicine purchased. If there is a discrepancy, we can report it to the authorities."

Yesterday, the Health Ministry and the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry issued a joint statement announcing that the Medicine Price Labelling Initiative at private healthcare facilities and community pharmacies, effective May 1, aligns with the Madani government's commitment to greater price transparency under the Medicine Price Transparency Mechanism (MKHU).

The initiative is aimed at empowering consumers to make informed choices by allowing them to compare and select the best prices for their medication needs.

In Sarawak, 47-year-old civil servant Asrina Kartini Sulaiman echoed this sentiment, particularly for low-income households.

"For example, if the buyers have a low income, surely they have to budget and choose an affordable option. Medicines are getting more expensive, so when we display the prices, we can decide whether or not to buy them, or continue checking prices elsewhere."

Negeri Sembilan Consumers Association chairman Khairuddin Yunus also praised the mechanism as consumer-friendly, offering patients the flexibility to either purchase medicines at the clinic, or opt for a prescription, and buy them at more affordable prices from pharmacies.

"If you buy from the pharmacy, you'll know the price of the medicines. But if you buy them from private clinics, you often don't and, like it or not, you just have to pay. This new mechanism is welcomed

because consumers now know the cost of the services provided."

Meanwhile, some pharmacies have already begun implementing the policy voluntarily.

Siti Sarah Romli, a resident pharmacist at Taman Ara Jaya Azam Pharmacy in Tasek Gelugor, Penang, said they started preparing for the rollout in February by compiling a list of medicines and their prices in digital form for customer reference.

"When we first heard about the implementation of the MKHU, we started compiling the list of medicines and their prices. When it came into effect today, we were ready, although some details still need to be updated to meet the government's guidelines."

While supportive of the initiative, Siti Sarah hopes for more structured engagement with private community pharmacies to ensure a balanced and practical implementation.

Malaysia hotspot for rich property investors from China

➤ Nation now ranks fourth behind Thailand, Australia and Canada as major destination for affluent Chinese buyers of homes priced from RM22 million, says academician

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's luxury property market is attracting interest from Chinese high-net-worth individuals, with momentum expected to accelerate into 2025 and beyond.

The country now ranks fourth, behind Thailand, Australia and Canada, as a major destination for affluent Chinese buyers seeking upscale homes priced from RM22 million and above.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Property Economics and Finance associate professor Dr Muhammad Najib Razali said Malaysia's solid economic fundamentals, including steady GDP growth, robust domestic consumption and a dynamic services sector, make it an increasingly appealing investment haven.

"Infrastructure development is another major driver supporting the optimistic outlook. Projects like the Tun Razak Exchange, set to be Southeast Asia's next financial hub, and ongoing upgrades to transport networks and urban amenities are transforming Kuala Lumpur into a more competitive global city."

He said the proposed high-speed rail link to Singapore, once finalised, would significantly enhance regional integration and boost demand in Kuala Lumpur and southern Johor.

Muhammad Najib said Malaysia's luxury real estate offers some of the best value in Asia. "In Kuala Lumpur, luxury condos average between RM1,900 and RM3,800 per sq ft, with the most premium developments reaching RM5,700, still considerably lower than in cities like Singapore or Hong Kong."

For example, RM4.75 million can secure a 1,500 to 2,000sq ft property in Kuala Lumpur as opposed to a 400 to 500sq ft one in Hong Kong.

He said the country's strong education sector is another major pull factor.

"With over 44,000 Chinese students



Muhammad Najib said foreign buyers view the luxury property market in Malaysia as a 'buy low now, appreciate later' opportunity. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

currently enrolled in Malaysian institutions, families often invest in property near education hubs such as Mont Kiara and Subang Jaya.

"These buyers see real estate not only as housing but also as a long-term asset tied to accessible, globally-recognised education."

He said demand is particularly high in prime locations such as Kuala Lumpur City Centre, Bangsar, Bukit Damansara and Kenny Hills where luxury condos, villas and gated communities match the expectations of international buyers.

Muhammad Najib said property agents specialising in the luxury segment have reported not only rising enquiry volumes but also higher conversion rates, with more enquiries turning into purchases.

"In fact, we're seeing group viewings, multiple families or investor circles travelling together, making swift decisions when properties tick all the boxes."

High-rise condominiums and serviced residences have emerged as firm favourites among wealthy Chinese.

He said while Kuala Lumpur remains the primary focus, interest is also growing in Johor Bahr, especially in large-scale projects like Forest City.

"They view Malaysia's luxury property market as a 'buy low now, appreciate later' opportunity. The country's global profile is rising with megaprojects, and the value proposition here is hard to beat compared with other Asian cities."

He said government incentives have also helped fuel interest, particularly the Malaysia My Second Home (MM2H) programme, which despite tighter conditions, continues to offer long-term residency.

"Malaysia's property ownership laws are relatively foreigner-friendly. Freehold titles are available in many projects, unlike in Thailand or Indonesia, where rules are more restrictive."

"Although the revised MM2H requirements, such as a RM40,000 monthly income and RM1 million fixed deposit, initially deterred some, they've since positioned Malaysia as a premium option for serious investors seeking a stable second home."

Advice for haj pilgrims leaving for Mecca

MEDINA: The movement of the first group of 284 Malaysian pilgrims for the 1446H/2025 haj season into Mecca will begin in stages, starting on Monday.

Tabung Haji (TH) Zone Two manager in Medina Shahidan Ishak said pilgrims would attend a briefing the day before departing for Mecca to ensure smooth and orderly movement.

"We will provide a preparatory briefing to ensure pilgrims fully understand and comply with all necessary requirements before setting off, including donning the ihram and making other essential preparations."

He said the briefing would include key details such as the time and location to profess the ihram intent, adding that TH has set up help counters at its Medina office, offering information on haj and umrah rituals.

Shahidan reminded pilgrims to always wear their ID tags and wristbands for safety and easy tracking. — Bernama

Ministry to distribute grants to unions beginning May 12

KUALA LUMPUR: The Human Resources Ministry will begin disbursing the Union Affairs Development Grant from May 12 to enable trade unions to carry out various programmes, including training initiatives to strengthen their respective organisations, said Human Resources Deputy Minister Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Mohamad.

He said the total grant allocation has been increased to RM10 million this year compared with RM5.8 million last year.

"With this increased allocation, we can expand the support or increase the amount each union receives. This time, it involves 551 unions. Previously, we provided between RM20,000 and RM50,000 depending on the size of the union," he said after the 2025 Labour Day Celebration and Cuepacs Gathering held yesterday.

Also present were Public Service Department director-general Tan Sri Wan Ahmad Dahlan Abdul Aziz, Cuepacs president Datuk Dr Adnan Mat and Deputy Inspector-General of Police Datuk Seri Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay.

Abdul Rahman said he and Human Resources Minister Steven Sim would take turns presenting the grants, starting in Sabah.

Earlier, Abdul Rahman highlighted that the ministry is committed to strengthening policies and worker protection rights, adding that eight labour-related laws had been drafted and amended since last year.

"All these Acts have now been passed in Parliament, marking a significant milestone for the country in reinforcing worker rights, including the amendments to the Sabah and Sarawak Labour Ordinances." — Bernama

Amendments to Sabah, Sarawak labour ordinances take effect

PUTRAJAYA: The Sabah Labour Ordinance (Amendment) Act 2025 and the Sarawak Labour Ordinance (Amendment) Act 2025 came into force on May 1, with the exception of Section IVA, which specifically addresses the minimum standards for employee housing, accommodation and facilities.

The official date for the enforcement of the Acts was gazetted on April 28, according to a statement from the Human Resources Ministry.

"These amendments are significant as for the first time since the formation of Malaysia, labour laws have been successfully standardised across Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak."

"The standardisation includes three key legislations, namely the Employment Act 1955 [Act 265], the Minimum Standards of Housing, Accommodation and Facilities for Workers Act

1990 [Act 446] and the Children and Young Persons (Employment) Act 1966 [Act 350]," said the statement.

The ministry said the amendments are a priority and demonstrate the government's commitment to ensuring that the rights and welfare of workers are standardised across Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

"The amendments to both ordinances are aimed at fulfilling Malaysia's obligations towards the compliance of the country's labour laws with international labour standards, specifically the International Labour Organisation Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 1998."

The amendments are to improve Malaysia's image, thereby attracting more investors, especially from abroad.

Key changes include an expansion of coverage, which now applies to all workers regardless of their salary or job type, extending beyond the previous limit of RM2,500 per month.

Additionally, the amendments introduce several important improvements for workers, including an increase in maternity leave from 60 days to 98 days, the introduction of seven days of paternity leave for fathers and a reduction in the standard workweek from 48 hours to 45 hours.

The amendments also introduce new provisions on flexible working arrangements, workplace discrimination complaints, forced labour complaints, sexual harassment and worker housing, accommodation and facilities, adapting provisions from the Minimum

Standards of Housing, Accommodation and Facilities for Workers Act 1990 (Act 446).

The ministry said the gazettment of the Acts includes two orders under the Sabah Labour Ordinance (Amendment) Act 2025, namely the Employment Order (Exemption) (Revocation) Order 2025 and the Employment Order (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 2025.

Additionally, one order under the Sarawak Labour Ordinance (Amendment) Act 2025 — the Employment Order (Exemption) (Revocation) Order 2025 — also took effect on May 1.

"The ministry is confident that the amendments to both ordinances will have a significant positive impact on the welfare and rights of workers in Sabah and Sarawak, and will further enhance Malaysia's international reputation," the statement added. — Bernama

Call to stem toxic online slang usage

➤ Association urges govt action as racial code words fuel division on social media

■ BY IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE
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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Cyber Consumer Association (MCCA) has voiced concern over the growing trend of online ethnic labelling among Malaysians, warning that such toxic behaviour is eroding national unity and mutual respect.

The association was referring to a recent trend on social media in which individuals are being categorised as "Type M", "Type C" and "Type I" – terms widely believed to correspond to the country's three major ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian.

Speaking to *theSun*, MCCA president Siraj Jalil said this divisive behaviour is being driven by certain groups attempting to provoke others, often under the guise of using seemingly non-provocative language.

"Terms such as 'Type M', 'Type C' and 'Type I' aren't inherently offensive, but we all understand what they imply and who the intended targets are.

"These groups are trying to shape a narrative, but in a way that avoids being judged as violating the

sensitive 3R issues – royalty, religion and race."

Siraj noted that such comments frequently surface when news relates to a particular ethnic group.

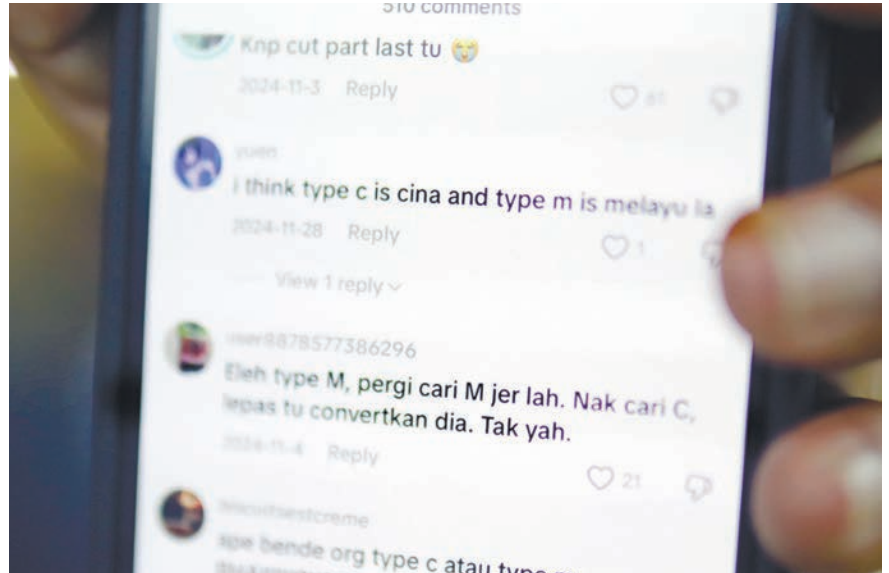
"For instance, when news broke about an illegal temple, certain individuals would comment about 'Type I'. Similarly, when illegal farming is discussed, some netizens target 'Type C' and when family-related issues arise, the term 'Type M' is often used."

He added that the Malay language allows for satire to be used subtly as a vehicle for criticism, often with the expectation that the underlying message will be understood by the intended audience.

"Those who take it with an open mind may not react strongly, but others may respond aggressively to the provocation."

Siraj stressed that it is the responsibility of the government, particularly the National Unity Ministry, to create platforms where sensitive topics can be addressed in a constructive and meaningful manner.

He emphasised that the ministry must involve individuals who resonate with each ethnic group



Siraj said the divisive behaviour is being driven by certain groups attempting to provoke others, often under the guise of using seemingly non-provocative language. – AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

and can effectively communicate their concerns to ensure all communities feel represented in the dialogue.

"First, we need to address the root cause of why these issues keep

recurring on social media.

"I'm not saying such programmes don't exist, but the government must create more opportunities for these discussions to take place."

Malaysians speak out against racist labels

PETALING JAYA: The growing trend of tagging individuals on social media with labels such as "Type M", "Type C" and "Type I" is raising alarm across Malaysia.

Critics warn that the practice not only oversimplifies identities but also reinforces racial stereotypes, fosters division and undermines efforts to build an inclusive and respectful digital environment.

As the trend spreads, public pressure is mounting on authorities to take action before it causes further harm to national unity.

Operations manager Boon Ming Choon, 46, from Johor Bahru, told *theSun* he had noticed the trend gaining traction online for some time.

"Initially, I didn't quite grasp it but as it persisted, the message these groups were trying to send became clear."

He believes the public also has a role to play in addressing the issue.

"Of course this trend shouldn't continue. Personally, I wouldn't hesitate to call out any of my friends if they took part in it online."

For Muhammad Afiq Muktar, a 30-year-old executive based in Sungai Petani, such labels can be a double-edged sword.

While he acknowledged that racial identifiers can honour Malaysia's multicultural heritage, their misuse, especially in online discourse, is fuelling division.

"On one hand, these labels can help us appreciate our cultural history and traditions, creating opportunities to celebrate diversity and strengthen generational ties.

"But when racial labelling becomes overused or weaponised, as we see now with race being referred to as a 'type', it risks hardening stereotypes and prejudice."

He stressed that in a pluralistic society such as Malaysia, reducing people to racial shorthand can block genuine dialogue and mutual understanding.

"If we only see someone through the lens of race, without acknowledging their values or background, it leads to

more fragmentation."

Private sector employee Sakthi Ganesh, 32, said he hopes the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission will begin monitoring and blocking accounts that post racially charged content.

"It's truly disheartening. I think those who make these comments likely haven't had meaningful interactions with people of other races, which has shaped their current mindset.

"If someone makes a mistake, it shouldn't be immediately linked to their race. That's a very sensitive issue. Remarks like these can deeply wound those who come across them." – by **Ikhwan Zulkaflee**

Resident feared drowned after falling into river

SIBU: A man is feared drowned after he reportedly fell into a river near the LKIM Fisheries Port Jetty in Tanjung Manis yesterday.

The victim, identified as Tan San Belati, 40, from Sungai Mapai, Kanowit, is believed to have slipped while walking down the jetty.

He was returning to a trawler to rest after spending time with his co-workers.

The Fire and Rescue Department received a distress call about the incident at 1.56am.

A search and rescue team from the Tanjung Manis fire station was deployed, involving five firefighters and a fire engine.

The operation was suspended at 3.23am and resumed at 8am yesterday following discussions with the police. – Bernama

Three men killed in expressway car crash

KUALA LUMPUR: Three men were killed when the car they were travelling in skidded and crashed into a road divider on the Kuala Lumpur-Seremban Expressway (Besraya), heading towards the Sungai Besi toll plaza near the Balakong exit, yesterday.

The Kuala Lumpur Fire and Rescue Department received an emergency call at 5.57am and dispatched 10 firefighters with two fire engines from the Sungai Besi and Bukit Jalil stations.

Operations commander Shahrum Din said they found a sedan that had lost control and struck the divider.

"All three men, believed to be in their 30s, were trapped inside the vehicle with serious injuries. It took about an hour for firefighters to extricate them."

They were pronounced dead at the scene by paramedics. – Bernama

Man charged with trafficking over 20kg of syabu

BATU PAHAT: An unemployed man was charged at the Magistrates' Court in Batu Pahat yesterday with trafficking more than 20kg of syabu last month.

The charge against Muhammad Nur Hazreq Kairuddin, 36, was read out before Magistrate Nurasidah A Rahman.

No plea was recorded as the case falls under the jurisdiction of the High Court.

According to the charge, Muhammad Nur Hazreq was found trafficking 20,712g of methamphetamine at a jetty near a lampost along Lorong 3, 1/7, Minyak Beku, Batu Pahat at 7pm on April 21.

He is charged under Section 39B(1)(a) of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952, punishable under Section 39B(2), which carries the death penalty or life imprisonment.

If not sentenced to death, the offender must also receive no fewer than 12 strokes of the cane.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Firdaus Ruslan appeared for the prosecution, while the accused was unrepresented. No bail was offered.

The case will be mentioned again on June 30 for the submission of chemical reports.

Last Tuesday, Johor Police Chief

Datuk M. Kumar confirmed the arrest of a 36-year-old man at a jetty in Batu Pahat.

An inspection of a pickup truck revealed 20 bundles of suspected syabu, weighing over 20kg and worth more than RM662,000.

He said the syndicate had been using vehicles to store drugs before smuggling them by sea to neighbouring countries. – Bernama

Three nabbed for illegal iron ore mining in forest reserve

KUANTAN: Three men, including two Bangladeshi nationals, were arrested for suspected illegal iron ore mining at Sungai Ganoah in the Bukit Ibam Forest Reserve, Muadzam Shah, on Tuesday.

The arrests took place at about

3am during a joint operation by the General Operations Force (GOF) 7th Battalion and the Pahang State Enforcement Unit under Op Bersepadu Khazanah.

According to a statement from the GOF Southeast Brigade,

inspections revealed that the site was operated by a local man together with two Bangladeshi nationals.

The site owner failed to produce a valid mining licence, while the two foreign workers did not possess

valid identification documents.

All three men, aged between 40 and 50, were detained.

The case is being investigated under the State Mineral Enactment 2001 and the Immigration Act 1959/63. – Bernama

Understanding the Gen Z psyche

➤ Zoomer workforce akin to sophisticated tech that yields tremendous outcomes only if handled properly

KUALA LUMPUR: Generation Z (Gen Z), also known as Zoomers, may be the youngest in the workforce, but they are already reshaping workplace culture and are no longer motivated solely by job security or prestigious titles, according to a talent management expert.

Padiberas Nasional Bhd (Bernas) Group head of talent S. Prakash said Gen Z, the first true digital natives born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, are not merely looking for jobs but for purpose-driven roles that reflect their values and lifestyle expectations.

He said Gen Z individuals are focused on social impact, mental wellness and continuous self-development, priorities that are prompting employers to redefine what work feels like, not just what it pays, and to embrace the idea of "living, not just working."

In contrast to their predecessors Gen X and Millennials, Gen Z are often perceived as outspoken and emotionally sensitive, sometimes labelled as "crybabies," yet they are more inclined to pursue meaningful work and flexible opportunities over job security or climbing traditional corporate ladders.

Despite the stereotypes, Gen Z are already a significant part of the workforce and is rewriting



Gen Z individuals are focused on social impact, mental wellness and the idea of "living, not just working". — SYED AZAHAR SYED OSMAN/THESUN

the rules of engagement at work.

Having 15 years of experience in talent management and human resources, Prakash observed that Gen Z thrive under leaders who provide guidance, not control, and would not hesitate to walk away from organisations that do not align with their values.

"One of the most common questions Gen Z asks during interviews is: 'What development resources and support will I receive in this role?' They want to know what comes next, not just in five years, but what their next assignment will be after onboarding."

"When their ideas are rejected, they don't just accept it. They want a dialogue and expect thoughtful alternatives. They expect a

workplace that supports their growth continuously and managers who coach, not command, check regularly and create space for them to contribute meaningfully."

Prakash, who has expertise in organisational development and change management, said Gen Z workers choose flexibility, whether it's remote work, flexible hours or autonomy in completing tasks, and dislike being micromanaged.

He said while Zoomers are sometimes misunderstood as anti-social or averse to pressure, they are in fact responsive to authentic engagement and constructive feedback when delivered with empathy and respect.

"The ideal leadership style for Gen Z is

purpose-driven communication, coaching-oriented support and trust-based empowerment. Gen Z don't wait for companies to evolve. They are entrepreneurial and not afraid to carve their own path with new ventures," he added.

Meanwhile, National Organisation of Skilled Workers president Mohammad Rizan Hassan said he disagrees with claims that Gen Z are problematic workers, adding that they have potential to do well if properly trained, guided and given space to shine.

"Actually, it's not that they are the problem, but the way we understand them needs to change. Gen Z want a meaningful approach to work, transparent communication and the opportunity to actively contribute."

"They do not easily submit to an unfair or old-school system. We need to foster 'youth-adult partnership' in the workplace, listen to and respect one another."

Mohammad Rizan said today's youths are generally more conscious about work-life balance and mental well-being, valuing personal time, family and emotional health over rigid work structures, Bernama reported.

"This is not a weakness. Rather, it reflects a generation that wants to live a healthier and more productive life. They tend to choose companies that respect rest time, have a healthy work culture and time flexibility."

He said the outlook of Zoomers has been shaped by rising living costs and the erosion of long-term job security, especially after witnessing how the so-called 'stable jobs' of their parents sometimes failed to provide lasting protection.

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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Govt efforts to uplift workforce lauded

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has praised the government's continued efforts to uplift the workforce, and called for stronger collaboration among employees, employers and policymakers to build a more resilient and inclusive Malaysia.

Its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said the country's progress depends on the collective commitment of all stakeholders, emphasising that close collaboration between employees, employers and the government is essential for national success.

He said tripartism is crucial to safeguarding Malaysia's long-term prosperity and stressed that sustainable productivity and a progressive business environment can only be achieved through unity and a shared commitment to the

nation's development goals.

"With the theme 'Pekerja Kesuma Bangsa', MEF is committed to fostering unity among employees, employers and the government to navigate internal and external challenges, ensuring sustainable progress for our nation."

"In today's volatile global landscape, unity is not an option but a necessity. By upholding the Madani values of respect, honesty, loyalty and opportunity, Malaysia can overcome any adversity and emerge stronger," he said in a statement yesterday in conjunction with the Labour Day celebration on Thursday.

Syed Hussain also welcomed the introduction of the Madani Employee Card, announced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, calling it a meaningful gesture that

reflects the government's care for the workforce.

The Madani Employee Card is an initiative aimed at one million unionised workers, offering them discounts of up to 30% at more than 100 companies providing goods and services. The initiative is intended to ease the cost of living for workers, particularly union members, by offering discounts and exclusive perks.

The initiative, which provides union members access to various discounts through participating companies such as Aeon, Mydin, Jakel, Marrybrown, Genting, OldTown White Coffee, Zus Coffee, Socar and Bateriku, is seen as a practical step to help workers cope with rising living costs.

Syed Hussain said the initiative not only uplifts the spirit of the workforce but also

acknowledges the vital role of worker unions in fostering industrial peace and national development.

"MEF commends Human Resources Minister Steven Sim for his exemplary leadership in advancing law reform and strengthening industrial harmony."

"Under his stewardship, critical amendments were enacted to modernise Malaysia's labour framework, striking a balance between enhancing worker protections and sustaining business competitiveness."

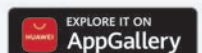
He also lauded the government's move to establish Worker One-Stop Centres in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor, calling it a progressive step towards improving support services for the workforce.

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Preparations for colourful Wesak floats procession

► Lighting ceremony to be held tonight to usher in annual Buddhist festival

BY SIVAA TANGAI RAJU
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MALACCA: The Melaka Buddhist Youth Society (MBYS) is geared up to participate in the Wesak Float Official Lighting Ceremony tonight, in conjunction with the forthcoming Wesak Day celebrations this month.

The event will be held at Dhammacakka Buddha Vihara temple in Bukit Rambai from 7pm to 9pm.

MBYS adviser Chan Weng Keng told *theSun* that MBYS will also be involved in the Wesak procession and organise a float workshop for the Buddhist Society school as this year marks the tenth-year grand Wesak celebration.

"Wesak Day was announced as a public holiday in 1962," he explained. "Since then, we have celebrated it in a very grand way every ten years. We were supposed to have it in 2022, but unfortunately it was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic."

"In honour of this milestone, MBYS is proud to take part in the Wesak procession in Malacca (on May 11) and host a float workshop for the Buddhist Society in accordance with our longstanding practices," he said.

He also expressed his gratitude to sponsors who kept MBYS moving forward with its intention of having a meaningful celebration.

"We would like to thank our adviser Datuk Lim Ban Hong for donating RM8,000 for the event, Dhammacakka Buddhist Vihara for sponsoring the venue, Cheng Hoon Teng Temple for food sponsorship and Bina Kimpal Engineering Sdn. Bhd for financing the float's rack."

"Not only that, MBYS sincerely honours and respects all devotees who came forward to contribute with monetary sponsorship," he said.



Youths preparing a float that will be part of the grand procession on May 11.

Keng noted that the Wesak Float Official Lighting Ceremony tonight is anticipated to draw 150 to 200 devotees, and refreshments will be provided for those who attend.

Local Buddhist devotees are eagerly awaiting the event, with many appreciating it for incorporating cultural and traditional elements besides the religious values.

Charlene Tan, 35, said that attending the ceremony is a blessing as the traditional chants and peaceful atmosphere radiate the deep values of Buddhism, including compassion, respect and mindfulness.

"I'm really excited to participate with my children in the event as it serves as a powerful way to transmit cultural values to the younger generation and provide an inspiring environment for children to

learn about kindness, discipline and living a life guided by good morals.

"Obviously, tradition can play a vital role in shaping the character and values of our youth."

"The ceremony is not only to convey Buddha's teachings but also to create a space for families to earn harmony," she said.

Similarly, Tan Ee Wern, 29, said that she will attend the Wesak Float Official Lighting Ceremony with her parents and fiancé to offer gratitude and seek blessings in return.

"We are attending the ceremony as a family to gain blessings and prosperity in life. It's going to be a pure cultural and spiritual experience."

"I truly appreciate the efforts of the organisers and volunteers for keeping this meaningful tradition alive," she said.



Shanti (left) and Creador founder and CEO Brahma Vasudevan at the launch of Schola.

Students given career options on digital exploration platform

KUALA LUMPUR: With SPM results just released, most students have to make career choices. To help them along, Schola, Malaysia's first free digital exploration platform, was launched recently at The Grounds in MAHSA Avenue.

Along with the launch, a career discovery festival, "Kepoh Kerja Dengan Schola", was held with booths manned by over 50 professionals and activities designed to help students discover their career paths.

The career festival was held in response to a recent trend which revealed that eight out of ten Malaysian secondary school students lacked essential knowledge about their chosen careers, and seven out of ten did not actively research career options. Shockingly, six out of ten based their career choices on short-term factors.

"Students are being asked what they want to be when they grow up. Hence our goal is to shift the focus by ensuring career exposure starts much earlier," said Maha Subramaniam, vice-president of Creador Foundation and head of Schola.

To assist students in making informed decisions, Schola developed 150 job guides to expose students to real-life career insights, through a simple and fun career personality quiz.

Since its introduction in August last year, Schola has reached 190,000 users across all states and generated 4.7 million organic social media views, supported by 2,300 teachers nationwide.

At the launch, Shanti Kandiah, protector of Creador Foundation, said: "By encouraging students to consider their future fields of study and careers earlier, we aim to help them visualise the larger possibilities that lie ahead."

"Schola is committed to instilling this long-term perspective in young people, offering support through any obstacles they may face," she said.

To discover more, Schola invites students, teachers and parents to explore schola.org.my. For potential collaborations, including NGOs, industry partners and school systems, email schola@creadorfoundation.com

Record-setting 'floor mural' created in donation initiative for schools

KLANG: A recent feat to create the 'Biggest Floor Mural Made of Sporting Goods' at SMK Bukit Tinggi here has found a place in the Malaysia Book of Records.

The 40ft by 40ft mural, jointly built by staff and students of the school, was constructed entirely of sporting equipment such as balls, cones and racquets.

It was undertaken in conjunction with GreenBay CES's 10th anniversary celebration last Saturday.

The event was held to emphasise a message of community and empowerment, as the items used to create the mural were later donated to ten schools.

The schools were selected based on input from local education authorities and identified as needing greater support in non-academic resources.

The sporting goods were donated to five primary and five secondary schools across the Klang district,



Participants pose with the giant mural while displaying the plaque from the Malaysia Book of Records.

including SK Jalan Kebun, SK Telok Panglima Garang, and SMK Bukit Tinggi.

SMK Bukit Tinggi welcomed over 200 participants for the event, which included family activities, telematch-

style games and a long service award ceremony honouring dedicated staff from GreenBay CES and VSAT.

"We are honoured to have hosted this inspiring event," said Norlia Zolkiaiply, principal of SMK Bukit

Tinggi.

"It was more than a celebration. It brought students, educators and industry leaders together in a meaningful way, and showed how creativity and corporate social

responsibility can go hand in hand."

The Malaysia Book of Records plaque was presented during the ceremony, followed by the symbolic handover of sporting goods to the selected schools.

As the mural was deconstructed, each item was packed and redistributed, ensuring that what was once a symbol of achievement would become a valuable resource for young learners.

Other schools receiving the sporting goods were SK Taman Klang Jaya, SK Batu Unjur, SK Bukit Tinggi, SMK Rantau Panjang, SMK Tengku Ampuan Jemaah, SMK Batu Unjur and SMK Raja Mahadi.

"As we celebrate 10 years of growth, we wanted to do something historic and meaningful," said Chong Lin Kong, director of GreenBay KL.

"This mural represents what we've always believed in – real success lies in building people and giving back to the communities that grow with us."

Thailand reports first anthrax death in decades

BANGKOK: Thailand has reported its first anthrax-related death in decades with two infections nationwide, prompting a public health alert after authorities identified hundreds potentially exposed to the deadly bacteria, officials said on Thursday.

A 53-year-old man in Mukdahan province in northeastern Thailand died on Wednesday after contracting anthrax, the government said, with a second case confirmed in the same province and three suspected cases under investigation.

Authorities have identified at least 638 people as being potentially exposed after eating raw meat.

Among them, 36 had participated in butchering livestock while the rest had consumed raw or undercooked beef, health officials said.

All are receiving antibiotics and being monitored as part of containment measures.

The Livestock Department is overseeing containment efforts in the affected area, including a 5km quarantine zone around the infection site, the Agriculture Ministry said.

There are plans to vaccinate 1,222 cattle, although no animals have shown signs of illness, it added.

Thailand last reported human anthrax cases in 2017 when two people were infected without fatalities. In 2000, 15 cases were recorded, also without deaths.

Wednesday's death is the first anthrax fatality in Thailand since 1994 and follows a rise in regional infections. Laos reported 129 anthrax infections last year, including one death, while Vietnam confirmed 13 cases in May 2023. — Reuters

Man held for allegedly ramming car into pupils

OSAKA: A 28-year-old man was arrested on Thursday in Osaka for allegedly ramming his car into a group of elementary school pupils, injuring seven children, police said.

The suspect, identified as Yuki Yazawa, was detained on charges of attempted murder, Kyodo news agency reported.

"I was sick of everything. I tried to run over and kill the elementary school pupils," Yazawa reportedly told investigators.

The children were walking home after school when the incident occurred. All seven were sent to the hospital and are conscious, according to police.

Osaka's educational committee said the victims included four boys and one girl in the second grade, and two boys in the third grade.

The pupils had been heading home after lunch following a shortened school day. — Bernama-Kyodo

Singapore poll candidates waiting with bated breath

SINGAPORE: Eleven political parties and two independent candidates contesting in Singapore's general election will know their fate tonight, following nine days of campaigning and nearly five years of groundwork since the last election.

It is now in the hands of more than 2.75 million voters to decide whether the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) will once again secure a supermajority or if opposition parties will make further inroads.

Campaigning ended at midnight yesterday, giving voters time to reflect before deciding who deserves their vote.

Political analyst Mujibu Abd

► Experience of PM in managing economy and image as independent leader could offer advantage: Political analyst

Muis believes the deciding factors in this election would be the economy, youth vote and how parties respond to scandals and pressing national issues as Prime Minister Lawrence Wong leads PAP into his first election as party chief.

Mujibu noted that young voters in particular were becoming more critical and vocal in expressing

their dissatisfaction.

He said the handling of minority issues could influence the sentiments of minority voters.

"I still see that PAP has a strong chance of remaining in power for the next term but there may be a change in the vote margin because we have already seen this trend in the previous general election."

In the 2020 general election, PAP won 83 out of 93 seats, securing 61.2% of the overall vote share, compared with the 2015 general election, in which it secured 83 out of 89 seats and garnered 69.9% of the vote.

He pointed out that as seen in other countries, a party that has held power for an extended period can be perceived as elitist and may struggle to present a fresh narrative, especially to younger voters.

However, he added that Wong's extensive experience in managing the economy, along with his image as an independent leader distinct from the Lee family legacy, could offer PAP an advantage during this generational transition.

"I see Wong's image as that of a more progressive and modern leader. Most importantly, I see a possible factor in how he 'distances' himself from the Lee family legacy."

Jen, a voter in the Ang Mo Kio Group Representation Constituency, said she considers both the individual and the party when casting her vote as "manifestos can change at any time".

"The main thing is bringing good people into the government. We cannot expect the government to solve everything for us."

"We need to take some responsibility for the rest of the issues," she said.

PAP enters polling day with five seats already secured following an uncontested walkover in the Marine Parade-Braddell Heights constituency, leaving 92 seats up for grabs.

The outcome of the election will mark a pivotal moment for Singapore as it transitions to a new generation of leadership. — Bernama



Wong addressing supporters during an election campaign rally. — AFP/PPIC

South Korea ex-PM launches presidential bid

SEOUL: South Korean former prime minister Han Duck-soo announced his bid for the presidency yesterday, joining the race in a snap election triggered by the impeachment of ex-president Yoon Suk Yeol.

The June 3 vote will decide who replaces Yoon, who was impeached and removed from office over his declaration of martial law in December that sank South Korea into political turmoil.

Political instability in the country intensified on Thursday after a retrial was ordered for a presidential

front-runner over alleged election law violations and two key government figures resigned, including Han.

"For the future of the Republic of Korea, a country I deeply love, and for all of us, I have decided to do what I can," Han said in a televised speech yesterday.

Han took over as the country's acting president after Yoon was impeached in December.

The 75-year-old career bureaucrat is expected to team up with Yoon's People Power Party to launch a unified

conservative campaign against liberal front-runner Lee Jae-myung.

"I have dedicated my life to serving on the front lines of economic development as a proud public servant of the Republic of Korea," he said, pledging that he would address the ongoing crisis in trade involving Washington's tariffs.

He also vowed to amend the Constitution to shorten the presidential term.

Han's announcement comes a day after the country's highest court overturned a ruling that found Lee

not guilty of making false statements during a previous campaign, potentially harming his chances of running in the election next month.

On the same day, Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok, set to replace Han as acting president, stepped down as opposition lawmakers voted on his impeachment over alleged involvement in the martial law incident, among others.

The impeachment process was suspended after his resignation. — AFP

Thai tycoon jailed for golf course land fraud

BANGKOK: A Thai court has jailed a billionaire businessman for 24 years after expanding his luxury golf resort into a nature reserve, local media said.

Anti-graft prosecutors filed a case in 2021 accusing metal magnate Prayudh Mahagitsiri of colluding with officials to obtain land deeds to

extend his Mountain Creek Golf Resort and Residences.

The 360ha, 27-hole resort in Nakhon Ratchasima province, bills itself as "a sensory multiplex for those with lofty desires".

But authorities said 29ha added to the development fall within areas

protected by conservation laws.

The Central Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct on Thursday found 79-year-old Prayudh guilty of multiple charges, including bribery and land encroachment, local media outlets said.

He was sentenced to 24 years

alongside 10 defendants, including his daughter, who was handed a 12-year jail term.

Prayudh is filing for an appeal, reports said.

He has an estimated net worth of US\$2.6 billion (RM11 billion), according to Forbes.

Golf is a major Thai tourism draw, particularly among enthusiasts from Europe, Japan and South Korea.

The sport is often criticised by environmental campaigners because it converts tracts of wilderness into pruned grass greens requiring intensive watering. — AFP

US marks May Day with anti-Trump rallies

➤ Protests organised by network of left-leaning activist groups, held in more than 1,000 locations

WASHINGTON: Demonstrators across the United States gathered on Thursday for May Day rallies against US President Donald Trump, protesting his administration's policies and attempts to push the limits of presidential power.

The protests were organised by a loose network of left-leaning activist groups, which said the rallies were taking place in more than 1,000 locations.

Hundreds to thousands of protesters gathered in many of the nation's largest cities, from New York to Chicago to Los Angeles, while a number of smaller towns also had demonstrators turn out in their streets.

"We believe that the ultra wealthy are trying to take over the country and suppress the working and middle class," Shane Riddle told AFP outside the White House in Washington.

The 54-year-old, who works for an education union in the eastern state of Virginia, fears the United States "could turn into an authoritarian type of government if our citizens do not stand up to this president and his billionaire allies".

Rallies held across the capital brought together hundreds of people, with similar turnouts in New York, while several thousand demonstrators congregated in Los Angeles, AFP photographers on the scene observed.

In Houston, Texas, activist Bernard Sampson denounced the administration's rapid deportation of undocumented immigrants, defending migrants as the people who "work in your restaurants or the people that built your homes".



Protesters gathered outside the New York Public Library in New York City. – AFP/IC

The protests come as Democratic elected officials struggled to find an effective strategy against Trump's far-reaching shakeup, and with fairly minimal mass mobilisation by opposition protesters.

"I feel like I have not heard anything from the party at all," 22-year-old student Izabela Cabrera told AFP in Washington.

"Clearly, the American people are angry and we are trying to fight for change. But I do not think the Democratic Party is really grasping at that right now."

The chief organiser of the protests was the group 50501. Its name is meant to represent 50 protests in 50 states and one movement. It has been behind previous calls to demonstrate.

A rally in Philadelphia organised by America's largest union federation AFL-CIO was headlined by leftist Senator

Bernie Sanders, who has been touring the country for weeks to mobilise opposition.

The demonstration, titled "For the Workers, Not the Billionaires", alluded in part to the exceedingly wealthy individuals in Trump's administration, including Tesla and SpaceX boss Elon Musk, who heads the so-called Department of Government Efficiency cost-cutting effort.

"Today in America, one man, Elon Musk, owns more wealth than the bottom 52% of American households," said Sanders.

At May Day rallies across the globe, from France to the Philippines, anti-Trump themes were also visible.

May Day, which is celebrated in many countries as International Workers' Day, is not a public holiday in the United States, which marks Labour Day in September. – AFP

AMERICA NOMINATES NEW AMBASSADOR TO UN

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Thursday said he was nominating National Security Adviser Mike Waltz to become the US ambassador to the United Nations, in the first major government reshuffle since taking office for a second term, the German news agency (dpa) reported. This comes following media reports suggesting that Waltz would be sacked from his post after he was involved in the leaking of confidential information on US military strikes in Yemen in a group chat on the encrypted messaging app Signal. "I am pleased to announce that I will be nominating Mike Waltz to be the next US Ambassador to the United Nations," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "From his time in uniform on the battlefield, in Congress and as my National Security adviser, Waltz has worked hard to put our nation's interests first. I know he will do the same in his new role." Secretary of State Marco Rubio will serve as national security adviser "in the interim", Trump said. – Bernama-dpa

THREE SERIOUSLY INJURED IN AUSTRALIA HELICOPTER CRASH

MELBOURNE: Three people have been seriously injured after a helicopter crashed into the water off the coast of Victoria in southeastern Australia, German Press Agency (dpa) reported. Victoria police said yesterday the aircraft went down shortly after 10am (0000 GMT) at Point Lonsdale, a coastal town on the Bellarine Peninsula, about 100km southwest of Melbourne. "All three people managed to make it to shore and were located by passersby, who contacted emergency services," police said in a statement. A man and a woman were airlifted to the hospital with serious injuries. A second man, who also suffered serious injuries, was taken to hospital by land, police said. "The exact circumstances surrounding the incident have yet to be determined. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau will investigate the crash with assistance from police," it added. – Bernama-dpa

Order to cut funding to news outlets

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order that aims to cut funding to news outlets NPR and PBS, the White House said, marking his latest attempt to use federal funding as leverage against institutions that he does not view favourably.

The order instructs the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which distributes funding to PBS and NPR stations, to "cease direct funding" to them, according to the order's text that was released by the White House on Thursday.

"The CPB Board shall cancel existing direct funding to the maximum extent allowed by law and shall decline to provide future funding," the order said.

NPR and PBS have said Trump's effort to cut their funding would disrupt essential media service and have a "devastating impact" on Americans who rely on them for credible local and national news, including during emergency situations.

The Trump administration has labelled multiple institutions in academia and the media industry, including Harvard University and Columbia University, as being leftist, Marxist, biased and woke, and threatened funding cuts.

Human rights advocates have raised concerns over free speech and academic freedom.

The CPB sued the White House on Monday after Trump sought to fire three of its five board members. The non-profit corporation was created by Congress in 1967 and provides funding for more than 1,500 locally managed public radio and TV stations.

Several media outlets have reported that the White House plans to ask Congress to rescind US\$1.1 billion (RM4.72 billion) in funding for the CPB, with the amount being two years' worth of funding. – Reuters

Supreme Court slams presidential attacks on judges

WASHINGTON: US Supreme Court justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said on Thursday attacks by Republican President Donald Trump and his allies on judges were "not random" and seemed "designed to intimidate the judiciary".

US chief justice John Roberts rebuked Trump in March for urging the impeachment of a federal judge, laying bare tensions between the country's executive and the judiciary as Trump's sweeping assertions of power encountered judicial obstacles.

"The attacks are not random. They seem designed to intimidate those of us who serve in

this critical capacity," said Jackson at a judges' conference in Puerto Rico.

Federal judges have said the Trump administration has failed to comply with court orders regarding foreign aid, federal spending and the firing of government workers.

The administration disputes the claim that it has defied judges but has been critical of orders and judges that have blocked its actions.

"The threats and harassment are attacks on our democracy, on our system of government. And they ultimately risk undermining our

Constitution and the rule of law," said Jackson.

An appointee of former Democratic president Joe Biden, Jackson did not mention Trump by name but spoke about "the elephant in the room".

Her comments were cited in media reports from *Politico* and the *New York Times*, with *Politico* noting that her comments received a standing ovation.

The combative atmosphere under the Trump administration has raised concerns among legal experts of a potential constitutional crisis. – Reuters

Truck spills metal shards across Australian highway

SYDNEY: A truck spilled 750kg of sharp metal debris across one of Australia's busiest highways yesterday, authorities said, forcing city-bound lanes to close, damaging hundreds of vehicles and sparking traffic chaos.

New South Wales police said the incident occurred on the M1 Pacific Motorway in the early hours of the morning, leaving over 300 vehicles with tyre damage.

The M1, which is a freight and commuter route that runs north of Sydney, remains partially shut as emergency services clear the debris, using magnets and working to "hoover up the highway".

State Highway Patrol commander

Howard Collins said it would be "more than several hours" until the motorway could reopen.

"It is not just a case of getting a road sweeper out or guys and girls with brooms. We are using some magnetic devices. We are removing embedded metal in the highway itself. This takes a long time."

He said the truck had travelled over 30km before the spillage was detected.

"Around 300 vehicles have been impacted, maybe more, by what we now know was 750kg of metal debris that was spilled from the back of a truck, which spread this debris for over 30km," he said.

State Roads Minister Jenny Aitchison said

the situation was "unprecedented".

"We are working with all the resources of the government and the private sector to do the clean-up," she said.

The truck driver, a 46-year-old man, is cooperating with inquiries, police said.

NJ Ashton, the haulage company that owns the truck involved, apologised for the incident and said it was helping with clean-up efforts.

"We are taking full responsibility for what has happened and are sorry for any damage and disruption that has been caused," it said in a statement on its website.

"We still do not fully understand how this occurred." – Reuters

Ship carrying activists, aid attacked

VALLETTA: A ship carrying humanitarian aid and activists heading for Gaza was bombed by drones while in international waters off Malta on Friday, said international NGO The Freedom Flotilla Coalition.

It uploaded video footage showing a fire on one of its ships but did not indicate who could have been responsible for the attack.

There was also no immediate indication whether anyone had been hurt.

"The drone attack appears to have specifically targeted the ship's generator and the vessel is at risk of sinking with 30 international human rights activists on board," it said in a social media post.

The ship issued an SOS distress call after being hit 31.5km east of Malta, to which Cyprus responded by dispatching a vessel, it said.

The coalition is campaigning to end Israel's blockade of Gaza.

Israel's offensive on the enclave has killed more than 52,000, according to Palestinian health officials.

Another coalition ship on a similar mission to Gaza in 2010 was stopped and boarded by Israeli troops, and nine activists died.

Other ships have similarly been stopped and boarded, without loss of life. – Reuters

Air strikes launched in Damascus over Druze violence

Spiritual leader condemns 'genocidal campaign' against community

DAMASCUS: Israel's military said yesterday it launched air strikes near the presidential palace in Damascus after the country's defence minister threatened intervention if Syrian authorities failed to protect the Druze minority.

Syrian Druze spiritual leader Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri has condemned the "genocidal campaign" against his community.

The violence poses a serious

challenge to Islamist authorities in Syria, who ousted longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December.

Israel has since attacked hundreds of Syrian military sites and yesterday announced that its "fighter jets struck adjacent to the area of the palace" in Damascus.

Sheikh Hikmat called on Thursday for immediate intervention by "international forces to maintain peace and

prevent the continuation of these crimes".

The Druze killings come after a wave of massacres in March in Syria's Alawite heartland on the Mediterranean coast, in which security forces and allied groups killed more than 1,700 civilians, mostly from Assad's Alawite community, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani on Thursday called for "national unity" as "the solid foundation for any process of stability or revival".

"Any call for external intervention, under any pretext or

slogan, only leads to further deterioration and division."

Israel sees the new forces in Syria as extremists and has warned them to protect the Druze minority, with Defence Minister Israel Katz saying his country would otherwise respond "with significant force".

Israel carried out strikes near Damascus on Wednesday and has sent troops into the demilitarised buffer zone that used to separate Israeli and Syrian forces on the Golan Heights.

Two wounded Syrian Druze have been evacuated to northern Israel for treatment, according to the Israeli military.

At a meeting of Druze leaders, elders and armed groups in the city of Sweida, the community agreed that it was "an inseparable part of the unified Syrian homeland", a spokesperson said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the fighting this week involved security forces, allied fighters and local Druze groups.

The Britain-based monitor, which relies on a network of sources in Syria, said the 102 death toll included 30 government loyalists, 21 Druze fighters and 10 civilians, including Sahnaya's former mayor Husam Warwar.

In the southern Druze heartland province of Sweida, it said 40 Druze gunmen were killed, including 35 in an "ambush" on the Sweida-Damascus road on Wednesday.

The monitor told AFP that the fighters were killed "by forces affiliated with the ministries of interior and defence, and gunmen associated with them".

Truces were reached on Tuesday in Jaramana and a day later in Sahnaya. The Syrian government announced that it was deploying forces in Sahnaya to ensure security and accused "outlaw groups" of instigating clashes. – AFP



RUBBLE ROMP ...

Displaced Palestinian children playing in a damaged lecture hall at the Islamic University campus in Gaza. – AFP/IPC

Israel claims missile launched from Yemen intercepted

JERUSALEM: The Israeli military said yesterday it intercepted a missile fired from Yemen, where Houthi rebels recently claimed responsibility for a missile launch that targeted Israel.

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have not claimed responsibility for the launch yesterday but said on

Sunday they had launched a "hypersonic missile" at the Nevatim air base in Israel's Negev desert.

The Houthis are part of Iran's "axis of resistance" against Israel and the United States, portraying themselves as defenders of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

They have launched repeated missile and drone attacks on Israel and merchant shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, prompting retaliatory air strikes by Israel, Britain and the United States against Houthi targets.

Since US President Donald Trump

took office in January, the US air campaign has intensified, with almost daily strikes for more than a month.

Houthi-controlled media said this week US strikes on the movement's stronghold of Saada killed at least 68 people, all Africans being held at a "centre for illegal migrants". – AFP

EDUCATION

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Optimax sets sights on expansion

► Eyecare specialist to scale up operations in Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia, boost foreign patient revenue contribution

■ BY HAYATUN RAZAK
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KUALA LUMPUR: Optimax Holdings Bhd aims to double its foreign patient revenue contribution to 20% by end-2025 as it scales up outreach in Cambodia, Indonesia, and Vietnam.

CEO Sandy Tan Sing Yee shared that the group's Cambodian operations, launched in May 2024, are already self-sustaining.

"Our doctors only fly in twice a month, but the numbers are quite good. Now our foreign revenue stands at about 10% overall," she told *SunBiz* in an interview.

Tan said there is a trust gap in Cambodian healthcare, which Optimax is addressing with high standards and modern facilities.

"To be honest, many Cambodians lack confidence in their local healthcare system. That is why air ambulance services are effective there. For instance, patients experiencing a heart attack frequently opt for direct flights to Bangkok or Singapore for their medical treatment," she stated.

She added that Optimax's entry into the Cambodian market has received strong response due

to its modern facilities and adherence to international standards.

"When we first started as an eye centre, we built an operating theater that meets Joint Commission International standards. This practice ensures that patients feel confident and reassured when coming in for surgery," she said.

According to Tan, Optimax currently holds an estimated 50% share of Cambodia's private eye care sector and is the sole Malaysian eye care provider there.

"Our patients are not just from Phnom Penh, but also from the outskirts, who come to see us," she said.

Tan said the group is exploring expansion beyond Phnom Penh, potentially into Siem Reap or other parts of Cambodia.

"Once our operating theatre reaches full utilisation and operates seven days a week, then we will proceed," she said.

At the same time, Optimax is ramping up roadshows and digital outreach in Indonesia and Vietnam to attract more international clients.

"We are going all out. In fact, we recently held a roadshow in Jakarta and managed to secure

100 patients for eye surgeries in Malaysia," Tan said.

At the same time, Optimax plans to maintain a consistent presence in Indonesia and Vietnam, with annual roadshows and marketing activities.

"Some of our team members are currently in Jakarta. We are building up more agents and strengthening our marketing team. We are actively running roadshows, events, radio campaigns, and digital marketing – not just to promote our services in Malaysia but also to raise awareness overseas," Tan said.

"At the end of the day, we are in the service line. If we continue investing in international marketing, our foreign patient base will grow significantly," she added.

On the domestic front, Tan noted that Optimax is already well-established in Malaysia.

"Before the MCO, we were a 100% Malaysian-based company. I would say 99% of our patients were locals, with maybe just 1-2% being foreign patients, mainly from Medan due to our Penang presence.

"But today, that has changed. We now see many more foreign patients – not just Indonesians and Cambodians, but also those from China and Brunei. Medical tourism in Malaysia is definitely booming," she said.

On Malaysia's appeal as a medical tourism hub, Tan said the country offers high-quality care and facilities that rival the region's best. "Our OTs (operating theatres) are built to extremely high standards. MOH (Ministry of Health) has done a fantastic job setting those requirements."

Tan is optimistic about Optimax's new revenue streams, particularly its foray into aesthetic services.

"Our aesthetic clinic at Atrium Mall, which began operations in May last year, has shown promising numbers. Although still new, we have seen strong walk-in traffic and expect the centre to contribute solid revenue going forward," she said.

Meanwhile, Optimax is strengthening its position in the myopic control sector to address rising short-sightedness rates among children in Southeast Asia.

"We are converting most centres without operating theaters into myopic control centres," said Tan.

Alongside refractive surgery and cataract treatment, myopic control is now a standard offering across all 24 Optimax centres.

Tan said the prevalence of myopia in Southeast Asia is alarmingly high, largely due to lifestyle and academic pressures.

"Whether it is in Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam or Indonesia, we see the same trend, and that has contributed to Southeast Asia having the highest rates of myopia globally."

Tan said the rate of myopia in Asia is significantly higher than in Western countries, with recent studies indicating that up to 70% of the next

generation in the region may be affected. "It's a big difference compared to America. Our myopia rates are much higher. If you look at the latest data, it's very alarming."

She added that the region's growing reliance on digital tools is compounding the issue.

The group is collaborating with MOH and the Ministry of Education to conduct school-based eye screenings.

"We've already developed the Optimax app so parents can monitor their child's condition annually. We are doing this across our network," Tan said.

The programme is rapidly expanding. "We started with 10 to 20 kids, but

now we have 20,000 children coming in for annual check-ups. This shows the growing awareness and demand," said Tan.



Tan says the prevalence of myopia in Southeast Asia is alarmingly high.

Capital A says 'actively exploring' dual listing on Hong Kong Exchange

PETALING JAYA: Capital A Bhd is actively exploring a potential listing on the Hong Kong Exchange (HKEX), as part of its strategy to broaden access to global capital markets and position its digital and aviation services businesses for the next phase of growth.

The initiative follows a high-level meeting with HKEX, where Capital A was invited to explore a Hong Kong listing to access deeper global and mainland Chinese investor pools that are increasingly drawn to Asean growth stories with strong China ties.

In a statement, the company said discussions are ongoing, and Capital A is close to appointing an international investment bank to advise on the listing structure and time-line. Plans to initiate the formal process are subject to internal assessments and regulatory

approvals.

Capital A CEO Tan Sri Tony Fernandes said the company is proudly rooted in Asean but built for the world.

He said with over 20 destinations across Greater China and significant business exposure in the region, Capital A see Hong Kong as a natural capital markets gateway.

"A dual listing would allow us to tell our story on a global stage and connect with a broader investor base that values digital-first, asset-light business models."

"Teleport, ADE (Asia Digital Engineering), and digital travel platform AirAsia MOVE have received great recognition, and this is an exciting opportunity that aligns with our ambition to accelerate growth, attract new strategic investors, and maximise long-term shareholder value," he said.

The potential HKEX listing is

seen as a natural next step following Capital A's ongoing PN17 regularisation plan, which is targeted for completion by mid-2025.

Upon exiting PN17 status, the group intends to pursue strategic initiatives that will further strengthen its capital structure and global presence.

Hong Kong's deep capital markets, enhanced listing regime, and strong connectivity with both international and Mainland Chinese investors continue to attract high-growth, internationally exposed businesses.

The HKEX remains a preferred venue for Asean companies seeking to scale globally, bolstered by rising Southbound Stock Connect trading and an increasingly diversified investor base.

Capital A said it will provide further updates as the evaluation progresses.

SD Guthrie delivers first tariff-free palm oil shipment to UK under CPTPP

KUALA LUMPUR: SD Guthrie Bhd delivered its first-ever tariff-free shipment of Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil-certified sustainable palm oil (CSPO) to the United Kingdom under the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

In a statement yesterday, the company announced that its SD Guthrie International Liverpool Refinery received 8,000 tonnes of fully traceable and segregated CSPO. The cargo was shipped aboard *Dolphin 19* from Kunak Port, Sabah on Feb 19.

The CSPO had undergone stringent testing to ensure low levels of mineral oil saturated hydrocarbons and mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons, it added.

"The CPTPP is a free trade agreement initially signed in 2018 by 11 Pacific Rim countries, including Malaysia. The agreement removes most tariffs while promoting economic integration and maintaining strong labour and environmental protections among its member states."

"With the UK's official membership in

the CPTPP taking effect on Dec 15, 2024, tariffs on crude palm oil and its derivatives imported from Malaysia into the UK have been eliminated. Previously, these tariffs ranged from 2% to 10%," it said in the statement.

SD Guthrie group managing director Datuk Mohamad Helmy Othman Basha said the shipment highlighted not only the strength of the Malaysia-UK trade relations but also the company's strong commitment to ensure quality, traceability and security of sustainable palm oil supply to customers in the UK.

For over a decade, SD Guthrie's Liverpool refinery has been the company's gateway for CSPO to enter the UK market, supplying approximately 50% to 55% of domestic palm oil demand.

Its refined products are widely used for deep-frying in fish-and-chip shops across the country and as key ingredients in the production of many popular brands of biscuits, baked goods and British confectionery favourites. – Bernama



From left: M&A Securities associate director Lee Yoke Wah and deputy head of corporate finance Danny Wong; Reach Ten Holdings independent directors Wong Siew Si and Wong Wan Yin, executive director Lu Pak Lim and Chin; M&A Equity Holdings Bhd managing director Datuk Bill Tan; Reach Ten independent directors Datin Sng Bee Seio and Terence Goh and head of corporate finance Gary Ting Hua Tai at Reach Ten's listing ceremony on Bursa Malaysia's Main Market.

Reach Ten to expand fibre link to Miri, Sibul and Bintulu

➤ Sarawak telecommunication services provider to expand network to 767km from 217km that covers Kuching and Samarahan currently

■ BY HAYATUN RAZAK
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KUALA LUMPUR: Sarawak-based telecommunication services provider Reach Ten Holdings Bhd is set to expand its fibre optic duct infrastructure in the state to Miri, Sibul and Bintulu over the next three years, tripling its fibre footprint to 767km from 217km currently.

Managing director Leo Chin said the company took about 14 to 15 years to build the first 217km of fibre optic duct in Kuching and Samarahan.

"With the IPO proceeds, we will be able to expand beyond Kuching to Sibul, Miri and Bintulu within three years for another 550km of duct infrastructure.

"That is the scale we are referring to. Instead of spending another 14 or 15 years, this time we just need three; we can triple the distance we have," Chin said at a press conference following the company's listing ceremony yesterday.

He said new towers will be located in urbanised areas such as Miri, Sibul and Bintulu, which are key commercial and manufacturing hubs, to meet the growing demand for high-speed connectivity.

"These efforts will cater to the immediate connectivity needs and lay the foundation for Sarawak's smart city initiatives, including intelligent traffic systems and digital services," he added.

Chin said Reach Ten's market share in Sarawak's fibre and tower segments is below 1%, but it sees strong growth potential.

"We believe that in three to five years, the fibre business will pick up strongly because we are spending RM60 million over the next three years to expand outside Kuching. So, naturally, we expect to generate significant revenue from that segment," he said.

Currently, 90% of Reach Ten's revenue comes from its satellite segment, which it expects to remain its core business.

"We have to accept the fact that we are operating in Sarawak, with the big landmass and also the challenging terrain; satellite services are still the preferred choice when you talk about providing services to the under-served communities."

Founded in 2005, Reach Ten provides connectivity solutions in Sarawak for businesses, government bodies and the telecommunications industry, with a focus on infrastructure expansion and technological innovation.

Reach Ten has been involved in major government-led digital initiatives, including Jendela, Smart and Saluran, ensuring secure, high-speed connectivity throughout the state.

"As Sarawak continues its journey towards becoming a digital economy leader, Reach Ten remains committed to providing the infrastructure and technology necessary for the state's transformation," Chin said.

Reach Ten shares opened at 52 sen each, the same as its IPO price.

The company raised RM104 million from its public issue of 200 million new shares. The listing also includes an offer for sale of 100 million existing shares to selected investors by way of private placement.

Of the total proceeds, RM60 million (57.7%) is allocated to expand its existing fibre optic communication network infrastructure in Kuching and to establish new fibre optic communication network infrastructure in Miri, Sibul, and Bintulu.

A further RM25 million (24%) will be used for the construction of the additional 100 4G and 5G telecommunication towers across Sarawak – particularly in Miri, Sibul and Bintulu – to support the state government's initiatives to widen internet coverage and connectivity, especially the 4G and 5G coverage in rural areas.

Part of the proceeds amounting to RM4.3 million (4.1%) will be used to enhance its satellite-based communication networks and service capability by acquiring additional mobile and fixed satellite terminals, hardware, and software, as well as enhancing its facilities in the teleport.

The remainder will be used for working capital requirements amounting to RM5 million (4.8%); RM1.7 million (1.6%) to repay bank borrowings; and the remaining RM8 million (7.7%) to defray the estimated listing expenses.

Based on the enlarged share capital of one billion shares, Reach Ten is expected to have a market capitalisation of RM520 million after listing.

M&A Securities Sdn Bhd is the principal adviser, underwriter and placement agent for the IPO exercise.

MGS, GII yields seen stable ahead of BNM policy meeting next week

PETALING JAYA: Local bond yields are expected to remain anchored ahead of the Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) Monetary Policy Committee meeting next week, in which the Overnight Policy Rate is expected to be held at 3%.

Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd (Kenanga IB) said it will closely monitor the May 5 parliamentary sitting for updates on Malaysia's economic growth outlook and the government's response to US tariffs.

"Externally, the upcoming US FOMC meeting may influence sentiment – any dovish tilt could push local yields lower," Kenanga IB said.

Malaysian Government Securities (MGS) and Government Investment Issues (GII) yields edged lower this week, declining between 0.8 and 4.6 basis points (bps).

The 10-year MGS eased by 2.0 bps to 3.651%, while the 10-year GII fell 4.2 bps to 3.637%.

Key drivers were due to the improved investor sentiment following renewed optimism over US-China trade discussions, which supported the rally in Malaysian bonds.

Kenanga IB said weakness in the US economy also put downward pressure on yields.

"Domestically, robust trade and strengthening bilateral ties with countries such as the Maldives, Japan, Italy, and Vietnam set a positive investment tone.

"The favourable terms of trade update for March further supported foreign interest in local debt," Kenanga IB said.

Touching on the local currency, the investment bank said the ringgit once again exceeded expectations, strengthening towards the 4.32/US\$1 level.

Kenanga IB said the local note's resilience appears underpinned by Malaysia's relative macroeconomic stability and BNM's consistent policy stance. It also noted that the US dollar gained some support from tariff exemptions on auto parts and a marginally weaker euro.

Meanwhile, the US dollar drew strength from improved geopolitical sentiment, including revived US-China trade talks and a US-Ukraine deal on critical minerals.

"Domestically, BNM is expected to hold its ground, but any downward revision to Malaysia's growth outlook may attract attention," Kenanga IB said.

It expects the ringgit to trade within the 4.30–4.35/US\$1 range over the coming week, with markets remaining cautious amid ongoing US economic uncertainty and evolving tariff dynamics.

Positive outcomes from the special parliamentary sitting on May 5 could lend additional support to the ringgit, it added.

NTT Data launches integrated payment solutions suite Adaptis

PETALING JAYA: NTT Data Payment Services has unveiled Adaptis, a suite of integrated payment solutions designed to meet the evolving needs of modern businesses.

Introduced at an exclusive brand launch event, Adaptis marks a strategic milestone in the company's transformation, bringing together innovation, flexibility and regional expertise to shape the future of commerce in Southeast Asia.

The Adaptis suite of services comprises five key offerings designed to empower businesses with enhanced flexibility and efficiency.

Adaptis In-Store is suited for seamless retail transactions, Adaptis e-Commerce for secure online payments, Adaptis Financing to support

business growth, Adaptis Enterprise for scalable payment infrastructure, and Adaptis VAS (value-added services) is to optimise business operations.

NTT Data group CEO and executive director Sean Hesh said Adaptis is the company's answer to the evolving demands of the digital economy.

"Having served Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines for decades, and with over 500,000 touchpoints across these countries, we understand what businesses need. Adaptis is built to be flexible, localised, and future-ready, helping businesses scale efficiently while providing customers with seamless payment experiences," he said.

NTT Data head of global payments and services division, Japan, Shinichiro Nishikawa emphasised the strategic importance of this evolution, stating that "the future of payments is not just about transactions, it's about ecosystems".

"By bringing together Asian payments industry leaders under the NTT Data umbrella, we are building a more connected, intelligent, and resilient regional commerce infrastructure. Adaptis reflects our commitment to seamless integration, localised solutions, and large-scale innovation that empowers businesses worldwide," he said.

The launch of Adaptis comes after the

acquisition of GHL Systems Bhd by NTT Data Japan in 2024, making it a wholly owned subsidiary of one of the world's top ten global IT service providers.

In line with this strategic transformation, the company officially rebranded as NTT Data Payment Services Sdn Bhd on Nov 13, 2024, aligning with its new vision while maintaining the high standards of service that merchants and businesses have come to expect.

Following its debut in Malaysia, the Adaptis suite will be rolled out in Thailand and the Philippines later this year, strengthening NTT Data's commitment to delivering cutting-edge payment solutions across the region.

Apple braces for trade tensions, cuts stock buyback

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple on Thursday trimmed its share buyback program by US\$10 billion (RM43 billion), with CEO Tim Cook telling analysts that tariffs could add about US\$900 million in costs this quarter as the iPhone maker shifts its vast supply chain to minimize the impact of President Donald Trump's trade war.

Cook said Apple's planned US\$500 billion investment in the US will cover both capital spending and operating costs as it expands server and chip production with partners. In addition, he outlined how Apple has started to build up a stockpile of products so that the majority of its devices sold in the US this quarter will not come from China.

Taken together, analysts said the moves showed one of the most profitable companies in the history of business battenning its hatches as it moves into uncharted waters.

"We were expecting to see more buybacks. Knowing the company, this indicates that Tim Cook is hoarding cash for difficult times," said Thomas Monteiro, senior analyst at Investing.com. "While that's not exactly a problem in itself, it certainly suggests that the company is not as certain about its near-term future as it was in previous quarters."

Apple shares were down 4.3% after the company released quarterly results. So far, the trade war has not been a problem for Apple's sales, with Cook saying the company did not see consumers rushing to stock up on Apple items.

He said the majority of iPhones sold in the US in the current quarter will come from India, and that most iPads, Macs and Apple Watches will come from Vietnam. Cook said that the vast majority of Apple products for markets outside the US will continue to come from China.

"We have a complex supply chain. There's always risk in the supply chain," he said. "What we learned some time ago was that having everything in one location had too much risk with it."

Cook also signalled that Apple's efforts to spend more in the US will come with real costs to Apple's balance sheet. He said the company already sources 19 billion chips from a dozen US states and will be expanding its own facilities.

Apple also said it will increase its cash dividend by 4% to 26 cents per share and that its board has authorised an additional US\$100 billion for its stock buyback program, down US\$10 billion from the same time last year. — Reuters

US blacklist on China carries errors, outdated info

HONG KONG: Doris Au, a seller of door locks and hardware in Hong Kong for 25 years, received a letter from her bank, DBS Group, last June stating that her business account would be closed. The bank gave little explanation but subsequently froze the account, killing her business with international suppliers, she said. Au discovered after searching online that another firm with a similar name was added to the US trade blacklist in October 2023 for "providing support to Russia's military and/or defense industrial base." The entry identified two addresses, one of which was Au's warehouse.

"We are not that company. It's totally a mistake," Au told Reuters in her warehouse stacked with locks, hinges and sliding-door kits from well-known brands. Au's predicament captures the challenge facing the administration of US President Donald Trump as it ramps up limits on China's access to American technology by adding dozens of Chinese firms to its blacklist.

Review finds over a quarter of listed Chinese and Hong Kong firms had wrong names and old contact data

A Reuters review of almost 100 Chinese and Hong Kong companies added to the US entity list in 2023 and 2024 found more than a quarter, or 26 entries, contained erroneous details, such as incorrect names and addresses and outdated information.

For each listed entity, Reuters visited at least one address identified by the US to determine whether the blacklisted firms were still there. Businesses at those locations included a beauty salon, a tutoring firm, a massage parlour and a counselling centre.

At one site in Shenzhen, Reuters found weed-covered remnants of a factory locals said was demolished years earlier.

Yet Reuters also found evidence of trade in restricted items by some entities, aided by loopholes, paper companies and networks of freight

forwarders and shipping agents, illustrating the challenge of containing access to sensitive technology.

The entity list, established in 1997, has become an increasingly important tool for the US to limit technology transfers to Russia and China, including semiconductors, that might undermine US security. It is managed by the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), a Commerce Department agency.

Five former US officials said it's hard to fix identity mistakes or update the entity list, partly because the agency lacks staff. One called BIS "woefully under-resourced."

Many listed entities are front companies, said Matthew Borman, who until March was a senior BIS official overseeing US export

controls, including those targeting China and Russia.

"The challenge is that they can move to a different address with a different name," he said.

BIS and the Commerce Department didn't respond to detailed questions about errors on the trade blacklist and any actions to rectify them.

Singapore-based DBS declined to comment on Au's case. In its letter to Au, DBS didn't mention the entity list but said it had reviewed her business account and found "activity/information that is not consistent with your account profile."

The Biden administration aimed to block tech transfers aiding Russia's war in Ukraine, adding hundreds of entities—many tied to China—to curb access. The list also targets China's advances in AI, military upgrades, and quantum tech.

That trend is continuing under Trump. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said in March that China must be prevented from getting US chips, noting the success of Chinese AI startup DeepSeek. He said the US would bring export controls into future trade deals. The Commerce Department has claimed some success from its export controls in stemming chip flows to Russia via Hong Kong and China. But they don't catch everything.

Ukraine's KSE Institute think tank found 76% of all common high priority items likely to be procured by Russia for its weapons programs, including semiconductors, radar and communications gear, were routed through China and Hong Kong in 2023.

Russian customs records show 20 of the 92 entity-listed companies visited by Reuters were exporting restricted items to Russia in December 2023, the most recent month for which a complete dataset was available. Those items, including semiconductors, were valued at US\$7.5 million (RM32 million). — Reuters



US to tighten export rules in future trade deals, citing mixed success in blocking chip shipments to China and Russia. — UNSPLASH PIX

Tariff-induced uncertainty seen curbing US job growth in April

WASHINGTON: US job growth likely slowed in April amid heightened economic uncertainty because of President Donald Trump's aggressive tariff policy, though companies continued to hoard workers, keeping the labour market humming for now.

The Labour Department's closely watched employment report on Friday is, however, likely to be dismissed as backward-looking and probably will not offer a clear pulse of the economy after GDP contracted in the first quarter under the weight of a deluge of imports as businesses tried to get ahead of tariffs.

Trump's April 2 "Liberation Day" tariff announcement ushered in sweeping duties on most imports from the US' trade partners, including raising duties on Chinese goods to 145%, sparking a trade war with Beijing and

tightening financial conditions. Trump later delayed higher reciprocal tariffs for 90 days, which economists said was essentially a pause on the whole economy as it left businesses in a state of paralysis and risked a recession if there was no clarity soon.

"This is a situation where the air in the balloon is slowly dissipating out," said Brian Bethune, an economics professor at Boston College. "There's a certain amount of labour hoarding that's going on despite the uncertainty across so many different dimensions, on the anticipation that somehow there will be some clarity in terms of direction of policy."

Nonfarm payrolls likely increased by 130,000 jobs last month after rising by 228,000 in March, a Reuters survey of economists showed. Estimates ranged from 25,000 to 195,000 jobs added.

Part of the anticipated step-down in payrolls would be due to the fading boost from warmer weather.

The pace of job gains would be more than the 100,000 that economists say are needed to keep up with growth in the working-age population. The unemployment rate is forecast to have been unchanged at 4.2% last month. While the labour market continues to show resilience amid a reluctance by employers to let go of workers after struggling to find labour during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, warning signs are accumulating.

Business sentiment continues to plummet, which economists expect will at some point give way to layoffs. Already, airlines have pulled their 2025 financial forecasts, citing uncertainty over spending on nonessential travel

because of tariffs.

General Motors cut its 2025 profit forecast on Thursday and said it expected a \$4-5 billion (RM17-22 billion) tariff hit.

China has ordered its airlines not to take further deliveries of Boeing planes while Ryanair, Europe's largest low-cost carrier, on Thursday threatened to cancel orders for hundreds of Boeing aircraft if the tariff war leads to materially higher prices.

Amid the uncertainty, the Federal Reserve is expected to keep its benchmark overnight interest rate in the 4.25-4.5% range next week.

Economists expect companies will reduce hours before resorting to layoffs. The average workweek has been steadily declining since 2023 and held steady at 34.2 hours in March.

"How much can the labour market

absorb and handle this uncertainty that the administration has injected into the economy?" asked Martha Gimbel, executive director of the Budget Lab at Yale. "American businesses are resilient, and there's a lot that they can overcome, but they can't overcome everything, and at some point the policy environment is going to really start to bite."

The Trump administration's unprecedented and often chaotic campaign spearheaded by tech billionaire Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, to drastically shrink the federal government through mass layoffs and deep funding cuts is adding to the rising labour market risks.

Some of the spending cuts have affected schools and medical research. — Reuters



Gold in spotlight, outshines better-value assets

► Precious metal now trades at more than three standard deviations above long-term trend

LONDON: Gold is having a golden moment as investors fret about runaway prices and the stability of the US dollar. Adjusted for inflation, gold has risen above its previous peak in early 1980, after which its value declined in nominal terms for nearly two decades. The precious metal now trades at more than three standard deviations above its long-term trend. Although gold has retained its purchasing power over several millennia, it has proven a relatively poor hedge against inflation over the shorter term. After a 25% increase this year, it has never looked more expensive, both in real terms and relative to other commodities.

"The real price of gold," writes Campbell Harvey of Research Affiliates, "resembles a price-earnings ratio for equities. Very high P/Es are often followed by low expected returns. Gold's historical record suggests a similar pattern." Since 1975, investors who acquired gold at elevated prices lost money over the following decade. Conversely, buying gold when it was relatively cheap delivered positive inflation-adjusted returns.

Today its price is far out of line with several other commodities. Over the past half-century an ounce of gold has, on average, cost 21 times the price of a barrel of oil. Today, the gold/oil ratio is above 50 times – its highest-ever level apart from a brief moment in 2020. Gold also looks expensive relative to silver. Since 1975, on average, you could exchange 60 ounces of silver

for an ounce of gold. Today, gold is worth around 100 times more than its cheaper cousin.

There's another precious metal that looks even less expensive. Platinum may not have the allure of gold but is much harder to find. Global production is mostly concentrated in deep mines located in a small region of southern Africa. Platinum has been on a roller-coaster in recent years. In the first decade of the century, the metal was caught up in the mining supercycle when it boomed and then crashed. Mine production was interrupted during the pandemic after which platinum climbed above US\$1,200 (RM5,174) an ounce in the spring of 2021. Since then, it's fallen below US\$1,000. In real terms, platinum currently trades roughly 25% below its 50-year average.

Since 1900, the price of platinum has proved stable relative to gold, according to Bryan Taylor, chief economist at Finaeon (formerly Global Financial Data). Over the past 50 years, the ratio of gold to platinum has on average been about par. Since 2015, however, gold has pushed ahead and now trades at three times the price of platinum. Relative to gold, platinum has never been so cheap.

The significance of these comparisons is a matter of judgment. After all, gold is considered by many to be an alternative to unstable paper currencies. Although silver and platinum are officially designated monetary metals they lack the strong brand of their yellow rival.

Successive US presidents have threatened to undermine the current international monetary system dominated by the US dollar. After the US and its allies froze Russia's foreign exchange reserves in 2022, China and other central banks stepped up their purchases of gold. On several earlier occasions when international monetary regimes collapsed, gold underwent a paradigm shift.

For instance, when the gold standard

collapsed in the early 1930s, its official price was raised from US\$20.67 per ounce to US\$35. After the post-war Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates crumbled in the late 1960s, gold became extremely volatile but settled at a higher average price, in real terms. Looking further back in history, the demonetisation of silver in Western industrial economies during the second half of the 19th century permanently lowered the market value of silver relative to gold.

Gold may be in the early stages of yet another paradigm shift. Furthermore, while the yellow metal benefits from economic uncertainty, industrial commodities are vulnerable to a global downturn. At the start of the pandemic in 2020 oil futures briefly turned negative. Around half of the annual production of silver goes to industrial applications, while three-quarters of platinum demand comes from industrial users. If the global economy turns down these commodities will surely take a hit.

There's another threat to consider. So-called platinum group metals, which include palladium and rhodium, are prized for their ability to withstand high temperatures. Around 44% of platinum production is used in auto catalytic converters that reduce pollution produced by internal combustion engines. Government targets to end the sale of traditional motor vehicles threaten the long-term demand for oil and for platinum and its related metals, which are not used in battery powered electric vehicles.

The recent parabolic price movement suggests that gold could be in a bubble. Speculators may continue to make money in the short run. But investors seeking to protect their wealth over the long run should look elsewhere. Relative to gold, oil and silver look extremely cheap. Platinum might be said to be in an anti-bubble. – Reuters

Air India faces US\$600m hit from Pakistan airspace ban, seeks help

NEW DELHI: Air India expects to face around US\$600 million (RM2.6 billion) in additional costs if a ban from Pakistan's airspace lasts for a year, and has asked the federal government to compensate it for the hit, a company letter seen by Reuters shows. Indian airlines are bracing for higher fuel costs and longer journey times after Pakistan shut its airspace to the country's carriers in a tit-for-tat retaliation following an attack on tourists in Kashmir last week.

Air India on April 27 asked the Indian government for a "subsidy model" proportionate to the economic hit, estimating a loss of more than 50 billion Indian rupees (RM2.55 billion) for each year the ban lasts, according to a letter sent by the airline to the Civil Aviation Ministry seen by Reuters.

"Subsidy for affected international flights is a good, verifiable and fair option ... the subsidy can be removed when the situation improves," the letter said.

"The impact on Air India is maximum due to airspace closure, due to additional fuel burn, additional crew."

Air India declined to comment. India's Civil Aviation Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Air India's letter was sent after the government asked its executives to assess the impact of the airspace ban on Indian carriers, said a source with direct knowledge of the matter.

The Indian government is considering options to reduce the hit to the airline industry from the closure of Pakistan's airspace, three other people familiar with the matter said.

One of the sources said Indian carriers met with the Civil Aviation Ministry to work on possible solutions, including flying over difficult terrain closer to China, and some tax exemptions.

It also requested government approval to carry extra pilots on US and Canada routes due to longer flight times. – Reuters

US ends China duty exemption but collection uncertainty remains

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration ended US duty-free access for low-value shipments from China and Hong Kong on Friday, removing the "de minimis" exemptions availed of by Shein, Temu and other e-commerce firms as well as traffickers of fentanyl and other illicit goods.

The action restores an executive order from President Donald Trump in February that was quickly suspended due to a lack of screening procedures for sub-US\$800 (RM3,449) shipments that sparked chaos at airports and caused millions of packages to pile up.

US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has "a massive task at hand" but is ready to handle the enforcement and collection of Trump's tariffs on small Chinese shipments, a spokesman for the agency said.

"We are prepared and equipped to carry out enhanced package screening and enforce orders effectively as outlined" in Trump's executive order ending de minimis treatment for China, the spokesperson added.

The new procedures should not affect passenger wait times at airports and ports of entry, the spokesman said. The packages are handled in the cargo section of airports, even when they arrive in the bellies of passenger planes.

Under CBP's latest guidance, shipments from China and Hong Kong regardless of size will now be subject to Trump's new tariffs of 145% plus any prior duties, except for products such as smartphones which were excluded last month. These will largely be handled by express shippers such as FedEx, United Parcel Service or DHL,



Under new US guidance, all shipments from China and Hong Kong face a 145% tariff plus existing duties, with limited exceptions such as smartphones. – PEXELS PIX

which have their own cargo handling facilities.

Items valued at up to US\$800 and sent from China via postal services are treated differently. They are now subject to a tax of 120% of the package's value or a flat fee of US\$100 per package – an amount that rises to US\$200 in June.

The US Postal Service said it would not be involved in any duty collections. Instead a USPS spokesman said airlines and vessel operators would need to work with shippers and Chinese postal authorities to pay the import taxes and show proof before the goods are transported out of China or Hong Kong.

Although de minimis is a Latin term referring

to matters of little importance, low-value shipments from China to the US reached an estimated US\$5.1 billion in 2024, according to US Census Bureau data. That made it the seventh-largest US import category from China, behind video game consoles, but just ahead of computer monitors.

Shippers were bracing for more package chaos, and some questioned whether airlines were prepared to handle duty collection from China Post and Hongkong Post.

"We have the same worry about bottlenecks," said Kate Muth, executive director of the International Mailers Advisory Group (IMAG),

whose members include Amazon.com, eBay and divisions of United Parcel Service, FedEx and DHL.

"I don't think we're ready for the change because we're still awaiting some clarification around the rules," including how to define Chinese origin for goods that are shipped from other countries, Muth said.

A late change in the CBP's guidance took away a major complication for shippers, but created a potential new hurdle to enforcement as CBP temporarily suspended a rule that would have required formal customs entry for all shipments valued at over US\$250 containing goods that are also subject to punitive tariffs.

Formal customs entry, normally associated with larger, containerized cargo, requires full 10-digit tariff codes for all items, advance electronic transmission of entry data and a bond to cover for customs liability.

And it would have applied to many other countries now subject to US tariffs imposed by Trump, creating a potential new crush of administrative paperwork for shippers.

Instead, the suspension allows the use of informal entry procedures for shipments from China and Hong Kong valued at up to US\$800 and up to US\$2,500 from elsewhere, requiring no tariff codes and a less detailed contents description.

Trump ended the de minimis exemption for China largely because it was being used for largely unscreened low-value shipments containing fentanyl precursor chemicals into the US, a phenomenon documented in a Reuters series about fentanyl. – Reuters

TOP SHOTS OF THE WEEK



PICKLEBALL PICK-UP ... Tunku Zain Al-Abidin ibni Tuanku Muhriz (third from left), Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh (third from right), Canon Marketing Malaysia head of corporate communications Koh Boon Hui (second from left) and representatives of other sponsors at the launch of the Alliance Bank KL Open Pickleball Championship 2025 recently. Canon supported Malaysia's inaugural Pickleball Summit and the championship as the official imaging partner. The championship, organised by Courtside, was held on April 25-27.



MOU SIGNING ... Foam and non-foam products manufacturer WTEC Group on Tuesday entered into a memorandum of understanding with Jiangsu ChengFeng New Materials Co Ltd, a China-based specialist in advanced polyurethane-based products. At the signing ceremony are WTEC Group managing director Tan Kok Kheng (left) and Jiangsu ChengFeng New Materials chairman Ruan Guo Ciao.



BURSA AWARDS ... Bursa Malaysia Bhd held the Bursa Excellence Awards 2024 in Kuala Lumpur recently. The 12th edition recognised the accomplishments of brokers, market intermediaries and principal advisers within the securities, derivatives and Islamic markets, awarding 62 accolades across 32 categories. At the presentation of the awards for the 'Best Overall Bursa Malaysia-i Participating Organisation' category are, from left, Bursa Malaysia chairman Tan Sri Abdul Wahid Omar, CGS International Securities Malaysia Sdn Bhd group head, syariah services, Rushdan Mohd Nadzir, Maybank Investment Bank Bhd CEO Michael Oh-Lau, Affin Hwang Investment Bank Bhd CFO Ahmad Gazzara Czillich and Bursa Malaysia CEO Datuk Fad'li Mohamed. Maybank Investment Bank was named champion, Affin Hwang Investment Bank first runner-up and CGS International Securities Malaysia second runner-up.



DOUBLE AGMs ... KLCCP Stapled Group held the 12th and 22nd annual general meetings for KLCC Real Estate Investment Trust (KLCC REIT) and KLCC Property Holdings Bhd (KLCCP), respectively, on Tuesday in respect of the financial year ended Dec 31 2024. From left are KLCCP Stapled Group CEO Datuk Mohd Salem Kailany, chairman Datuk Annies Md Ariff, CFO Rohizal Kadir and KLCCP and KLCC REIT Management Sdn Bhd company secretary Hanida Hanum Jamon.



FINANCIAL BACKING ... AmBank Group has approved financing totalling RM408.2 million to MSR Green Energy Sdn Bhd (MSRGE) to part-finance its working capital requirements for a landmark battery energy storage system project in Lahad Datu awarded by Sabah Electricity Sdn Bhd. At the signing ceremony on Wednesday are, from left, AmBank Group head of commercial banking 1, business banking, Yeow Swee Yun; managing director of business banking Christopher Yap; senior vice-president commercial banking 1, business banking Amanda Lau Meel Jiun; and MSRGE directors Qiang Xiaoyu and Ong Kah Hui.



PASSED AND RECEIVED ... CIMB Group Holdings Bhd held its 68th annual general meeting on Tuesday at Sime Darby Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur, where all 12 ordinary resolutions tabled were passed, and the audited financial statements for the financial year ended Dec 31 2024 were duly received. Looking at the annual report are CIMB Group chairman Tan Sri Mohd Nasir Ahmad (left) and CEO Novan Amirudin.



PREMIER DELIGHT ... Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim reacts joyfully during the 'Majlis Ramah Mesra Aidilfitri MITI & Agensi 2025' event at Dewan Perdana Menara MITI in Kuala Lumpur recently. — **AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN**



EMPATHIC EVENT ... Able-sighted individuals with blindfolds taking part in the '15th Blind Leading The Blind Annual Charity Walk 2025' on April 27 at Laman MBPJ in Jalan Yong Shook Lin, Petaling Jaya. — **AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN**



CASUAL CRITTERS ... A romp of otters strolling along a beach in anticipation of wet weather. The Meteorological Department has forecast heavy rain in Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang during the Northeast monsoon season beginning this month until December. — **BERNAMAPIC**



RESTORATION BEGINS ... Heavy machinery deployed at the site of the Putra Heights gas explosion as works start to repair and rebuild damaged houses, after the Cabinet approved RM40 million for the purpose. — **BERNAMAPIC**



GUARDIANS OF THE NATION ... Elite commandos from several units gather during the Armed Forces Parade and Order of the Supreme Commander Assembly at the grounds of the Segenting Camp in Port Dickson on April 30. — **BERNAMAPIC**



PERSONAL ATTENTION ... Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming viewing an exhibit during a visit to Taman Desa Bakti Selayang in Selangor as part of the Urban Renewal Expedition to receive feedback on concerns of residents. — **ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN**



CALL TO ARMS ... Kurdish women attending a training session on how to use assault rifles in Qamishi, Syria. — **REUTERSPIC**



GRIEVING HEART ... A man pays tribute to the late Pope Francis at Surabaya Cathedral in Indonesia as the world mourns the 88-year-old pontiff, who died of a stroke on April 21. — **AFPPIC**



SURVIVAL STRUGGLE ... Children in the southern Gaza Strip jostle to receive food distributed by a charity kitchen in Khan Younis. — **REUTERSPIC**



PARADE OF PEACE ... Vietnamese troops march in Ho Chi Minh City during celebrations on April 30 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. — **REUTERSPIC**



RARING TO WIN ... Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong gestures confidently during a People's Action Party rally. — **REUTERSPIC**

Power of accountability

I OFTEN find myself lamenting about poor customer service in Malaysia. During a recent conversation, a friend pointed out what she saw as a key issue: a lack of accountability.

But what is accountability? Is it something we are born with or something we learn and cultivate? More importantly, why does it matter?

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, accountability is “the fact of being responsible for what you do and able to give a satisfactory reason for it, or the degree to which this happens”.

Put simply: if you are a restaurant manager whose job is to ensure that there is always 10kg of potatoes in the kitchen, then it is your job to make sure they are there.

If the delivery van does not arrive, you don't shift the blame to the supplier or the kitchen staff. You find a solution – whether that means calling around, picking them up yourself or finding an alternative. You take ownership. You go the extra mile to ensure those potatoes are in the kitchen.

So what happens when we slip? Of course, life happens. We get overwhelmed, distracted and things fall through the cracks. Do we get defensive, make excuses or blame others? Or do we own up to our mistakes and say, “That was my responsibility. I dropped the ball. I am sorry – and it won't happen again”.

Is accountability inborn or taught?

The general consensus is that accountability is taught or learned – from the environment, society, culture, upbringing and personal experiences.

However, a lack of accountability is not always just a character flaw or laziness. In some cases, it can be a trauma response. Repeated developmental and relational trauma can significantly

disrupt the normal development process needed for accountability.

Here are some ways trauma can impact a person's ability to be responsible:

- The brain may prioritise survival mechanisms over higher executive functions, like planning and follow-through.

- Deep breaches of trust may damage a person's ability to rely on others or be reliable themselves.

- Emotional regulation capabilities may be compromised, making it difficult to respond calmly and constructively to challenges.

- The ability to think long-term may be replaced by immediate self-protection.

- Trauma-related responses like hypervigilance or dissociation can interfere with focus, consistency and follow-through.

For many trauma survivors, what may appear as “irresponsibility” or a “lack of accountability” is actually an adaptive response to perceived threats.

Avoiding commitments, struggling with consistency or finding it difficult to acknowledge mistakes may not stem from indifference but from stress responses deeply rooted in past trauma.

This does not excuse harmful behaviour but it does offer important context. Understanding the link between trauma and accountability can help us approach the issue with greater empathy and lead to more effective paths for healing and growth.

As someone who lives with C-PTSD and struggles with ADD, I know firsthand the emotional weight of not meeting expectations. It is a genuine anguish and painful struggle. Learning accountability has been a lifelong lesson for me. It is not an excuse and has been a work in progress.



“Repeated developmental and relational trauma can significantly disrupt the normal development process needed for accountability.”

If you are in a personal or professional relationship with someone who struggles with accountability, here are some constructive ways to support them:

- **Practise patience and sensitivity:** You may not know their full story. A lack of accountability could be a sign they are struggling with something deeper – and may not even be fully aware of their behaviour.

- **Prioritise psychological safety:** Let them know that your relationship won't be threatened by mistakes or setbacks. People grow best in environments where they feel secure.

- **Avoid shame-based approaches:** Criticisms, lectures or disappointment can often backfire. These reactions can reinforce avoidance and defensiveness rather than inspire change.

- **Separate behaviour from identity:** Remind them that making a mistake does not make them a bad person. Accountability is about growth, not perfection.

- **Recognise small steps:** Acknowledge and appreciate even minor steps towards accountability. Progress is often incremental and encouragement can reinforce it.

- **Model healthy accountability yourself:** Be open about your own mistakes and how you take responsibility. This will create a culture of honesty and self-improvement.

- **Ask open, non-confrontational questions:** Instead of saying, “Why did you do this?” try, “What do you think happened here?” This invites reflection without triggering defensiveness.

- **Offer collaboration, not control:** Frame solutions as a team effort – “How can we work through this together?” – rather than taking a top-down approach.

- **Understand that defensiveness is often about pain, not defiance:** What

looks like resistance may be a protective mechanism rooted in past hurt.

- **Gently highlight patterns without judgement:** Pointing out recurring behaviours with care can help build awareness and promote self-reflection.

- **Encourage professional support when needed:** Sometimes the most meaningful progress happens with the help of a coach or trauma-informed therapist.

Remember, your role is not to fix someone else but to help create conditions where healing and growth can become possible. Accountability skills take time to develop, especially when they are unfolding alongside the complex work of healing from trauma.

While certain predispositions may influence an individual's propensity for accountability, it is largely a learned behaviour cultivated through experience. This perspective will empower individuals and institutions to engage in practices that promote personal and collective responsibility.

Accountability is not about guilt or being caught and scolded. True accountability is about integrity – the quiet power of owning up to what is ours, even (and especially) when it is uncomfortable.

In my work as a therapist, I have seen the transformation when someone stops defending or avoiding and begins to take responsibility – not to punish themselves but to build trust, foster healing and grow in maturity.

Accountability, in this light, is not a punishment; it is a practice of emotional courage.

Nahlana T. Kreshnan is a somatic psychotherapist and life and executive coach.

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Young and broke: Symptom of Malaysia's deeper financial challenges



THE alarming rise in bankruptcy among Malaysian youths is a critical issue, with 877 cases reported in 2024 and over 5,000 since 2020.

This trend highlights the significant financial challenges facing the younger population and calls for immediate action to address the underlying causes.

Multiple factors contribute to this phenomenon – including personal loans, business loans, housing and vehicle loans – compounded by a lack of financial literacy.

Tackling youth bankruptcy requires a collaborative approach involving individuals, communities and policymakers.

Many young individuals resort to personal loans to bridge income gaps or fulfil lifestyle aspirations, often without understanding repayment terms. Similarly, business loans have contributed to the rising bankruptcy figures as young entrepreneurs struggle to navigate the complexities of managing finances in competitive industries.

The lack of adequate financial planning and business acumen often exacerbates their financial challenges, leading to insolvency.

Another major contributor to youth bankruptcy is the high housing and vehicle ownership cost. Malaysia's

younger generation often aspires to achieve milestones such as owning a home or car, which can strain their finances. These aspirations are further compounded by the increasing cost of living, making it difficult for many to meet their loan obligations.

Additionally, other types of debt, such as credit card liabilities and income tax, have contributed to the rising trend of bankruptcies. The failure to contribute to retirement savings, such as those required by the Employees Provident Fund, also adds to the financial instability many young Malaysians face.

One of the root causes behind these financial challenges is the lack of financial literacy among youths. Many young individuals lack the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about managing their finances. This gap in financial education often results in poor budgeting, excessive borrowing and an inability to manage debt effectively.

Without a strong foundation in financial literacy, youths are more likely to fall into financial traps. To address this pressing issue, comprehensive solutions must be implemented.

First and foremost, financial literacy programmes should be made widely accessible to young Malaysians.

Initiatives such as the Youth Financial Literacy Programme can educate youth about responsible financial management, budgeting and the risks of excessive borrowing.



Organisations such as AKPK provide invaluable services to individuals struggling with debts. – BERNAMAPIC

By equipping young individuals with the tools to make informed financial decisions, such programmes can help prevent future bankruptcy cases. Debt management support is another essential component of the solution. Organisations such as the Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency (AKPK) provide invaluable services to individuals struggling with debts.

These agencies offer counselling, financial education and debt management plans to help individuals regain control of their finances. Expanding access to such services and raising awareness about their availability can significantly benefit youths facing financial challenges.

Economic empowerment

initiatives are also vital in addressing youth bankruptcy. Programmes that focus on alleviating the cost of living and enhancing economic resilience can provide young Malaysians with the support they need to overcome financial hurdles.

For example, targeted subsidies, affordable housing schemes and skills development programmes can help reduce the financial burden on the younger generation.

Policy interventions are equally important. The government should encourage responsible lending practices by financial institutions to ensure that loans are offered based on individuals' repayment capacity.

Additionally, amendments to insolvency laws, such as those under

the Insolvency Act, can relieve individuals seeking to resolve their financial difficulties.

Policymakers should also prioritise incorporating financial education into school curricula to ensure that future generations are better prepared to manage their finances.

Community support and cultural shifts are other factors in preventing youth bankruptcy. Building a culture of financial awareness and responsible spending within communities can empower young individuals to make prudent financial choices.

Encouraging open discussions about finances and seeking support from peers and mentors can also reduce the stigma associated with financial difficulties.

The rising bankruptcy rates among Malaysian youths highlight the need for immediate and comprehensive action. By addressing the root causes and implementing solutions like financial education, debt management support and policy interventions, Malaysia can pave the way for a more financially stable future for its youths.

This collaborative effort is essential to ensure that the next generation is equipped to achieve financial independence and resilience.

Dr Cheah Chan Fatt is a research fellow at the Ungku Aziz Centre for Development Studies, Universiti Malaysia.

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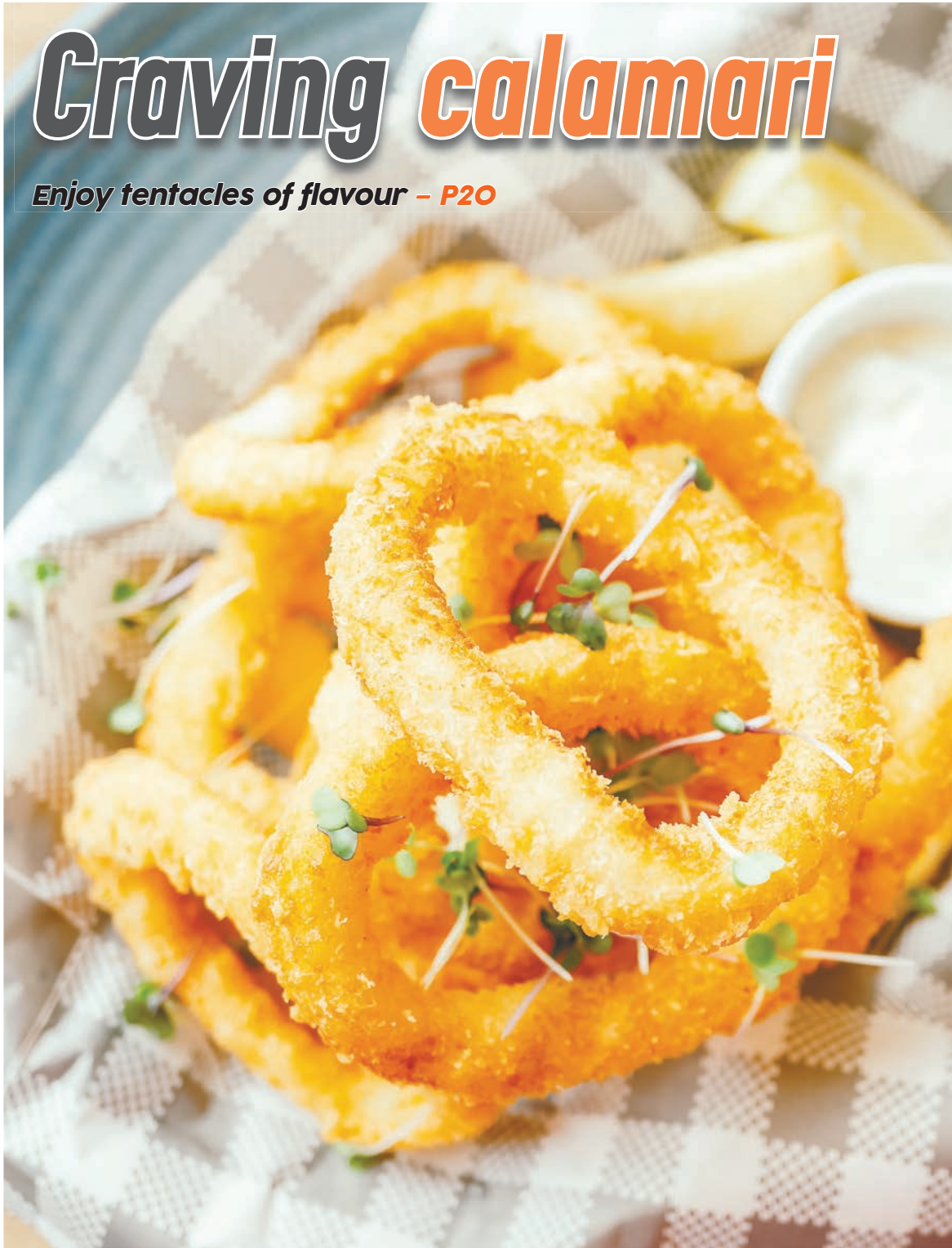
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Craving calamari

Enjoy tentacles of flavour – P20



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Elizabeth Tan in
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BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN



CALAMARI, or squid, is a seafood delight that takes on flavours beautifully. Its tender yet chewy texture makes it a favourite across the globe. Here are eight standout calamari dishes ideal for any day you are craving something a little extra from the sea:

Sambal calamari stir-fry

Spicy, savoury and packed with heat, this Malaysian-inspired dish is a go-to for spice lovers.

Ingredients

500g cleaned calamari, cut into rings
2 tablespoons oil
1 onion, sliced
2 tablespoons *sambal belacan* (or store-bought *sambal*)
1 teaspoon sugar
Salt to taste
1 tablespoon lime juice
Optional: Sliced bird's eye chilli for extra heat

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a wok. Saute onions until soft.
2. Add sambal and sugar, and cook until fragrant.
3. Toss in calamari and cook for 3-4 minutes on high heat.
4. Season with salt and lime juice.
5. Serve hot with steamed rice.

Salt & pepper calamari

A Chinese restaurant favourite with a satisfying crunch and peppery finish.

Ingredients

500g calamari rings
3 tablespoons cornflour
1 tablespoon plain flour
1 teaspoon white pepper
Salt to taste
1 fresh chilli, sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
Spring onions, chopped
Oil for deep frying

Instructions

1. Mix cornflour, flour, pepper and salt. Coat calamari evenly.
2. Deep-fry until golden and crispy, then drain.
3. In a separate pan, saute garlic and chilli.
4. Toss in the fried calamari and spring onions quickly.
5. Serve immediately for the best crunch.

Thai calamari salad (*yam pla muek*)

Zesty and refreshing, this Thai-style salad balances spice, sourness and sweetness beautifully.

Ingredients

500g calamari, boiled for 1-2 minutes
1 red onion, thinly sliced
1 tomato, diced



Salt and pepper calamari is a lightly crisped favourite at Chinese restaurants. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @SPICE AND PANS**



Thai calamari salad balances spice, sourness and sweetness beautifully. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @NUTH AND NIKY**



Creamy risotto brightened with calamari and lemon zest. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @RECIPES**



- 2-3 minutes.
3. Toss in capsicum and udon noodles.
4. Add sauces, sugar and black pepper. Stir well.
5. Serve hot, garnished with spring onions if desired.

Calamari risotto with lemon zest

A creamy Italian-style risotto infused with citrusy brightness and tender squid for an elegant dish.

Ingredients

500g calamari, cut into small pieces
1 cup Arborio rice
1 small onion, finely chopped
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 cup dry white wine
4 cups warm fish or vegetable stock
Zest of 1 lemon
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan
Salt and pepper
Fresh parsley

Instructions

1. In a pan, saute onion in olive oil. Add rice and stir until glossy.
2. Pour in wine and let it absorb.
3. Gradually add stock, one ladle at a time, stirring constantly.
4. When rice is nearly done (about 15 minutes), stir in calamari.
5. Add lemon zest, Parmesan and seasoning. Garnish with parsley.

Calamari tacos with mango salsa

A playful Western fusion dish ideal for sharing with loved ones.

Ingredients

500g calamari, coated in flour and lightly fried
6 small taco shells
1 ripe mango, diced
1/2 red onion, diced
1 red chilli, sliced
Juice of 1 lime
Salt to taste
Fresh coriander
Optional: Sour cream or sriracha mayo

Instructions

1. Combine mango, onion, chilli, lime juice and salt to make salsa.
2. Fry calamari until golden and crispy.
3. Warm taco shells slightly.
4. Fill with calamari, top with mango salsa and coriander.
5. Drizzle with sour cream or spicy mayo if desired.

With Asian spices that wake up your taste buds and Western classics that feel like home, these recipes prove that squid is not just a fancy appetiser but also the star of any meal.



Crispy calamari tucked in tacos with sweet mango salsa. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @SUGAR FREE**

Culinary adventures with calamari

➤ Eight irresistible squid dishes

Fresh coriander and mint
1 tablespoon fish sauce
Juice of 1 lime
1 teaspoon sugar
1 chilli, chopped (adjust to taste)

Instructions

1. Boil calamari briefly, then cool under cold water.
2. Mix fish sauce, lime juice, sugar and chilli in a bowl.
3. Toss calamari with the dressing, onion, tomato and herbs.
4. Chill before serving for extra freshness.

Grilled calamari with garlic butter

A Mediterranean-inspired dish that is simple but full of rich, buttery flavour.

Ingredients

500g whole calamari, cleaned



Smoky, tender calamari glazed in rich garlic butter. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @DEVILISHLY FAVOURITE FOOD**

3 tablespoons melted butter
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon lemon zest
Juice of half a lemon
Salt and pepper
Chopped parsley

Instructions

1. Marinate calamari in butter, garlic, lemon zest, juice, salt and pepper.
2. Grill for 2-3 minutes per side until lightly charred.
3. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

Calamari rings with tartare sauce

The Western classic that is crispy on the outside and tender inside, with creamy dip on the side.

Ingredients

500g calamari rings
1 cup flour
2 eggs, beaten
1 cup breadcrumbs
Salt and pepper
Oil for deep frying
Ready-made tartare sauce or mayo with pickles and lemon juice

Instructions

1. Season calamari with salt and pepper.



Golden-fried calamari rings served with tangy tartare. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @CHEF'S PENCIL**

2. Coat in flour, dip in egg, then breadcrumbs.
3. Deep-fry until golden.
4. Serve hot with tartare sauce on the side.

Calamari black pepper udon

This stir-fried noodle dish delivers bold *umami* notes with a peppery kick.

Ingredients

400g calamari rings
2 packs fresh udon noodles
2 tablespoons oyster sauce
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon oil
1/2 onion, sliced
1/2 capsicum, sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced

Instructions

1. Heat oil in a wok. Saute garlic and onion until soft.
2. Add calamari and cook for



Stir-fried udon noodles with calamari and bold black pepper. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @OKI**

If you have ever visited Malacca, you would know that its streets echo with history. A stroll down Bukit Beruang, a small town in Malacca, will lead you to an unassuming cafe, where opening its doors will lead to something much more significant.

It is here that Peranakan Chinese Shyre May is blending theatre and her heritage in ways that breathe new life into local traditions. Her mission? To use art as a bridge to connect people with the vibrant, yet often overlooked, Peranakan culture.

Previously, Shyre was everything but traditional. Born and raised in Malacca, her artistic ambitions began with a love for painting and storytelling, but it was through theatre that she found her true calling.

"I wanted to be an artist. And that is how Krate came about."

Krate, Shyre's theatre company-cum-cafe, started in 2016 as a small creative project that gave her a space to teach drama and produce performances.

"I rented a run-down terrace house to create a space where I could do art, storytelling and community-building," the 32-year-old recalled.

Little did she know, this was just the beginning of her journey into exploring her roots.

While Shyre had always known she was Peranakan, it was in her 2022 short film production *Rosie's Diaries*, which tells the story of a young Peranakan bride, that her passion for the culture really took off.

"The more I learned and researched, the more fascinated I became. The Peranakan culture is so rich and colorful," she said.

As she delved deeper into her Peranakan roots, Shyre saw an opportunity: modern audiences were not connecting with traditional Peranakan performances. So, she reinvented them through various self-written performances and musicals. One of them was *The Best Nyonya* that sold out multiple runs and drew over 2,000 attendees.

Where heritage meets digital

But it was not just theatre that carried Shyre's message – it was video platforms such as TikTok.

"I posted about *kebaya* and my creative process just for fun. Then people started asking questions,



Where good food meets good company.

Cafe for creatives

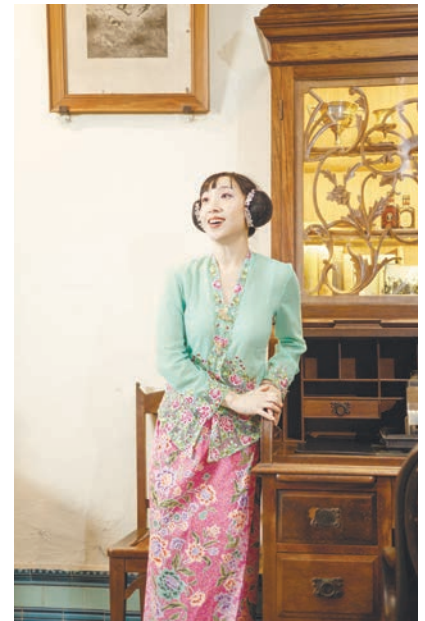
► Peranakan Chinese blends food, culture, heritage



The Ultimate Sandwich at Krate Cafe.



Traditional Nyonya pineapple tarts.



Shyre embraces her heritage in a Nyonya kebaya.



Krate's menu. – PICS FROM FACEBOOK @KRATE.MY

wanting to learn more," she said.

What started as casual content turned into a newfound passion. Her TikTok, filled with fun facts and stories about her heritage as well as updates about her shows, reaches new audiences every day and proves to all that the Peranakan culture is not a relic at all.

As she continues to push the boundaries of her creativity and become a jack of all trades, Shyre hopes to continue making the Peranakan heritage accessible to all, while serving guests the best cup of coffee, pastries, desserts and more at Krate in Bukit Beruang. And for those who have been lucky enough

to experience her performances, there is no doubt that this Peranakan storyteller has a unique way of making the past feel exciting and relevant to today's world.

In fact, this month, in collaboration with Nyonya Palazzo, which offers a cultural experience of heritage, fashion, food and

photography under one roof, Shyre will be showcasing *The Best Nyonya* at Georgetown Mansion, Penang.

This marks Krate's first-ever performance in Penang, and audiences can expect an interactive experience – complete with Nyonya *kuih* and the chance to be styled in a *baju kebaya*.

China shows sustained appetite for Malaysian durians

THE volume of China's durian imports from Malaysia is expected to increase by between 15% and 20% this year, driven by sustained consumer demand despite recent weather-related challenges in Malaysia, according to the Malaysia Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China.

Its chairman Loh Wee Keng said demand from Chinese consumers continues to outpace supply, particularly for premium varieties such as Musang King and D24.

"Although heavy rain in Malaysia caused some fruits to drop prematurely, I foresee the overall export volume this year to be 15% to 20% higher compared to last year," he said, adding that demand remains robust in the China market.

He explained that Malaysia's Musang King continues to command strong interest, especially among premium fruit consumers in China.

"Right now, it is impossible to get



Malaysia durians are in high demand in China. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

Grade A Musang King below RM30 per kg at farm price. During the off-season like May, prices can go up to RM80 per kg. For D24, the lowest is about RM15 per kg," he said.

According to China's Agriculture Ministry, the country imported 19.25 million kg of durians from Malaysia worth US\$212.05 million (RM1 billion) between January and December

last year.

Fifteen years ago, Loh said the farm price for frozen Musang King was about RM25 per kg and could drop as low as RM12 per kg during peak season.

"While for frozen D24, the highest could be RM15 per kg, the lowest can come to RM3 per kg," he said.

He also said Malaysia started to export durians to China since 2010.

"We are not competing with Thai durians because the prices and quality are completely separate matters. We are actually competing with kiwis and cherries as well as those products from Japan such as strawberries and grapes," he pointed out.

Loh, who had pioneered Malaysia's frozen durian exports to China following Beijing's approval in 2011, said industry players must protect the integrity of the Malaysian durian brands in China.

"Some traders mislabel kampung

durians and sell them as Musang King to get higher profits. This is damaging. Even kampung durians have a market if sold honestly. We have to educate Chinese consumers on the real characteristics of Musang King, D24 and others," he emphasised.

He also said the Chinese government has been supportive and has shown leniency on Malaysian durian exports due to strong diplomatic ties. Hence, he said businesses must maintain the reputation and bilateral relations.

Commenting on attempts to cultivate Musang King on China's Hainan island, Loh said the results have not matched the standards of Malaysian-grown durians.

"There was initial excitement, but it faded quickly. The taste is different due to the soil and climate. My friend also tried growing it here, but it was not successful. Hainan Musang King cannot replace the Malaysia original," he added. – Bernama



Home chefs battle it out in live showdown

HOME cooking recently took centre stage at 1 Mont Kiara as eight home chefs battled it out in the first-ever Prego Home Chef Live Showdown.

Held at the mall's concourse area, the competition brought culinary skills to life as contestants competed for the coveted title and a grand prize of RM2,000.

All eight had earned their place after winning Prego's earlier Master the Menu contest, qualifying them for this live cook-off.

The event, organised by Prego, consisted of two rounds: a preliminary cook-off and a high-stakes final where only two chefs advanced.

In the preliminary round, contestants were judged by food content creator Nurul Ain and professional chef Jay, founder of Base Pasta & Bistro.

The final round placed the decision in the hands of the audience, who voted for the ultimate winner.

Emerging as the champion was Jeanette Faustina Effendi, who impressed judges and the crowd despite facing hurdles during the competition.

It marked her first live cooking contest and her first experience preparing food with plastic gloves.

Jeanette's opening dish, a Chicken Parmigiana featuring tomato-based pasta topped with fried chicken and melted cheese, drew praise for its subtle Japanese flavour, a nod to her inspiration from chicken katsu.

In the final round, the top two contestants faced a new challenge: creating a dish for 10 people within 45 minutes using Prego ingredients and two shrimps.

Jeanette adapted quickly, preparing a cream-based pasta accented with lemon juice to balance the richness, while finely mincing the shrimps as the dish's main protein.

Her careful attention to flavour and balance helped her edge out fellow finalist Siti Zaitun by a single vote from the enthusiastic crowd.

Even after injuring her finger with a knife during the competition, Jeanette remained calm and carried on.

"I just joined for fun and did not expect to win. I am used to cooking for my friends who often come over every weekend – sometimes up to 15 people," she shared.

The Prego Home Chef Live Showdown aimed to celebrate culinary creativity while showcasing resilience and resourcefulness in the kitchen.



Jeanette in the final stages of preparing her cream-based pasta during the last round of the competition.



TLFP Royal Patron Raja Permaisuri Perak Tuanku Zara Salim touring the new facility.

The Lost Food Project marks 10 years with new facility

» NGO reaffirms mission to battle hunger

FOOD bank NGO The Lost Food Project (TLFP) recently moved to its new "home" in Chan Sow Lin, located right in the city centre.

The milestone commemorates 10 years of bridging the gap between surplus and need – a mission that has nourished hundreds of thousands of lives while protecting the environment, and also coincides with Malaysia's commitment to national food security and sustainable development.

This move marks a step forward in TLFP's mission to combat hunger and reduce food waste – vital components of Malaysia's National Food Security Policy Action Plan 2021–2025.

The new facility enhances TLFP's ability

to scale its operations, improve food handling capacity and increase efficiency in rescuing and redistributing surplus, nutritious food to those in need.

TLFP founder Suzanne Mooney said: "With this new space, we are able to rescue and distribute more food than ever before – efficiently, safely and with dignity."

"As we celebrate our 10th anniversary, this facility is not just about growth – it is a reflection of the strength of our community, our partners and our volunteers. Together, we have proven that no good food should go to waste while people go hungry."

The new sorting hub will enable TLFP to increase its capacity to rescue surplus, nutritious food from landfills and redirect it to vulnerable communities. This directly supports Malaysia's goals to reduce food loss, enhance the resilience of local food systems and uplift underserved populations – all while lowering the carbon footprint of the nation's food supply chain.

"Malaysia has made food security a national priority, and our work proves that food rescue must be part of that conversation," added Mooney.

Since its founding in 2015, TLFP has served 25 million meals to date through the rescue of 9 million kg of surplus food while avoiding 22 million kg of greenhouse gas emissions. TLFP's efforts contribute to more than 20,000 B40 families, 150,000 underserved people, 50 PPRs and 107 charities across Malaysia on a monthly basis.

The new facility was made possible through the support of Pos Malaysia, donors, corporate partners and government collaborators who share TLFP's vision of a more equitable and sustainable food system.

As TLFP steps into its second decade, the organisation reaffirmed its commitment to systemic change through advocacy, education and community empowerment.

New range of marinade pastes for air fryers

WITH air fryers now found in 42% of Malaysian households, the trend towards fast, convenient home-cooked meals has never been stronger. Responding to this growing shift, Nestle Malaysia has launched its new Maggi air fryer-friendly range of marinade pastes for "perap", featuring a new satay variant alongside its repositioned marinade range.

Malaysia is one of the first markets globally where these pastes, designed for air fryers, have been introduced. They make enjoying the authentic taste of Malaysian favourites easy.

Made with fresh, high-quality ingredients, these marinade pastes are crafted by Maggi's chefs authentic to the way they are traditionally prepared – as if cooked from scratch.

Doing away with time-consuming preparation, they offer a convenient solution in just two easy steps – marinate and air fry. So,



The Maggi air fryer-friendly "perap" marinade series makes enjoying the authentic taste of Malaysian favourites easy.

it is easier than ever to serve beloved local flavours, even on the busiest of days.

The new Maggi air fryer-friendly "perap" marinade series features four Malaysian

flavours, each crafted with fresh ingredients and a rich blend of traditional spices:

- **Ayam Goreng Berempah** is made with fresh onions and a delicious blend of spices.
- **Ayam Perik** combines fresh onions, garlic and lemongrass for a balanced mix of sweet and spicy flavours.
- The **Black Pepper** variant features a blend of black pepper and fresh onions.
- The new **Satay** variant is made with lemongrass, turmeric and aromatic spices to deliver the iconic taste beloved by Malaysians.

This marinade paste range aims to allow consumers to spend less time in the kitchen and more quality time enjoying good food moments with loved ones.

The Maggi air fryer-friendly marinade series is available at major hypermarkets and supermarkets nationwide at a recommended retail price of RM4.90 per pack, with a serving size of six portions.



A worker holding the fruit of a coffee plant at the Tianyuzhuang coffee plantation in Pu'er.



Coffee plants (foreground) and rows of tea plants (centre) at the Tianyuzhuang coffee plantation in Pu'er.



Shihao pouring coffee for a guest at the Xiaowazi coffee plantation.

AT a mountainside cafe in southwestern China, Liao Shihao brews handfuls of locally grown coffee beans, a modern twist on the region's traditional drink. For centuries, Pu'er in Yunnan province has given its name to a type of richly fermented tea – sometimes styled *pu-erh* – famous across East Asia and beyond. But as younger Chinese cultivate a taste for punchy espressos, frothy lattes and flat whites, growers are increasingly branching out into tea's historic rival.

"People are coming to try our hand-drip coffee... and more fully experience the flavours it brings. In the past, they mostly went for commercial coffee and would not dabble in the artisanal varieties," said Shihao, 25.

Shihao's family has run the Xiaowazi, or Little Hollow, coffee plantation for three generations. Nestled in a shady valley, spindly coffee trees line its steep hillsides, their cherry-like fruit drying on wooden pallets outside.

When visited this month, clusters of tourists sipped boutique brews in the airy cafe overlooking its verdant slopes.

"It is very good," said Cai Shuwen, 21, as he perched on a bar stool lifting sample after sample to his lips.

"Even though some beans are more astringent than I imagined, others have exceeded my expectations."

Brewing success

Every year, Pu'er's plantations sell tens of thousands of tons of coffee to major Chinese cities, according to government data.

In metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai, a thriving cafe scene has emerged in recent years, driven by people aged between 20 and 40.

To Liao, a trained roaster and

China develops taste for coffee

» Local bean growers make tourism part of business



A worker raking coffee beans during the drying process at the Xiaowazi coffee plantation. – ALL PICS FROM AFP

barista, coffee from his home region possesses "a creamy flavour with a silky, viscous mouthfeel".

Modern commercial plantations only sprang up in Pu'er in the 1980s, and the area is still better known for its centuries-old tea trade.

Liao's grandfather Liao Xiugui said "nobody knew anything about coffee" when he arrived in Pu'er a few

decades ago.

At the time, the older man was one of few people in China who had studied coffee cultivation. But the region's relatively high altitude and temperate climate were well-suited to the unfamiliar crop, said the now 83-year-old.

"The quality of the coffee we plant here is strong but not too bitter, floral

but not too heady, and slightly fruity," he added.

Free from artificial pesticides and interspersed with other species for biodiversity, Little Hollow yields about 500 tons of raw coffee fruit per year.

Xiugui himself drinks two or three cups a day, and credits the caffeinated beverage for keeping him

spry in his advanced years.

"Drinking coffee can make you younger and healthier... and prevent ageing. Also, everyone is tired at work these days... and they want to give their brains a boost," he smiled.

Richer pickings

China's coffee output has risen dramatically in recent years, though it still lags far behind traditional powerhouses such as Brazil, Vietnam and Colombia.

Yunnan, near three borders with Southeast Asian nations, accounts for virtually all of China's coffee production, much of it concentrated in Pu'er.

On a visit to Yunnan last month, Chinese President Xi Jinping said the province's coffee "represents China", according to state media.

Keen to further expand the sector, officials have rolled out policies to improve production, attract investment and boost exports, according to government statements.

They have also merged coffee production with tourism, dovetailing with a central government push to increase domestic consumption.

Longtime farmer Yu Dun, 51, said she had opened new income streams with plantation tours, homestays and a restaurant fusing coffee with the cuisine of her native Dai ethnicity.

Her prospects were bright, she said, adding that she also earned "10 times" more revenue from her beans since learning to process and roast them herself.

"We used to say only rich people could drink coffee, but that has all changed now," she said. – AFP

French pastry chefs complete 'world's longest cake'

ARMED with 4,000 eggs and a truckload of sugar and cream, French pastry chefs recently completed a 121.8m-long strawberry cake which they have claimed is the world's longest ever made.

Youssef El Gatou brought together 20 chefs to make the 1.2-tonne masterpiece that took a week to complete and was set out on tables in an ice rink in the Paris suburb town of Argenteuil for residents to inspect.

The effort overtook a 100.48m-long strawberry cake made in the Italian town of San Mauro Torinese in 2019.

El Gatou's cake also used 350kg of strawberries, 150kg of sugar and 415kg of cream.

To claim the record in the Guinness book, the cake had to be at least 8cm wide and 8cm tall. The logistics were so difficult that the team "used blowtorches to heat the bowl" for the



Pastry chefs work on the strawberry cake, measuring 121.8m in length, during a Guinness World Record event in Argenteuil.

cream mix, said the chef's wife Nadia El Gatou.

Youssef said that since a child, he

had wanted to set a record.

"I was looking for a product or a French pastry, and I also wanted to



Pastry chefs celebrate their achievement and the cake made using 350kg of strawberries, 150kg of sugar and 415kg of cream. – ALL PICS FROM AFP

highlight farm produce, so French strawberries and products such as milk, cream and butter," he said.

Residents of Argenteuil who went to see the calorie-packed record-breaker were given a piece to take away. – AFP



WHAT began as a daringly spicy noodle in South Korea has become a global food icon, and Samyang Foods Inc is showing no signs of slowing down.

With exports surpassing US\$1 billion (RM4.31 billion) last year, the brand behind the iconic Buldak Bokkeummyeon has ignited taste buds, trends and trade charts in over 100 countries, including Malaysia.

Seoul-based Samyang Foods Inc attributed the export surge, up 65% from the previous year, to the company's laser focus on consumer reactions.

"We created the taste of the street food that foreign visitors used to gather around in Myeongdong. Based on this experience, we have set a goal to spread Korea's spicy flavour globally," said the company.

According to Yonhap News



Samyang Foods says the popularity of its Buldak noodles has introduced Korean spicy food culture to the world. — 123RF/PIC

Korean ramen goes global

► How Buldak spicy noodles became foundation for culinary empire



The Buldak Challenge, a social media phenomenon dating back to 2014, has boosted the noodles' popularity. — PIC FROM FACEBOOK @JUSTTWOCENTS

Agency, exports accounted for 77% of Samyang's total revenue, which reached 1.73 trillion won (RM6.9 billion) last year.

Samyang's momentum was

further bolstered by the Buldak Challenge, a social media phenomenon that began in 2014 and sparked international curiosity about Korean spicy ramen.

Samyang said the virality of the *mukbang* challenge had significantly boosted brand visibility and led to stronger digital marketing strategies.

The company also credited its proactive approach to *halal* certification as a key to penetrating Muslim-majority markets, including Malaysia and Indonesia.

"This strategic step helped us broaden our reach and diversify product offerings, including flavours inspired by Thai cuisine and *halal*-compliant snacks," it said.

The company further noted the global demand for spicy noodles has contributed positively to South Korea's food export sector.

The US and China remain among Samyang's most influential export destinations.

The US market, bolstered by the *mukbang* trend and a growing interest in Asian flavours, saw accelerated demand, while China's appetite for spicy food – combined with the brand's localisation strategy – drove rapid growth.

"The popularity of Buldak has introduced Korean spicy food culture to the world, particularly among younger generations. It has also enhanced the international perception of Korean cuisine," the company added.

To meet global demand, Samyang is expanding its production infrastructure, including the construction of its first overseas plant in China, scheduled for completion by 2027.

Asked about lessons for Malaysian manufacturers, the company emphasised the importance of authenticity.

"Buldak succeeded due to its originality. We did not push the trend – we allowed the spicy culture led by consumers to thrive organically. Malaysia's cuisine has the same global potential," it said.

Samyang also offers variants tailored to different regional preferences, including cheese, carbonara and country-specific flavours such as Poo-Phad-Pong Curry in China.

While the Scoville scale, a measurement used to quantify the pungency or spiciness of chilli peppers and other substances, remains the standard for gauging spiciness, the company continues to adapt its products to suit consumer preferences and meet safety regulations in each market.

Beyond product innovation, Samyang highlighted its commitment to corporate social responsibility, including the development of eco-friendly production systems, nutritionally balanced foods and community-based initiatives.

"We are committed to sustainable growth in harmony with nature," the company said.

From its humble beginnings in Seoul's food alleys to reaching homes in over 100 countries, Samyang's global journey is viewed as a case study in strategic branding, cultural export and responsive innovation. — Bernama

Wonders of chocolate's base ingredient

CACAO beans have uses that go beyond being the base ingredient of our hot chocolate mixes or the traditional Easter treats to hide in the garden. Today, cacao beans are processed in all sorts of ways to make the most of every part of the bean. Here are a few examples of how cacao beans are utilised:

Cacao water

Mucilage – a whitish pulp that surrounds fresh beans. South American workers who harvest the pods have long been used to sucking this white material-like candy. There are now several ways to make use of this raw material, including as cacao water.

A simple cold extraction process produces a juice with a tangy taste that is rich in antioxidants and theobromine, an energiser similar to caffeine. In late 2021, chocolate giant Barry Callebaut announced it

had spotted a new opportunity by launching its first functional beverage, made from cacao fruit.

Mucilage in fine dining dessert creations

In the world of pastry, mucilage is a novel ingredient that some top chefs are experimenting with. Its fruity flavour has serious potential for creating a new kind of chocolate dessert. At the Four Seasons George V hotel in Paris, the young prodigy Michael Bartocetti sources it from Vietnam.

As building material

In Ecuador, an architectural project aims to build an eco-village made up of sustainable buildings constructed from recycled cacao bean waste.

This raw material gets fed into 3D printers to produce fibers capable of constructing buildings

in an area traditionally used for cacao cultivation. Ecuadorian brand Muze Cacao is a partner for this vast project.

In cosmetics

In Cote d'Ivoire, the leading cacao-producing country, an artisan chocolatier (Le Chocolatier Ivoirien), who launched his brand to demonstrate that the country also had the skills to transform the raw material into chocolate bars, recently initiated a project to recycle cacao beans into powder for use in make-up foundation.

In fact, the entrepreneur is turning the technique of using cocoa powder as foundation for black skin into a commercial venture. It is a trick that legendary make-up artist Pat McGrath spoke about when discussing the beauty industry's long journey to producing for diverse skin tones.



Cacao can be used for a variety of sustainable and eco-friendly applications. — 123RF/PIC

In fragrance

It is only a short step from cosmetics to perfumery. The TechnicoFlor group, which develops aromatic compositions for perfume

houses, has unveiled some surprising fragrances all based on the reuse of waste products, including cacao extracted from pods. — ETX Studio

BY JOHN TAN

ELIZABETH Tan Su Mei has frequently played police officers in local movies and dramas. Be it her role in *Sheriff: Narco Integrity* or *Special Force: Anarchy*, the 31-year-old Kuala Lumpur native's filmography mostly consists of "masculine" police characters.

But Tan is switching things up with her role in the upcoming film *Wantugo*. Slated for release sometime this year, the actress-singer will star alongside actors Meerqeen, Zul Ariffin and Daiyan Trisha in the first local battle royale film.

The battle royale genre centres around a select group of people who are forced to kill one another for their own survival. *Wantugo* will be no different as the film follows a group of friends known as "The Clique", who find themselves unwitting participants in a deadly game.

Under the watchful eye of a mysterious game master, they must navigate through three game stages, where only the last survivor will earn their freedom.

As the stakes escalate, the group discovers that these games are intricately connected to their shared past involving their former college friend Luqman, sparking tensions in the group.

Tan's character Isabelle is one of the group's members. In an interview with *theSun*, she dishes on her role and experience shooting the film.

Why did you agree to get on board?

Malaysia has not done a movie like this before. Korea has done it quite a few times, Hollywood as well. But

Surviving deadly games

► Elizabeth Tan on starring in Malaysia's first battle royale film *Wantugo*

Malaysia has never had a movie in the death game genre.

So, it is quite interesting. It is fun and it has been fun shooting it. I hope audiences will enjoy watching it.

What can you say about Isabelle?

She is actually five months pregnant and she has always dreamt of becoming a mother. So, she is protective of her baby and herself.

Most of the characters I played before were police officers. I was masculine for the roles. But now, I get to be feminine. I changed my voice tone. I spoke in a higher tone, a more feminine range.

I am also playing a pregnant woman for the first time. That is what I like about playing this character. It was challenging for me because it was something new. I hope I gave justice to the role.

If you could switch characters, who would you want to play?

No, I would not want to get into other characters. I love my character Isabelle. She is a good character to



Tan often plays police officers in local movies and dramas.
— PICS COURTESY OF XENO ENTERTAINMENT



Tan says her movie role is something new and challenging for her.

play with.

What are some difficult scenes your character goes through?

Without revealing too much, I had to shoot a cold scene. It was -5°C and for

five days in a row. I had quite a lot of dialogue and I am personally bad at being in cold places.

Plus, we had no jackets, nothing. We just shot in our regular outfits in -5°C. But I just focus on knowing my

lines. It helped me give my best even though it was -5°C.

Any new music on the way?

I just released a new song and music video for my song *Rezeki*. I also have an English song with Talitha Tan and Claudia Tan. The three Tans. People always ask us if we are sisters or cousins. But we are absolutely not related. Claudia wrote the song and produced it with her boyfriend Erwin.

It is called *Girlfriend Material* and that is hopefully coming out this year as well. But we have not shot a music video for that yet. It is going to be girly pop.

What is on your bucket list this year?

My plan, since last year, has been to get a baby. I have been trying for one year actually. Hence, this character Isabelle resonates a lot with me. She is finally pregnant and she is just trying to protect the baby.

She does not want the baby to die basically. I relate because last year, I had two miscarriages. I am also focusing on my job. If I get more opportunities to do movies, I will definitely take it.



Tan plays a pregnant woman in the upcoming movie.

— PIC COURTESY OF ASTRO SHAW



Tan reveals that shooting scenes in the extreme cold for the movie proved challenging. — PIC COURTESY OF SYAFIQ MOHTAR



SCAN ME

HYPE ZONE

Haikyuu Pop Up Store

Date: April 21 - May 4

Time: 10am - 10pm daily

Venue: 1 Utama Shopping Centre (First Floor, Centre Court)

Admission: Free

A pop-up event for fans of the beloved Japanese volleyball anime and manga series *Haikyuu*, where exclusive merchandise such as t-shirts, badges, coasters, phone straps, hoodies, pillows and more await.



Events listing



UA Infinite Race

Date: May 3

Time: 8pm

Venue: Sunway BRT Line

Admission: For Individual Category, RM119 (Super Early Bird), RM140 (Early Bird) and RM160 for regular pricing. For Relay Category, RM199 (Early Bird), RM220 and RM240. One for marathon enthusiasts and runners, Under Armour's night run will see participants competing to complete two laps around the Sunway BRT Line for a total of 21.1km.

Malaysian-Asean Youth SDG Summit 2025

Date: May 10

Time: 10am

Venue: The Secret Garden @ 1 Utama Shopping Centre

Admission: RM10

The summit is a full-day convergence of youth changemakers, policymakers, educators and corporate leaders committed to accelerating sustainability and inclusion in Malaysia and the Asean region.



Jameson Distilled Sounds

Date: May 17

Time: 6pm - 12am

Venue: The Zhongshan Building, The Courtyard, Kantata and Triptik

Admission: Free

From Talitha Tan to Chasey Lain, the latest edition of Jameson Distilled Sounds by Jameson will see 18 artistes converge on the Zhongshan Building and adjacent locations for a night of eclectic sounds and vibes.



AmBank Malaysia Pickleball Championship 2025

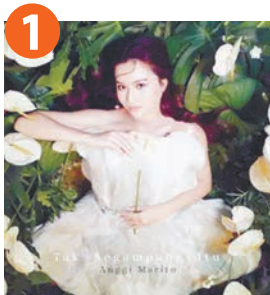
Date: May 30 - June 1

Venue: Pickle Nation, Shah Alam

Admission: Registration fees at RM200 for Open, RM170 for

Intermediate and RM170 for Novice. As part of AmBank Group's 50th anniversary, the championship will see 500 pickleball and sports enthusiasts, including first-time players to seasoned pros, competing.

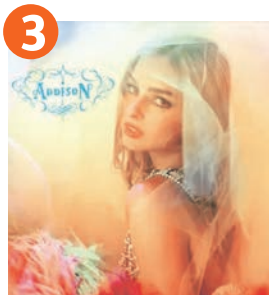
Lyfe's chartbusters - PICS FROM APPLE MUSIC



Song: Tak Segampang Itu
Album: Tak Segampang Itu (Single)
Artist: Anggi Marito



Song: Ennadi Maayavi Nee
Album: VadaChennai
Artist: Sid Sriram



Song: Headphones On
Album: Addison
Artist: Addison Rae



Song: Hands Up
Album: Hands Up (Single)
Artist: MeoVV



Song: Call It Off
Album: Orenjii
Artist: Emotional Oranges (feat. Jaehyun)

ROHIT SHARMA shined with the bat and Karn Sharma spearheaded a fine collective bowling effort as Mumbai Indians cruised to a massive 100-run win over Rajasthan Royals on Thursday, officially ending their opponents' chances of reaching the playoffs.

Rohit smacked 53 runs of 36 balls as Mumbai posted 217-2 after being invited to bat first at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur.

Indian pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Karn then picked up a combined total of five wickets to help bowl out Rajasthan for 117 in 16.1 overs after teenage sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi fell to a two-ball duck.

The match extends Mumbai Indians winning streak to six games and pushes them to the top of the points table.

Mumbai skipper Hardik Pandya said the team were going back to "simple" cricket with clinical batting and bowling performances.

"As a group, the way we batted was proper batsmanship..." said Hardik. "Everyone is really clear. We're going back to simple cricket, and it's working for that. We want to take game by game, and be humble and disciplined."

Rajasthan Royals captain Riyan Parag was left to rue a misfiring middle order after the IPL champions became the second team to be eliminated from the playoff race this season.

"We've been getting good starts, but it's up to the middle order - myself, Dhruv (Jurel) - to step up in the middle overs," Parag said after their loss in Jaipur.

"When we lose wickets in the powerplay, (we) couldn't just do it. We still back ourselves that if a similar situation comes in the next

Rohit, Karn shine



Mumbai Indians' Rohit Sharma.
- AFP/PIC

Mumbai eliminates Rajasthan from IPL playoff race with bruising win

game, we should be up for it."

Rajasthan's strategy at the pre-season players' auction surprised many when they released the likes of English batter Jos Buttler and New Zealand seamer Trent Boult and did not compensate for the loss of experience.

Regular skipper Sanju Samson has missed the last four matches with an abdominal injury leaving West Indian Shimron Hetmyer as their only experienced batsman.

Rajasthan choked in successive chases against Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Super Giants - they needed nine from the final over in both matches and fell short on both occasions.

"A lot of mistakes, a lot of small errors, I think we've got to focus on how to not make them again, focus on the good as well," Parag said.

"We've had a few close matches, so in the next three games when we get opportunities like we had in the first 11 games this season, hopefully we can do better."

Parag said that Mumbai Indians deserved credit "for the way they batted".

"Yeah, 190-200 would have been ideal. We've been getting good starts," he said. "But it's up to the middle order... to step up. I think we've done a lot of things right. And a lot of things wrong." - AFP/Reuters

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Jobs

WE ARE HIRING

1 MEDIA SALES - Specialist

Job Description

- Building and sustaining strong working relationship with advertising agencies and clients.
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- Possess own transport and willing to travel.
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Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016
AND
IN THE MATTER OF FAMOUS MATRIX SON BHD (200201008444 (576107-H)) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP)

NOTICE OF FINAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 459 of the Companies Act, 2016, the Final Meeting of the Company will be held at 159 Jalan 8, Taman Tan Yew Lai, 58200 Kuala Lumpur on 3 June 2025 at 10.30 a.m. for the following purposes :-

(i) To receive an account from the Liquidator showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and of hearing any explanations that may be given by the Liquidator; and

(ii) To determine the manner in which the books, accounts and documents of the Liquidator and of the Company thereof shall be disposed of.

Date: 3 May 2025

SOO CHEE BENG
Liquidator

A member of the Company entitled to attend and vote at the Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy to attend and vote instead of him. The instrument appointing a proxy must be in writing under the hand of the appointor or his attorney duly authorised in writing or if the appointor is a corporation under its common seal or the hand of its attorney and must be deposited at the above address not less than forty-eight (48) hours before the time set for the Meeting.

'Boss Baby' Suryavanshi falls to second-ball duck in IPL

RAJASTHAN ROYALS' teenage sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi fell to a two-ball duck in the IPL on Thursday, just days after he became the youngest-ever player to hit a T20 ton.

Left-handed opener Suryavanshi, who is just 14 years old, made waves after he struck a record 35-ball century in a match earlier this week.

The teenager has played just four games in the IPL, but has wowed viewers with his fearless approach and bat strength.

Nicknamed "Boss Baby", Suryavanshi has drawn instant comparisons with West Indies great Chris Gayle, who styled himself as the "Universe Boss".

But on Thursday, millions of fans who eagerly awaited Suryavanshi's turn at the crease saw the teenager fall swiftly without having troubled the scorer in a match against IPL heavyweights Mumbai Indians.

The money-spinning IPL has been a breeding ground for up-and-coming talent with the likes of Yashasvi Jaiswal, Suryakumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah making a name for themselves through the league.

But never has a 14-year-old garnered so much attention.

Cricketing veterans, however, have warned him of life in the spotlight.

Rajasthan head coach Rahul Dravid, speaking at a news conference organised by *Star Sports* earlier this week, said there was still a long road ahead for the youth.

"Nobody is saying he's a finished article," Dravid said.

"No one should be in any rush to proclaim him as something that he's not. He's an exceptionally talented young player. He's working really hard - but he's going to have to keep improving." - AFP

Swiatek thrashed, Sabalenka returns to Madrid final

REIGNING champion Iga Swiatek suffered a crushing 6-1, 6-1 semifinal defeat by Coco Gauff on Thursday, with the American to face world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka for the Madrid Open title.

The second-ranked Swiatek, a five-time Grand Slam winner, dropped serve five times against Gauff as the Pole fell in 64 minutes.

With this latest loss, Swiatek has only the upcoming Italian Open to help her get back to winning ways before she defends her French Open title later in May.

"I couldn't really get my level up. Coco played good, but, yeah, I think it's on me that I didn't really move well," said Swiatek.

"I think I pushed kind of with my head for more than I even should, tennis-wise," she added. "Today for sure everything kind of collapsed."

Gauff broke in the third, fifth and seventh games to blow Swiatek away in the first set and secured two more breaks in the second set and wrapped up victory at the first time of asking.

"Obviously she wasn't maybe playing her

best tennis, but I think I made her uncomfortable," said Gauff. "She is very talented and can make you run and move you around the court. And I just tried to not do that today."

"I think the previous times we played on clay I don't think I had a win against her yet..." said Gauff.

"Obviously on clay she's a different player, but clay is one of my better surfaces too, and I thought if I can beat her on hard I can beat her on clay."

Last year's runner-up Sabalenka sealed a return to the final after battling past Ukraine's in-form Elina Svitolina 6-3, 7-5.

In the men's draw, Casper Ruud reached the semifinals with a 6-3, 7-5 triumph over Daniil Medvedev.

Ruud, ranked 15th, will face Francisco Cerundolo in the final four after he edged past Jakub Mensik 3-6, 7-6 (7-5), 6-2.

Fifth seed Jack Draper swept past Matteo Arnaldi 6-0, 6-4. He meets Lorenzo Musetti next after the Italian brushed Canada's Gabriel Diallo aside 6-4, 6-3. - AFP

Scheffler grabs lead

Two-time Masters champion fires sizzling 61 at CJ Cup Byron Nelson

TOP-RANKED Scottie Scheffler fired a 10-under-par 61 yesterday, his lowest round of the year, to seize a two-stroke lead at the CJ Cup Byron Nelson tournament.

The 28-year-old American, seeking his first victory of 2025 after taking nine titles last year, finished a bogey-free opening round with back-to-back birdies in his hometown event at TPC Craig Ranch in McKinney, Texas, near Dallas.

"I hit the ball really well," Scheffler said. "I gave myself a lot of opportunities, hit a lot of fairways, hit some really good iron shots in there close. A lot of it had to do with my ball-striking. I hit it really nice."

Scheffler, who was one off the course record held by South Korean Noh Seung-yul, fired his second-best 18-hole score in a PGA Tour event.

Filipino veteran Rico Hoey, seeking his first PGA title, fired his lowest PGA score to share second on 63 with Venezuela's Jhonattan Vegas. On 64 were Germany's Stephan Jaeger and Americans Michael Thorbjornsen, Eric Cole, Andrew Putnam, Patton Kizzire, Will Gordon and Cameron Champ.

"I drove the ball great," Hoey said. "I've had some pretty good days where I drove it, but today was one of the best ones I've seen. Having ball in hand helped a lot, so took advantage of it."

Two-time Masters champion Scheffler, who struggled with a hand injury early this season,

fired a 7-under 29 on the front nine and shot 32 on the inward nine and his eighth bogey-free round of the year ranks second on tour to Tom Hoge's 10.

"This is a golf course that you've got to make some birdies on, especially a day like today when there wasn't much wind," Scheffler said.

"There are some scoring opportunities that you need to take advantage of and fortunately I was able to take advantage of those holes."

Hoey, a 29-year-old from Manila, didn't miss a fairway in a bogey-free round. He holed out for eagle from just beyond 35 feet at 18, then reeled off five consecutive birdies from the second through sixth holes before closing with a birdie putt from just inside 10 feet at the ninth.

"It felt great out there," Hoey said. "I just kept plugging away. I knew the birdies would come. I'm glad I stayed patient. I rattled off five straight birdies and that was awesome."

Hoey has triumphs on the Canadian and Korn Ferry developmental tours but yearns for a PGA breakthrough victory.

"Nice to get the momentum rolling now. This is the season to really kick it into gear," he said. "It would be great (to win), but it's just the first round." — AFP

Scottie Scheffler plays his shot on the fifth hole. — AFP/PIC

Ryu jumps in front at Black Desert C'hip

HAERAN RYU carded a bogey-free, 9-under-par 63 yesterday to take the first-round lead at the inaugural Black Desert Championship in Ivins, Utah.

The 24-year-old South Korean holds a one-shot lead over Taiwan's Wei-Ling Hsu and Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn at the Club at Carlton Woods' Nicklaus Course.

Lucy Li, Germany's Esther Henseleit, Spain's Carlota Ciganda, Australia's Grace Kim and South Koreans Jiwon Jeon and Soo Bin Joo are tied for fourth place at 7 under. Six players share 10th place at 6 under.

Japan's Mao Saigo, who won her first career major title last week at the Chevron Championship, is tied for 42nd at 2 under.

Ryu opened on the back nine and birdied each of her first two holes. She wound up with five birdies on the back nine and four on the front nine.

"This course, it is... not too... narrow but feels like it is because (there are) too many rocks in here," said Ryu, who earned her second career LPGA win last September outside Boston.

"So I just want to keep keeping on the fairway my tee shot and on the easy spot on the greens."

She also cited a recent change of putters as helping her.

"It's more comfortable for my shot and, yeah, that's good for last week and this week, too," Ryu said.

"This week I think I just try to be a little bit more calm and a little bit more relaxed," Hsu said. "So I think I had a good mindset start of today, and a lot of approaching shot I just — before I hit the shot just like, 'You can do this, Wei-Ling.'"

"I think I just give myself a good note in my head, so I think that really worked out well today."

Jutanugarn's two nines were nearly identical, each featuring five pars and two sets of back-to-back birdies.

"I would say this course can be really stressful because you kind of have to plan everything, every shot, like tee shot, second shot, where to finish the ball," Jutanugarn said. "... I'm very lucky this morning. No wind, so got a bit easier to stop ... the ball where I want to finish." — Field Level Media

'F1 drivers want more than words from FIA boss'

GEORGE RUSSELL said Formula One drivers wanted more than words from FIA president Mohammed Ben Sulayem in a lukewarm response to a mooted change in the rules concerning punishment for misconduct, including swearing.

Ben Sulayem, the Emirati head of the governing body, said on Instagram this week that he was considering "improvements" to Appendix B of the FIA's International Sporting Code after feedback from drivers across several series.

Rally drivers had been up in arms over stiff fines imposed for swearing, as had their F1 contemporaries.

Asked at the Miami Grand Prix yesterday if he saw Ben Sulayem's words as a positive step, Mercedes driver Russell — a director of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association (GPDA) — replied:

"Conceptually, yes. But obviously we want to see these things put into action rather than saying 'we're considering things'. We all consider a lot of things.

"We're clear, we want changes. And once they are implemented, then we'll comment on it. But for the time being it's being considered. The words don't mean anything until the change has been made."

"It'll be great if changes were made and the drivers were at least heard," said Russell. "And I think it's just in the best interest for the sport and ensuring that some common sense is sort of applied to these situations," he added.

"But as I said, I think all of us can comment on it when we see the action being taken, rather than just the consideration." — Reuters

Norris and Piastri taking championship battle in their stride

LANDO NORRIS says he isn't stressing about McLaren teammate Oscar Piastri's hot start to the season and the gap he has opened up at the top of the driver's championship.

Norris finished second in the championship last season and was viewed as McLaren's top driver but Piastri has won three of the last four races and has a 10-point advantage.

"No worry at all. He's doing a good job and he deserves it. Nothing more than that. I don't believe so much in the momentum stuff," said Norris, who won the season opener in Australia.

"No reason to be worried. It's round six of 24. I'm not going to say that forever, I know I need to get a move on and I need to get into gear a

little bit. I'm doing the best I can every week and every minute," he added.

"Clearly I've made some mistakes and I'm not at the level I need to be, but I believe I can be at the level soon enough," he said.

Norris is back at the scene of his first F1 win, at Miami last year, and is hoping that the vibes from that success will help lift him.

"It is a place that brings good memories. I dreamt as a kid to win in F1 and standing on the top step and I was able to do it here."

"There are a lot of things that have brought a smile to my face since I have returned, and I plan to do it again," he said.

Australian Piastri says he is enjoying coming into the race as the

leader but says it is far too early to start thinking about the battle for the title.

"I've been enjoying it a lot. Every time you can go into a weekend and know you have got a very good chance of winning the race and if you do a good enough job then you will win the race, that is always a nice position to be in," he said.

"Winning races is what is exciting at the moment, I think the championship lead is nice but... I'm much proud and satisfied of the work and the reasons why I am leading the championship than the actual fact that I am leading," he said.

"I think we have just done a very solid job the whole season," he added. — AFP

Overloaded Inter risk losing title race to focused Napoli

INTER MILAN'S Serie A title defence is on the line with the busy champions chasing a fresher Napoli side who have the finishing line within sight and this weekend both teams take on clubs involved in the fight for survival.

Simone Inzaghi's Inter played nine matches in April compared to Napoli's four and, after a hectic season, could end up paying a high price for the demands of battling on all fronts.

Inter's treble bid ended last month with their Coppa Italia exit to AC Milan, after a two-

legged semifinal, but their Champions League dream is still alive following Thursday's dramatic 3-3 draw at Barcelona in the semifinal first leg.

While that result ended a run of three consecutive defeats for Inter, and saw the return of forward Marcus Thuram from injury, host lowly Hellas Verona tomorrow (2.45am Malaysian time).

Verona, 15th in the standings, are seven points above the relegation zone but with

games against fellow strugglers Lecce and Empoli still to come, they cannot take any chances.

Antonio Conte took over a Napoli side with no European football after a 10th-place finish last season, and an early exit from the Coppa Italia has seen them free of any other commitments since early December.

Napoli's Cup defeat by Lazio was followed by a league loss to the same opposition, but Conte's side then went on a 10-game unbeaten

run which allowed them take back the top spot which Atalanta had briefly taken from them.

Napoli visit Lecce tomorrow (12.01am), a side without a win in 11 games and who are one place and two points above the drop zone.

Atalanta are aiming to maintain their grip on third place when they travel to bottom club Monza and Juventus are at Bologna in a Champions League qualification showdown.

AS Roma, Lazio and Fiorentina are also in the hunt for a Champions League place. – Reuters

Damaging defeat for Forest against Brentford

NOTTINGHAM FOREST suffered a huge blow in their push for a return to the Champions League after decades away as Brentford came away from the City Ground with a 2-0 win yesterday.

A third defeat in four games, courtesy of goals from Kevin Schade and Yoane Wissa, leaves the stumbling two-time European champions outside the Premier League's top five with just four games remaining.

Not since 1980, under former manager Brian Clough, have Forest played in the continent's top club competition.

But after a season spent largely in the upper reaches of the Premier League they are suffering a major wobble at the worst possible moment.

"It's a bad night and a bad game," Forest manager Nuno Espirito Santo told *Sky Sports*. "I'm not really worried about the table, more how to correct the mistakes."

"Credit to Brentford but the situations we should solve normally with better defending. We are disappointed but it's about reacting and going for the next one."

He added: "There are still four games to go, a lot of football to be played. We have to focus on ourselves and play better football."

Forest would have climbed to third with a win but despite the defeat they have 60 points, just two behind Newcastle, with Manchester City, Chelsea and Villa also in the mix.

Defeat is a bitter disappointment for Forest but a major boost for Brentford in their own drive to qualify for European football next season.

The three points lift the Bees just one point behind 10th-placed Bournemouth as they chase their highest Premier League finish.

"It is a big strength that we go to a difficult place against a team who have been fantastic all season," Brentford boss Thomas Frank told the *BBC*.

"I think everything is possible. There are four games left. We'll try our best to win them." – AFP

Muller eyes one final title

Bayern out to seal league title, Dortmund eye top-four finish

BAYERN MUNICH veteran Thomas Muller can win his 13th league title with victory at RB Leipzig today (9.30pm Malaysian time), as his summer departure after 25 seasons at the club draws near.

Eight points clear of defending champions Bayer Leverkusen with three games remaining, Bayern will clinch the title if they beat Leipzig this weekend.

Bayern's top scorer Harry Kane, looking to land the first title of his career, is suspended for the game.

Bayern's last league win at Leipzig came in 2021. If the Bavarians falter, they will still wrap up the Bundesliga crown if

Leverkusen fail to beat Freiburg tomorrow (11.30pm).

Another league title would be a fitting farewell for Muller, who joined Bayern aged just 10 and played his 500th Bundesliga game last week.

A one-club player, Muller has amassed a remarkable 32 trophies with Bayern, including two Champions Leagues, but will leave at the end of the season after he was not offered a contract extension.

No player has ever won 13 Bundesliga titles and only Manchester United's Ryan Giggs has hit that mark in any of Europe's top five leagues.

"It sounds good doesn't it?"

Muller said of the record in an interview with the Bundesliga website.

"I won my first title in 2010. You're holding something heavy in your hands and it gives you the feeling that it's not really easy to win the thing."

"There's always a lot of work and you have to perform over a long period."

"That's why the satisfaction when you win the league trophy is greater than the Champions League or the German Cup."

With his departure edging closer, Muller has been celebrated by fans at home and away, but has been quick to remind everyone he is not on a farewell tour – and that there is a title at stake.

"On the topic of pride, I'm someone who lives life looking forward rather than looking back too much," said Muller.

"Looking back is nice and then you can toast to it and ask: 'What are you doing tomorrow?'"

Meanwhile, Eintracht Frankfurt, who face European hopefuls Mainz 05 on Monday, are third on 55 points, with a four-point gap to Freiburg, and almost certain of a Champions League spot.

Dortmund, sixth with 48 points and three behind Freiburg, have endured a rollercoaster domestic season and from early title contenders are battling to secure a Champions League place to rescue something from an otherwise disappointing campaign.

The Ruhr Valley club host VfL Wolfsburg tomorrow (12.30am).

Dortmund have won four of their last five Bundesliga matches, with coach Niko Kovac and his players confident they can still finish in the top four.

"What has characterised us in the past weeks is that everyone wants the success of the team," said Dortmund defender

Waldemar Anton. "That is how we got our belief back."

"We just kept at it and that is why I am happy that we are still in with a realistic chance." – AFP/Reuters



Thomas Muller

Fatigued Barca look to extend lead over Real

AFTER Barcelona salvaged their treble hopes in a thrilling Champions League semifinal against Inter Milan, Hansi Flick's side will turn their attention back to La Liga where a victory would put them in a strong position before another *Clasico*.

The La Liga leaders came from behind twice to earn a 3-3 draw with Inter in the first leg on Thursday but continued to show defensive frailty.

"We conceded a lot of goals at home again and it's unacceptable," Barca forward Raphinha said.

Flick's side have scored over 150 goals in all

competitions this season but a hectic schedule has taken its toll on the home stretch and Barca have kept only one clean sheet in their last five games.

"Of course, every team has its strengths and weaknesses," Flick told reporters.

"When you play every three days, it is not easy to work on certain things. But at the moment the situation is this: these are things that happen."

Barcelona have less than 72 hours to rest before they play Real Valladolid tomorrow (3am Malaysian time), an easy fixture on paper since La Liga's bottom side were relegated

from the top flight last week.

Barca thrashed Valladolid 7-0 in August as the team with just four wins and the worst defensive record (81 goals conceded in 33 games) welcome the leaders with nothing to lose but their pride.

Barcelona were dealt another injury blow after Jules Kounde went down with a calf injury against Inter and had to be replaced.

Victory would give Barca a seven-point lead over second-placed Real Madrid, whose defensive problems are far worse as they prepare to play Celta Vigo a day later.

Real have nothing left to play for apart from

the league title after they lost to Barca in the Copa del Rey final and were knocked out by Arsenal in the Champions League quarterfinals.

Real must find a way to close the gap or risk handing Barcelona the La Liga title when they face each other on May 11.

Third-placed Atletico Madrid kick off the weekend's action at Deportivo Alaves tonight (8pm) and although challenging Barcelona for the title is next to impossible with a 10-point gap, they could reel in their city rivals.

Athletic Bilbao are safe in fourth spot will face Real Sociedad on Monday. – Reuters

De Bruyne might join Fire

KEVIN DE BRUYNE, a 10-year standout in the Premier League, may be headed to the Chicago Fire, according to multiple media reports yesterday.

The 33-year-old Belgian contributed 189 goals in 10 seasons with four-time defending champion Manchester City. De Bruyne recently announced that he will depart the club when his contract expires at the end of the season.

The struggling Fire hold the top priority to sign De Bruyne. DC United and NYCFC were the other two squads to inquire about the midfielder. Inter Miami CF previously negotiated with De Bruyne, but their three designated player slots are now filled, including one by Lionel Messi.

The Belgium captain favors heading to the MLS over signing a deal to play in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, he did not rule out returning to the Premier League or competing in Europe as his next venture.

"I'm open for anything, anything, just because I have to look at the whole picture," De Bruyne said.

"I'm looking at sporting, family, everything together, what makes the most sense for me and my family. I don't know what that is, because it depends on when you speak to people and what they say about projects or something, like I said, I still feel like I can play at a good level, but then after I'll have to make a decision once I really know a little bit more."

Through 10 matches, Chicago is 3-3-4 with 12 points and sits in 11th place in the Eastern Conference under former US national team coach Gregg Berhalter.

De Bruyne could join countryman Hugo Cuypers, who is tied for the MLS league with seven goals, and give the side a dynamic offensive presence.

"I think that in a perfect world you'd be able to invest across the entire roster and say, 'OK, we can bring in world-class players in every position,' but it's not perfect," Berhalter said. "There's a salary cap, there's a limited amount of designated players. So I think the most sense is to bring in an attacking player."

The Fire have made the playoffs just one time (2017) in the last 12 seasons. — Field Level Media

Liverpool PL win was one of 'best days of my life': Slot

LIVERPOOL manager Arne Slot said yesterday that winning the Premier League title at Anfield was one of the best days of his life as he turned his thoughts towards next season.

The Reds crushed Tottenham 5-1 on Sunday to seal a record-breaking 20th English league title with four games to spare, basking in a sensational atmosphere at their packed home ground.

"Maybe for all the Liverpool fans, but for many of them, one of the best days of their lives, and I think it was the same for me," said Slot.

"The way the whole day went, arriving at the stadium, how intense the fans already were, then during the game going 1-0 behind, so it even felt like, 'Oh, they're not going to give it to us, we have to work for it.'"

"Scoring the goals, seeing how much it meant to the players but also to the fans, for me, was really special to be part of."

Liverpool travel to face fifth-placed Chelsea tomorrow before taking on Arsenal, Brighton and Crystal Palace in their remaining games.

"It's nice that we play some very strong teams with Chelsea, Arsenal, Brighton and Palace, so that gives immediate challenge to those games," said Slot, 46.

"It's the end of the season but we also have to look at this as the start of next season already."

The Dutchman said he was surprised by the 22-point between his side and Enzo Maresca's Chelsea, whom he felt were the better team when they met in October, even though Liverpool won 2-1.

"We found a way to win, and that is a quality that we didn't need a lot, because mostly we were the better team on the pitch," he said.

"But in that game we had to suffer more than any other game, maybe. So to be so many points ahead of them is a big compliment for everyone here at this club."

The former Feyenoord boss said he would rotate in the final games of the season. — AFP



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SCAN ME

Chelsea cruise to win

The Blues close in on Conference League final

CHELSEA strolled to a comfortable 4-1 win at Djurgarden in the first leg of their Uefa Conference League semifinal yesterday to all but book their spot in the final.

In the other semifinal, Spain's Real Betis take a 2-1 lead into the return fixture against two-time runners-up Fiorentina.

First half goals from Jadon Sancho and Noni Madueke put Chelsea in control in Sweden, before Nicolas Jackson grabbed a brace midway through the second period.

"It was (a perfect night), an important semifinal," Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca told TNT Sports.

"It's a good result, but we have the experience from the Legia Warsaw game, where we won 3-0 there and we struggled a little bit (Chelsea's only loss in the tournament came at home in the return fixture), so we need to be focused on the second leg."

Maresca's side have one foot in the final of the Conference League in their debut campaign in the third-tier European competition.

Lifting the trophy in the Polish city of Wroclaw on May 28 would add another continental title to the London club's haul of two Champions Leagues, a pair of Europa Leagues and two Uefa Cup Winners' Cups.

Their opponents, on the other hand, don't quite boast the same European pedigree, and in making the last four became the first Swedish side to play a semifinal in Europe since 1986/87.

To further add to Djurgarden's underdog status, coach Jani Honkavaara only had 14 senior players fit to call upon for the visit of the Premier League giants.

"Very good performance, the most important thing is that we won."

It is one step forward and we hope to reach the final," said Jackson.

Chelsea's next match will be against Premier League champions Liverpool (11.30pm Malaysian time), who are in line to receive a guard of honour at Stamford Bridge tomorrow but any pre-match pleasantries will quickly be put to one side with the Blues desperate to boost their top-five hopes.

Liverpool wrapped up the title with four games to spare last weekend with a 5-1 hammering of Tottenham Hotspur at Anfield while Chelsea eked out a 1-0 win over Everton that kept them in the thick of the battle for Champions League qualification.

The Premier League having an extra spot in next season's Champions League might ordinarily have given the likes of Manchester City and Chelsea a little more leeway, but the reality is five clubs are chasing three places.

With second-placed Arsenal, who have 67 points from 34 games, looking safe for a top-five finish, the scrap for third, fourth and fifth has become the only story in town for the remaining weeks of the top-flight season.

Newcastle United (62 points from 34 games) are in a strong position ahead of their tomorrow's trip to Brighton & Hove Albion (9pm).

Seventh-placed Aston Villa's season is in danger of petering out and they know anything other than a win against Fulham today (7.30pm) could end their top-five hopes. — AFP/Reuters

Chelsea's Jadon Sancho (right) in action with Djurgarden's Adam Stahl. — REUTERS/PIC

Spurs take control in Europa semifinal

TOTTENHAM closed in on a place in the Europa League final after Brennan Johnson struck just 38 seconds into their 3-1 win against Norwegian side Bodo/Glimt yesterday.

Johnson's quick-fire opener was followed by James Maddison's strike before the interval in the semifinal first leg at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

Dominic Solanke's second half penalty should have been the end of the tie.

But a late goal from Ulrik Saltnes

ensured the second leg on

May 8 will be a nervous

occasion for beleaguered

Tottenham boss Ange

Postecoglou.

Postecoglou will also

have to sweat on the

fitness of Solanke and

Maddison after both

limped off with injuries.

If Tottenham can get the

job done in Norway, they will

face Manchester United or

Athletic Bilbao in the final on May 21, with the tournament winners qualifying for the Champions League next season.

"We're in a good position. I thought the players were outstanding. They were everything they needed to be, really calm going forward and maintained the pressure," Postecoglou said.

"Bodo/Glimt scored a late goal, so the scoreline didn't totally reflect our dominance."

"We have to accept that but if we repeat that performance next week it will be enough for us to get through."

An all-Premier League clash in the final would present a fascinating duel between two clubs enduring miserable domestic campaigns.

Languishing in 16th place in the Premier League, Tottenham's woeful 5-1 thrashing at Liverpool on Sunday was a club record-equalling 19th defeat in the top flight this season.

They have not suffered so many losses in a Premier League campaign since 2004.

Despite their abysmal top-flight form, Tottenham should reach their first European final since the 2019 Champions League as they bid to end a 17-year trophy drought.

Tottenham, whose last trophy was the League Cup, haven't won a major European prize since lifting the Uefa Cup in 1984.

An unheralded team from a tiny town north of the Arctic Circle, Bodo/Glimt's fairytale run is not over just yet, but they have a huge task in the second leg.

"The goal was really important. You saw when Tottenham conceded they were really disappointed and lost energy," Bodo/Glimt boss Kjetil Knutsen said.

"It is totally different in the second game. We still have a good opportunity. We are not the favourites but we will go for it." — AFP



RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE:
Nottingham Forest 0 Brentford 2
 (Schade 44, Wissa 70).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	34	25	7	2	80	32	82
Arsenal	34	18	13	3	63	29	67
Newcastle	34	19	5	10	65	44	62
Man City	34	18	7	9	66	43	61
Chelsea	34	17	9	8	59	40	60
Nottm Forest	34	18	6	10	53	41	60
Aston Villa	34	16	9	9	54	49	57
Fulham	34	14	9	11	50	46	51
Brighton	34	13	12	9	56	55	51
Bournemouth	34	13	11	10	53	41	50
Brentford	34	14	7	13	58	50	49
Crystal Palace	34	11	12	11	43	47	45
Wolves	34	12	5	17	51	61	41
Man Utd	34	10	9	15	39	47	39
Everton	34	8	14	12	34	41	38
Tottenham	34	11	4	19	62	56	37
West Ham	34	9	9	16	39	58	36
Ipswich	34	4	9	21	33	74	21
Leicester	34	4	6	24	27	76	18
Southampton	34	2	5	27	25	80	11

CHAMPION RELEGATED

EUROPA LEAGUE (semifinal, first leg):
Tottenham 3 (Johnson 1, Maddison 34, Solanke 61-pen) **Bodo/Glimt 1** (Saltnes 83), **Athletic Bilbao 0 Manchester United 3** (Casemiro 30, Fernandes 37-pen, 45).

CONFERENCE LEAGUE (semifinal, first leg): **Real Betis 2** (Ezazoulou 6, Antony 64) **Florentina 1** (Ranieri 73), **Djurgarden 1** (Alemayehu Mulugeta 68) **Chelsea 4** (Sancho 13, Madueke 43, Jackson 59, 65).

* Second legs to be played May 8.

MFL extends club licence application deadline

THE Malaysian Football League (MFL) has explained the decision of the independent First Instance Body (FIB) to extend the National Licence application period in accordance with the provisions outlined in the MFL Club Licensing Regulations 2024/25 season.

In a statement yesterday, the MFL informed that the FIB committee appreciates the commitment of clubs that have completed the document submission process in the AFC CLAS (Club Licensing Administration System) licensing system before or on the original deadline of April 30.

However, the governing body of the Malaysian League (M-League) clarified that, following written requests from several clubs, the FIB has granted an extension of the deadline to May 10.

"The decision for this extension was made based on the authority granted to FIB under the MFL Club Licensing Regulations 2024, Article 7, 8(a).

"With this extension, MFL hopes that the clubs involved can upload their documents no later than the new deadline, which is before or by (or on) May 10, 2025," the statement read.

According to MFL, Article 7, 8(a) of the 2024 MFL Club Licensing Regulations states that "The decision-making bodies must operate according to the principles of natural justice and must, at a minimum, regulate the following standards: deadlines (e.g. submission deadline, etc.); while also considering the specific circumstances of each application and case submitted.

Last Wednesday, the FIB agreed to grant clubs additional time to complete all required documents for the 2024/2025 Club Licensing Cycle for the National Licence within the AFC CLAS licensing system. – Bernama

Malaysia out of Sudirman Cup

Jonassen says defeat to China serves up valuable lessons for shuttlers

THE national badminton squad's dream of at least reaching the semifinals for the third consecutive time in the 2025 Sudirman Cup competition was shattered by world champions China after they lost 0-3 in the quarterfinals held at the Fenghuang Gymnasium, Xiamen, China yesterday.

Playing in front of their own fans, China flexed their power from the start of the game to make Malaysia the next victim in their mission to defend their 13th championship and their dream of lifting the fourth consecutive title since 2019.

It all started with the mixed doubles match when the home team, Feng Yan Zhe-Huang Dong Pin, displayed a neat and energetic performance to defeat the national pair, Chen Tang Jie-Toh Ee Wei, 21-17 and 21-17 in 49 minutes.

Ee Wei, who was met after the match, admitted making simple mistakes which caused their defeat and that it was something that needed to be improved for the next match.

"Thank you to all Malaysian fans who supported us but we also apologise for not being able to give the country the first point," she said in an audio shared by the Badminton World

Federation (BWF).

Failure to overcome the early pressure also dealt a major blow to the national camp when Shi Yu Qi as the leading Chinese men's singles player continued to add to the suffering when Leong Jun Hao failed to match his opponent's strength and succumbed 6-21 in the first set.

Jun Hao tried to come back by tying the score at 12-12 in the second set but Yu Qi remained calm and launched a solid attack to end the set with a 21-14 victory, thus earning the second point for China.

Jun Hao admitted that he tried to be more aggressive in the second set to get more consistent shots but his plan did not work out.

"Although today I lost the matches, I'm still satisfied with what I played in here. I'm the captain for the first time, we work together as a team. I'm proud of myself and my teammates," he said.

National women's singles player, K. Letshanaa, who was entrusted with the third match, faced a tough task against Tokyo 2020

Olympic champion, Chen Yu Fei, losing in 8-21, 7-21 in 32 minutes.

The defeat saw Malaysia's campaign come to an end in the quarterfinals, thus ending the dream of repeating the bronze medal achievements in Vantaa 2021 and Suzhou 2023.

National singles coaching director Kenneth Jonassen believes the Sudirman Cup quarterfinal loss to China yesterday served as a valuable learning experience for singles shuttlers Leong Jun Hao (men's) and K. Letshanaa (women's), with both showing potential but still having room to grow and refine their game.

He said the defeat underscored the importance of rising to world-class standards, learning to vary their shots according to their opponents' styles and improving their speed in decision-making and tactical adaptability during matches.

"I knew it was going to be an uphill battle against China's top players. As coaches, we never stop hoping but today China really

showed their strength.

"To say I'm satisfied would be a big word, but I saw a lot of positives. At the same time, there's plenty that still needs sharpening and improvement," he told *Bernama*.

Meanwhile, national doubles coaching director Rexy Mainaky feels that the recently reunited mixed pair of Chen Tang Jie and Toh Ee Wei still have strong chemistry and the potential to contribute to the national squad.

However, he acknowledged there are still areas to work on, particularly Ee Wei's hesitancy at the net during the first game of yesterday's tie against Feng Yan Zhe-Huang Dong Ping, which allowed their China rivals to take control of the match.

Rexy also addressed the selection of men's doubles pair Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik to face former world champions Takuro Hoki-Yugo Kobayashi (in yesterday's Group C match against Japan) instead of Goh Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin Rumsani, who some felt had an advantage.

Rexy explained that the decision was left to the coaching team, saying: "This is a team competition, so I leave it to the coaches to choose who to field. If we had won (against Japan), surely this question would not have cropped up." – Bernama



YOUNG NATIONAL rider Muhammad Hakim Danish Ramli needs to take up the challenge of achieving as many positive results as possible this season to unlock the 'key' to the National Sports Trust Fund (KWASN) grant from the Ministry of Youth and Sports (KBS).

SIC chief executive officer Azhan Shafriaman Hanif said the Terengganu-born rider's career path certainly requires a lot of funds and his team is also working on this matter, including promoting him to the wild card slot in the MotoGP competition.

"It's still early days for the Rookies Cup race, he's

only just finished the first round of the race with a double podium finish, so we hope he can maintain his positive momentum until the end of the year.

"SIC will also try to find funds to enter him in the MotoGP in Sepang as a wild card rider," he said after being met at the Malaysia Touring Car Championship press conference at SIC here yesterday.

Azhan Shafriaman revealed that SIC has received approximately RM4 million in funds, but it is still not enough to cover the rider's needs to compete in the championship he is participating in.

Rebranded MTCC kicks off at Sepang

THE newly rebranded Malaysia Touring Car Championship (MTCC) roars into action this weekend as Round 1 of the 2025 season got under way at the Sepang International Circuit (SIC) yesterday.

Previously known as the Malaysia Championship Series (MCS), the MTCC ushers in a new era with a strong international field of entries from Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Australia, Hong Kong and Macau.

Speaking at a press conference at SIC yesterday, SIC chief executive officer Azhan Shafriaman Hanif said the rebranding signifies more than a name change – it reflects a strategic evolution designed to elevate the national

motorsports landscape and expand the championship's visibility and appeal across the region.

"We have redefined the championship with clearer classes, updated technical regulations, and a stronger focus on turbocharged cars to keep up with global motorsport trends. With 53 entries already confirmed for Round 1, we are off to a strong start," he said.

He said this weekend's opening round is expected to feature a total of 82 cars, with the return of the F4 Southeast Asia Championship, the Asia Classic Car Challenge/Caterham series, and the debut of the Porsche Sprint Challenge Indonesia as a companion event.

SIC is also working on funds to cover the needs of another talented rider, Qabil Irfan Azlan.

Previously, Minister of Youth and Sports Hannah Yeoh announced that Danish Hakim will have the opportunity to enjoy the grant facility as support for his career journey if he achieves positive results in the two championships he will be participating this season.

The Junior GP World Championship and MotoGP Rookies Cup are the arenas for the 17-year-old rider, who is under the management of SIC. – Bernama

Azhan Shafriaman said the MTCC has been restructured into five distinct classes: Malaysia Touring 1 (MT1), Touring Production 1 (TP1), Touring Production 2 (TP2), and the newly introduced Malaysia Touring 2 (MT2V and MT2G), designed to enhance category clarity and competitive parity.

For fans, a three-day Paddock Pass is available at RM100, while the newly introduced two-day MTCC Hospitality Pass offers a premium trackside experience at RM318.

The 2025 MTCC calendar continues with Round 2 (July 25-27), Round 3 (Aug 8-10), before concluding with the season finale (Sept 5-7), all to be held at SIC. – Bernama



the Sun Sports

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SCAN ME

'Natural' for stars like Maguire to deliver now, says Amorim

MANCHESTER UNITED coach Ruben Amorim said it was "natural" his more experienced stars like Harry Maguire delivered in the Europa League semifinal first leg win over Athletic Bilbao yesterday.

The Red Devils have had an atrocious domestic season and some of their most established players have come in for heavy criticism.

However at the San Mames, Bruno Fernandes netted twice and England international Maguire helped set up the opening goal for former Real Madrid

midfielder Casemiro with an enterprising dribble down the right flank.

"It's really important that they have to step up in these moments," Amorim told reporters.

"They are experienced, international players, they have to step up in these moments, that's why they are playing here.

"They are the most experienced players in this team so I think that is natural."

Maguire also scored a vital goal as United came from behind to beat Lyon in the quarterfinals, with his Europa League displays providing respite after a torrid spell at Old Trafford.

"I think it's a good lesson for all the players, sometimes you have some moments that you think I will never recover from this or that – anything can happen," said Amorim.

"It's not just Harry – this game can tell you that.

"It looked like we were struggling a lot and then everything changes and everyone is going

to say it was maybe the best game of our season."

Despite his team's professional display which helped them put one foot into the Europa League final, back in Bilbao on May 21, Amorim cautioned his players ahead of the Old Trafford return next Friday.

"They have to think about the second leg, and they have to think more about the first 20 minutes (of this match) more than the rest of the game," continued Amorim.

"The game is going to be really tough. There are no away goals and anything can change – that is my message to the players." – AFP



Manchester United's Casemiro (bottom right) celebrates scoring their first goal with teammates. – REUTERS/PIC

Devils seize control

United one foot in Europa League final after raucous first half at the Cathedral

BRUNO FERNANDES struck twice as Manchester United put one foot in the Europa League final with a clinical away performance to beat 10-man Athletic Bilbao 3-0 yesterday.

The fervent home fans were enraged when Athletic defender Daniel Vivian was sent off for pulling back Rasmus Hojlund and Fernandes slotted home the resulting penalty, after Casemiro had opened the scoring against the run of play in the semifinal first leg.

Fernandes rolled in a third before halftime as Ruben Amorim's side moved a step closer to the final, to be held at Athletic's San Mames stadium.

The hosts have been dreaming of winning a first European trophy on their own soil but their hopes were demolished by United's professional display in the north of Spain – and Athletic's supporters argued, the refereeing.

"I think it's the best result (of my tenure) because nobody expected this result – but you saw two games today," Amorim told reporters.

"The first 25 mins, then (another one) after the goal and the sending-off."

Languishing in 14th in the Premier League, Champions League qualification for United is only possible with a Europa League triumph, as is access to the £100 million (RM568m) honey-pot it entails.

Despite regularly crumbling under pressure this season, the Red Devils – who produced a stunning comeback against Lyon in the quarterfinals – first survived and then thrived in a hostile environment.

"We looked a little bit nervous at times in the first 20 minutes... we weathered the storm and we knew we'd get our chance," Man

United's Harry Maguire told *TNT Sports*.

"It was a clinical first half, professional second half... It's a great victory in the end but there's another big game next week."

With May 1 a bank holiday in Spain the streets of Bilbao were filled with red-and-white striped shirts from the morning onwards, in party mode.

The San Mames was rocking as fans greeted their heroes, all of them born or raised in the Basque country, as per the club's century-long policy.

Beyond an Alejandro Garnacho goal ruled out for offside, the early stages for United were about gritting their teeth and holding off the hosts.

The hosts were ascendant and when former Real Madrid midfielder Casemiro opened the scoring for United it came as a shock.

It seemed like a smash-and-grab but soon United had a second, when Vivian was penalised for pulling back Hojlund as he tried to connect with a cross.

The defender was sent off to add insult to injury and Fernandes stroked home from the spot.

"The penalty and the red card... conditioned the game. At 11 against 11, we were doing well," said Athletic coach Ernesto Valverde.

United made it three before halftime. Ugarte's clever backheel played Fernandes through and he stroked home.

The second leg takes place next Friday at Old Trafford, ahead of the final on May 21 against Tottenham or Bodo/Glimt.

"At the slightest contact (Hojlund) let himself fall and the bad luck is that the penalty was given," said Inaki Williams.

"We weren't particularly great, so we shouldn't make excuses – we're three goals down but we're capable of mounting a comeback." – AFP