



**Rear seat passengers urged to buckle up**

In critical situations, wearing safety belt could mean difference between life and death: Expert

Report on  
page 5

# Sharp risks of flag pin badges

Injury to pupil prompts calls for safer alternatives such as fabric versions that can be ironed, sewn or stuck onto uniforms.

Report on  
page 2



Parents say pin badges are unsuitable for students, particularly those in primary schools, as the sharp point could cause injuries if not handled properly.  
— ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

**Navigating grief and guilt of early pregnancy loss**

Medical academic says greater awareness of miscarriage, timely medical intervention and emotional support vital not just for women but also for families and caregivers.

Report on > page 3

**CAP calls for immediate ban on vapes, e-cigarettes**

Anti-smoking activist says use of electronic smoking devices escalating among children, some as young as eight.

Report on > page 4



A REFRESHING RETREAT  
NEAR KUALA LUMPUR  
colmartropicale.com.my



## Osaka World Expo tour an eye-opener, says Selangor Sultan

Sultan Sharafuddin with Tengku Permaisuri Norashikin and Tengku Amir Shah at the expo.  
— PIC COURTESY OF OFFICE OF SELANGOR SULTAN



**SHAH ALAM:** The Sultan of Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah has expressed delight over the experience and knowledge gained during his recent visit to the 2025 Osaka World Expo in Kansai, Japan.

His Royal Highness, accompanied by the Tengku Permaisuri of Selangor Tengku Permaisuri Norashikin and the Raja Muda of Selangor Tengku Amir Shah, visited 36 pavilions throughout the five-day stay in the Land of the Rising Sun from May 3.

The Ruler described the visit as a learning process, particularly regarding the sustainability of new technologies, climate change and its effect on natural resources and the environment, as well as the future prospects of global social and economic development.

According to a post on the Selangor Royal Office Facebook page, this is the fourth World Expo

that His Royal Highness has attended, following visits to Seville in Spain in 1992, Shanghai in China in 2010 and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates in 2021.

Sultan Sharafuddin was attracted by the concept of the World Expo, which has been held since 1851, as a global platform for countries to showcase their best achievements in various fields such as technology, innovation, culture, architecture, economy and social solutions.

The Osaka Expo, themed "Designing Future Society for Our Lives" saw the participation of 158 countries, Bernama reported.

"His Royal Highness found that the outcomes and presentations of each country's pavilion effectively conveyed a broad universal message, encompassing various aspects of life for the sustainability and unity of humanity in the future."

## PM congratulates Catholics on election of pope

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday extended a congratulatory message to the Catholic faithful around the world, and especially in Malaysia, on the election of Pope Leo XIV.

Noting that this historic occasion marked a new chapter for the global Catholic community, he expressed confidence that it would be a source of renewed purpose and inspiration.

"Malaysia values its ties with the Holy See, and we look forward to continued engagement rooted in mutual respect, dialogue and our shared commitment to peace and human dignity," Anwar said in a post on his Facebook page.

Robert Prevost, a 69-year-old cardinal from Chicago, was elected on Thursday as the new pope, the first American ever to ascend to the papacy.

According to Anadolu Ajansi, he has taken the name Pope Leo XIV, marking the first use of the papal name "Leo" since the 19th century.

National Unity Minister Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang also extended a congratulatory message to Leo on his election as the 267th Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church.

Aaron described the appointment as a "momentous occasion" not only for the Catholic faithful but also for people of all religions around the world. — Bernama

## 'Rethink use of pin-style Jalur Gemilang badges'

➤ Push to build national pride positive, but wise to relook at design safety following injury caused to pupil by sharp metal on emblem

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA  
MOHD RASHIDI  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** The safety of using pin-style *Jalur Gemilang* badges issued by schools has come into question after a young girl was injured.

The Education Ministry's push to build national pride is a positive one, but there are suggestions that it might be wise to rethink the badge design to avoid mishaps.

Civil servant Marziana Ab Rashid, a mother of two school-going children, said she supports efforts to instil patriotism but believes pin-style badges may not be suitable for young pupils.

"They may not understand the risks. They can easily get hurt, lose the badge or the metal pin could damage their uniforms if it rusts."

Marziana suggested that schools opt for safer alternatives such as fabric badges that could be ironed on or sewn onto uniforms.

"At the very least, schools should ask for parents' input so we can share our views and concerns."

Another parent, Norazila Masdar, also a mother of two school-going children, echoed similar concerns, saying pin-style badges are unsuitable for students, particularly those in primary school.

She said she was aware of the risks even before the recent incident, noting that such badges could harm if not handled properly.

"They're not appropriate for children. The sharp pins can cause injuries and I think there are much safer options available."

Norazila believes it may not be necessary for schools to consult

parents on every decision.

"Educators should already have enough knowledge to determine what is appropriate and safe for students."

"A better option would be an embroidered *Jalur Gemilang* badge. It's safer, looks neat and can be sewn onto uniforms."

Alliance for a Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said while he supports the patriotic initiative, the injury suffered by the student highlights a critical oversight.

He emphasised that clear safety guidelines and product standards must be in place for any item distributed in schools, particularly those worn or handled by young children.

"While efforts to instil patriotism are important, they should never come at the expense of student safety."

"There must be proper consideration of the materials used, the item's design, the age group it's meant for and how it's expected to be used. Without these standards, even well-intentioned programmes can inadvertently cause harm."

To prevent similar incidents, Lee said precautionary steps should include avoiding sharp objects, ensuring age-appropriate materials, and involving both parents and teachers in safety discussions.

He also strongly advocated a redesign of school-distributed items that could pose risks.

"Items with sharp edges, pointed pins or detachable parts can be hazardous or even pose choking risks for younger students. We must be more thoughtful in designing and selecting these items."

He recommended replacing sharp or hazardous items like pin badges with safer alternatives such as magnets, velcro or fabric patches.

Since April 21, all public school students are required to wear the *Jalur Gemilang* badge on their uniforms as part of an initiative to promote patriotism and national resilience.

A March 24 circular by Education Director-General Azman Adnan said students must wear the 5cm x 2.5cm national flag design badge.

## Aviation industry affected by flight disruptions, safety concerns

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's aviation industry will likely record lower revenues as it faces higher air travel costs, supply chain delays and reduced tourism activity owing to prolonged flight disruptions.

The closure of Pakistan's airspace following tensions between Delhi and Islamabad as well as the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict have weighed on business sentiment.

With global aviation routes disrupted, rerouting of flights will add to high logistic costs while tourists will be reluctant to travel due to safety concerns.

Against such a scenario, the view is that Malaysia needs to focus on bolstering revenue by expanding trade and making its industries more resilient to tide it over what potentially could be difficult times ahead, made worse by higher American tariffs.

Putra Business School associate professor Dr Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff concurred, saying the rerouting of flights over longer and less direct paths would raise operational costs for airlines and impact the flow of goods and people into and out of Malaysia.

"These prolonged flight reroutings will likely cause higher logistic costs and potential disruptions to the supply chain. In addition, tourist movements will be affected, causing a negative impact on the aviation industry."

He said safety concerns could also influence travel behaviour, leading to softer demand in the outbound travel segment.

"Malaysians may consider postponing their travel arrangements, especially long-haul flights, due to fears of incidents similar to MH17."

Ahmed Razman said Malaysia's

best defence lies in expanding its international trade footprint and rethinking its economic priorities.

"Having more unilateral trade agreements is becoming more realistic and effective as they offer alternative trading partners and potential for trade expansion, considered necessary amid rising global tension."

"Malaysia should focus more on services and digital industries which do not require as much movement of goods or people. These sectors offer resilience and future growth potential."

He recommended substantial investments in technology-driven and agile industries to build a more resilient economic structure.

"Malaysia should consider investing in more resilient sectors such as technology and digitalisation."

"These industries can withstand external shocks more effectively and keep the economy moving even when global logistics are interrupted."

Pakistan's airspace was closed following escalating tensions with India, sparked by cross-border military strikes and retaliatory actions after a deadly attack in Kashmir. — Bernama



## 'Sulu group defeat a major win for Madani govt'

**TAWAU:** Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Minister Datuk Ewon Benedick has described Malaysia's victory in the international court over the Sulu group claim against Sabah as a legacy of the Madani government success under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said as a federal minister, he was proud to be part of the Cabinet that had secured the outcome in Malaysia's favour.

"On behalf of the Sabah leadership and the people of Sabah, we extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the federal government under the leadership of the prime minister, for establishing a special task force led by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said to address the Sulu claim brought by certain parties in several foreign courts.

"We have achieved victory and this proves that the Sulu claim is unfounded. This is a significant success by the Madani government. I am sure the people of Sabah will appreciate it," he said after attending the pocket talk session of the Prime Minister's Department Legal Affairs Division titled "Malaysia's Victory in the Sulu Claim", delivered by International Relations Section director Irianie Abdul Wahab as part of the Sabah Madani Rakyat event held yesterday, Bernama reported.

Malaysia has secured a series of legal victories, including one in November last year when the French Supreme Court fully rejected the group's legal challenge.

# Miscarriage still a **silent struggle** for many women

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA  
MOHD RASHIDI  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Miscarriage, although common, remains a deeply misunderstood and often silent tragedy, affecting 15.9% of Malaysian women of reproductive age.

With the majority occurring in the first trimester, a health expert is calling for greater awareness, timely medical intervention and emotional support, not only for women but also for families and caregivers navigating the loss.

Taylor's University School of Medicine obstetrics and gynaecology associate professor Dr Anitha Ponnupillai said between 75% and 80% of miscarriages occur in the first trimester.

She added that one in five pregnancies ends in miscarriage, although the actual figure may be higher due to unreported cases.

"Miscarriage refers to the spontaneous loss of pregnancy before the foetus becomes viable, usually before 20 to 28 weeks. While some women recover quickly, others experience prolonged grief and guilt, which can affect their overall

well-being," she said.

Anitha stressed that a deeper understanding of miscarriage – both medically and emotionally – is crucial in helping individuals build resilience and restore hope for future pregnancies.

Maternal age remains a significant risk factor, with chromosomal abnormalities increasing the likelihood of miscarriage from 6.4% in women under 35 to 23.1% in those over 40.

She said one in 100 women experiences recurrent miscarriage, often without a known cause, but noted that with specialised care, the chances of a successful pregnancy could reach 75%.

Medical conditions such as diabetes, thyroid disorders, polycystic ovary syndrome and blood-clotting issues, as well as lifestyle factors such as smoking, alcohol or drug use, and obesity also contribute to the risk

of miscarriage.

Anitha underscored the importance of dispelling common myths, including the false belief that normal activities such as exercise or intercourse can cause miscarriage.

"That's simply not true," she said.

Typical warning signs include vaginal bleeding, ranging from spotting to a heavy flow accompanied by abdominal cramps or severe pain.

"Bleeding may persist for about two weeks, with the heaviest flow occurring within the first two days. Even mild spotting should prompt immediate medical attention," she advised.

Diagnosis is generally confirmed through clinical history, physical examination and an ultrasound.

She explained that different types of miscarriage require different forms of care.

A complete miscarriage results in full expulsion of pregnancy tissue,

while an incomplete miscarriage leaves tissue behind that may require medical or surgical removal.

A missed miscarriage, in which the foetus stops developing but no immediate symptoms occur, is often only discovered during a routine scan.

In contrast, a septic miscarriage, which involves infection caused by retained tissue, is a medical emergency marked by fever, pain and foul-smelling discharge.

If pregnancy tissue is expelled at home, Anitha recommended collecting it in a clean container and bringing it to the hospital for examination.

Physically, miscarriage can result in heavy bleeding, infection, pain, trauma to reproductive organs and, in some cases, the need for additional surgery.

Septic miscarriage, in particular, can affect future fertility.

She said follow-up care within two weeks is vital to monitor both physical and emotional recovery.

Ovulation typically resumes in two weeks, with menstruation returning within four to six weeks.

It is advisable to wait for at least one full cycle before attempting to conceive again.

## Sabah PH backs BN alliance

**KOTA KINABALU:** Sabah Pakatan Harapan (PH) leaders have described the decision by PH and Barisan Nasional (BN) to cooperate in the next Sabah state election as rational while remaining open to discussions with other parties that support unity and collaboration.

In a joint statement, they noted that PH and BN form the backbone of the current federal government, alongside Gabungan Parti Sarawak, Gabungan Rakyat Sabah and several other parties.

"Sabah PH believes that political stability at both the federal and Sabah government levels must be preserved and strengthened to realise the aspirations behind the formation of the Malaysian Federation and to secure a better future for the people of Sabah.

"Sabah PH is open to fostering unity and cooperation with other parties and is of the view that such political cooperation should be guided by policies that prioritise the people's interests and the future of Sabah," the statement read. – Bernama



### URBAN ATTRACTION ...

Tourists snapping photos during a walkabout at the River of Life, Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Tourism Malaysia is optimistic that Visit Malaysia 2026 will achieve its target of drawing over 35.6 million arrivals. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

## Religious council denies 'inaccurate' claims on faith rehab programme

**SHAH ALAM:** The Selangor Islamic Religious Council has denied claims on social media alleging that its faith rehabilitation programme for former members of GIBS Holdings focuses solely on the study of *tajwid* (Quranic pronunciation rules).

Its secretary Dr Ahmad Shahir Makhtar said the Insan Rabbani programme, introduced to rehabilitate the faith (*akidah*) of former members, was approved on Feb 4 following a *fatwa* gazetted on Oct 16, 2024, which declared that the beliefs, teachings and practices of the organisation deviate from true

Islamic teachings.

The programme forms part of the council's broader efforts to restore Islamic faith among former members, and is conducted in collaboration with the Selangor Islamic Religious Department.

"The Insan Rabbani programme is held every Sunday in 24 sessions, each lasting four hours across four locations: Sekolah Rendah Agama Country Homes in Rawang, Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Mosque in Shah Alam, SRA Sijangkang in Kuala Langat and SRA Sungai Kantan in Kajang. A total of 51 certified teachers are involved in delivering the modules," he

said in a statement.

Ahmad Shahir explained that the programme follows the Istiqabah Module, approved in 2013, and covers key areas of Islamic education including Qur'anic studies, *akidah*, *tasawuf* (spiritual purification) and *fikah* (Islamic jurisprudence), tailored for adult participants.

In the Quranic component, participants study not just *tajwid* but also deepen their understanding of the Quran to improve recitation and comprehension.

"The *akidah* module covers the

foundations of Islamic belief, including the correct understanding of the attributes of *Allah*, the role of prophets and related concepts," he said.

The *tasawuf* section focuses on purifying the heart and cultivating good character traits, while the *fikah* module teaches practical rulings – particularly on prayer – based on the *Shafii* school of thought.

For children of former members, the council uses the *Pendidikan Insani* (holistic education) module, which aims to develop their personality and potential comprehensively, guided by

divine revelation and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad.

It covers areas such as *akidah*, *ibadah* (acts of worship) and *akhlak* (morality).

"Therefore, the claim circulating on social media that the rehabilitation programme only focuses on *tajwid* is inaccurate and misleading," he added.

Previously, the media reported that 2,474 former members, including 1,410 children, were participating in the Insan Rabbani programme, which began on Feb 15 and runs until August, involving several phases of rehabilitation. – Bernama



# Ban vape, e-cigarettes to save lives, says CAP

► 'Problem requires immediate attention as vaping among children, some as young as eight, escalating'

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

**GEORGE TOWN:** The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) has issued a strong call to action, urging both federal and state authorities to immediately ban the sale and use of vape and e-cigarettes to protect children and young people.

Senior education officer and anti-smoking activist N.V. Subbarow warned that vape and e-cigarette use among children and teenagers, some as young as eight, is escalating.

"They are still studying and have not yet completed school. They are still young with ages ranging from eight to 16, but have already adopted the habit of smoking vape and e-cigarettes," he said in a statement.

Subbarow urged state governments that have not yet implemented a ban to follow the example of more proactive states and act swiftly to stop the sale of these products before more young lives are harmed.

"The vape problem is not only in Pahang but throughout the country. The relevant ministry must take action seriously. Don't be complacent and leave this problem to the states to solve."

He also pointed out troubling trends among school students which have led to social problems as a result of smoking vape.

"Breakfast for these students is vape liquid."

Subbarow also reported disturbing incidents of students vaping inside school grounds and even in prayer rooms despite official school bans.

CAP urged the Health Ministry and the Higher Education Ministry to take stronger enforcement measures in schools and universities.

According to the 2023 National Health and Morbidity Survey, over 14% of Malaysian teenagers aged 13 to 17 reported using e-cigarettes.

The association also highlighted that the Sultan of Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah



Vaping among school students has become a serious problem. – PIC COURTESY OF CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION OF PENANG

Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah has also called for a complete ban on e-cigarettes and vapes.

Subbarow echoed concerns raised by Deputy IGP Datuk Seri Ayob Khan Mydin, who warned that vape products have become a "silent trap" involving synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine, ecstasy and fentanyl.

"Once you smoke by mistake, you may not have time to come back," Ayob was quoted as saying.

Subbarow said the crisis has escalated beyond state-level concern and requires urgent national intervention.

The federal government has opted for a regulatory approach rather than a nationwide ban.

On April 24, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the federal government supports state-level actions such as not

issuing vape sales licences and his ministry would regulate tobacco-related products at the national level.

He also reaffirmed that the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024, which covers vape and e-cigarette regulations, would come into force in June.

However, the Act does not include a Generational End Game (GEG).

Dzulkefly clarified that this decision was based on concerns raised by the Attorney-General's Chambers regarding the constitutionality of the GEG provision, rather than lobbying pressures.

Penang has not officially banned the sale of e-cigarettes and vape products.

To date, Johor and Kelantan have enforced bans on vape sales since 2016, while Terengganu is set to do so in August 2025. Selangor is also reviewing a potential ban.

## KL to be recognised as pioneering city

**LABUAN:** Kuala Lumpur is set to be recognised as one of the pioneering cities in the Davos Baukultur Alliance, an international initiative aimed at promoting high-quality cultural and architectural development in urban environments.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Federal Territories) Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa shared this development during her journey from Milan to Venice, where she is scheduled to deliver a commitment speech at the Davos Baukultur Alliance Biennale Architettura 2025 Public Programme.

"Kuala Lumpur will be positioned as one of the pioneering places within the Davos Baukultur Alliance."

"This recognition underscores our commitment to integrating cultural and architectural excellence into our urban development strategies."

Zaliha said she would highlight in her speech the CHASE City Framework currently being implemented in the Federal Territories.

"The CHASE City Framework aligns with the Baukultur principles by focusing on sustainable and culturally enriched urban development."

"Our goal is to create spaces that reflect our heritage while meeting contemporary needs."

Launched in 2023, the Davos Baukultur Alliance brings together stakeholders from politics, the private sector and civil society to improve city, village and landscape planning.

Zaliha said Kuala Lumpur's inclusion in the alliance would make it one of the few Asian cities to adopt and implement the Baukultur principles.

"This positions Kuala Lumpur as a leader in culturally conscious urban development in the region."

Zaliha said she is also scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with Her Excellency Baume-Schneider to discuss potential collaborations between Switzerland's Federal Department of Home Affairs and Malaysia's Federal Territories.

"We are exploring avenues for cooperation that will benefit both our nations, particularly in areas of urban development and cultural exchange." – Bernama

## App to promote smart water usage

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A total of 9.62 million water consumers in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya can now report pipe leakages through the upgraded Air Selangor 2.0 app, said Pengurusan Air Selangor Sdn Bhd (Air Selangor) CEO Adam Saffian Ghazali.

He said the improved mobile app now features a "Report Leaks" function, allowing users to report leaking or burst pipes, faulty meters and illegal connections in real time.

"This initiative aims to reduce the Non-Revenue Water rate and ensure more efficient water management," he said in a statement.

He said the Air Selangor 2.0 app was revealed during the Madani Smart Water Campaign launched by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof on Thursday.

Adam Saffian added that the app also includes a water usage monitoring feature through the Litres per Capita per Day indicator, allowing consumers to assess and manage their daily water consumption.

"They can compare their consumption against the benchmark recommended by the National Water Services Commission, which is 160 litres per day, and receive water-saving tips tailored to their household profile."

Adam Saffian said Air Selangor has implemented multiple digital initiatives as part of its sustainability commitment to promoting smart water usage among consumers. – Bernama

## 'Make use of Sabah Madani Rakyat Programme'

**TAWAU:** Community leaders here have described the Sabah Madani Rakyat Programme 2025 as a platform to broaden perspectives and nurture a culture of innovation across various fields.

Residents of Tawau and nearby districts, including Kalabakan, Kunak, Semporna and Lahad Datu are encouraged to attend the programme from today until May 11, as such events are rarely hosted in Tawau, said Kukusan state assemblyman Datuk Rina Jainal.

She said the programme offers over 200 people-centric services, 36 ministry booths and various pocket talks, including on entrepreneurship, career guidance and health.

"It is highly inclusive, featuring sessions on the economy, advocacy and security. It would

be unfortunate for the people of Tawau and surrounding areas to miss out.

"There is also a career carnival as well as inquiry and complaints booths, traffic summons payment counters, affordable sales and stalls by local entrepreneurs."

Rina, the political secretary to Sabah Finance Minister Datuk Seri Masidi Manjun, said the programme provides valuable information that could spark new business ideas among Tawau residents.

Tanjung Batu assemblyman Datuk Andi Muhammad Suryady Bandy expressed hope for strong public participation from Tawau, Kalabakan and nearby districts.

"There are plenty of opportunities for the people – health checkups, traffic summons

discounts, affordable sales, information on Technical and Vocational Education and Training programmes and local vendor products," said Andi Muhammad, who is state industrial development and entrepreneurship assistant minister.

Sabah Farmers' Organisation adviser Tan Sri Liew Yun Fah said the event offers various benefits to all segments of the community, including farmers.

"Bring your families. There are a variety of activities – not just affordable sales and Agro Madani but also children's activities."

Tawau Municipal Council president Joseph Pang expressed appreciation to the government for selecting Tawau to host the Madani Rakyat Programme. – Bernama



## Man held for smashing council building glass doors

**IPOH:** A man has been arrested for allegedly smashing the glass doors at the main entrance of the Teluk Intan Municipal Council building.

Hilir Perak district police chief ACP Dr Bakri Zainal Abidin said the 63-year-old suspect was detained after a complaint was lodged at 10.35am on Thursday regarding a man behaving aggressively and damaging public property at the building.

"Investigations found that the suspect arrived at the scene on a motorcycle, parked in front of the building, and then used a sledgehammer to break the glass doors.

"After the incident, the suspect attempted to leave the scene and return to his shop in Jalan Bandar, Teluk Intan, but was apprehended and handed to police," he said in a statement.

Bakri said the suspect's actions are believed to have been triggered by his dissatisfaction with the municipal council for placing a tent in front of his watch repair shop during the annual Chitra Pouramani celebration, which he claimed obstructed his customers' view of the premises.

The man also claimed to have lodged multiple complaints with the council but no action was taken, prompting him to act out of frustration.

Police also seized a sledgehammer believed to have been used during the incident.

A remand application will be filed to assist investigations under Section 427 of the Penal Code for committing mischief and causing damage.

Earlier, a video showing a man aggressively smashing the glass doors of the council building after arriving on a motorcycle was widely shared on social media. — Bernama

## Elderly woman dies after SUV slams into restaurant

**IPOH:** A 73-year-old woman has died after being struck by an SUV that crashed into a fast-food restaurant in Setiawan on Wednesday night.

Manjung district police chief ACP Hasbullah Abd Rahman said the victim was pronounced dead at 10.56pm after receiving treatment at the emergency ward of Seri Manjung Hospital.

Seven other individuals — four men, two women and a girl aged between five and 38 — sustained minor injuries and were also treated at the same hospital.

"Initial investigations at the scene found that the SUV, driven by a 29-year-old man, was travelling from Kampung Koh towards Sungai Wangi.

"Upon reaching the traffic lights junction in front of the restaurant, the driver is believed to have lost control, veering to the right before crashing into the premises and hitting eight customers, comprising seven adults and one child," he said in a statement.

Hasbullah said the driver, who also sustained injuries, has been detained.

The case is being investigated under Section 41(1) of the Road Transport Act 1987 for causing death by reckless or dangerous driving. — Bernama

# Many still do not use rear seat belts despite dangers

► Experts call for stricter enforcement and public awareness as preventable deaths involving unrestrained passengers persist

■ BY IKHWAN ZULKAFLEE  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Rear seat passengers, although statistically facing a lower risk of injury in road crashes, are still strongly urged to use seat belts for their own safety, said Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research chairman Prof Wong Shaw Voon.

He stressed that seat belts remain the most effective safety feature in vehicles and using them is vital, regardless of seating position.

"Under normal circumstances, a car door doesn't just fly open without someone actually opening it," he told *theSun* when contacted.

However, he acknowledged that in certain situations, such as during a collision or if a car is driven

recklessly, doors may indeed unlatch or swing open.

He said in such moments, the consequences could be fatal if passengers are not securely fastened.

"In critical situations, wearing a seat belt could mean the difference between life and death," Wong said.

He also urged parents to prioritise child safety by using proper car seats when travelling with infants and toddlers.

"I understand that some may not be able to afford these seats, but vigilance is key. It's always safer to have children in car seats rather than held in someone's arms or left unsecured.

"Most modern vehicles also come equipped with child-lock functions, another important safety feature that every parent should be familiar with," he added.

Wong's comments come amid growing public concern following a series of tragic incidents in which unrestrained passengers were thrown from vehicles, resulting in fatalities.

Echoing his remarks, National Road Safety Council member Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye emphasised that public awareness and personal responsibility remain crucial.

"Age doesn't matter; every passenger, front or rear, should buckle up. It's a fact seat belts save lives," Lee said.

The former lawmaker also called on authorities to strengthen enforcement of rear seat belt regulations, saying the lack of compliance remains worrying despite ongoing public awareness campaigns.

"Too many people still think seat belts are optional in the back seat. They're not. We've seen too many fatal cases in which lives could have been saved if they were buckled up," he said.

Lee added that many of these fatalities involve children who were not properly restrained.

"I hope authorities take this issue seriously. It's heartbreaking to read about children who died because they weren't strapped in safely."

He said even if a child seat is not available, parents must at the very least ensure that seat belts are fastened before driving.

Rear passengers in vehicles have been required to use seat belts since Jan 1, 2009, under the Motor Vehicles Rules (Seatbelt) (2008 Amendment).

Non-compliance can result in fines of up to RM2,000 or imprisonment of up to one year.



Wong said in critical situations, wearing a seat belt could mean the difference between life and death.

— ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THE SUN

## 16 forced labour victims rescued in Klang Valley raids

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Police rescued 16 individuals, including several teenagers, believed to be victims of forced labour during a series of raids across the Klang Valley carried out yesterday by the Bukit Aman Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants units under Op Pintas Mega.

Bukit Aman D3 section chief SAC Soffian Santong said the first raid was conducted shortly after midnight at a restaurant in Bandar Tasik Puteri, Rawang, where five teenage boys — four from Myanmar and one from Indonesia — aged 16 to 17 were rescued.

Two men were arrested in connection with the case — a 29-year-old Malaysian employer and a 26-year-old Indian national who acted as a supervisor.

Both are being investigated under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants Act 2007.

In addition, 20 other foreign workers, including Indian, Myanmar, Bangladeshi and Indonesian nationals, were detained for suspected immigration offences.

The second raid took place at 11.30am at a construction site in Pantai Dalam, Kuala Lumpur, where eight men

comprising a local and seven Bangladeshis aged between 35 and 51 were rescued.

Soffian said two Bangladeshi men, believed to be acting as supervisors, were arrested under the same Act, while 17 others were detained under the Immigration Act.

Later in the day, police raided two car workshops in Puchong Utama at about 4.15pm and 4.25pm.

Three teenage boys, aged between 14 and 17, including one from Myanmar, were rescued.

Two local men believed to be the workshop owners were arrested under

anti-trafficking laws, while two Myanmar nationals working there were detained for immigration offences.

All rescued victims were taken to police stations in Gombak, Brickfields and Subang Jaya for further action.

The joint operation also involved the Home Ministry, Immigration Department, Labour Department, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency and the National Anti-Trafficking Council.

"Police are serious about combating human trafficking and urge the public to report any suspicious activities in their area," Soffian said. — Bernama

## Dentist loses over RM300,000 in job scam

**GEORGE TOWN:** A dentist here has lost RM300,440 after falling victim to a scam syndicate offering a non-existent online job.

Northeast district police chief ACP Abdul Rozak Muhammad said the 72-year-old victim was duped after receiving a WhatsApp message on

Feb 28 from an unknown number promoting a job opportunity via the "JEM Abundance Store (JBS)" app, which promised returns of up to 15%.

"The victim accepted the offer and was instructed to make payments, supposedly to cover the cost of items ordered by customers. The fraudster

also directed the victim to register a business account through the JBS Shop app provided," he said in a statement.

Between March 10 and April 17, the victim made 17 transactions amounting to RM300,440 into 11 different bank accounts.

Abdul Rozak said the victim became

suspicious after failing to receive any returns as promised and stopped making payments when the perpetrator asked for more money.

A police report was later lodged and investigations are ongoing, including efforts to identify and trace those involved in the syndicate. — Bernama

## Boost for Selangor mental health programmes

**KLANG:** The Selangor government is open to collaborating with the Malaysian Occupational Therapy Association to strengthen an inclusive and responsive public health ecosystem in the state.

State Public Health and Environment Committee chairman Jamaliah Jamaluddin said this could empower the field of public health, thus strengthening the efforts and initiatives on early mental health intervention programmes introduced by the state government, such as Selangor Mental Sihat (Sehat).

She said the initiative, which highlights topics related to emotional and mental well-being, comprised several components such as the Sehat Hub Counsellor Programme, Sehat Hotline as well as "Bicara Hati bersama Kaunselor" or "Pakar Psikologi" slots on SelangorFM radio.

"For a start, the state health department could start discussions with the association for cooperation in carrying out rehabilitation programmes in the 12 districts in Selangor.

"I believe occupational therapists can play a key role in advocacy and promoting the services offered because there may be some in the community who do not know how to seek treatment and rehabilitation," she said at the launch of the Malaysian Occupational Therapy National Conference on Wednesday.

Jamaliah also said there is an urgent need to increase the number of occupational therapists in the country to meet the current demand, especially with the increased number of senior citizens, special needs children, and chronic diseases and mental health issue cases.

"With a current ratio of only one occupational therapist to more than 10,000 people, Malaysia is still far behind when compared to Japan and the US.

"As such, more efforts, such as training more students, empowering the career pathway, expanding service opportunities and recognising the contribution of the profession, need to be implemented immediately for the welfare of the people." - Bernama



Razali (right) being assisted by Terengganu Tourism director Hilman Hajjian during the launch ceremony yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

## Foreign participants to enliven Terengganu squid fest

**MARANG:** The Terengganu Squid Jigging event this year is expected to be more lively, with the participation of 50 foreigners.

State Tourism, Culture, Environment and Climate Change Committee chairman Datuk Razali Idris said for the first time, Terengganu received participation from Thailand, Bangladesh, Chile, the Philippines and France.

He added that the foreign participation not only helps to promote Terengganu's tourism industry but also boosts promotions for the Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) campaign.

"The uniqueness of the squid jigging event, themed 'Pakat Maghi

► Some 3,000 boats ferrying 30,000 visitors expected during open jigging season between April and August

Candat Sotong 2025', has attracted the attention of social media influencers, the electronic media and foreign mainstream media.

"Squid jigging is an iconic tourism attraction of the state that has been recognised and included in the VM2026 tourism calendar. It is not just a recreational activity, but a symbol of the cultural heritage of the Terengganu coastal

community," he said at the launch of the 2025 squid jigging season at the Marang Tourism Jetty yesterday.

Also present at the event was Kelantan Tourism, Culture, Arts and Heritage Committee chairman Datuk Kamarudin Md Nor.

Razali said this year, some 3,000 boats carrying 30,000 tourists are expected to gather at

the waters off Terengganu for the squid jigging season, which started in April and will continue until August.

"(The activity) is expected to generate an economic return of more than RM7.5 million for boat operators, hoteliers, homestay operators and local traders.

"The squid jigging event has a direct impact on the local economy, particularly on fishermen, seafood traders and craftsmen.

"Therefore, this programme remains a key component in the Terengganu tourism promotion calendar and has been selected for inclusion in VM2026," he added. - Bernama

# ENJOY A SEAMLESS READING EXPERIENCE.

Read our iPaper at <https://www.thesun.my/>



Or download **theSun** app on the AppStore or Google Play

Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

EXPLORE IT ON AppGallery



## Leadership training seminar to empower student Interactors

**SUBANG JAYA:** The Rotary Club of Subang recently organised the Interact Leadership Training Seminar 2025, a landmark youth empowerment event, at Asia Pacific Schools here.

The seminar brought together about 300 Interactors from 20 schools across Kuala Lumpur, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan.

Being rooted in "service above self", the Rotary Club of Subang has continued to champion youth development through its support of Interact clubs, which are Rotary-sponsored clubs for secondary school students that nurture leadership, responsibility and civic engagement.

This seminar was held to reflect the club's stated commitment to shaping future leaders who are grounded in compassion, action, and purpose.

It featured participation from a diverse group of schools, including: Frontier International Secondary School, ELC International School (Sungai Buloh), SMK Damansara Utama, SMK (P) Methodist, ELC International School (Cyberjaya), Bukit Bintang Boys Secondary School, Harvest International School, Meadow Oaks International, IGB International School, St. John International School, SMUK Hwa Lian, Asia Pacific Schools, Sekolah Menengah Sri UCSI, SMK Taman Sea, SMK Seksyen 19 Shah Alam, Taylor's International School Puchong, SM Chung Hua (P) Klang, Pulau Sebang Secondary School, SMK La Salle PJ and SKJT Kajang.

Rotary District 3300 Malaysia Governor Arvind U Gopi Kumar, who was present as the guest-of-honour, officiated the seminar and delivered the keynote address.

Tunku Zain Al' Abidin Ibtin Tuanku Muhriz graced the occasion as the Royal Patron for Rotaract District 3300 Malaysia.

He delivered an inspiring message on the importance of leadership and civic responsibility among the youth.

This successful initiative underscores the Rotary Club of Subang's proactive role in developing platforms for youths to thrive, lead and make a difference in their communities.

# Celebrating 20 years of Malaysian performing arts

**PETALING JAYA:** The 20th BOH Cameronian Arts Awards took place on May 4 at the Petaling Jaya Performing Arts Centre to honour extraordinary contributions in theatre, dance, music and musical theatre.

It was a night of glamour and artistic brilliance, showcasing the best of Malaysian performing arts.

A milestone was celebrated with the theme "20 Years of Legacy: Igniting Inspiration for Tomorrow."

While honouring visionaries who laid the foundations of the vibrant arts scene, the event also gazed forward on the next generation of artists.

➤ **BOH Cameronian Arts Awards** returns to honour visionaries and next generation of artists

"Over the past 20 years, we've seen talents evolve into icons, small productions spark national conversations, and audiences grow in appreciation and pride for local voices," said Low Ngai Yuen, president of Kakiseni, an arts portal which founded the event.

"As we step into the next 20 years, we carry forward not just the

accolades, but the spirit to keep nurturing spaces where ideas flourish, where courage takes the spotlight and where the arts continue to be a catalyst for unity, courage and growth."

The event is endorsed by the Culture and Arts Department under the Tourism and Culture Ministry, and is supported by BOH

Plantations as title sponsor.

Other key partners are Yayasan Sime Darby, Taylor's University, A Cut Above, Sephora and Capri Communications.

BOH Plantations executive chairman Caroline Russell said: "It has been BOH's privilege to walk alongside Malaysia's vibrant and ever-evolving performing arts community over these two decades and witness countless 'ummph' moments of artistry, passion and innovation."

During the ceremony, the BOH Cameronian Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Dr. Tan Sooi Beng, an ethnomusicologist at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Theatre productions such as The Bee and Randai "MacBeth" led the nominations in the theatre category, with Randai "MacBeth" emerging as a standout, receiving seven category awards.

In the dance category, Geetha Shankaran-Lam won in the Best Featured/Lead Performer category for Samskara - Past Reflections, Present Expressions by GSD Performing Studio.

In music, Dr. Bernard Tan was honoured with Best Musical Direction. Dr. Poom Prommachart took home the Best Solo Performance - Instrumental award.

Teater Muzikal Sakti Merong Mahawangsa stood out in the musical theatre category, bringing home four awards.

Three prestigious Best of 2024 awards were presented to:

- Randai "MacBeth" by Pusat Seni Pentas Tradisional, Aswara;
- Spice, Magic and Mystique by The Young KL Singers, presented by TAS Seni Teater Rakyat and Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre;
- Teater Persiapan Seorang Aktor by Studio Sedar Ruang.



An array of talents were given recognition and encouragement during the vibrant ceremony. - FACEBOOK/KAKISENI

## Outreach to help needy folks access hearing aids

BY P. CHANDRA SAGARAN  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**IPOH:** In conjunction with World Hearing and Speech Awareness Month, the Lions Club of Ipoh Evergreen together with Pure Sound Tech Enterprise, a hearing aid centre, provided hearing devices to six underprivileged individuals on May 4.

The items were fitted into the recipients' ears during a ceremony witnessed by members at the club's centre in Ipoh. Each unit costs between RM4,500 and RM14,000.

The event was held in collaboration with main sponsor Swiss Medicare Sdn Bhd, the exclusive local principle, importer and distributor of Phonak hearing instruments.

One of the beneficiaries, Che Dah Ariffin, 82, said she had difficulty hearing and was taken by her family to a clinic for a check-up.

It was only then that they learned she had a hearing malady.

Another recipient, Wong Tuck Onn, 70, said his hearing defect started when he entered old age.

In her speech, Lions Club of Ipoh Evergreen president Alice Loh said: "The donation of the 12 units of hearing aids valued at RM82,000 is more than just a number. It represents hope and a better quality of life for those in need."

"Moving forward we will continue to strengthen our outreach efforts, identify individuals and provide them with access to essential hearing care."

"Together with the support of our members, friends and corporate partners, we hope to bridge the gap for those living with hearing loss, restoring not only their sense of hearing but also their connection to the world around them."

A mock cheque was presented by Swiss Medicare managing director Vincent Cheong to Loh.

According to data from the World Health Organisation, over 700 million people - roughly one in every 10 individuals - are projected to experience some form of hearing loss worldwide.

What is more concerning is that about four in every 1,000 newborns



have hearing disorders that require early detection and timely intervention.

"Hearing impairment is often an overlooked issue among our senior population," Loh said.

"Beyond the medical concerns, it can also lead to isolation, communication breakdown and even depression."

"It creates ripple effects that impact families and communities at

large," she added.

Meanwhile, Cheong said there must be greater awareness about hearing defects. "People need to take it seriously and not ignore such problems," he said.

Hearing aid specialist Wendy Kan speaks with Wong after placing a device on him. With them are Loh (second right) and Cheong (second left). - P. CHANDRA SAGARAN/THESUNDAILY



FOLLOW **theSun** ON TWITTER  
@thesundaily



## BRIEFS

### NEW DELHI ORDERS X TO BLOCK 8,000 ACCOUNTS

NEW DELHI: The Indian government has ordered X to block over 8,000 accounts in the country, including foreign news organisations. It has threatened to punish the company's local employees if not obeyed. X said it disagrees with the demands but has started the process of withholding the specified accounts. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Economic Affairs Ministry said yesterday its X account had been hacked after a post was published on it appealing to international partners for more loans amid rising tensions with its neighbour India. — Bernama/Reuters

### SIX KILLED IN SRI LANKA HELICOPTER CRASH

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan air force helicopter crashed in the country's east yesterday during a demonstration flight, killing four commandos and two air force gunners, the military said. The military personnel were preparing for a rope jump when their helicopter plunged into a lake, an official said. — AFP

## Failed bid by Thai ex-PM to travel

**BANGKOK:** A Thai court has refused former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra's request to leave the country for Qatar, where he had hoped to meet US President Donald Trump for informal trade talks.

Thaksin, who is facing criminal charges under Thailand's strict royal defamation law, had sought permission to travel as part of his bail conditions.

The Criminal Court ruled on Thursday that the request lacked "sufficient justification", noting that the invitation from Qatar's Lusail Palace was personal and unrelated to any official diplomatic capacity.

Thaksin argued that the event offers a rare opportunity to speak with Trump and his economic team in discussions, after Thailand was hit with a 36% tariff as part of a blitz of US trade penalties.

"The request lacked a specific itinerary," the court said in a statement.

It also said the proposed travel could interfere with legal proceedings against Thaksin.

He is due to appear in court in July in the royal defamation case, which is linked to a 2015 interview with a South Korean media outlet.

He is also facing scrutiny from the Supreme Court over alleged special treatment following his return to the country. — AFP

# Philippines election key to future for Marcos, Duterte

**MANILA:** The Philippines will vote on Monday in a ballot that will decide half the Senate's seats, thousands of local posts and possibly the political future of impeached vice-president Sara Duterte.

More than 160,000 national police have been deployed to secure polling stations, escort election officials and guard checkpoints in a country where hotly contested provincial postings are known to erupt into violence.

But it is Duterte's feud with President Ferdinand Marcos that has dominated national politics heading into the mid-term election.

The rift between the former allies came to a head in the wake of Duterte's February impeachment and her father Rodrigo Duterte's subsequent arrest and transfer to

## Police deployed to secure polling stations, escort officials and guard checkpoints

the International Criminal Court (ICC) to face charges over his deadly drug war while he was president.

The 12 senators elected on Monday and 12 others already in office will serve as jurors in an impeachment trial tentatively set for July that could see her permanently barred from public office.

Seven polling in the top 12 have been endorsed by Marcos while four, including his independently minded sister Imee Marcos, are publicly aligned with Sara.

Among the front-runners are a

TV host, a comedian and a former lieutenant for Rodrigo who has publicly said he could be next on the ICC's warrant list.

Former boxing champion Manny Pacquiao sits just outside the so-called Magic 12.

The threat the Dutertes face is an existential one, WR Numero Research president and CEO Cleve Arguelles told AFP.

"If (Rodrigo) is cut off from power, if Sara is cut off from public office, then it is not far from imagining that it might also threaten their control of Davao," he said, referencing the

capital of the family's southern stronghold Mindanao.

Seeing Sara removed from the 2028 presidential equation is in the interest of more than just Marcos, who is constitutionally limited to one term, he added.

"If she is out of the game, then it is anybody's ballgame."

The Dutertes' woes, however, have done little to boost Marcos's popularity.

A survey released last month showed a dramatic dip in his approval rating from nearly 50% to 25% in barely three months.

"There is a view that the mid-term elections serve as a referendum for the incumbent president," said Dennis Coronacion of the University of Santo Tomas political science department.

Marcos has no signature achievement that he can point to, said University of the Philippines political science department assistant chair Jean Franco.

"Since late 2023, his entire administration's narrative seems to be about Sara Duterte. I think Filipinos are souring on him."

A bid to make the country's clashes with Beijing in the disputed South China Sea central to the campaign has also largely fizzled with voters.

While surveys show Filipinos are broadly anti-China on the issue, it rates far behind bread-and-butter topics, such as inflation and jobs, said Arguelles.

No matter the election's outcome, Marcos's influence is certain to wane over the next three years, said University of the Philippines associate political science professor Alcor Panao.

"The political capital of the president decreases in the second half of his term whatever happens because he cannot promise anything anymore."

"The legislators and local officials will (start preparing) for the next presidential election. That is the reality of our politics." — AFP



Residents attending the campaign rally of candidates under the party of Rodrigo in Manila on Thursday. — AFP/PPIC

## Diplomatic efforts to push for India-Pakistan dialogue

**NEW DELHI:** Diplomatic efforts are under way to encourage India-Pakistan dialogue amid military tensions between the two South Asian nations.

Top diplomats from several countries, including Iran, Italy and Saudi Arabia, discussed the regional standoff with Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar on Thursday.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who was in New Delhi for consultations with senior Indian officials, held a telephone conversation on Thursday with Dar "regarding the latest security developments in South Asia following

the recent escalation of tensions between India and Pakistan", said the Iranian Foreign Ministry on X.

Araghchi also held a 90-minute meeting with Indian national security adviser Ajit Kumar Doval.

During the meeting, "both sides emphasised the necessity of safeguarding peace and stability in the South Asian region and underscored the importance of adopting appropriate measures to reduce tensions in the region", according to an Iranian statement.

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas and Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani discussed the regional flare-up in phone conversations with Jaishankar and Dar.

Jaishankar "shared perspectives on countering terrorism" in a meeting with visiting Saudi Arabian Foreign Affairs State Minister Adel Al Jubeir.

The Pakistani media reported that Al Jubeir planned to travel to Islamabad yesterday.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio discussed the India-Pakistan military escalation with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Jaishankar.

"Rubio emphasised the need for immediate de-escalation. He expressed US support for direct dialogue between India and Pakistan and encouraged continued efforts to improve communications," said US State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce.

US Vice-President J.D. Vance said

on Thursday India and Pakistan should de-escalate tensions, adding that the United States cannot control the nuclear-armed Asian neighbours and a war between them would be "none of our business".

Washington has held regular talks with both countries in recent days.

US President Donald Trump called the rising tensions a shame and expressed hope that the countries would stop now after going "tit-for-tat".

The US State Department urged both countries to work towards what Washington terms as a "responsible solution".

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated this week following India's airstrikes on Wednesday under

what it dubbed "Operation Sindoor", targeting locations in Pakistan, Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir.

Nearly 50 people have been killed on both sides, mainly in Pakistan, since India launched the air strikes targeting "terrorist camps".

India said its pre-dawn strikes were a response to a deadly April 22 attack in Pahalgam, located in Indian-administered Kashmir.

India reportedly blamed Pakistan for the recent Kashmir attack, citing alleged cross-border links, a claim that Pakistan has denied.

Thursday saw further cross-border missile and drone exchanges, according to Indian and Pakistani officials. — Bernama/Reuters



# First American pope celebrates inaugural mass

➤ Upcoming events include Sunday Regina Coeli prayer and Monday meeting with journalists at Vatican

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Leo XIV celebrated mass yesterday, the day after becoming the first US head of the Catholic Church, with the world watching for signs of what kind of pope he will be.

Chicago-born Robert Francis Prevost was elected on Thursday by fellow cardinals to lead the world's 1.4 billion Catholics after a secret conclave in the Vatican's Sistine Chapel.

At 11am (0900 GMT) yesterday, the 69-year-old returned to the chapel to celebrate a private mass with cardinals that was broadcast by the Vatican, delivering his much anticipated first homily as pope.

He used his first homily to warn against reducing Jesus to "a kind of charismatic leader or superman", in an apparent message to evangelical Christians.

He was elected so that the Church could be

an increasingly bright beacon in a troubled world, he said in the Sistine Chapel.

Tens of thousands of well-wishers cheered for Leo as he appeared on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica on Thursday.

Leo, who spent two decades doing missionary work in Peru and was only made a cardinal in 2023, had been on many Vatican watchers' lists of potential popes, although he is far from being a globally recognised figure.

Over the coming days, including Sunday's Regina Coeli prayer and a meeting with journalists at the Vatican on Monday, his actions and words will be closely scrutinised.

In his first speech to the crowds packed into St Peter's Square on Thursday, Leo echoed his predecessor Pope Francis with a call for peace.

"Help us, and each other, to build bridges through dialogue, through encounter, to come together as one people, always in peace," he said.

"We must seek together how to be a missionary Church, a Church that builds bridges, which holds dialogues, which is always open."

World leaders raced to welcome his election as the 267th pope and promised to work with the Church on global issues at a

time of great geopolitical uncertainty.

Leo faces a momentous task. As well as asserting his moral voice on a conflict-torn world stage, he must try to unite a divided Church and address burning issues, such as the continued fallout from the sexual abuse scandal.

As Cardinal Prevost, he had defended the poor and underprivileged, and reposted articles online that were critical of US President Donald Trump's anti-migrant policies.

Trump nevertheless welcomed his election, saying it was a "great honour" to have a pope from the United States.

It is not known how many ballots it took to elect Leo XIV but the conclave followed recent history in wrapping up in less than two days.

The crowds erupted with cheers on Thursday when white smoke billowed into the sky from the Sistine Chapel chimney, the traditional sign that a new pope has been elected.

"It is an amazing feeling," said Joseph Brian, a 39-year-old chef from Belfast in Northern Ireland, who came with his mother to Rome for the spectacle.

"I am not a very religious person but being with all these people blew me away." – AFP/dpa



Leo appearing on the balcony of St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. – REUTERS/PIC

## World leaders congratulate new pontiff

**MOSCOW:** Leaders of global powers, including the United Kingdom, Italy and the Netherlands, have congratulated US Cardinal and Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops Robert Francis Prevost on his election as the new pope, Sputnik/RIA Novosti reported.

The new pope has taken the name Leo XIV. This is the first pontiff from the United States in history.

"I extend my most sincere wishes to Pope Leo XIV for the beginning of his pontificate. In a time of conflicts and anxiety, his words from the balcony of St Peter's Basilica are a powerful call for peace, fraternity and responsibility," said Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on X.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney expressed hope that Leo would follow the

path of solidarity, compassion and dignity in an era of global challenges.

"The election of Leo is a profound moment of joy for Catholics in the United Kingdom and globally. I look forward to meeting the Holy Father and continuing to work closely with the Catholic Church in the UK and internationally to advance our shared values and the common good," said UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof congratulated Leo on his election, noting that this is a special moment for the global Catholic community and beyond.

Venezuela has also sent official congratulations to Leo, expressing hope that his pontificate would continue the course of social justice and inter-religious dialogue, Foreign Minister Yvan Gil said.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro expressed hope that the pontificate would become a powerful voice in defence of migrants and the environment.

"Congratulations to His Holiness Leo XIV, elected by the College of Cardinals as the head of the Vatican State and the spiritual leader of the Catholic Church. I reaffirm our humanistic solidarity for world peace and prosperity," said Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva expressed hope that Leo, like Pope Francis, would advocate for peace and social justice.

United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres congratulated Leo on his election and said he looks forward to continuing cooperation with the Holy See. – Bernama-Sputnik

## AI tool uses selfies to predict cancer survival

**WASHINGTON:** Doctors often start exams with the so-called "eyeball test", which is a snap judgement on whether a patient appears older or younger than their age, which could influence key medical decisions.

This intuitive assessment may soon get an artificial intelligence (AI) upgrade.

FaceAge, a deep learning algorithm described on Thursday in The Lancet Digital Health, converts a simple headshot into a number that reflects a person's biological age more accurately than the birthday on their chart.

Trained on tens of thousands of photographs, it pegged cancer patients on average as biologically five years older than healthy peers.

The study's authors said it could help doctors decide who could safely tolerate punishing treatments and who might fare better with a gentler approach.

"We hypothesise that FaceAge could be used as a biomarker in cancer care to quantify a patient's biological age and help a doctor make these tough decisions," said co-senior author Raymond Mak, who is also an oncologist at Harvard-affiliated health system Mass Brigham Health in Boston.

Growing evidence shows that humans age at different rates, shaped by genes, stress, exercise and habits such as smoking or drinking. While pricey genetic tests could reveal how DNA wears over time, FaceAge promises insight using only a selfie.

The model was trained on 58,851 portraits of presumed-healthy adults over 60 years old, culled from public datasets.

It was tested on 6,196 cancer patients treated in the United States and the Netherlands, using photos snapped just before radiotherapy. Patients with malignancies looked on average 4.79 years older biologically than their chronological age. – AFP

### BRIEFS

#### TRUMP FIRES HEAD OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

**NEW YORK:** US President Donald Trump's administration has fired Librarian of Congress Carla D. Hayden, the *New York Times* reported on Thursday, citing a spokesperson for the organisation. Hayden, who was the first woman and first African American in the role, headed an office that has overall management responsibility for the library and sets out policy on its programmes and activities. Neither the Library of Congress nor the White House immediately responded to a request for comment from Reuters. US House of Representatives top Democrat Hakeem Jeffries described the move as "unjust". – Reuters

#### TV HOST NAMED TOP WASHINGTON PROSECUTOR

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump on Thursday appointed TV personality and former judge Jeanine Pirro to a key post in the US judiciary. The 73-year-old has been selected to work as interim US Attorney for the District of Columbia. The pick came soon after Trump pulled his first choice for the post, a defence lawyer who represented defendants charged in the Jan 6, 2021 storming of the US Capitol. – AFP

#### U.S. TO RESETTLE WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN REFUGEES

**NEW YORK:** The United States is working to bring the first group of white South Africans it has classified as refugees to the country early next week, the *New York Times* reported yesterday, citing officials briefed on the plans and documents obtained by the newspaper. The White House did not immediately respond to Reuters's requests for comment. Trump issued a Feb 7 executive order that called for the United States to resettle white minority Afrikaner refugees. It said Afrikaners, who are descendants of mostly Dutch early settlers, were "victims of unjust racial discrimination". – Reuters



## HAMAS ENGAGED IN FIERCE FIGHTING IN SOUTHERN GAZA

CAIRO: Hamas militants engaged in "fierce fighting" with Israeli soldiers on Thursday in the south of the Gaza Strip near Rafah, the Palestinian militant group said. The statement suggested that Hamas is still active in areas where the Israeli military has expanded its control, after the start of Israel's air and ground campaign in Gaza. It said fighters ambushed an Israeli 12-man force inside a house in the Tanur neighborhood in the eastern Rafah area with two anti-personnel and anti-armour rockets, killing and wounding several soldiers. The Israeli army confirmed yesterday that two of its soldiers had been killed in combat in the southern Gaza Strip. – Reuters

## UKRAINE CLAIMS SETTLEMENTS HIT DURING CEASEFIRE

KYIV: Russia hit eight Ukrainian settlements near a frontline 220 times during a ceasefire, said governor of the Zaporizhzhia region Ivan Fedorov on Telegram yesterday. The villages in Zaporizhzhia were hit by 150 drones and 70 artillery rounds in the past 24 hours, he said. The ceasefire announced by Russian President Vladimir Putin came into force in the early hours of Thursday. – Reuters

# Putin and Xi attend Victory Day Red Square parade

➤ Attendance of allies shows Russia not isolated, says Kremlin

**MOSCOW:** Russia marked the 80th anniversary of the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II (WWII) yesterday with a parade attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping amid tight security to guard against Ukrainian attacks after three years of war.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, the longest-serving Kremlin chief since Josef Stalin, stood beside Xi, several dozen other world leaders and Russian veterans on a rooftop tribune beside Vladimir Lenin's mausoleum in Red Square as Russian troops marched past.

Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov inspected 11,000 troops, including many who have fought in Ukraine, and congratulated them on Victory Day.

Ukraine attacked Moscow with drones for several days this week,

although there were no reports of major attacks on Russia yesterday amid a 72-hour ceasefire declared by Putin.

The Kremlin said the attendance of Russian allies, such as Xi, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and several leaders from Africa, Asia, Latin America, Serbia and Slovakia, shows that Russia is not isolated even if Moscow's former WWII Western allies want to stay away.

The Soviet Union lost 27 million people in WWII, including many millions in Ukraine.

For Russians and many of the peoples of the former Soviet Union, May 9 is a sacred date.

Putin, angry at what he said are attempts by the West to belittle the Soviet victory, has sought to use memories of WWII to unite



The parade being held in Red Square yesterday. – REUTERS/SPIC

Russian society.

Putin has sought to insulate Moscow from the grinding artillery and drone war being fought 600km away in Ukraine, although Ukrainian drone attacks have in recent days disrupted air travel to

the Russian capital.

For the first time, Russia will parade drones, the biggest technological innovation of the Ukraine war, Russian state television said.

The Kremlin said the military is doing everything it can to ensure security for the parade next to the Kremlin, which Russia said was targeted in 2023 by Ukrainian drones.

There were some drone attack warnings announced overnight in western Russian regions but no reports of attacks on Moscow, which along with the surrounding region has a population of at least 21 million.

Putin proposed a ceasefire from Thursday until today, although Ukraine said Russia has broken the ceasefire, a claim dismissed as absurd by Moscow.

The Kremlin said military units from 13 countries, including China, took part in the parade along with Russian troops. – Reuters

## 30-day ceasefire indicates move to peace: Zelensky

**KYIV:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Thursday he told US President Donald Trump in a phone call that a 30-day ceasefire was a "real indicator" of moving towards peace with Russia, and Kyiv was ready to implement it.

Zelensky said Russia has to show its readiness to end the war, starting with an unconditional ceasefire.

In a social media post on Thursday, Trump again called for a 30-day unconditional ceasefire, although he made no reference to his conversation with Zelensky.

He said if the ceasefire "is not

respected, the United States and its partners will impose further sanctions".

The ceasefire was initially proposed by Washington in March and Ukraine agreed.

Russia has said such a measure could only take effect once reliable measures of monitoring and upholding it are put in place.

Zelensky said he also spoke to Trump about the ratification by Ukraine's parliament on Thursday of an agreement to exploit Ukraine's mineral riches along with the creation of an investment fund for Ukraine's reconstruction.

In a separate development, a top Kremlin aide said on Thursday the United States is coming around to an understanding of Russia's positions on key issues, including the Ukraine conflict.

"It is clear that there is an understanding of what we are trying to achieve," said Russian diplomat and former ambassador to Washington Yuri Ushakov.

"To some extent, our demands, our thinking, our proposals are being taken into account. Not all of them. But the process is under way."

He noted movement towards an

improvement in ties between Washington and Moscow.

Some comments by US officials, such as Trump envoy Steve Witkoff, have sometimes seemed to echo Kremlin narratives.

Russia stands by its demands that Ukraine give up in full all four regions that Moscow's troops have partially occupied in Ukraine's east and south.

Moscow also says it wants resolved the "root causes" behind the conflict, including the rejection of any notion of Ukraine joining the Nato alliance and the "denazification" of Kyiv's leaders. – Reuters

## EDUCATION

### FOCUS 2025

Education matters remain an important component of Malaysian society. Today the landscape is fast paced with new exciting developments in technology such as AI, coding, virtual reality, and cybersecurity, leading the way for changes in curriculum development. To showcase the latest and most updated content, we invite you join us in 2025, and be part of our Education Focus!







## FTA with M'sia will be central pillar for deeper ties with Asean: EU envoy

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The European Union (EU) is positioning the Malaysia-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as a central pillar in its broader strategy to deepen economic and geopolitical partnerships in Asean countries.

EU Ambassador to Malaysia Rafael Daerr (*pic*) said the FTA would enhance trade and investment flows between the two economies amid escalating global uncertainties and protectionist headwinds.

"It will also serve as a platform for building a resilient, future-oriented partnership grounded in shared values and rules-based multilateralism."

"Trade is in the EU's DNA. We are a group of countries that believe in openness, fair competition and working within a clear framework. Malaysia mirrors many of these principles," he said in his keynote address at the "Powering Resilience: EU-Malaysia Partnership in Turbulent Times" forum at the Asia School of Business here yesterday.

The event was held in conjunction with Europe Day.

Daerr noted that Malaysia, if it were an EU member state, would rank sixth in population size and 11th in terms of economic scale – a testament to its regional significance and complementarity with Europe's economic ambitions.

The FTA negotiations, relaunched in January this year following a joint announcement by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, are expected to enter their first round soon.

"We expect the FTA to replicate the success we have seen in Vietnam, where trade surged following the agreement's entry into force in 2020. It is a win-win that will encourage more foreign direct investments, especially in strategic sectors such as semiconductors," Daerr said.

He highlighted that the EU remains Malaysia's third-largest trading partner and its second-largest collective investor.

He added that recent European investments in high-tech and green sectors signal continued confidence in Malaysia's economic direction.

Daerr said the FTA is part of a broader EU pivot towards trusted partnerships in Asia, spurred by global supply chain disruptions, Russia's aggression in Ukraine, and rising geopolitical fragmentation. "The global rules-based order is under pressure. In this context, we want our partners to be as resilient, independent and economically strong as we aspire to be," – Bernama



## Smile-Link taps digital shift, AI-powered tools for growth

► Dental care company projects modest recovery in second half of 2025

■ BY HAYATUN RAZAK  
[sunbiz@thesundaily.com](mailto:sunbiz@thesundaily.com)

**SHAH ALAM:** Smile-Link Healthcare Global Bhd, the parent company of Drs Wong and Partners Dental Surgeons, expects a modest recovery in the second half of 2025 through cost-cutting efforts, downsizing and upgrades in digital and artificial intelligence-driven dental tools.

Managing director Datuk Dr Wong Ruen Yuan said this recovery also depends on macroeconomic factors such as interest rates and consumer disposable income.

"We do not expect revenue to improve in the first half of the year, as there's nothing particularly promising."

"The second half may improve, but any increase would likely be modest – around 5% to 10%. It will not be a dramatic jump. That said, we are seeing some encouraging signs," he told *SunBiz* in an interview.

Wong said Smile-Link's recovery is supported by international patients from Singapore, Hong Kong, China and Australia who are drawn to Malaysia's affordable and high-quality dental care.

"We get a lot of patients from overseas – around 10% to 20% of our revenue comes from them. Those who migrate from Malaysia to Australia or the UK, when they want to do treatment, return to Malaysia. Even patients from Singapore, where the cost of living and operating standards are significantly higher," he said.

These patients generally seek high-value dental procedures, such as implants and cosmetic treatments, rather than basic care. "They typically do not visit for routine services, it is usually for more complex or specialised procedures," Wong said.

He rebutted the perception that Malaysia's dental care lags behind that of developed nations.

"There is a common belief that we are behind countries like Germany or the United States, but in reality, we offer comparable quality at just 20% of the cost."

Many overseas patients return for treatment because they trust the standards.

"There is a common perception that countries like Singapore or Thailand are regional leaders in healthcare. However,



Wong says Smile-Link's recovery is supported by international patients drawn to Malaysia's affordable and high-quality dental care.

whether in medical or dental services, Malaysia upholds comparable standards. Even in prosthetics, we have advanced towards digital integration and AI-driven technologies," Wong said.

For example, Wong said, the group started digitalising patient records last year.

"Previously, we relied on handwritten records stored in the lab. We have now transitioned to the CLN system, which links all our clinics. This allows us to access a patient's records even if they were treated at a different branch," he explained.

He shared that the group has allocated between RM1.5 million and RM2 million this year for internal upgrades.

"Our focus is on upgrading our internal infrastructure, including replacing ageing dental equipment such as treatment chairs over a decade old, and ensuring all clinics are fully digitalised," Wong said.

He added that the group has no plans to open new clinics this year due to the lengthy break-even period and increasing pricing pressure from independent practitioners offering aggressive discounts.

"We cannot arbitrarily reduce our fees, as doing so would compromise service quality and sustainability. However, new solo practitioners often enter the market with lower pricing and frequent promotional offers, which puts pressure on the industry. As a result, expansion is not our immediate priority," Wong said.

He highlighted Smile-Link's integration of AI and digital tools to enhance treatment quality, reduce costs and improve operational efficiency.

"Given the current economic climate, patients are generally reluctant to pay more

for treatment. However, by leveraging AI technology, we can reduce treatment time, enhance the quality of care, and lower material costs," Wong said.

Smile-Link posted a pre-tax profit of RM715,000 for the six months ended Dec 31, 2024 – a reversal from a RM3.99 million loss in the same period of the previous year. The improvement was primarily driven by cost-cutting measures, including selling underperforming clinics and ongoing internal restructuring efforts to enhance service quality and operational efficiency.

However, revenue declined 17.7% year-on-year to RM15 million from RM18.2 million, mainly attributed to downsizing its clinic network, which was reduced from 86 to 60.

The company remains focused on cost efficiency and service upgrades while working toward resolving its delayed audited financial statement submission and trading suspension on the LEAP Market.

As of end-March, Smile-Link remained under trading suspension on the LEAP Market due to its failure to announce audited financial statements for the 18-month financial period ended June 30, 2024, by the Oct 31, 2024, deadline.

The company replaced its previous external auditors, HLB Ler Lum Chew PLT, via extraordinary general meetings in January and appointed Messrs Ong and Wong as new auditors on March 13.

Bursa Malaysia did not grant a time extension for the delayed filing, and the audit is ongoing.

In line with LEAP Market Listing Requirements, the company is issuing monthly updates under Rule 6.14(3) until the matter is resolved.

## Local construction sector's value of work done rises to RM42.9b in Q1

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's construction sector recorded a 16.6% year-on-year increase in the value of work done to RM42.9 billion in the first quarter of 2025 (Q1'25), according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia.

In a statement yesterday, Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the sector maintained its

upward momentum, albeit at a more moderate pace compared to the 23.1% growth registered in the previous quarter.

"The performance was mainly driven by continued expansion in the special trade activities and residential buildings sub-sectors, which posted double-digit growth of 35.5% and 27%, respectively."

"The non-residential buildings sub-sector showed an increase of 21%, while the civil engineering sub-sector remained positive with marginal growth of 3.7%," he said.

Of the RM42.9 billion in work done, RM15.7 billion came from the civil engineering sub-sector, mainly driven by roads and railways (RM7.9 billion) and utility projects (RM6 billion).

Meanwhile, the value of work done for non-residential buildings and residential buildings stood at RM12.3 billion (28.8%) and RM9.9 billion (23%), respectively.

Mohd Uzir said the private sector remained the main driver of growth in the quarter, with an increase of 23.7%, supported by special trade activities (40.9%) and residential

buildings (26.5%).

The value of work done by the private sector amounted to RM27 billion, or 62.9% of the total construction work done value.

In contrast, the public sector contributed RM15.9 billion, or 37.1% of the total work done, with a growth of 6.3% (compared to 8.8% in Q4'24). – Bernama



# FMM backs new foreign worker rules

► Allowing them to change employers will help rebalance labour distribution across sectors, says manufacturers federation

**PETALING JAYA:** The Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) said it strongly welcomes the government's recent policy to permit foreign workers to change employers across sectors.

In a statement, the association said this decisive and pragmatic move comes at a critical time, offering much-needed relief to industries facing labour shortages amid the continued freeze on new foreign worker recruitment.

FMM said the policy has the

potential to help rebalance the distribution of labour across sectors, enabling companies with surplus workers to release them to sectors experiencing acute shortages, including manufacturing.

FMM also supported the policy announcement on allowing applications on a case-by-case basis for the manufacturing sector, particularly to replace workers who have exited employment. This flexibility will assist in maintaining the continuity of operations and mini-

mising disruption to production activities, it said.

"As a responsible employer organisation, and from a human resource management perspective, FMM underscores the importance of ensuring that the implementation of this policy aligns with regulatory compliance and ethical workforce practices," FMM president Tan Sri Soh Thian Lai said.

In line with this positive, FMM advocated for the portability of levy payments.

In cases where a worker transfers to a new employer, the levy already paid by the former employer should be transferable. If the levy rate differs between sectors, the new employer should only be required to pay the difference.

Soh said this approach promotes

financial fairness and avoids double-burdening employers.

FMM proposed that the Immigration Department to directly manage the intersectoral transfer process. It said a centrally coordinated system would ensure uniformity in procedures, reduce opportunities for abuse, and speed up approvals.

The federation also urged the adoption of digitised processing with end-to-end visibility to enhance efficiency and transparency.

An online platform featuring status tracking, audit trails and defined approval timelines would reduce administrative overhead and strengthen compliance monitoring, it said.

In addition, FMM said, worker consent and safeguards must be prioritised. Transfers should only

proceed with the worker's informed, voluntary consent and be properly documented.

FMM noted that a formal grievance mechanism should be in place to resolve any disputes arising from such transfers.

Finally, FMM recommended integrating databases for effective labour matching.

"Specifically, the MyFutureJobs platform should serve as a national clearinghouse to align surplus labour with industry demand. Employers should be encouraged to update their workforce status to promote transparency and reduce reliance on intermediaries," Soh said.

He noted that with these measures in place, the new policy can deliver its intended benefits while protecting the interests of all stakeholders involved.

## Intra-Asia trade drives 63% of Westports' container volume in Q1

**PETALING JAYA:** Westports Holdings Bhd achieved revenue of RM621 million for the first quarter ended Mar 31, 2025 as the port operator handled a container volume of 2.69 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU).

Net profit for the quarter rose 8.78% to RM222.46 million from RM204.50 million posted in the same quarter last year.

Westports' container volume was mainly supported by intra-Asia regional trade, which made up 63% of the total volume handled.

It managed 2.95 million tonnes of bulk cargo in the conventional segment, with a noticeable rise in liquid bulk activities like palm oil products, liquefied petroleum gas and bunker fuel.

Executive chairman Datuk Ruben Emir

Gnanalingam said the tariff rates among some key trading nations have pivoted upwards.

"The interim uncertainties and adjustments may pause containerised trade growth, but a new equilibrium, Asia's economic dynamism, and Malaysia's commitment towards multilateral trade will reestablish a new baseline for sustained future long-term growth."

"Therefore, the container terminal expansion at WP2 will continue towards completion by 2028 as we anticipate higher demand for terminal handling facilities by the time we commission CT10 into service," he said in a statement.

Westports maintains round-the-clock operations with a total staff strength of 5,600.

The operational workforce cost, the largest cost component, increased by 7% as Westports continued to pay more than the latest minimum wage rate of RM1,700 per month, which came into effect on Feb 1.

Westports uses unsubsidised diesel for its terminal operations, and its fuel costs saw the biggest drop thanks to lower global oil prices.

However, the company began paying more to the port authority under a renewed privatisation agreement that took effect on Sept 1, 2024.

Westports' cash flow statement showed higher payments related to the port's infrastructure and facilities, including amortisation, finance costs, and lease expenses.

## M'sian labour market maintains upward momentum

**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysia's labour market continued to chart steady progress in the first quarter of 2025, with key indicators showing growth in employment and labour force participation, coupled with a decline in the unemployment rate, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM).

Chief Statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin said the country's labour force grew by 0.8% to 17.23 million persons in the January-March period, from 17.1 million in the fourth quarter of 2024.

"The labour force participation rate (LFPR) rose slightly by 0.1 percentage points to 70.7%, compared to 70.6% in the previous quarter," he said in a statement yesterday.

In line with this development, the number of employed persons increased by 0.9% to 16.70 million, while the number of unemployed persons declined by 2.3% to 526,300 from 538,700 in the preceding quarter. As a result, the unemployment rate decreased to 3.1% from 3.2% previously.

On underemployment, he said the number of individuals working less than 30 hours per week fell by 5.9% to 242,700 persons, while time-related underemployment or those willing and able to work more hours, dropped by 3.8% to 146,900 persons, maintaining a rate of 0.9%.

However, skill-related underemployment saw a marginal increase of 0.4%, reaching 1.95 million persons, or 35.7% of tertiary-educated individuals employed in semi- or low-skilled jobs.

At the state level, Putrajaya recorded the lowest unemployment rate at 1.8%, followed by Malacca and Pahang 1.9% each and Selangor 2.2%. Selangor also posted the highest LFPR at 77.9%, trailed by Putrajaya (77.6%) and Kuala Lumpur (75.4%).

Touching on monthly data, Mohd Uzir said the number of unemployed persons in March decreased to 529,600, compared to 532,800 in February, bringing the monthly unemployment rate to 3.1%.

"An optimistic economic position in March has allowed the country's labour market to continue to develop steadily," he said, adding that Malaysia's labour force in March rose by 0.2 per cent to 17.31 million persons from 17.27 million in February.

He said the country's economic performance during the first quarter shows strong growth, driven by increased investment, labour market stability, and a robust export sector. — Bernama

## Sirim targets 2,000 companies with ESG certification by year-end

**SHAH ALAM:** Sirim Bhd aims to certify around 2,000 companies with environmental, social and governance-related certification by the end of this year as part of efforts to prepare local industries for global market access.

SIRIM group president and CEO Datuk Dr Ahmad Sabirin Arshad said ESG certification is crucial as its implementation will become mandatory by 2027.

"We're encouraging industries to obtain ESG certification early, before it becomes compulsory. Currently, we're building the platform to support this transition, and since the initiative was launched last year, 300 companies have already been certified," he told reporters after the "Living ESG: Aspiration to Action" forum at Sirim's headquarters here yesterday.

He added that Sirim targets to certify up to 10,000 companies by 2030.

Sirim, Ahmad Sabirin said, is committed to supporting businesses across all sectors through customised training, resource development, and innovative ESG solutions. This includes frameworks such as Sirim 55: ESG Advancement and Sirim 56: ESG Readiness, along with carbon reporting and training initiatives.

Although ESG awareness is growing, it remains limited among many Malaysians, especially SMEs, Ahmad Sabirin said.

To address this, Sirim plans to develop more accessible educational materials and practical case studies to help businesses understand how ESG adoption can lead to long-term benefits.

Earlier, the forum was officiated by Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry, deputy secretary-general (investment and management) Datuk Bahria Mohd Tamil.



Bahria (left) and Ahmad Sabirin (centre) officiating at the launch of the Sirim Blockchain Verification platform yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

The forum brought together industry leaders, policymakers, and businesses to advance Malaysia's sustainability agenda and promote understanding of ESG practices through talks, workshops, and exhibitions.

In conjunction with the event, Sirim launched the Sirim Blockchain Verification platform, a system that enables businesses and

individuals to verify certificates and documents more quickly and securely.

"With just a scan of the document's serial number, users can confirm its authenticity and approval by a trusted certification body. This helps reduce fraud and builds confidence in important transactions," Ahmad Sabirin said. — Bernama



## S'pore banks raise buffers on tariff risks, OCBC posts strong Q1 earnings

**SINGAPORE:** Singaporean banks beefed up their buffers against potential loan losses that could emerge due to uncertainties triggered by US President Donald Trump's tariffs despite strong balance sheets, while delivering a solid first-quarter earnings season.

Oversea-Chinese Banking Corp (OCBC), Singapore's second-largest bank, on Friday said it adopted a prudent approach to set aside allowances for non-impaired assets of S\$118 million (RM388 million), citing a challenging economic outlook after posting first-quarter net profit that beat expectations.

"We have to be comfortable at a level based on how we test our book that we think this is the right amount that we are taking," OCBC Group CEO Helen Wong said in an earnings briefing yesterday.

"Another impact is what we call the macroeconomic factors that may actually impact how we make our provision," she added.

Larger rival DBS Group on Thursday said it took general allowances of S\$205 million as a prudent measure to strengthen its general provision reserves, while delivering better-than-expected first quarter results.

Smaller peer United Overseas Bank on Wednesday said it had set aside an additional pre-emptive allowance to strengthen provision coverage after reporting a stable but weaker-than-expected first-quarter profit. It also paused giving 2025 guidance.

Major global lenders such as HSBC and Standard Chartered have also highlighted the threat to economic growth due to the impact of Trump's tariffs.

Despite the uncertainties, OCBC, which is also Southeast Asia's second-largest bank, maintained all of its 2025 financial targets, including net interest margin in the region of 2% and credit costs in the range of 20 to 25 basis points.

Shares of OCBC rose marginally yesterday afternoon, underperforming the benchmark index's nearly 0.7% rise.

In a research note released after the earnings results, Jefferies' analysts said OCBC's net interest margin decline was larger than peers, leaving not as much room versus the 2025 guidance.

OCBC, which counts Singapore, greater China and Malaysia among its key markets, said January-March net profit fell to S\$1.88 billion from a record S\$1.98 billion a year earlier, mainly on lower net interest income. It was OCBC's first on-year quarterly net profit drop since the first quarter of 2022. – Reuters

# Where things stand in trade war between US and China

**BEIJING:** US and Chinese officials will meet this weekend in Geneva for their first formal talks aimed at resolving a gruelling tit-for-tat tariff war that threatens hundreds of billions in trade and roiled global markets and supply chains.

AFP looks at how the trade row between the world's two economic superpowers is playing out:

## What steps have the two sides taken so far?

The US has raised tariffs on Chinese imports to 145%, with cumulative duties on some goods reaching a staggering 245%.

As well as the blanket levies, China has also been hit with sector-specific tariffs on steel, aluminium and car imports.

Sales of Chinese goods to the US last year totalled more than US\$500 billion (RM2.1 trillion) – 16.4% of the country's exports, according to Beijing's customs data.

Beijing has vowed to fight the measures "to the end" and has unveiled reciprocal tariffs of up to 125% on imports of American goods, which totalled US\$143.5 billion last year, according to Washington.

China has filed complaints with

➤ Economic strain pushes both sides to table, but hopes for breakthrough talks this weekend remain low despite market optimism

the World Trade Organisation (WTO), citing "bullying" tactics by the Trump administration.

And it has gone after US companies, scrapping orders for Boeing planes, probing Google for "anti-monopoly" violations and adding fashion group PVH Corp – which owns Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein – and biotech giant Illumina to a list of "unreliable entities".

Beijing has also restricted exports of rare earth elements – critical for making a wide range of products including semiconductors, medical technology and consumer electronics.

## What's been the impact?

Beijing has long drawn Trump's ire with a trade surplus with the US that reached US\$295.4 billion last year, according to the US Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Chinese leaders have been reluctant to disrupt that status quo.

But an intensified trade war could mean China cannot peg its hopes for strong economic growth this year on exports, which hit a record high in 2024.

US duties further threaten to harm China's fragile post-Covid economic recovery as it struggles with a debt crisis in the property sector and persistently low consumption.

The tariff war is already having an impact in the US, with uncertainty triggering a manufacturing slump last month and officials blaming it for an unexpected economic contraction during the first three months of the year.

"Both countries have surely found out that it is not so easy to fully decouple," Teeuwe Mevissen, senior China economist at Rabobank, told AFP.

"Both the US and China lose economically with the current trade war," he said, adding that even in the case that one side gains the upper hand "it is still worse off economically than before the trade war started".

The head of the WTO warned in April that the US-China standoff could cut trade in goods between the two countries by 80%.

Beijing announced a raft of interest rate cuts on Wednesday aimed at boosting consumption – a possible sign that it is starting to feel the pinch.

Analysts expect the levies to take a significant chunk out of China's GDP, which Beijing's leadership have targeted to grow 5% this year.

Likely to be hit hardest are China's top exports to the US – this includes everything from electronics and machinery to textiles and clothing.

And because of the crucial role Chinese goods play in supplying US firms, the tariffs may also hurt American manufacturers and consumers, analysts have warned.

## Is a breakthrough possible?

Both sides insist that economic pressures have driven the other to seek negotiations.

But while markets have welcomed the talks, a major breakthrough in Geneva seems unlikely.

China has insisted its position that the US must lift tariffs first remains "unchanged" and vowed to defend its interests.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said the meetings will focus on "de-escalation" – and not a "big trade deal".

But analysts do expect some form of tariff reduction to be announced following Saturday's ice-breaking exercise.

"One possible outcome of the Switzerland talks is an agreement to pause most, if not all, of the tariffs that have been imposed this year while negotiations take place," Bonnie Glaser, managing director of the German Marshall Fund's Indo-Pacific program, told AFP.



The ongoing trade war leaves both the US and China economically worse off – even if one side gains the upper hand, it still suffers compared to pre-conflict conditions. – PEXELS PIX

## Trump unveils trade deal with UK, first since tariff blitz

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer unveiled a "historic" trade agreement Thursday, Trump's first deal with any country since he unleashed a blitz of sweeping global tariffs.

The deal will see Washington lower tariffs on British luxury cars and lifts them entirely on steel and aluminium, although a 10% baseline levy on British goods stays in place.

As Trump announced the deal while making a phone call to Starmer in the Oval Office, he said Britain would in return will open up markets to US beef and other farm products.

But the deal remained thin on details, despite Trump hailing it as a template for deals with other countries such as China after his

"Liberation Day" tariffs in April.

"I'm thrilled to announce that we have reached a breakthrough trade deal with the UK," Trump said. "The deal includes billions of dollars of increased market access for American exports."

The deal came through at the last minute, with Starmer saying he learnt that Trump had given it his approval when he called him on Wednesday night as he watched a football match.

"This is a really fantastic, historic day," Starmer said during the call with Trump.

He noted that it coincided with the 80th anniversary of "Victory Day" for allied forces – including Britain and the US – over Nazi Germany in World War II.

Britain had made a major push to avoid Trump's tariffs, which the Republican insists are necessary to stop the US from being "ripped off" by other countries.

Starmer launched a charm offensive as early as February when he came to the White House armed with an invitation from King Charles III for a historic second state visit to Trump.

The reward came on Thursday, with a trade deal slashes export tariffs for British cars from 27.5% to 10%, Britain said.

The move will apply to 100,000 vehicles from luxury makers like Rolls Royce and Jaguar, billionaire Trump added.

US automakers however said the deal "hurts" companies that have

partnered with Canada and Mexico.

The British government insisted that the deal to allow in more US agricultural products would not dilute British food standards, amid concerns over chlorinated US chicken and hormones in US beef.

It also entirely lifts recently-imposed 25% tariffs on British steel and aluminium.

World stock markets mostly rose on news of the deal but uncertainty remained over key issues.

Trump said that "James Bond has nothing to worry about" from his threatened 100% tariffs on foreign movies, but did not spell out how Britain could get a carve out.

The deal also failed to mention digital services, with the White House

keen to tackle a recent digital services tax imposed by Britain on US tech giants.

Both sides said there would be further negotiations on a fuller deal, but Trump denied overselling the agreement.

"This is a maxed-out deal – not like you said it really incorrectly," he added, answering a reporter's question on whether he was overstating the breadth of the deal.

Tortuous negotiations between London and Washington in the years since the Brexit vote failed to produce a deal until now.

But Trump has also been in need of a win after weeks of insisting that countries were lining up to make deals with the US. – AFP

# China exports soar on 'beat tariff' rush

➤ Outbound shipments in April top forecasts, lifted by demand from manufacturers which wanted to take advantage of US duties pause

**BEIJING:** China's exports beat forecasts in April, buoyed by demand for materials from overseas manufacturers which rushed out goods to make the most of US President Donald Trump's 90-day tariff pause.

The world's two largest economies have been locked in a bruising tit-for-tat tariff war and businesses on both sides of the Pacific will be looking for some kind of resolution at closely watched trade talks in Switzerland this weekend.

Customs data on Friday showed outbound shipments from China rose 8.1% year-on-year in April, beating a forecast 1.9% increase in a Reuters poll of economists but slowing from the 12.4% jump in March.

Trump announced sweeping "reciprocal tariffs" of 10% on April 2,

before offering a pause for most countries while the White House worked on multiple trade deals. China, however, was excluded from the reprieve and singled out for levies of 145%, kicking off a protracted cat-and-mouse game that has rattled global markets and upended supply chains.

Chinese manufacturers had also been front-loading outbound shipments in anticipation of the duties, but are now banking on ice-breaker tariff talks between American and Chinese officials in Geneva this weekend.

Imports fell 0.2%, compared with expectations for a 5.9% drop, suggesting domestic demand may be holding up better than expected as policymakers continue to take steps

to prop up the US\$19 trillion economy.

"The Asean countries are speeding up their production to meet the July deadline, the 90-day negotiation break. Their production is highly reliant on China's exports in raw materials and industrial inputs, so China's exports got support," said Dan Wang, China director at Eurasia Group.

"Over the next two months, China's exports could continue to be strong due to industrial capacity relocation, but the trade data could deteriorate quite quickly if the 145% tariffs on China are still in place and Asean countries' talks (with the Trump administration) don't make progress," she added.

Exports to Southeast Asian countries rose 20.8% in April.

China's exports to the US, meanwhile, fell 21%. That meant the trade surplus with the US dropped to US\$20.5 billion from US\$27.6 billion in March, a win for Trump, who has repeatedly said he wants to narrow the gap.

Beijing cannot afford a trade war with the US but sees Trump's tariffs as unwelcome interference, with officials wanting to implement the painful domestic reforms needed to shore up long-term growth at their own pace.

If not lowered or removed, the tariffs could deal a heavy blow to China's economy, which has relied on exports to drive growth as it struggles to recover from the pandemic shocks and a protracted property market slump.

"The damage of the US tariffs has not shown up in the trade data for April," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist at Pinpoint Asset Management. "I expect the trade data will weaken in the next few months gradually."

"Hopefully, the trade negotiations between China and the US can reach agreement soon and bring down tariffs to mitigate the shock to global trade," he added.

Beijing has in the past few months reiterated its confidence that China could achieve the "around 5%"

growth target for the year, and rolled out measures to bolster consumption and support the country's exporters.

A slew of monetary stimulus measures, including liquidity injections and cuts to policy rates, was announced on Wednesday in a bid to ease tariff hits on the economy.

For now, the trade sector's momentum is still riding on the global scramble to make the most of Trump's brief tariff relief.

China's steel exports stayed above 10 million tons in April, as buyers like South Korea and Vietnam rushed orders to avoid tariffs that may soon disrupt transshipments.

With global copper producers rushing stocks to the US after Trump proposed slapping levies on the metal, China's imports of unwrought copper and copper products remained unchanged last month.

Soybean imports plunged to a 10-year low in April, but this was due to prolonged customs clearance delays and late Brazilian shipments caused by harvest slowdowns and logistics issues. - Reuters

## Bitcoin retakes US\$100,000 on global trade deal optimism

**NEW YORK:** Bitcoin topped US\$100,000 (RM427,093) on Thursday for the first time since early February, bolstered by a wide-ranging deal between the US and the UK in a sign that perhaps US President Donald Trump's trade war with the rest of the world is easing.

By midday, bitcoin was trading at US\$101,329.97, a 4.7% gain on the day. The world's biggest cryptocurrency has clawed its way back into positive territory for the year, although it remains below the record high of more than US\$109,000 reached in January.

Ether, the cryptocurrency for the Ethereum blockchain, surged more than 14% to US\$2,050.46 after earlier hitting its highest since late March.

Trump and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Thursday announced a "breakthrough deal" on trade that leaves in place a 10% tariff on UK goods imported into the US, while Britain agreed to lower its tariffs to 1.8% from 5.1% and provide greater access to US goods.

The agreement is the first since Trump triggered a global trade war with a barrage of tariffs on trading partners following his return to the White House in January.

"The retaking of US\$100,000 must go down as one of bitcoin's more formidable feats and is a reminder that buying peak fear - just last month bitcoin was languishing around US\$74,000 - can be exceptionally lucrative," Antoni Trenchev, co-founder of digital asset trading platform Nexo, said in an emailed comment.



Bitcoin has returned to positive territory this year, though it still lags behind its January peak of over US\$109,000. - UNSPLASH PIX

"The speed of the rebound to US\$100,000 amid a resumption of risk appetite sends a signal that US\$109,000 and above are in its sights, as buying from long-term holders - those holding for at least 155 days - more than offsets selling by short-term holders."

Bitcoin and other crypto prices fell sharply between February and April, as traders fretted about Trump pushing through pro-crypto reforms more slowly than anticipated.

The president's announcement of widespread tariffs in early April triggered a

dash into safe havens, with bitcoin and other crypto prices tumbling in tandem with stocks and other higher risk assets.

Other cryptocurrencies have not recovered so strongly, with ether still 50% off its late 2024 highs.

Joel Kruger, market strategist at fintech company LMAX Group, said institutional investor inflows into bitcoin exchange-traded funds, easing geopolitical tensions and Chinese measures to boost monetary stimulus had contributed to bitcoin's surge. - Reuters

## Nissan drops plan for US\$1.1b EV battery plant in southern Japan

**TOKYO:** Nissan Motor said yesterday it would abandon a plan to build a US\$1.1 billion (RM4.7 billion) factory for electric vehicle batteries on Japan's southwestern island of Kyushu, marking the latest change of plans for the troubled automaker.

Japan's third-biggest automaker had announced in January the plan for a lithium iron phosphate (LFP) battery plant in the city of Kitakyushu that was set to create about 500 jobs with an investment of ¥153.3 billion (RM4.5 billion).

"Nissan is taking immediate turnaround actions and exploring all options to recover its

performance," the company said in a statement on the decision, indicating a willingness at Nissan to scale back its domestic market ambitions.

"After careful consideration of (the) investment efficiency, we have decided to cancel the construction of a new LFP battery plant in Kitakyushu City, Fukuoka Prefecture."

The Japanese government had set aside a subsidy of up to ¥55.7 billion to support the project. The plant was supposed to start supply in July 2028 or later and have an annual production capacity of 5 gigawatt-hours (GWh), materials posted on Japan's industry

ministry's website showed.

New CEO Ivan Espinosa, who took over from Makoto Uchida as CEO last month, is currently restructuring Nissan's operations. The company is shedding employees, reducing production capacity and closing plants.

Nissan said last month it expects a record net loss of ¥700 billion to ¥750 billion for the financial year that ended in March due to impairment charges.

The company is set to provide its outlook for the current financial year and update on its recovery actions when it announces full-year financial results on Tuesday. - Reuters

## Nvidia modifies H20 chip to meet US export rules

**BEIJING:** Nvidia plans to release a downgraded version of its H20 artificial intelligence chip for China in the next two months, following US export restrictions on the original model, three sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The US chipmaker has notified major Chinese customers, including leading cloud computing providers, that it aims to release the modified H20 chip in July, two of the sources said.

The downgraded H20 represents Nvidia's latest attempt to maintain its presence in one of its most crucial markets in the face of Washington's expanding efforts to restrict China's access to advanced semiconductor technology.

The H20, which had been Nvidia's most powerful AI chip cleared for Chinese sales, was effectively blocked from the market after US officials informed the company last month that the product would require an export licence.

Nvidia has formulated new technical thresholds, which will guide the development of the modified chip designs. These specifications will result in significant downgrades from the original H20, including substantially reduced memory capacity, one of the sources said.

Another of the sources said downstream customers could potentially modify the module configuration to adjust the chip's performance levels.

Nvidia declined to comment. The US Commerce Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

China accounted for US\$17 billion (RM73 billion) in revenue, or 13% of Nvidia's total sales, in the fiscal year ended Jan 26.

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang visited Beijing last month, underscoring the country's importance after new US export rules for the H20 chip were announced.

During meetings with Chinese officials, Huang emphasised China's significance as a key market for the company.

Since 2022, the US has restricted Nvidia's top chips to China over concerns about military use.

The H20 was introduced after Washington tightened export controls in October 2023. - Reuters



## TOP SHOTS OF THE WEEK



**RIISING SUN ...** Sunway Group founder and chairman Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah has been conferred the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, by the Emperor of Japan. The Japanese government announced this during the 2025 Spring Imperial Conferment in recognition of Cheah's services in promoting academic exchanges and strengthening economic relations between the peoples of Malaysia and Japan. Picture shows Cheah with Japanese students at Sunway University. He is the founder and chancellor of the university.



**LISTING ADVISER ...** Nuren Group Ltd on Monday announced the engagement of ZICO Evolve Capital Sdn Bhd as its financial adviser for initial public offering structuring and readiness in connection with the proposed listing on the Nasdaq Stock Exchange in the United States. Formalising their partnership are ZICO Evolve Capital and ZICO Holdings executive director Chew Seng Kok (left) and Nuren Group CEO Petrina Goh.



**SOLAR PARTNERSHIP ...** Hektar Real Estate Investment Trust (Hektar REIT) on Tuesday unveiled a solar energy partnership with Samaiden Group Bhd. The collaboration marks a significant milestone in Hektar REIT and Samaiden's commitment to sustainability. At the signing are, from left, Hektar Property Services Sdn Bhd CEO Aldela Puspita Nordin; Hektar Asset Management Sdn Bhd COO Sabrina Halim and CEO Zainal Iskandar Ismail; and Samaiden group managing director Datuk Chow Pui Hee, executive director Fong Yeng Foon and chief strategy officer Tee Wu Shun.



**UNDERWRITING DEAL ...** Solid-liquid filtration solutions provider Pan Merchant Bhd signed an underwriting agreement with Affin Hwang Investment Bank Bhd on Wednesday as part of its initial public offering exercise on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia Securities. From left are Pan Merchant executive director Wong Voon Yoong and managing director Wong Voon Ten; and Affin Hwang Investment Bank managing director of capital markets Johan Hashim and head of equity capital markets Arvin Cheah.



**SNEAK PEEK ...** Jaecoo Malaysia marked its first anniversary at the Malaysia Autoshow 2025 with a refreshed brand image and will hereafter be known as Omoda Jaecoo Malaysia. The company teased the market with a sneak peek of the Omoda C7 Neo Crossover. From left are Chery Corporate Malaysia executive vice-president Leo Chen, Chery Automobile Co Ltd chief engineer of product development management and director of Pre-Research and Vehicle Architecture Institute Dr David Xianqiang Lu, and Omoda Jaecoo Malaysia, vice-president Emily Lek and country director Vincent Bian. Jaecoo is a brand of China's Chery.



**TARIFFS TALK ...** Hong Leong Bank on Thursday hosted a forum, 'Beyond the Headlines on US Tariffs: What's Next for Malaysian Businesses and the Global Economy', addressing the evolving global trade dynamics, particularly US tariffs, for Malaysian SMEs and the broader global economy. From left are PwC director of tax Chandrasegaran Perumal; Hong Leong Investment Bank chief economist Felicia Ling; Hong Leong Bank managing director of business and corporate banking Yow Kuan Tuck, group managing director and CEO Kevin Lam, managing director of global markets Hor Kwok Wai; Investment, Trade and Industry Ministry deputy secretary-general, bilateral economic and international trade Raveendran Nair; and Small and Medium Enterprises Association Malaysia chairman of international trade Eugene Tan.





**TOUCHING BASE ...** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim waving to participants at the national-level Workers' Day celebrations at Axiata Arena in Bukit Jalil. – **AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN**



**VVIP VISITORS ...** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and visiting Kosovo President Dr Vjosa Osmani Sadriu meeting pupils from SK Putrajaya Presint 8 (3) at the Seri Perdana Complex on May 2. – **BERNAMAPIC**



**ONE, TWO, HEAVE ...** Fire and Rescue Department personnel carrying out a fitness presentation and demonstration in conjunction with the World Firefighters Day celebration in Kuantan on May 4. – **BERNAMAPIC**



**FOWL FEST ...** Participants of the Queen Chicken Competition with their roosters at the Asean Unggas Festival held at the Tengku Anis Orchid Park in Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan last Saturday. – **BERNAMAPIC**



**PINNACLE POSITION ...** Penang Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Ramli Ngah Talib (left) salutes while inspecting a parade of uniformed personnel at Dewan Sri Pinang on May 1. – **BERNAMAPIC**



**NO HIKES ...** The price of chicken eggs in the market remains stable despite a reduction in subsidies that came into effect on May 1. – **ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN**





Guard of honour mounted by the Second Battalion of the Malay Regiment prior to taking the oath of office as the



**ANTI-FASCIST RALLY ...** Demonstrators in Washington DC participate in a protest marking US President Donald Trump's first 100 days in office. – **REUTERSPIC**



**PAP POWER ...** Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong of the People's Action Party waves to supporters as he celebrates the party's victory at the May 3 general election. – **AFP/PIIC**



**LABOURIOUS TUSSELE ...** Protesters clash with police during a Labour Day demonstration in Manila, the Philippines. – **REUTERSPIC**



**SHELL-SHOCKED ...** A Palestinian inspects the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. – **REUTERSPIC**



**FAN FAVOURITE ...** Visitors throng the '100% Doraemon & Friends' tour exhibition in Bangkok, Thailand last week. – **REUTERSPIC**





BLISSFUL  
ESCAPE AMIDST NATURE  
berjayaahotel.com

BERJAYA  
LANGKAWI RESORT  
MALAYSIA

# Rooted on what people think

**I**F you grew up in a typical household, especially in Asian culture, you have probably heard this phrase more times than you can count: "What will people think?"

It is a familiar refrain, often used as a warning, a means of control or a tool for silence. It comes not just from parents but from aunts, uncles and even strangers on the street – all united by a common mission: to keep you in line for the sake of appearances.

We are taught to behave in a certain way, to dress modestly, to keep our voices low and to smile even when we are hurting – all to avoid gossip.

We learn early on that our lives are not entirely our own; they are a public performance, carefully curated for the judgement of others.

And if you dare to question or resist? You're met with the classics:

"After everything I've done for you..."

"I fed you, raised you and sent you to school – and this is how you treat me?"

"You're so ungrateful."

"You're embarrassing us."

Sound familiar?

## Guilt is not gratitude

Many of us grew up believing they were the same – that to be grateful meant to repay our parents not just with love but with lifelong obedience. That we were expected to carry



BY NAHANA T. KRESHNAN

their dreams, their fears and their emotional wounds – and silence our own.

This burden weighs heavily, especially on women. Daughters are taught to be quiet. To serve. To sacrifice.

And slowly, bit by bit, we begin to disappear. We say yes when we mean no. We bite our tongues when we want to scream. We play small so no one will feel offended. It can be exhausting. And yet we do it – because we were told, over and over: "What will people say?"

But here's the truth: People will always say something. Let them.

## Fear in disguise

To be fair, many parents did not mean to hurt us. They were not cruel – they were simply afraid.

They grew up in a world where shame could destroy a family's standing and where gossip had the power to ruin reputations, marriages, even livelihoods.

So they learned to survive through control, image management and silence.

And, unfortunately, they passed those survival patterns down to us.

When a parent says, "What will people think?", what they often mean is:

"I'm scared you'll get hurt."

"I'm afraid of what this says about me."

"I don't know how to handle this."

It's fear – disguised as love.

But fear does not build connection. It builds resentment.

A few years ago, a friend of mine – then in his late 30s – was constantly nagged and guilt-tripped after telling his mother he wanted to marry a woman of a different race.

As her only child, she insisted he marry someone from their own community.

Eventually, feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained, he quit his job and went on a trip to clear his mind and sort through the guilt he felt towards his mother and the love he had for his girlfriend.

While overseas, he suffered a heart attack and died.

At his funeral, many of us looked at his mother – now alone – and couldn't help but think: "If only you had let him love freely, you might have been surrounded by grandchildren today."

## Who are you living for?

We often believe we are being good daughters, sons, partners – even good citizens – by keeping the peace and not rocking the boat. But at what cost?

The cost is you – your voice, your desires, your relationships and your joy.

Even now, I see clients torn between who they are and who they were told to be. Some stay in jobs they despise. Some marry people they don't love. Some hide their mental health struggles to avoid judgement. And some never cry – because they were taught that "strong people don't break."

When I ask why, the answers are almost always the same:

"What will people think?"

"What will my parents say?"

"I don't want to hurt them."

"I owe them."

But the real question is: Do you want to be loved or just approved of? Do you want to be free or just tolerated?

Living honestly does not mean you hate your family; it means you are finally choosing to stop abandoning yourself.

You are allowed to make choices they won't understand. To set boundaries they may not like. To be proud of who you have become – even if it's not who they imagined.

You are allowed to disappoint someone in order to stay true to yourself. You do not owe anyone your silence, your suffering or your constant performance.

And if you're a parent who feels the need to put your foot down and insist your children follow the path you have chosen for them – ponder over this excerpt from Khalil Gibran's poem *On Children*:

*Your children are not your children.*

*They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.*

*They come through you but not from you, And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.*

*Nahana T. Kreshnan is a somatic psychotherapist and life and executive coach. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com*

# My mother, a stellar performer of life

**THIS** Mother's Day, my second without my mother, her absence weighs heavily, yet her presence lingers in every corner of my life.

Two years have passed since she left us and the grief remains a quiet companion, not fading but settling in as part of our daily lives.

There is a saying: "God cannot be everywhere, hence, He created mothers," and it rings true as I meander through every important occasion, feeling lost and yet happy that she is in a better place. Letting her go was an act of love – unselfish and necessary – when her body was worn down by ailments. She had always wished to pass without lingering illness, to "hit the bucket" swiftly, as she put it.

That wish was granted – until her last day, she stood in her kitchen, cooking her own meals, dismissing intrusion and interference from any of us.

My mother's kitchen was her domain, a place of order and ritual. Every dish followed strict rules where vegetables had to be cut in a precise fashion, onions sliced into thin crescents for one recipe and diced into tiny bits for another.

Her standards were exacting and failing to meet them could unleash her temper. A misplaced chop or a rushed step might send a spoon clattering or spark a sharp rebuke.

I can still hear her voice, firm and commanding, as she directed the chaos of meal preparation. Two years on, her kitchen remains a shrine to her memory.

The spice jars sit in their familiar order, the steel ladles and her favourite pots and pans hanging in a manner that she approved.

I haven't had the heart to rearrange anything, as if moving a single item might summon her disapproval from beyond. She lives in these spaces, every corner reminding me of loud existence.

Last week, during our New Year celebration, I attempted her signature sweet dish. The result was decent but I took shortcuts, skipping steps which she would



BY BHAVANI KRISHNA IYER

have otherwise deemed essential. I could almost hear her scolding, coupled with her disapproving glare.

She would have shaken her head, her voice echoing in my mind: "This isn't how it's done." As a bride from India more than six decades ago, she brought with her many colourful customs and rituals, each one rooted in meaning.

She held fast to her traditions, not out of stubbornness but because they carried the weight of generations. Her rituals were not just habits, they were lessons in care, intention and respect for legacies.

My mother was a voracious reader, devouring newspapers and magazines with an insatiable curiosity. She absorbed the world's stories, always eager for new insights.

Her knowledge extended to the practical. While trying to emulate as much as possible, she would make way for modifications where they were necessary.

Through acquired knowledge and old wisdom, she had a remedy for every minor ailment, drawn from the kitchen.

A sore throat? Ginger and honey. A skin irritation? Turmeric paste. An upset stomach? A mysterious concoction of spices that worked wonders. These cures were her magic and she passed them on, not just to us but to our Indonesian helpers as well. They adopted her remedies effortlessly, particularly because they worked.

I laugh now, thinking of how my shortcomings must have frustrated her. Laundry was often a battleground as clothes had to be hung with exactness, each fold crisp and deliberate. A crease in the wrong place was a personal affront.

Folding was an art form, each shirt or towel arranged to her exact specifications. After Covid, her mobility waned and her bedroom became a reflection of her new reality. Books, medicines, snacks and photos piled around her bed, a seemingly chaotic jumble.

Yet, she handled it with ease, her mind a map of every item's location. If I needed to find something, her instructions were pinpoint. Order in disorder, as they say.

A mother's love is unmatched, a universe unto itself but death is the one certainty we all face. Losing her felt like losing gravity, everything floated, unmoored, in those early days. The pain was thick, slowing time to a crawl.

Yet, life has a way of stitching itself back together, piece by piece. The days move forward and somehow, I do too. What reminds me of her? Everything. Her larger-than-life personality, her command over her world and her unwavering standards.

She was a force, a woman who shaped her environment with intention. Her voice still guides me, her lessons woven into my choices.

Her influence is in the small things – how I fold a towel, how I stir a pot and how I pause to notice the world's details. She taught me that love can be practical and expressed through care in everyday tasks.

Strength, she showed me, lies in consistency, in showing up fully for the ordinary moments. In quiet moments, I feel her in the stillness, her presence in absence too real.

I see her in the way I arrange my home, in the recipes I attempt, even when I fall short. She is in the stories I tell, the remedies I share and the standards I try to uphold.

This Mother's Day, I carry her with me, not as a weight but as a memory that grounds me through my days. Her absence is permanent but so is her impact. She was my first teacher, my fiercest critic and my deepest love.

Happy Mother's Day.

*Dr Bhavani Krishna Iyer holds a doctorate in English literature. Her professional background encompasses teaching, journalism and public relations.*

*She is currently pursuing a second master's degree in counselling. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com*

## LETTERS

letters@thesundaily.com

# Family – our greatest emotional anchor

**FAMILY** is the cornerstone of our emotional well-being, providing the support and care that shapes who we are.

Loving your family goes beyond simply sharing a home; it involves deep emotional connections, respect and appreciation for those who nurture and shape us. Whether it is the bond with parents, siblings or extended family, love plays a critical role in fostering a sense of belonging and security.

One of the most significant aspects of loving your family is the unconditional support that family members offer.

In times of joy, family celebrates with you and in times of hardship, they stand by your side. Their support acts as a stabilising force, helping you navigate through life's challenges.

When we face difficulties, it is often the love and encouragement from family that help us regain strength and perspective.

Moreover, love within a family helps in building trust and mutual respect. A loving environment allows each family member to feel valued and heard. It encourages open communication and emotional expression, creating a safe space where everyone can be themselves without fear of judgement. Such an environment nurtures personal growth and strengthens relationships.

However, loving your family is not always easy. It requires patience, compromise and forgiveness. Conflicts can arise and disagreements are inevitable. But the beauty of family love lies in the ability to overcome these challenges and find resolution through understanding and empathy. This love teaches resilience, patience and the importance of maintaining strong relationships despite differences.

In conclusion, loving your family is essential for building a fulfilling and balanced life. It offers a foundation of support, trust and emotional security that enables individuals to grow and thrive.

**Liong Kam Chong**  
Seremban





# Splitting bananas

Ways to turn tropical fruit  
into golden grub - P20

## WEEKLY FOCUS

### MONDAY

Technology and  
social media

### TUESDAY

Family  
and parenting

### WEDNESDAY

Fashion  
and beauty

### THURSDAY

Home  
and living

### FRIDAY

Travel  
and leisure

### SATURDAY

Food  
and beverage

## INSIDE

**P21** Frozen rice: Time-saver  
with health benefits?

**P23** Wonderfully gory fun  
with Until Dawn

**P25** Local band Kaya's first  
music festival





Comforting classic, ideal for using up ripe bananas.  
— PIC FROM YOUTUBE @ROSSANA PANSINO



Fritters that turn everyday bananas into a street snack sensation. — PIC FROM YOUTUBE @CHE NOM

# Banana fusion

➤ Discover five delicious ways to enjoy potassium-rich fruit via different flavours

■ BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

**B**ANANAS lend themselves to endless possibilities, especially in kitchens. In this feature, read on as we explore five unique banana recipes, each offering a new way to experience this beloved fruit.

## Pisang goreng

A beloved Malaysian street food, pisang goreng, or Malaysian banana fritters, is comfort food at its finest, crispy on the outside, sweet and soft within. Often enjoyed with a cup of hot tea, this snack turns overripe bananas into pure joy.

## Ingredients

4 ripe bananas (*pisang raja* or cavendish)  
1 cup of all-purpose flour  
1 tablespoon of rice flour (for extra crispiness)  
½ teaspoon of baking powder  
Pinch of salt  
¾ cup of water  
Oil for deep frying

## Instructions

1. Slice bananas in half or into thirds.
2. In a bowl, mix flours, baking powder and salt. Gradually add water to make a smooth batter.
3. Heat oil in a deep pan.
4. Dip bananas in batter and fry until golden and crisp.
5. Drain on paper towels and serve hot.

## Banana coconut sticky rice

This luscious Thai-inspired dessert blends sticky rice, creamy coconut milk and ripe bananas into a melt-in-your-mouth treat. Traditionally wrapped in banana leaves, it is a warm hug in food form.

## Ingredients

1 cup of glutinous rice (soaked 4 hours)  
¾ cup of coconut milk  
¼ cup of sugar

½ teaspoon of salt  
2 ripe bananas, halved  
Banana leaves or foil (optional, for wrapping)

## Instructions

1. Steam soaked glutinous rice for 20 minutes.
2. In a pan, heat coconut milk with sugar and salt until just warm.
3. Mix half the coconut milk with the steamed rice.
4. Place a scoop of rice on a banana leaf, top with banana and wrap.
5. Steam wrapped parcels for 10–15 minutes. Serve warm with remaining coconut sauce.

## Banana curry

Yes, bananas can go into curries too! In South India, raw bananas are often used in savoury dishes. This mildly spiced curry balances natural sweetness with robust flavours.

## Ingredients

2 raw bananas (plantains), peeled and cubed  
1 onion, sliced  
2 cloves of garlic, minced  
1 teaspoon of mustard seeds  
1 teaspoon of turmeric  
1 teaspoon of chilli powder  
1 teaspoon of coriander powder  
¼ cup of grated coconut (optional)  
Curry leaves  
Salt and oil

## Instructions

1. Boil banana cubes until tender. Drain and set aside.
2. Heat oil, splutter mustard seeds and curry leaves.
3. Sauté onion and garlic until golden.
4. Add spices and a splash of water to form a paste.
5. Stir in bananas and coconut. Cook until well coated. Serve with rice or roti.

## Banana bread

No banana recipe list is complete without the classic banana bread.



It is the ultimate use for overripe bananas and excellent for breakfast, tea time or dessert.

## Ingredients

3 ripe bananas, mashed  
1¼ cups of all-purpose flour  
½ cup of sugar  
½ cup of butter, melted  
2 eggs  
1 teaspoon of baking soda  
½ teaspoon of salt  
1 teaspoon of vanilla extract  
Optional: nuts or chocolate chips

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 175°C.
2. In a bowl, mix butter and mashed bananas.
3. Add eggs and vanilla, then stir in dry ingredients.
4. Pour into a greased loaf tin and bake for 50–60 minutes.
5. Cool before slicing.

## Banana pancakes with honey butter

These fluffy pancakes with caramelised banana and honey butter are a breakfast delight. Easy

to whip up, they bring a touch of indulgence to your weekend mornings.

## Ingredients

1 cup of flour  
1 tablespoon of sugar  
1 teaspoon of baking powder  
Pinch of salt  
1 egg  
1 cup of milk  
1 ripe banana, mashed  
Butter and honey (for serving)



Sliced bananas for garnish

## Instructions

1. Mix flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in a bowl.
2. In another bowl, combine milk, egg and mashed banana.
3. Mix wet and dry ingredients until just combined.

4. Cook pancakes on a buttered skillet until golden on both sides.
5. Serve stacked with honey butter and extra banana slices.

Bananas prove they can do it all. So next time you see ripe bananas on your counter, think beyond smoothies.

Warm, tropical treat that wraps creamy coconut and banana in soft, sticky rice.  
— PIC FROM YOUTUBE @DAILY DISH

Fluffy, buttery and banana-packed for breakfast.  
— PIC FROM YOUTUBE @DIVAS CAN COOK

Sweet meets spice in this hearty South Indian-style banana curry.  
— PIC FROM YOUTUBE @MAYEEKA



## ► Time-saving method that reduces consumption

**A**FTER discovering the benefits of frozen rice, 31-year-old Nurhanisah Johari revamped her kitchen routine by cooking the staple just once to last for five days.

Since adopting the change last year, the online entrepreneur said it has not only saved time and reduced rice consumption, but also helped streamline her family's meal planning.

"I usually cook two pots of brown rice for my husband and two pots of white rice for myself. Once cooled, I portion them into five containers each and store them in the freezer."

"Each day, we simply take out one container for lunch," she said, adding that the rice must be fully cooled before being frozen in airtight containers.

Elaborating on her routine, Nurhanisah said frozen rice should be stored separately from side dishes or raw ingredients to prevent contamination.

She also reheats the rice using a microwave by adding a tablespoon of hot water on medium-high heat before serving it to her family.

"The texture of the rice after reheating is still good, like freshly cooked rice. So far, we have never encountered any problems," she said.

### Difference is in glycemic index

"The rising trend of consuming frozen rice, particularly among urban dwellers and working individuals, is seen as a potential alternative for diabetes patients, according to Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) dietitian Jazlina Syahrul.

She explained the main difference between frozen rice and freshly cooked rice lies in the Glycemic Index

(GI), which indicates how quickly food raises blood sugar levels and the starch content.

She explained the key difference between frozen rice and freshly cooked rice lies in their GI, which measures how quickly food raises blood sugar levels.

"Freshly cooked white rice has a moderately high GI. However, studies have shown when rice is cooled, stored overnight in the fridge and then reheated, some of its starch transforms into resistant starch," she said.

"Resistant starch is a type of fibre that is not digested by the small intestine. Instead it passes into the large intestine, where it undergoes fermentation. In simple terms, rice with more resistant starch causes a slower, more controlled increase in blood sugar levels."

For this reason, Jazlina explained frozen rice has the advantage of helping control blood sugar, making it a suitable option for diabetes patients as a substitute for some regular white rice.

"Frozen rice is not a magical low-calorie food. If calorie control is the goal, the focus should remain on managing rice portions and selecting healthier side dishes. However, frozen rice can be a simple way to boost fibre intake and promote satiety, although it is important to still be mindful of portion sizes," she added.

While frozen rice offers its benefits, food safety must be a priority to prevent food poisoning. According to UPM food policy expert Dr Siti Nurhayati Khairatun, improperly reheated frozen rice poses a risk of food poisoning due to potentially active bacteria.

# Frozen rice smarter, healthier option?



Siti Nurhayati says frozen rice do not only reduce consumption but also saves time. – 123RF/PIC

### Bacteria risk

Siti Nurhayati explained reheating must be thorough, as the primary risk is the growth of *Bacillus cereus* (*B. cereus*), a bacterium commonly associated with starchy foods. The spores of *B. cereus* naturally exist in raw rice and can survive the cooking process.

"If cooked rice is left at room temperature for too long (more than two hours), these spores can develop into active bacteria. These bacteria

can then produce toxins that lead to food poisoning," she said, adding that freezing does not kill the bacteria or stop the production of toxins once they have been formed.

Siti Nurhayati, who is also a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Food Science and Technology, said several preventive measures can be taken to reduce the risk of food poisoning from frozen rice.

"After cooking, rice should be cooled as quickly as possible and

divided into small portions to speed up the cooling process. Once cooled, the rice should be stored in airtight containers and frozen immediately to prevent bacterial growth.

"Next, the defrosting process should be done in the refrigerator, not at room temperature. When reheating the rice, it should be stirred to ensure even heating and the reheated rice should be consumed immediately and not stored or reheated again," she said. – Bernama



The destination-themed bottles will be available at over 6,800 retail locations.

## Drink your next destination

**AIRASIA** has teamed up with local sparkling juice brand Hausboom where the local airline has co-created a beverage series inspired by its flight destinations.

The collaboration brings together two hometown names to celebrate local pride and a shared passion for connecting people.

Running until December 2025, the collaboration introduces nine limited-edition Hausboom bottles, each featuring a flavour inspired by a different AirAsia destination. From strawberry for Seoul to *roti bakar* for Kuala Lumpur, the series is a playful nod to the diversity of AirAsia's network and the wanderlust of

Malaysian consumers. Other destinations include Almaty, Phu Quoc, Sihanoukville, Xi'an, Nairobi, Melbourne and Amritsar.

The destination-themed bottles will be available at over 6,800 retail locations, including 7-Eleven, KK Mart nationwide, CKS Retail, Bataras Hypermarket & Superstore and Servay Supermarket in Sabah, as well as Sen Sen Department Store and Everwin in Kuching.

Each bottle features a unique QR code for entry into the Sip & Win contest, with monthly prizes including unlimited free flights and rewards from AirAsia's travel and lifestyle ecosystem spanning Snap, Hotels, Ride, Ikhlas and more.

## Local favourites enter Asean records

**LOCAL** favourites US Pizza and My US Coffee Sdn Bhd's Iboozee Fresh Juice Vending Machine have entered the Asean Records for their innovations.

US Pizza was recognised for offering the most localised pizza flavours in Asean, with 88 varieties tailored to Malaysian taste buds, while Iboozee was honoured for introducing the first halal-certified fruit juice through automated vending machines in Malaysia.

The recognition ceremony was held in conjunction with the Franchise International Malaysia (FIM 2025) exhibition at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on Thursday and was witnessed by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

US Pizza Group COO Deric Yeo said the awards reflect the company's strength in localising and innovating for the regional market.

"We are very proud because this recognition spans all Asean countries. Competing with larger regional players, our ability to localise and innovate truly sets us apart," he said.

Yeo added that the company's new kiosk concept, priced at RM300,000, offers an accessible entry point for investors, alongside a range of vending, coffee and juice machines under the Iboozee brand.

"We are targeting 40 to 50 new outlets this year. In the first quarter, we opened five outlets and have another five under construction. We expect to reach our goal by year-end," he said.

He said about 200 potential locations have been identified nationwide for Iboozee vending machines, each dispensing freshly squeezed, no-sugar-added juice made from three to four whole fruits.

To lower the investment barrier, US Pizza is offering a 50% franchise set-up subsidy, covering renovation and equipment, for franchisees who sign up during the three-day expo.

"Even enquiries via our expo QR code after the show will receive the same privileges," Yeo said.

US Pizza will also introduce two Malaysian-inspired pizzas by mid-May, Nyonya Fish Pizza and

Ayam Penyet Best Sambal Pizza, in collaboration with Ayam Penyet Best. The menu will expand to include breakfast items and late-night delivery until 2am at selected outlets.

Zahid also officiated at the launch of Iboozee. The ceremony featured a plaque signing and presentation of the official halal certificate by a representative from the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia.

Developed by My US Coffee Sdn Bhd, the Iboozee machine offers a combination of health, convenience and religious compliance by serving certified halal fresh juices through a fully automated system. – Bernama



US Pizza is recognised for offering the most localised pizza flavours in Asean, with 88 varieties tailored to Malaysian taste buds. – BERNAMAPIC



# Pasta hack

► Scientists find trick for flawless *cacio e pepe*

The study recommends using corn or potato starch to achieve the creaminess required for the dish.



**S**CIENTISTS have apparently discovered the trick to making perfect *cacio e pepe* pasta. You do not need olive oil or a ladle of cooking water to achieve the ideal creamy texture of a pasta dish such as *cacio e pepe*, made with pecorino and pepper. A team of scientists has now pinpointed a completely different – and surprising – ingredient to successfully cook up this traditional Italian dish.

From adding salt to egg whites to help them rise, or ice water to fix the green colour of spinach, time-old tricks are legion in the kitchen. And much to the dismay of Italians, pasta preparation is also the subject of many such beliefs, starting with that famous drizzle of olive oil that some say should be added to the pot of boiling water, supposedly to ensure that spaghetti does not stick. This advice has been the subject of much comment in the scientific community, including by chemist Raphael Haumont, famous associate of top chef Thierry Marx, who constantly points out that olive oil simply rises to the surface and does not mix with water at all. In short, it is a waste!

All is not lost, however, as the perfect pasta is a serious subject, and researchers from several universities have joined forces to conduct experiments to find the ultimate ingredient that will guarantee the ideal creamy texture of *cacio e pepe*, the famous pasta dish made with pecorino romano cheese and black pepper. Anyone who has ever tried to make this dish at home may have encountered problems, despite the simplicity of the ingredients.

It is hard to achieve the creaminess normally produced by the pecorino without getting clumps of cheese or a sticky mess. It is true that Italians generally recommend adding a ladle of pasta cooking water to finish a pasta-in-sauce dish such as *cacio e pepe*. And that water contains starch. But for researchers, you need to add starch rather than rely on the unknown quantity in the cooking water. Yes, there is starch in spaghetti – but not enough.

For the sauce to be as creamy as it should be, the ratio of starch to cheese needs to be around 2-3%. And this works just as well with corn or potato starch, according to study results published in the journal

*Physics of Fluids*. In practice, you need 4g of starch for 240g of pasta and 160g of grated pecorino.

Scientists from the University of Barcelona, the Max Planck Institute for the Physics of Complex Systems, the University of Padova and the Institute of Science and Technology, Austria also add that it is important to ensure the correct temperature of the dish when assembling the pasta with the sauce. It is important not to overheat the dish, as this could result in the cheese forming clumps.

While the purpose of this study may raise a smile because of its light-hearted nature, the authors remind us that pasta – both its composition and the way it is cooked – has long been a subject of scientific interest.

"On several occasions, pasta has been a source of inspiration for physicists. The observation that spaghetti always break up into three or more fragments, but never in two halves, puzzled even Richard Feynman himself, and the explanation of this intriguing phenomenon earned Audoly and Neukirch the Ig Nobel Prize," the researchers wrote. – ETX Studio

## Elitist no more, caviar turns casual

**WHEN** Burger King announced it was selling caviar with nuggets at its French restaurants on April 1, many people assumed it was an April Fool's joke.

But as news spread on social media, buyers rushed to try one of the world's most expensive delicacies paired with a humble and highly commoditised piece of deep-fried chicken while limited stocks lasted.

For €19 (RM92), they got seven nuggets, mayonnaise and a 10g pouch of Chinese-origin caviar from the Astana brand, which explained it had worked with the fast food giant to "make the caviar of chefs available to as many people as possible".

It was a marketing coup – the story quickly went viral after being picked up by French news outlets – but it also revealed how the image of caviar as an out-of-reach luxury product is rapidly changing.

As with most new food trends, interest in the exclusive fish eggs is being driven by online influencers and celebrities.

Rihanna posted a video to her 150 million followers on Instagram on Dec 20 last year showing her eating nuggets topped with caviar.

"I do not like how much I like this," she began.

US celebrity chef David Chang is also a champion, with a 2022 Instagram video showing him dunking a deep-fried chicken leg into a 1kg tin of caviar – "one of my favourite most obscene things to do" – which racked up more than three million views.

He credits New York chef Wylie Dufresne with first adding it to the menu at his influential WD-50 restaurant in the 2010s.

Last year, the US Open tennis tournament caused a stir by selling a US\$100 (RM430) box of six nuggets with caviar created by the luxury Manhattan fried chicken restaurant Coqodaq.

### 'Less formal'

Producers and food writers have mixed feelings about the popularisation of the culinary indulgence, which sells for €1,000 to €30,000 a kg depending on the type.

The high prices are due to rarity and the high investment producers make in the sturgeon fish needed for caviar, which start to produce eggs only after eight or 10 years.

The most expensive caviar – the one famously preferred by Hollywood star Elizabeth Taylor – is the roe of the beluga sturgeon, which takes at least 15 years to mature.

Mikael Petrossian, head of the French brand Petrossian, said there was a "demystification" of caviar underway.

"Caviar does not necessarily have to come in a large tin with silver serving pieces... You can enjoy the product in a much more relaxed way. I personally like eating caviar with crisps," he said.

The founder of French caviar producer Neuvic, Laurent Deverlanges, said his company also aims to make it "less formal".

He posted a review of the "King



Interest in caviar is being driven by online influencers and celebrities.

Nugget Caviar" menu online, concluding that "it works, even if you cannot really taste the caviar much".

But Olivier Cabarrot, the head of the France-based Prunier brand whose caviar restaurant is one of the most famous in the world, pushed back on the idea of it becoming a regular product.

"In terms of gastronomy, there is nothing as expensive. It is hard to talk about it becoming 'democratised'. But we can speak of greater accessibility, achieved through the sale of smaller quantities rather than lower prices," he said.

Many distributors including Petrossian and Prunier offer tins of 10g, 20g or 30g, helping to attract a younger clientele.

### Dreamy

Remi Dechambre, a food journalist at Le Parisien newspaper, said people associated caviar with opulence and refinement less and less.

"We have completely moved on from that... Consumption has become a little more common, a little less formal – even though it still makes people dream," he said.

But knowing how to enjoy the product properly remains essential, said Francoise Boisseaud, managing director of the supplier Le Comptoir du Caviar.

"There is a whole education to be done," she said about the different types – baeri, oscietre, sevruga or beluga – adding that "the richness of the world of caviar is infinite – just like wine".

For her, the best way to enjoy it is with a crusty baguette and butter, not with fried chicken or crisps.

Robin Panfil, a food journalist who runs the food blog Entree, Plat, Dessert, said Burger King had pulled off a "marketing trick".

"By trying to bring together two worlds that are completely opposed – luxury and fast food – the aim is to shake up the codes, to demystify a product historically seen as luxurious and elitist. It is visual, it is viral, it sparks discussion because it is provocative," he said. – AFP

## Chia seeds improve skin health, digestion

**LIKE** poppy, flax and hemp seeds, chia seeds have become a favourite in our recipes, sprinkled on salads and yogurt or added to desserts. Renowned for their many nutritional benefits, they have been popular with health-conscious consumers for several years.

Less well known, chia seed oil also deserves its fair share of attention: rich in essential fatty acids, we are now discovering its many benefits for the skin.

The plant responsible for chia seeds was already being cultivated by the Aztecs centuries ago. These tiny seeds offer numerous health benefits, including promoting intestinal transit and improving digestion.

Naturally rich in protein, omega-3, fibre and minerals, chia seeds not only help with digestive issues, but are also claimed to help improve concentration, memory and sleep quality, while acting as an appetite suppressant.

The only downside, and it is not a small one, is that you need two tablespoons of chia seeds per day to



Chia seeds offer numerous health benefits, including promoting intestinal transit and improving digestion. – ALL PICS FROM PEXELS

reap the benefits. Any more than that could increase the risk of diarrhoea.

While we are rather familiar with the seeds that can be sprinkled on many dishes, chia is much less well known in the form of vegetable oil. However, it too has a host of benefits for skin and hair. This discovery should mean that this miracle oil, already available in specialist online stores, will slowly but surely find its way into our future cosmetics.

Rich in antioxidants, chia seed oil

helps fight external aggressions, protecting the skin from the harmful effects of pollution, stress and the sun. It is therefore a powerful ally for mature skin. But that is not all. The omega-3 fatty acids it contains also provide elasticity, suppleness and hydration to the skin, while accelerating its regeneration process. And to top it all off, it is said to be a powerful anti-inflammatory. All good reasons to give it pride of place in your bathroom. – ETX Studio



## MOVIE REVIEW

BY YASMIN ZULRAEZ

**L**ET us get this out of the way: *Until Dawn* is not a faithful adaptation of the acclaimed PlayStation game it is named after. Fans who walk in expecting an interactive-story-style slasher tribute with butterfly-effect decisions and direct ties to the game's iconic moments will quickly realise that this film takes a different path.

Sure, Peter Stormare pops up again and there is a faint whisper of the game's mythos, but at its core, this is a standalone survival horror story with time loops, masked killers and grotesque monsters, none of which need the *Until Dawn* name to stand tall.

If Sony Pictures had simply titled this "Valley of the Dead" or "Gore Valley Massacre", audiences might have come in with more accurate expectations. As it stands, the *Until Dawn* label feels like a marketing shortcut to lure gamers – a label slapped on top of what is frankly an entertaining, nasty, little horror gem in its own right.

**Twisted, hilarious horror**

Strip away the title-related confusion and what remains is a film that plays like a spiritual cousin to *The Cabin in the Woods*. A group of photogenic young adults heads into a remote, cursed location, thinking they are just on a search mission, only to find themselves part of something much bigger, stranger and bloodier. But here, the added twist is the time loop mechanic, an element that *Until Dawn* (the movie) leans on to great effect in the first two acts.

Director David F. Sandberg, best known for his knack for visual scares



Clover (Rubin, right) faces the unsettling Dr Hill (Stormare), desperate for answers to the nightmarish loop.

## Fun horror ride

► Jaw-dropping practical effects, sharp pacing make *Until Dawn* hugely entertaining flick

(*Lights Out*, *Annabelle: Creation*), keeps the tension tight and the pacing razor-sharp in the setup and middle portions. There is dark humour underlying the characters' repeated,

brutal deaths and their escalating panic as they figure out the rules of their bloody predicament. It is the kind of movie where, even as characters get picked off, the audience is laughing nervously, not because it is a comedy, but because the whole thing is so gleefully unhinged.

What truly elevates *Until Dawn* from being "just another horror flick" is its commitment to old-school, practical gore effects. Forget the over-polished, weightless CGI kills that plague too many modern slashers, this movie delivers viscera with heft. Blood sprays, bodies rip apart, faces melt and creatures snarl, all in gloriously tangible fashion.

It is impossible not to think of *Evil Dead* (2013) while watching some of the more stomach-churning moments. The film does not hold back and the craftsmanship behind the practical effects deserves applause. Horror fans craving something tactile, something



*Until Dawn* is a night of blood, terror and a fight to survive until sunrise.



Clover (Rubin) comes face-to-face with the terrifying wendigo, the ultimate test of her will to survive.

they can almost feel through the screen, will walk away grinning (or retching, depending on their tolerance).

**Energetic first half, wobbly finish**

While the setup and escalation shine, the film's final act does not quite hit home. After building a compelling, chaotic mystery and offering satisfying jolts of tension and gore, *Until Dawn* tries to explain itself and in doing so, overreaches.

The narrative starts layering in revelations and thematic weight that feel unnecessary, almost as if the script could not resist tying a big, philosophical bow on what was otherwise a delightfully pulpy experience. The fun, brisk momentum of the first two acts gives way to a slightly overcooked finale that tries too hard to say something profound.

Still, even as the third act stumbles, the film never becomes a complete mess. It holds onto its core strengths: strong performances (especially from Ella Rubin and Michael Cimino), tight direction and sheer enthusiasm for the genre.

As it stands, *Until Dawn* is a worthy entry into the "meta-horror" space. It is a clever, gory movie that delivers solid entertainment for horror lovers, even if it disappoints hardcore fans of the original game. The film's decision to set itself within the *Until Dawn* universe but tell a separate story is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it

frees the filmmakers to explore new ideas. But on the other, it leaves viewers wondering when (or if) a true adaptation of the game's original narrative will hit the big screen.

If this turns into a franchise and the ending certainly hints at that, here is hoping future instalments either go all-in on the game's characters and plot or simply spin off into their own beast entirely. Great horror movies can stand on their own without having to lean on a video game's popularity.

**Watch as standalone horror flick**

At the end of the day, *Until Dawn* is best approached with the mindset to watch it like a standalone horror flick, not as a faithful game adaptation. The film is a gory, wild ride packed with thrills, chills and wickedly fun kills.

For horror fans craving something that feels like *Cabin in the Woods* meets *Evil Dead* (2013), this is a satisfying, blood-drenched treat. Just temper expectations for the final act and accept the title for what it is: a marketing hook, not a plot promise.

Hopefully, with this solid (if imperfect) foundation, the *Until Dawn* name will one day get the adaptation it truly deserves. But for now, this film stands as a gruesome, entertaining survival horror flick that is well worth watching, especially for those who appreciate their gore practical and their horror clever.



Megan (Yoo) stands alone, her expression shifting between fear and determination.



(From left) Nina (A'zion), Abe (Cameli), Clover (Rubin), Max (Cimino) and Megan (Yoo) huddle together as tension rises inside the eerie visitor centre.

**DIRECTOR:** David F. Sandberg  
**CAST:** Ella Rubin, Michael Cimino, Ji-young Yoo, Belmont Cameli, Peter Stormare

**E-VALUE**

7

**ACTING**

7

**PLOT**

8





## ALBUM REVIEW



Kommodus begins its lycanthropic evolution with *A Foetal Wolf in Stained Glass*. – BANDCAMPIC

## Lupine fury, lyrical fire

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

THE complete package, Kommodus is one of the few projects in this sphere of metal that delivers on the musical and lyrical front, as opposed to how most bands tend to hastily write grammatical nonsensical lyrics just so vocalists can gutturally vomit them out to accompany – rather ironically – good music.

Now three full albums deep into a storied discography of excellent demos and split albums, Lepidus – the sole member of the band – continues his emblematic style of injecting high-quality prose to back the consistent music writing that first made him a force with 2017's *Will to Dominate All Life*.

"A hypertrophic human weapon, bound by no man, no master/To no politic or cause, just fury and the cauldron of conflict," Lepidus howls over the opening of *Human Bulldozer*, the second track off *A Foetal Wolf in Stained Glass*.

Weaving tales of human conflict, conquering weakness to being reborn from strife and trauma, the new album is a yet another strong entry in the Kommodus discography, sticking to signature themes he has always deployed in previous releases with unyielding discipline and fervour.

On *Foetal Wolf*, the songs tell a wide variety of tales, ranging from a past war over Britain, an encounter with a folk monster, the ascent from past selves into a superior new one, human perseverance against a Lovecraftian entity, to carnage that unfolds aboard a whaling ship.

The album, at least from its lyrical concept, veers closer to the fantastical aspects seen in 2023's *Wreath of Bleeding Snowfall* rather than Kommodus' self-titled 2020 full length. Those expecting the relentlessly furious, chaotic songs of gaining strength and wisdom from adversity like in the latter album's *Where Iron and Blood Converge* and *Forged Between the Hammer and Anvil* best hold their steel.

It feels less dangerous than say, *Meridians of Sacrifice*, but that is perfectly fine. Like stained glass itself, *Foetal Wolf* is a culmination of many ideas, thoughts, narratives and song writing into what is essentially Lepidus at his most experimental. In a scene known for corpse-like rigidity, a figure such as Lepidus pushing Kommodus into different directions is a welcome shift.

*A Foetal Wolf in Stained Glass* is streaming on Bandcamp.

# Taylor Swift effect can be springboard for artistes

► Can new acts profit from opening for superstar's tour?

THE most lucrative tour in history, Taylor Swift's Eras Tour generated over US\$2 billion (RM8.53 billion) in ticket sales alone. But beyond this commercial triumph, the superstar's 149 concerts also had a major economic impact on the host cities and on the supporting artistes.

An American study, published in the *Journal of the Music and Entertainment Industry Educators Association*, revealed the dramatic impact the Eras Tour has had on the careers of emerging artistes chosen to support Swift. For some, the opportunity was a veritable springboard to stardom.

The study was conducted by Jeff Apruzzese, professor at Drexel University and director of the Music Industry programme. Himself a musician and a former member of the band Passion Pit, he is well aware of the transformative potential of such exposure.

"There is often a perception that opening for a major headliner is a guaranteed career boost for emerging artistes – but the reality is far more complex," the researcher explained in a statement.

To better understand these dynamics, the researcher analysed data from 57 artistes who played opening slots on the most lucrative tours of 2022 and 2023. He compared their audiences on Spotify four weeks before and four weeks after their live performances. As a result, emerging artistes, classified as "developing", recorded an 18% increase in listenership before the tour, followed by a slowdown afterward. Established artistes experienced more modest variations.

In the case of the Eras Tour, some clearly benefitted from a genuine "Taylor Swift effect." Gracie Abrams, for example, was able to retain a large part of the audience she won when she opened for the singer. Owenn, on the other hand, saw a 188% increase in listeners during the tour, but enthusiasm then waned.

What seems to make the difference is the



Opening for a Swift concert can be a game changer for an emerging artiste. – AFPPIC

musical affinity between the guest artiste and the headliner. While being the opening act offers great visibility, it is above all artistic coherence that builds audience loyalty. Phoebe Bridgers, with her folk-pop sound reminiscent of Swift's *Folklore* and *Evermore* albums, or Gracie Abrams, with her melancholy pop style, won over Swifties.

To measure audience influence, Apruzzese conducted a survey of 525 concertgoers aged 18–55. The results showed that 68% had discovered a new artiste through an opening act. Of these, half went on to buy a ticket to see the artiste solo again, and two-thirds listened to the artiste's music via streaming. In most cases, the audience did not know the name of the guest artiste when they bought their ticket. So it is the energy of the live show that sparks their enthusiasm.

But for an artiste, opening for a big name in music is a mixed experience. Of the 47 artistes interviewed by Apruzzese, 63% said they had gained followers on social networks

after taking part in another musician's tour. Yet 40% lost money. Travel, accommodation, equipment and crew costs are rarely covered. Worse, some even have to pay for the chance to go on stage – a reality unknown to the general public, yet commonplace in the music industry.

Opening for a major tour can therefore offer invaluable exposure. But it is not enough.

As Apruzzese points out: "Overall, while the role of opening acts in career development is undeniable, it must be viewed as part of a broader strategic framework aimed at cultivating and sustaining an artiste's presence in the competitive landscape of the music industry," the researcher explained.

To make the most of it, artistes need to be able to follow up with new tracks or projects, and sometimes even a bit of luck. Because in the world of music, a moment in the spotlight does not always guarantee a long career. – AFP

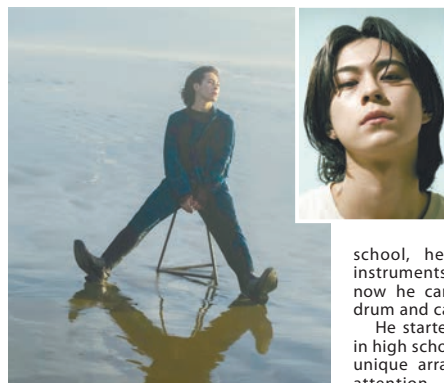
## Kenn releases debut solo single *Something Wrong*

JAPANESE artiste Kenn has released his first solo original track *Something Wrong* – a vibrant and heartfelt debut that marks a new chapter in his musical journey.

After debuting with a collaborative track with TiMT last December, titled *Moonlight*, this release is Kenn's first fully original solo work, and it radiates with optimism and emotional clarity.

Built on an uplifting, refreshing R&B/pop sound, *Something Wrong* is more than just a debut – it is a declaration. Kenn delivers a positive message through shimmering vocals and melodic grooves, singing with conviction that "music has brightened my life". The track blends bright instrumentation with an easy-breezy groove, reflecting a personal yet universal story of finding light in the dark.

The song is laced with Kenn's signature emotional transparency and vocal sparkle – an ode to how creativity



Kenn's new single is a sparkling R&B anthem celebrating the power of music.

can reshape identity and purpose.

As Kenn continues to evolve as a solo artiste, *Something Wrong* offers a glimpse into a promising future defined by openness, melody and authenticity.

Kenn grew up with music because his parents were DJs. During the time he was in junior high

school, he started learning to play instruments by watching YouTube and now he can play a guitar, piano, bass, drum and cajon.

He started to post covers on YouTube in high school. His ear-catching vocal and unique arrangement garnered a lot of attention. He now has over 39,000 followers on YouTube and 50,000 followers on TikTok.



BY JOHN TAN

**N**OT too long ago, local band Kaya was an opening act for various artistes, sharing the stage with prominent acts such as Yuna, Steve Thornton, Zainal Abidin and Salam Musik.

The band, which started out as a two-piece in 2010, has since solidified its presence, having won several competitions and launching its debut album *On Toast* in 2018 to a sold-out crowd at The Bee in Publika.

Adding to that is its very own music festival. In celebration of its latest singles *Go It Alone* and *Party All Night*, the band recently organised and played its first music festival at JioSpace in Petaling Jaya.

Titled *Party All Night: A Kaya Experience*, the band gathered a line-up of local artistes to share the stage, while celebrating how far Kaya has come through a medley of its best hits.

Speaking to *theSun*, the band dishes on the experience of putting the festival together and priorities for this year.

**Did everything go according to plan?**

Honestly, seeing everything come together was surreal. As with any live event, there were a few curveballs but the energy that night made it all worth it. The crowd, the music, the vibes, it all just clicked in the best way possible.



The band is known for its genre-blending sounds.

# Staging up

▶ Local band Kaya on organising playing first music festival

**How long did it take to put everything together?**

The idea had been brewing for a while but things really picked up about two months out. It was a whirlwind of chaos and excitement, but we had an amazing team and some supportive partners who made it all possible.

**How did the idea for a festival first come about?**

Initially, we were thinking of a simple single launch. But a friend of ours from Team Sound & Light jumped in and pitched the idea of going bigger, such as a 1,200 pax festival kind of big. He saw the lack of platforms for upcoming indie artists and wanted to do something real about it.

So we came together and built "A Kaya Experience" as a celebration of the local live music scene. A stage for any Malaysian artist to work towards – big, loud and full of heart.

**What was the process of picking the line-up like?**

It was all organic. We reached out to artists we have performed with before, as well as those we have admired from afar.

The goal was to create a line-up that captured the diversity and soul of the local sound. Raw, real and uniquely ours. It was not just about the headliners. It was about celebrating homegrown talent in every form.

**What are some memories from the festival that you will carry with you?**

Too many to count! The crowd sang every word back to us, the energy during our finale when everyone had their hands in the air and the impromptu jam sessions backstage.

But above all, just witnessing the community come together for the love of music is something we will never forget.

**Will there be more festivals in the future?**

Absolutely! The response was a clear sign that there is a hunger for this kind of space. We could not have done it without our crew and the incredible crowd that showed up with love. If you are an artist who would like to be part of the next one, drop us a DM – we are always listening.

**The festival was in celebration of your recent singles *Go It Alone* and *Party All Night*, could you elaborate on what those songs are about?**

*Go It Alone* is a love song but delivered in a kind of cool and nonchalant way. It is "I love you but I am going to play it chill", although deep down, it is only ever about you.

*Party All Night*, on the other hand, is a straight-up funk anthem meant for dancing, vibing and letting go. It is a feel-good energy, pure and simple.

**How would you like the latest singles to present you to new and longtime listeners?**

We hope these songs show our range. We have always enjoyed bending genres, breaking a few



Kaya members (from left) Emmanuel Joseph (lead vocals and guitar), Matthew Ezra (drums), Micheal Peris (lead guitar), Donald Omar (keyboards) and David Harding (bass).

rules and staying honest with our lyrics. These tracks are just a glimpse of where we are headed – a little evolution, a lot of heart.

**Will this release inspire a potential album? Or do you already have one planned?**

Let us just say we are cooking. Whether it is an album or something else, there is definitely more coming. The creative momentum is strong right now, so stay tuned.

**What do you hope to achieve this year?**

We want to keep building. Tour more, create more and reach new audiences. Most of all, we want to keep growing, as artists and collaborators in this community.

**Are there things you did in 2024 that you would never want to do again?**

Nothing we regret, but we have definitely drawn a line when it comes to saying "yes" to shows that underpay or do not value the artist. We are done with that and we hope more musicians feel empowered to do the same. The scene can only thrive if we start respecting our worth.



Peris has been a member since 2014.



Vocalist Emmanuel is the other co-founder of Kaya.



Guitarist Harding is the group's co-founder.



The band has two new singles out. – ALL PICS COURTESY OF KEVIN ELIAS



*If There Is an Afterlife, I Hope It's Your Version Instead of Mine***Venue:** Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre**Date:** May 22 – 25**Time:** May 22 – 25, 8.30pm | May 24 – 25, 3pm**Price:** RM68 – RM98 (with RM55 student bulk rates)

EJKLS Seni's acclaimed play by Asyraf Syahir returns for a restaging that blends intimate storytelling, live music and personal narratives about grief, healing and faith, running 90 minutes with post-show Q&As.

**Coway Run 2025****Venue:** Stadium Nasional Bukit Jalil**Date:** Aug 31**Time:** Flag-off times to be announced**Price:** From RM45

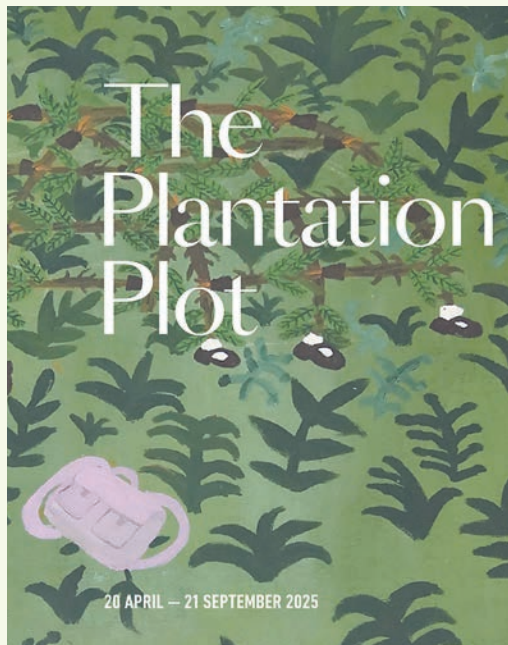
The ninth edition of Coway's signature Merdeka Day run features 5km, 10km and 21km race categories, obstacle runs, cash prizes and family activities, with RM10 from each ticket supporting the Coway Happy Water Project.



# Events listing

**The Plantation Plot****Venue:** Ilham Gallery, Kuala Lumpur**Date:** April 20 – Sept 21**Time:** Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 7pm | Sunday, 11am – 5pm**Price:** Free admission

A major group exhibition curated by Lim Sheau Yun in collaboration with Kadist, featuring over 60 works from Southeast Asia and the Americas exploring the legacies of plantation systems across history, labour and empire.

**Le Tabouret****Venue:** Komtar, Penang**Date:** June 13 – 15**Time:** June 13, 8pm | June 14, 3pm & 8pm | June 15, 3pm**Price:** RM45 – RM100

This award-winning experimental theatre piece fuses Eugene Ionesco's absurdist themes with Chinese glove puppetry, exploring the erosion of traditional arts and the human search for meaning amid cultural and existential decline.

**Borders Series: A Journey Between Movement and Serenity****Venue:** G13 Gallery, Petaling Jaya**Date:** May 17 – June 7**Time:** Tuesday – Saturday, 11am – 5pm**Price:** Free admission

Celebrating his 50th solo show, renowned Malaysian abstract artist Suzlee Ibrahim presents a series of works blending spontaneous gestural brushstrokes with geometric forms, reflecting on freedom, control and emotional intensity.



## Lyfe's chartbusters



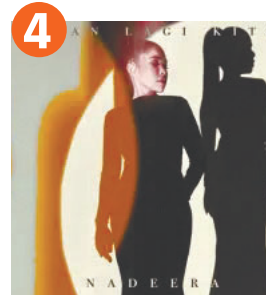
**Song:** Old Phone  
**Artist:** Ed Sheeran  
**Album:** Play



**Song:** Shokka Nikkiriye Nekka Neliriye  
**Artist:** G.V. Prakash  
**Album:** Accused



**Song:** Giant  
**Artist:** Stray Kids  
**Album:** Mixtape: DominAte (EP)



**Song:** Bukan Lagi Kita  
**Artist:** Nadeera  
**Album:** Bukan Lagi Kita (Single)



**Song:** Bonescraper  
**Artist:** Machine Head  
**Album:** Untoned

– PICS FROM APPLE MUSIC





**Classified**

SATURDAY | MAY 10, 2025  
T: 03-7784 6688 F: 03-7785 2625  
E: sunconnects@thesundaily.com

248 Others

## OLD LIQUORS WANTED



Highest Price  
Whole Malaysia

**JEFF**  
012-227 1175

322 Notices

## LOSS OF PASSPORT

Please be informed that Yemen passport bearing **ALMADHARI HUSSEIN MOHAMMED HUSSEIN 13995012** has been missing since **3rd January 2025** at **Universiti Tenaga Nasional 43000 Kajang, Selangor**.

Kindly contact **011-1148 3423** if you have any information regarding the above passport.

## DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI IPON

DALAM NEGERI PERAK DARUL RIJZUAN, MALAYSIA  
DALAM KEBAKRAPAN NO: AA-23NOC-21-01/2025

PER: **KONG YENG KIN**  
(No. K/P: 621021-08-5245)  
... PENGHUTANG PENGAKHIMAN

EX-PARTE: **MANAGEPAY RESOURCES SDN. BHD.**  
(No. Syarikat: 201201038703 (1022181-W))  
... PEMUTUANG PENGAKHIMAN

## NOTIS PENYAMPAIAN GANTI

Kepada: **KONG YENG KIN**  
(No. K/P: 621021-08-5245)  
No. 35, Jalan Durian Taman Setia 31000 Perak Malaysia

**AMBIL PERHATIAN** bahawa suatu Notis Kebankrapan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu di MAHKAMAH Ingil oleh Pemutus Penghakiman, **MANAGEPAY RESOURCES SDN. BHD.** (No. Syarikat: 201201038703 (1022181-W)) yang beralamat di 107-113, Jalan USJ2/10, 47630 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan dan Mahkamah telah memerintahkan bahawa Notis Kebankrapan tersebut dan Permisitan Mengeluarkan Notis Kebankrapan disampaikan kepada kamu melalui penyampaian ganti dengan menampalkan sesalanan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut dan Permisitan Mengeluarkan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut bersama dengan sesalanan Permisitan Penyampaian Ganti di atas papan notis di Mahkamah Tinggi Ipon dan di alamat kamu iaitu di No. 35, Jalan Durian Taman Setia, 31000 Perak Malaysia dan dengan mengiklankan Notis ini dalam satu keluaran surat khabar "The Sun Daily" dan bahawa penyampaian dan pengiklankan sedemikian hendaklah dianggap sebagai penyampaian Notis Kebankrapan yang sempurna dan cukup ke atas kamu selepas tamat empat belas (14) hari dari tarikh pengiklankan tersebut dan bahawa kos pemohonan ini diijadikan kos dalam kausa, jika kamu berhasrat untuk membantah Notis Kebankrapan tersebut, kamu mesti dalam masa empat belas (14) hari ini dari tarikh penyampaian menjadi sempurna memohon memfailkan dengan Pendftar samada suatu Affidavit dan atau Saman Dalam Kamar disokong dengan Affidavit bagi maksud tersebut. Notis Kebankrapan ini boleh dipertika oleh kamu dengan memohon kepada Mahkamah Ingil.

Bertarikh pada 16 April 2025

di

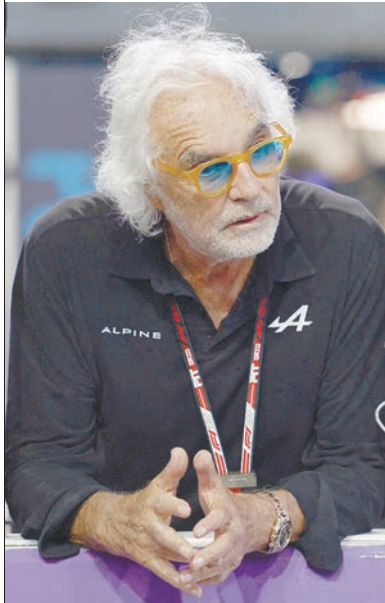
Pegacara Pemutus Penghakiman

Tetuan Long Law Chambers

**NOTIS PENYAMPAIAN GANTI** ini adalah diiklankan oleh Tetuan Long Law Chambers, Pegacara pihak Plaintiff yang beralamat di 113, Jalan USJ2/10, 47630 Subang Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.  
(Tel: 018-0236824)  
(Ruj: LC25MRSB-KONG/L50)

# Briatore fires back at critics

Italian called out reports of unrest in Alpine camp



**FLAVIO BRIATORE** (left) has fired back at his critics, shutting down 'completely false' rumours that Oliver Oakes' resignation as Alpine team principal was linked to a conflict between them.

Oakes vacated his position on Wednesday after less than a year in the role. The announcement of his resignation surfaced just 12 hours before news broke that Jack Doohan would be substituted by reserve driver Franco Colapinto for the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix next weekend.

It has been reported that this move was largely influenced by Briatore, who has taken over duties initially held by Oakes.

Speculation about Oakes' abrupt leave raised eyebrows, with whispers of a possible clash with Briatore over the team's driver line-up strategy.

The Italian, however, has categorically refuted such suggestions and, along with the team's official social media account, issued a clarifying statement.

Briatore's message was unambiguous: "A lot has been said in

the past 24 hours, incorrectly associating the decision of Oli (Oliver Oakes) resigning to an alleged disagreement, or that we shared different views. This is completely false and far from the truth.

"Me and Oli have a very good relationship and had long-term ambitions to drive this team forward together. We accept Oli's request to resign and have therefore accepted his resignation.

"The reasons are not related to the team and are of a personal nature. I will continue to be more and more involved with the team, together with the strong management we already have in place.

"We will work hard on improving our position this season and preparing for 2026."

Briatore's announcement also featured a statement from Oakes, who explained: "It's been a privilege to lead everyone at Enstone, what a team, what a place. It is a personal decision for me to step down.

"Flavio has been like a father to me, nothing but supportive since I took the

role, as well as giving me the opportunity.

"Everyone is in place for 2026 and where this dream deserves to be. I believe in Enstone."

Despite these affirmations, it's widely acknowledged that Briatore and Oakes held divergent views regarding their drivers.

The departing team principal was inclined to allow Doohan more time to settle in, whereas Briatore had been eager to see Colapinto take to the track.

Doohan's tenure seemed doomed from the outset, and although reports emerged in Bahrain suggesting that Alpine would afford him until the mid-year break to impress, his inability to secure a point or capitalise on moments of promising speed ultimately led to his exit.

Despite losing his racing spot, Doohan still holds a position with Alpine as the first-choice reserve driver.

Colapinto has been granted the next five races to prove his worth, with Alpine planning to reassess their line-up before the British Grand Prix in July. - Express Newspapers

## SHORTS

### India suspends IPL T20 tournament

**INDIA'S** cricket board has suspended the money-spinning Indian Premier League (IPL) T20 tournament amid rising tensions between India and Pakistan, a source with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters yesterday.

IPL chairman Arun Singh Dhumal and the Indian cricket board's secretary Devajit Saikia did not respond to Reuters calls and messages seeking comment.

Thursday's IPL match was abandoned midway after fighting began in India's border regions, but the cricket board attributed the disruption to a power failure at the stadium in the hill city of Dharamsala.

The world's richest cricket tournament began its current season on March 22, and the final fixture was scheduled to be played on May 25, with matches being spread over 13 venues across the country.

### ... as 'floodlight failure' halts match

**AN** Indian Premier League match was abandoned on Thursday after a floodlight malfunctioned at the stadium in Dharamsala because of a "technical failure", India's cricket board said.

"The Punjab Kings vs Delhi Capitals match (Match#58) in Tata IPL was forced to be abandoned due to a significant technical failure at the HPCA stadium in Dharamsala," the Board of Cricket Control in India said in a statement.

"Due to a power outage in the area, one of the light towers at the HPCA stadium malfunctioned."

Only 10.1 overs could be played before the match was called off.

Punjab, who won the toss and

opted to bat first, were sitting pretty at 122-1 after openers Priyansh Arya (70) and Prabhshimran Singh (50 not out) put on a quickfire century stand.

The no result on Thursday kept Punjab in third on 16 points - level with the two teams above them, Gujarat Titans and Royal Challengers Bangalore. Delhi are two points back in fifth place.

### MacGill spared jail for cocaine supply

**FORMER** Australian Test cricketer Stuart MacGill avoided jail time yesterday when a Sydney judge sentenced him for taking part in the supply of cocaine.

The 54-year-old was given an "intensive corrections order" - a sentence that is served in the community - of one year and 10 months, court papers showed.

It includes 495 hours of community service and a requirement to abstain from alcohol and drugs, with mandatory testing.

Judge Nicole Noman said the former bowler played an "indispensable role" in discussions leading to a cocaine deal, according to public broadcaster ABC.

MacGill was found guilty of taking part in the supply of cocaine in March.

Police said the retired leg-spinner introduced his personal cocaine dealer to an associate in 2021.

The pair went on to organise a US\$200,000 (RM900,000) drug deal between themselves, police alleged.

Although MacGill was not involved in the subsequent transaction, the jury found him guilty of knowingly taking part in the supply of a prohibited drug.

MacGill played 44 Tests for Australia between 1998 and 2008.

## Jobs

# WE ARE HIRING

## 1 MEDIA SALES - Specialist

**Job Description**

- Building and sustaining strong working relationship with advertising agencies and clients.
- New business development and business retention.
- Conceptualise, plan and execute creative and innovative marketing campaigns to enhance brand visibility and engagement.
- Create, develop and continuously improve marketing material, presentations and proposals that showcase our products/services effectively.

**Requirements**

- SPM level with at least two years of experience.
- Diploma or Bachelor's degree in business, marketing or other related fields.
- Fresh graduates are encouraged to apply, training will be provided.
- Good communication, presentation, problem-solving and organisational skills.
- Passionate in client servicing.
- Possess own transport and willing to travel.
- Able to start work immediately.

**Office based in Petaling Jaya (Five-day week)**

## 2 MEDIA SALES - Representative/Agent (Freelance)

**Requirement**

- Minimum one year sales experience in classified ad, print and digital advertising.
- Those without sales experience but with media advertising knowledge may also apply.
- Attractive commission package and incentives.
- Able to start immediately.
- Central, Northern, Southern, East Coast and Sabah/Sarawak.

**Send in your CV with your photo via email to : thesun.hr2@gmail.com**

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF MALAYSIA AT GEORGETOWN IN THE STATE OF PENANG COMPANIES (WINDING UP) NO : PA-28NOC-51-03 / 2025**

In the matter of Section 465 & 466 of the Companies Act, 2016.

And

In the matter of NAJCOM SDN. BHD. (formerly known as Nahzan Sdn. Bhd.) [Company No. : 198801002815 (170172-K)].

And

In the matter of Companies (Winding-Up) Rules, 1972.

Between

TEKAS JAYA SDN. BHD. [Company No. : 198301007203 (102427-A)] ... Petitioner

And

NAJCOM SDN. BHD. (formerly known as Nahzan Sdn. Bhd.) [Company No. : 198801002815 (170172-K)] ... Respondent

**ADVERTISEMENT OF PETITION**

NOTICE is hereby given that a Petition for the winding-up of the above-named Company, NAJCOM SDN. BHD. (formerly known as Nahzan Sdn. Bhd.) [Company No. : 198801002815 (170172-K)] by the High Court was on the 25th March, 2025 presented by TEKAS JAYA SDN. BHD. [Company No. : 198301007203 (102427-A)]. And that the said Petition is directed to be heard before the Court sitting at 9.00 a.m. on the 16th June, 2025; and any creditor or contributory of the said Company desiring to support or oppose the making of an order on the said Petition may appear at the time of hearing by himself or his counsel for that purpose; and a copy of the Petition will be furnished to any creditor or contributory of the said Company requiring the same by the undersigned on payment of the regulated charge for the same.

The Petitioner's address is at No. 38, Tingkat Satu Lorong Kelasah 3, Taman Kelasah, 13700 Seberang Jaya, Pulau Pinang.

The Petitioner's Solicitor is Messrs **Ang & Tan of No. 7-1, Lorong Usahaniaga 5, Taman Usahaniaga, 14000 Bukit Mertajam, Pulau Pinang.**

Signed  
Solicitors for the Petitioner

NOTE:- Any person who intends to appear on the hearing of the said Petition must serve on or send by post to the above-named Solicitors notice in writing of this intention so to do. The notice must state the name and address of the person, or, if a firm, the name and address of the firm, and must be signed by the person or firm, or his or their solicitor (if any) and must be served, or, if posted, must be sent by post in sufficient time to reach the above-named not later than twelve o'clock noon on the 15th June, 2025. (Ref: AWP/PTJ/NSB/184423/GK)



# Swiatek makes fast start

World No. 2 sets up meeting with Collins after easy win

**I**GA SWIATEK dismissed Elisabetta Cocciaretto in just 52 minutes as she opened her account at the Italian Open yesterday.

World No. 2 Swiatek came to Italy on the back of a demoralising straight-sets defeat to Coco Gauff in the semifinals of the Madrid Open.

But the 23-year-old Pole dropped just a single game in winning 6-1, 6-0 against Italian Cocciaretto to move onto a third-round meeting with American Danielle Collins.

"I felt like the ball was kind of listening to me today and I had full control over the match, so it's always pretty comfortable to play a match like that," Swiatek said.

"You just need to continue the work you've been doing and not expect that it's going to happen

more often."

Swiatek is a three-time winner of the Italian Open and is using the clay court tournament as a key step towards her defence of her French Open title, but she is yet to win a tournament this season.

In another second-round match, former world No. 1 Naomi Osaka came from behind to overcome lucky loser Viktorija Golubic 2-6, 7-5, 6-1.

Sixth seed Jasmine Paolini, cheered on by her home crowd, was a comfortable 6-4, 6-3 winner against Lulu Sun of New Zealand and will face Ons Jabeur in round three after the Tunisian benefited from a walkover against Petra Kvitová.

American third seed Jessica Pegula eased into the third round with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over compatriot Ashlyn Krueger. She will

next face Elise Mertens after the 25th seed Belgian beat Suzan Lamens in three sets.

Australian Open champion Madison Keys of the USA also progressed following a 7-6 (7-4), 6-1 win against France's Varvara Gracheva.

Madrid Open semifinalist Elina Svitolina got underway with a win as she bested Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-4, 7-6 (7-2).

Men's world No. 1 Jannik Sinner will make his return to competition after a three-month doping ban by facing Mariano Pavone today after the Argentinian beat Federico Cina 6-3, 6-3 yesterday.

Elsewhere in the men's draw, Hungarian Fabian Marozsan

eliminated up-and-coming Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca in straight sets.

Since earning his first Tour-level title in Buenos Aires in February, 18-year-old Fonseca has struggled on the red dirt in Europe with early exits at the Madrid Open and the challenger event in Estoril.

Italian showman Fabio Fognini bowed out of his home Masters event for the final time as the 37-year-old went down 6-2, 6-3 to Briton Jacob Fearnley.

- AFP

## Jeeno on top at Mizuho Americas Open

**JEENO THITIKUL** of Thailand rang up eight birdies with no bogeys on Thursday to set the first-round pace at the Mizuho Americas Open in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Thitikul, ranked No. 2 in the world, won the CME Group Tour Championship last fall but has not won on the LPGA Tour yet in 2025.

She's in good position at Liberty National Golf Club, where she has a two-shot advantage over Celine Boutier of France and Hye-Jin Choi of South Korea.

Thitikul got around the course in just 26 putts yesterday.

"I definitely kind of stress about my putting on week off," she said. "I found out I have been doing good."

"I have - you know, like I had a good stroke but just didn't drop in, so I just trying to make like hand-eye coordination is right and the speed to matching the line."

Thitikul, who birdied Nos. 17 and 18 to break away from the pack, was asked what she enjoyed about the Liberty National.

"Food," she quipped. "Ferry, food. Just fancy New York."

You know, really good views here. Good condition course as well. I think you can play here as a major for sure... the course condition-wise is nice, so smooth."

Boutier made a second-half charge after starting her round on the back nine and shooting 1 over through eight holes.

Her birdie at the par-4 18th was the first of a five-birdie run to shoot her into red figures. She added birdies at Nos. 6 and 7.

"I think my game hasn't been too far off," the World No. 16 player and former major champion said.

"I had trouble scoring here and there, just really a few strokes, putting get in or out, but I don't think my game has been too different from the beginning to this week."

Choi went bogey-free, while a whopping 10 players tied for fourth at 5-under 67. Among them were South Korea's Haeran Ryu and Lindy Duncan, who also competed in that playoff and lost to Mao Saigo of Japan. - Field Level Media

## Mitchell takes lead at Truist

**KEITH MITCHELL** used a late birdie run to shoot a 9-under 61 and take the early lead at the Truist Championship yesterday in Flourentown, Pennsylvania.

Mitchell started his first round at the Philadelphia Cricket Club's Wissahickon Course on the back nine and parred his first five holes.

After birdieing Nos. 15, 17 and 18, he stayed hot on the front nine with a 6-under 29 coming in, including four straight birdies at Nos. 5-8.

At day's end, it was only good for a one-stroke lead over Denny McCarthy. Tied for third at 7-under 63 are Collin Morikawa, Rickie Fowler, Akshay Bhatia and Austria's Sepp Straka.

Mitchell - only in the field due to a sponsor's exemption - carried a bit of insider info into the week.

"I have a buddy that's a member that kind of gave me a little bit of info, but honestly nothing," Mitchell said. "I knew it was a great golf course. Everybody that I talked to said it was amazing, and they were right."

"We're lucky to be here. I just plotted my way around Monday and Wednesday to figure out what to hit and where to kind of try to put the ball on the green."

That prep work helped immensely on his final few holes, as he stuck his approach at the par-4 seventh hole to 2½ feet of the pin, in between 5½- and 7½-foot birdie putts at Nos. 6 and 8.

Making its PGA Tour debut, the Philadelphia Cricket Club is serving as a

temporary host for the US\$20 million (RM9m) signature event while Quail Hollow prepares to host the PGA Championship next week.

"This golf course is as classic as it gets, traditional," Mitchell said. "The weather was just absolutely perfect today."

"So it didn't really have much going to make it play harder. Being able to take advantage of it today with the weather was exactly what we were trying to do."

Ireland's Shane Lowry and US Ryder Cup captain Keegan Bradley were part of a tie for seventh at 6-under 64. A massive tie at 65 included Patrick Cantlay, Harris English, Tony Finau, Russell Henley, Japan's Hideki Matsuyama and South Korea's Si Woo Kim.

Rory McIlroy is the four-time champion of the event at Quail Hollow, including last year, and the Northern Irishman managed an opening 66 with six birdies and two bogeys. Justin Thomas, Max Homa and Will Zalatoris are among those tied with him at 66. - Field Level Media



Thitikul plays a shot from the fourth tee during the first round of the Mizuho Americas Open 2025. - AFP/ICC

## SHORTS

### Raducanu called out over coaching arrangement

**EMMA RADUCANU'S** coaching arrangement with Mark Petchey has been dismissed by fellow Brit Dan Evans.

"It can't last if she starts losing matches and Petchey is in the commentary box, that's not going to work," said Evans.

"I think Emma will be looking for a new coach again pretty soon if she starts to lose some matches on the grass into the US swing. I'm not sure how that can last as it is."

Raducanu believes her current coaching arrangement is working well but knows she will soon need to "figure another solution out."

The 22-year-old still has a desire to develop a longer-term partnership with Mark Petchey, even if the pair were unable to agree a more exclusive arrangement.

"It's been working pretty well," Raducanu told

BBC Sport in Rome.

"Mark is doing his commentary work and around that he is going to help me as much as he can and hopefully the times allow that he can be there with me in the matches."

"That's why Jane is here for when he's not able to make it to the session."

"While she's not working it's nice to have her as much as possible, but she will go back to work and then I need to figure another solution out."

### Italian Open star in shock split with coach

**DIANA SHNAIDER** has revealed that her blockbuster coaching partnership with Dinara Safina is already over after just four weeks together.

A former world No. 1, Safina joined Shnaider's team last month and joined her at the recent Madrid Open.

Safina's brother Marat Safin also recently returned to the tour as a coach, working with

Andrey Rublev.

Shnaider enjoyed instant success with Safina, earning a 6-0, 6-0 victory over Anastasija Sevastova on her way to the last 16 in the Caja Magica. But, after sealing another double bagel at the Italian Open yesterday, the world No. 11 confirmed they had parted ways.

The 13th seed in Rome this fortnight, Shnaider breezed past Caroline Dolehide in her opening match, needing just 50 minutes to get the job done.

But her new coach was noticeably absent, and the 21-year-old later revealed that their work together had already concluded.

"She returned back home to Barcelona. She needed that," Shnaider told Tennis.com after booking her spot in round three.

### Match interrupted to announce new Pope

**FABIO FOGNINI'S** potential last-ever match at the Italian Open was briefly interrupted when

organisers announced the news that Robert Prevost had been named as the new pope after a two-day conclave in the Vatican. Ahead of the match, the Italian tennis star asked the umpire whether they'd be told who the new pope was.

As Fognini trailed Britain's Jacob Fearnley 5-2, an announcement was made to the fans on the Campo Centrale court during a changeover before play could resume. A photo of Pope Leo XIV was also shared on the big screen.

Shortly before the players took to the court, white smoke emerged from the Sistine Chapel, signalling the election of a new pope. But the identity of the pope had not been revealed by the time the match started.

During the warm-up, Fognini asked the umpire about the situation. "They told me they will announce during warm-up but they will just make the announcement if they know who it is," chair official Renaud Lichtenstein replied.

Just a few games into the match, Cardinal Prevost, 69, was unveiled as the successor to Pope Francis.



## Dethroned champions Leverkusen face uncertain future

**AFTER** conceding the Bundesliga title to Bayern Munich last weekend, Bayer Leverkusen host Borussia Dortmund on Sunday with rumoured big-name exits clouding the club's immediate future.

With two games remaining, Leverkusen are guaranteed to finish second, but the final home match of the season could be a farewell for coach Xabi Alonso and star midfielder Florian Wirtz.

Alonso, the rookie coach who banished the "Neverkusen" nickname by taking Leverkusen to the Bundesliga title last season, could be headed for Real Madrid, where he won the Champions League as a player.

While Alonso's departure was always on the

horizon – the Basque has often spoken of Leverkusen as the perfect place to develop – Wirtz's exit will sting, particularly if the 22-year-old Germany regular moves to Bayern, as German media have reported this week.

Born 20 minutes away in Pulheim, Wirtz was plucked from neighbouring FC Cologne's academy and made his debut aged 17, taking Kai Havertz's record as Leverkusen's youngest debutant and later briefly becoming the Bundesliga's youngest goalscorer.

After recovering from an ACL injury in 2022, Wirtz was instrumental in Leverkusen's league and cup double and was named Bundesliga player of

the season.

In an interview with *Sports Illustrated* published yesterday, Wirtz said "it definitely appeals to me to leave my comfort zone at some point and experience something new."

The chatter around the duo's exit has obscured what has still been an excellent season at the BayArena.

After last year's record-breaking campaign, where Alonso's side became the first team in Bundesliga history to go through a season unbeaten, Leverkusen were bound to come back to earth.

Like Bayern, Leverkusen have lost only twice all

campaign, but have been held to 11 draws – four more than the title winners.

Wins in their two remaining games will bring Leverkusen to 74 points: the second-best tally in their history and enough to win the league two seasons ago.

Leverkusen's upcoming opponents Dortmund will want to make to most of the uncertainty, as they push for a Champions League spot.

As low as 12th this season, Dortmund have picked up 16 points in their last six games. They sit one point and one place behind Freiburg, who travel to plucky battlers Holstein Kiel tomorrow. – AFP



Robert Lewandowski and Lamine Yamal (bottom). – REUTERS/SPIC

## High stakes El Clasico

Barcelona host Real Madrid with La Liga title firmly in their sights

**B**ARCELONA have the chance to land an almost fatal blow to Real Madrid's La Liga title aspirations in a mouthwatering *El Clasico* on Sunday (10.15pm Malaysian time) and edge closer to reclaiming the title.

Barca are top by four points over Real with four matches left and a win on Sunday would leave them needing one more victory to clinch a 28th Spanish league title while leaving last year's champions licking their wounds in a trophyless season.

Unbeaten domestically since late December playing some of the most entertaining football in Europe this season, Hansi Flick's Barca will try to grab a fourth consecutive victory over Real this season and their second in less than a month.

The Catalans have already lifted the Copa del Rey after a thrilling comeback win in extra time against their old rivals.

The chance of virtually securing the double by beating Real would be the perfect tonic after a heartbreaking 4-3 Champions League defeat by Inter Milan stopped them reaching their first European Cup final in a decade and claiming a sixth crown.

Barca were a couple of minutes away from the Munich showpiece after Raphinha scored from close range in the 87th minute to put them 3-2 up after trailing 2-0 at halftime.

However, Inter equalised through Francesco Acerbi in added time to stay alive and then got the winner from substitute Davide Frattesi in extra time to stun the Catalans.

Barcelona cannot afford to wallow in self-pity and must now focus on Sunday's

clash in which they will still be without defender Jules Kounde but will recover key players like striker Robert Lewandowski and left back Alejandro Balde from injury.

Despite their disappointing Champions League semifinal exit, Barca should be confident of overturning Real on Sunday, having dominated their arch-rivals across this campaign.

They have already recorded two emphatic victories over Real this season, winning 4-0 at the Santiago Bernabeu in La Liga in October and 5-2 in the Spanish Super Cup final in Saudi Arabia in January before fighting back to win the Copa del Rey.

Spearheaded by a potent attacking force of Lewandowski, 17-year-old sensation Lamine Yamal, Brazilian standout forward Raphinha and midfield maestro Pedri, they have scored 91 goals in 34 La Liga games this season, 22 more than Real, who have been a huge disappointment in Kylian Mbappe's first season.

Real travel to Barcelona missing several key starters due to injury. Coach Carlo Ancelotti will be without Eder Militao, Antonio Ruediger, Dani Carvajal, Ferland Mendy and David Alaba in defence and Eduardo Camavinga in midfield.

The Italian will be under the spotlight with growing rumours that he is on his way out of the Spanish capital to take over the vacant job with the Brazil national team.

Third-placed Atletico Madrid have 67 points, 12 adrift of Barca and eight behind Real. They host Real Sociedad, who are 11th on 43 battling for a European qualification spot a point behind a trio of teams led by eighth-placed Rayo Vallecano. – Reuters



Kylian Mbappe and Jude Bellingham (bottom). – REUTERS/SPIC

**SUNDAY,  
MAY 11  
10.15PM  
(Malaysian time)**

## Monuments in trouble while PSG prepare for Euro final

**WHILE** Paris Saint-Germain are looking forward to the Champions League final and have already wrapped up another Ligue 1 title, two of France's biggest clubs with proud European track records are facing the end of the season with trepidation.

PSG beat Arsenal in their semifinal on Wednesday to set up a final at the end of May in Munich against Inter Milan, the second in their history after a defeat by Bayern Munich in 2020.

It will be the eighth time that a French side has appeared in the final of Europe's elite club competition, with Marseille in 1993 still the only team from the country to have won the trophy.

Saint-Etienne were beaten finalists in 1976, when they lost 1-0 to Franz Beckenbauer's Bayern in Glasgow.

Almost half a century later, they stand on the brink of being relegated to Ligue 2, just a year after coming back up and then being bought by Canadian billionaire Larry Tanenbaum.

With two games of the season remaining they sit in the automatic relegation places, above only a Montpellier side who are already down.

Les Verts, whose tally of 10 French titles is bettered only by PSG on 13, are four points adrift of Le Havre in the relegation playoff spot and five away from outright safety.

That means a defeat away to Reims tomorrow will send them down, while a draw will effectively mean relegation too due to their poor goal difference.

However, a win will keep their hopes alive

going into the last day, provided they also get some favours from elsewhere.

"The whole season has been a struggle and a fight for our lives. There is nothing new about that," said Saint-Etienne's Norwegian coach, Eirik Horneland.

"We cannot wait for others anymore. We have to help ourselves. We need two victories to stay in the league."

Saint-Etienne's great rivals Lyon are seventh with two games to play, their hopes of Champions League qualification were dealt a huge blow when they lost 2-1 to Lens last weekend.

Lyon appointed Paulo Fonseca as coach at the end of January in the belief that he could take the seven-time French champions back to

Europe's top table.

However, they were three points off the top four then and they still are now, meaning it appears a first Champions League campaign since they got to the semifinals in 2020 is probably beyond them.

Tomorrow's trip to third-placed Monaco is a game they simply must win, with the consequences of failing to reach the Champions League potentially disastrous for Lyon.

"We need to win our last two games and then see where that leaves us," Fonseca said this week.

"It is six years since the club qualified for the Champions League so this is important.

"I want to be the coach who takes OL (Lyon) back there. It will be hard but it is possible." – AFP

# Postecoglou blasts critics

**A**NGE POSTECOGLOU has fumed over questions on whether Europa League success would be enough to save Tottenham's season, accusing people of trying to "diminish" their achievements.

Spurs booked their place in the Europa League final yesterday night with a 2-0 win at Bodo/Glimt, taking their aggregate score to 5-1.

It gives Postecoglou's side a shot at salvation after what has been a dismal domestic season, with Spurs now within one game of ending their 17-year trophy drought.

Standing in their way will be fellow Premier League strugglers Manchester United, who dispatched Athletic Bilbao over two legs to seal their place in the final.

And while Ruben Amorim has repeatedly said that lifting the Europa League would not be enough to make this season a success for Man United, Postecoglou has snapped back at anyone trying to "tear down" what Tottenham are building.

He said in his post-match press conference: "Why do I care what Man United think? Why is that relevant to me?"

"Ask the Man United manager why he says that. I've said all along that this is important.

*Spurs earned right to be in Europa League final: Arge*

"What do you think a trophy would do for this club? The question answers itself, but what's happening right now is that people are fearing that it actually might happen.

"Because it might happen, let's see how we can tear it down or diminish it somehow by saying it's been a poor season, or that we don't deserve this or we don't deserve that, or somehow comparing us to Man United.

"It's going to upset a lot of people isn't it!" Postecoglou added. "The debate's now raging, the latest one is that neither of us will be able to get a trophy if we win, they're just going to take a team photo because we're not worthy.

"I mean, who cares if we're struggling in the League? Why is that important? If it's so easy to get to a final, then why doesn't everyone who finishes in the top three do it?"

"We understand our league form hasn't been great. We understand the struggles we've had.

"A lot of them are because of the situation we've been in. But how does that diminish the achievement of getting to a final?"

"I couldn't care less who's struggling and who's not. I think both us and United have earned the right to be there."

This comes after Postecoglou hit back at Arsene Wenger for arguing the winner of the Europa League shouldn't qualify for the Champions League, joking that Spurs does "crazy things" to people.

Despite being on course for their worst Premier League finish of 16th, Tottenham put on a clinic in game management in Norway to put their Europa League semifinal against Bodo/Glimt to bed and book their place in a European final.

After keeping the hosts quiet during the first half, Postecoglou's side gave themselves clear daylight in the tie after the restart, with Dominic Solanke prodding home before Pedro Porro caught out Nikita Haikin from wide to bend into the top corner.

Spurs will now face United, who sit one place above them in the Premier League, in an all-English final, with the two Premier League rivals set to lock horns over continental silverware in Bilbao on May 21. - AFP

## Third all-English Europa League final showdown

■ BY DAMIAN SPELLMAN

**THE** Europa League trophy will be heading for England this season after Manchester United and Tottenham booked a final showdown in Bilbao on May 21.

It will be the third time two English sides have battled it out for the silverware in the competition, formerly known as the Uefa Cup.

Here's a look at the two previous occasions on which the nation provided both finalists.

**1972: Wolves 2 Tottenham 3 (on agg)** – The inaugural Uefa Cup final saw the teams which had finished fourth and third in the First Division a season earlier go head to head over two legs in what proved to be a tight affair.

Spurs boss Bill Nicholson had a star-studded squad at his disposal with World Cup winner Martin Peters, Pat Jennings, Joe Kinnear, Alan Mullery, Mike England, Martin Chivers and Alan Gilzean starting both games.

The north London club emerged from their trip to Molineux on May 3 with a priceless 2-1 advantage courtesy of England striker Chivers' second-half double – a header and a later piledriver – with Jim McCalliog replying in a game refereed by Azerbaijan's Tofiq Bahramov, the "Russian linesman" who awarded England's controversial third goal in the 1966 World Cup final.

But it was skipper Mullery whose header from a Peters freekick at White Hart Lane ultimately secured victory, with Dave Wagstaffe's equaliser handing the visitors a 1-1 draw on the night, but nothing more.

**2018: Chelsea 4 Arsenal 1** – With the Europa League by now long established, Maurizio Sarri's Chelsea and Unai Emery's Arsenal met at Baku's Olympic Stadium to battle it out for European glory.

Emery headed for Azerbaijan with an astonishing record in the competition – he had lifted the trophy in three successive seasons during his spell at Sevilla and would go on to win it again with Villarreal – but it was Chelsea's Belgian superstar Eden Hazard who left his mark on the game.

In his final appearance before leaving for Real Madrid, Hazard scored his side's third and fourth goals after Olivier Giroud and Pedro had put them 2-0 ahead, and although Alex Iwobi had pulled one back between the Belgium international's 65th-minute penalty and his second, the die was cast.

Within weeks, Italian Sarri had left Chelsea to take over at Juventus, while current Aston Villa boss Emery was sacked by the Gunners in the November of the same year and the club's wait for a first European trophy since their 1994 Cup Winners' Cup success is ongoing. - The Independent

## 6 ENGLISH TEAMS TO PLAY IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

**THERE** will be six English teams in next season's Champions League after Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur made it through to the Europa League final.

The Premier League started the season with four Champions League qualification spots, but a fifth was added due to the overall performance of English teams in this season's European competitions.

United and Tottenham are not in a position to qualify for the Champions League through their Premier League standing, with United 15th in the table and Tottenham 16th, so an additional spot will be created for the Europa League winners.

That will be added to the five existing Champions League qualification berths: newly crowned champions Liverpool have already claimed one, with Arsenal realistically requiring one win in their final three games to get over the line.

The remaining three spots will come down to a fight between Newcastle United, Manchester City, Chelsea, Nottingham Forest and Aston Villa, with three fixtures left this season and four points between them.

The team who finishes sixth in the Premier League will qualify for the Europa League and the team who finishes seventh will go to the Europa Conference League. Bournemouth, Brentford, Brighton and Fulham are in contention for those places.

However, if Manchester City finish in the top-five and beat Crystal Palace to win the FA Cup, six and seventh will go to Europa League and eighth will get Conference League.

It means there will be nine English teams involved in European competitions next season, almost half of the Premier League. - The Independent

## Blues ease into Conf. League final

**CHELSEA** will face Real Betis in the final of the Conference League after a 1-0 win over Swedish side Djurgarden yesterday sealed a 5-1 aggregate victory in their last-four tie.

Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall struck the only goal at Stamford Bridge late in the first half on a night 16-year-old Reggie Walsh became the youngest player to start a European game for Chelsea.

The Blues can become the first club to win all three of Uefa's current competitions if they beat Betis in Wroclaw on May 28.

"Very happy, the job is done tonight and now we have almost 20 days to prepare for this final and hopefully we can win this trophy," Chelsea boss Enzo Maresca told TNT Sports.

Chelsea haven't won a major trophy since the 2021 Champions League, but captain Reece James believes the club are heading back towards the top after a challenging period.

"We're in another final but it is probably something we expected coming into the game and we expect to win the competition as well. Winning the trophy would be a huge achievement," said James.

"We are definitely moving in the right direction. We're knocking on the door for Champions League next season, the table is tight and I have no doubts.

"We had a good result against Liverpool and hopefully we can keep momentum going and finish the season strongly."

Defender Marc Cucurella was the only player retained from the team that beat champions Liverpool in the Premier League last weekend as Maresca made sweeping changes to his line-up with an eye on Sunday's crucial game at Newcastle.

The Italian has been criticised for his cautious tactics but he has fifth-placed Chelsea on course to qualify for the Champions League via a top-five finish in England.

Teenage midfielder Walsh made his debut off the bench in the 4-1 win in Stockholm a week ago as Chelsea seized control of the tie, but that result didn't deter some 6,000 Djurgarden fans from making the trip to London for the second leg. - AFP



Djurgardens' Daniel Stenstrom (left) in action with Chelsea's Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall yesterday. - AFP/PIC

## Blades take control of Championship playoff semifinal

**SHEFFIELD UNITED** are within touching distance of a place in the Championship play-off final after powering to a 3-0 win against 10-man Bristol City yesterday.

Chris Wilder's side missed out to Leeds and Burnley in the race for automatic promotion to the Premier League after finishing third.

But the Blades are back on course to return to the top flight after a one-year absence thanks to their dynamic semifinal first leg display at Ashton Gate.

Harrison Burrows gave United the lead from

the penalty spot just before the break and substitutes Andre Brooks and Callum O'Hare struck in the closing stages.

United will be expected to finish the job in the second leg at Bramall Lane on Monday, while Coventry host Sunderland in the other semifinal first leg overnight.

The defining moment came in first half stoppage time as Rob Dickie was sent off for hauling down Kieffer Moore as the striker moved clear on goal.

Burrows converted a confident spot-kick, with

Brooks and O'Hare scoring in the space of six minutes to leave United fans dreaming of a trip to Wembley for the final.

"A really professional performance, everybody played their part. I saw a glint in the eyes after the Burnley game, really focused, ready for this,"

Sheffield United manager Chris Wilder told BBC Radio Sheffield.

"I'm delighted that we've got a three goal lead, but there's still a lot of work to go into this. There must be a full house at Bramall Lane for this team."

- AFP/Agencies



**NATIONAL** squash player Aifa Azman knows the odds are stacked against her as she faces world No. 4 Olivia Weaver in the opening round of the 2024-2025 World Championships in Chicago, the United States, today.

However, the 23-year-old remains unfazed despite this being a proverbial "David vs Goliath" scenario.

Even though their head-to-head record is 2-0 in favour of Weaver, world No. 38 Aifa is all fired up and ready to fight to the finish.

"I wish I had a better draw but it is what it is. It will be interesting to see

## Aifa ready to give her all against Weaver

how I will do against the world number four (Weaver) in my first round (match).

"Hopefully, I get to play my best squash and give her a tough time," she told *Bernama*.

On her preparation for the world meet, Aifa said she has been focusing on her length game and building the patience needed to stay in longer rallies, aiming to cut down on

unnecessary attacking plays.

After wrapping up the Bermuda Open 2025 tournament in Devonshire last week, the 23-year-old opted to travel early to Chicago.

With no jet lag and ample time to adjust, the Kedahan said the early move had helped her fine-tune her game and adapt to the local court conditions.

Aifa also said that she has put

behind her the semifinal loss to her sister, Aira, at the Bermuda Open, where she went down 11-4, 4-11, 8-11, 6-11 in a 31-minute clash.

She said the loss to the world No. 26 has fuelled her motivation to perform better in Chicago.

"As an athlete, I don't think about it too much and just move on to what's next. I've got to stay positive," she said.

Apart from Aifa and Aira, the other

national women's players who will be competing in Chicago are world No. 9 S. Sivasangari, world No. 19 Rachel Arnold and world No. 48 Noor Ainaa Amani Ampandi.

The Malaysian men's challenge will be led by world No. 10 Ng Eain Yow and world No. 72 Sanjay Jeeva. Former world No. 1 and national squash legend Datuk Nicol Ann David is the last Malaysian to lift the world title, having won it a record eight times.

The World Championships began yesterday and will run until May 17. – *Bernama*

### RESULTS

**EUROPA LEAGUE** (Semifinals, second leg): **Bodo/Glimt 0 Tottenham 2** (Solanke 63, Porro 69) – **Tottenham win 5-1 on agg; Manchester United 4** (Mount 72, 90+1, Casemiro 80, Hojlund 85) **Athletic Bilbao 1** (Jaureguizar 31) – **Man United win 7-1 on agg.**

**CONFERENCE LEAGUE** (Semifinals, second leg): **Florentina 2** (Gosens 34, 42) **Real Betis 2** (Antony 30, Ezkualzuola 97) **aet** – **Real Betis win 4-3 on agg; Chelsea 1** (Dewsbury-Hall 38) **Djurgarden 0** – **Chelsea win 5-1 on agg.**

**ENGLISH CHAMPIONSHIP PLAYOFF** (Semifinal, 1st leg): **Bristol City 0 Sheffield United 3.**

## Pakistan withdraws from Asian Sepak Takraw Cup

**PAKISTAN** has unexpectedly withdrawn from the 2025 Asian Sepak Takraw Cup, scheduled to begin today at Titiwangsa Stadium here, citing security concerns following rising tensions with neighbouring India.

Asian Sepak Takraw Federation (Astaf) president Datuk Abdul Halim Kader confirmed the withdrawal, saying that Pakistan Sepak Takraw Federation (PSF) secretary-general Noushad Ahmed Khan officially notified the tournament's Joint Organising Committee on Wednesday.

"Noushad informed me and Datuk Mohd Sumali Reduan, who is co-chairman of the committee and president of the Malaysian Sepak Takraw Association (PSM), that the withdrawal was also prompted by the closure of Islamabad International Airport due to fears of Indian military strikes," he said in a statement yesterday.

Six Pakistani players – Sarfaraz Rehman, Muhammad Khalid, Muhammad Shahroze Alvi, Muhammad Shahid, Aman Kumar Oad, and Aqeel Ahmed – along with team manager Akhtar Ali and coach Dileep Kumar Oad, were originally set to depart for Kuala Lumpur last night.

Abdul Halim explained that the tournament organisers accepted Pakistan's force majeure withdrawal, despite their participation being confirmed at the draw ceremony on April 21 at the World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur.

According to tournament rules, any team withdrawing after the draw will be deemed to have lost by default (walkover), and all teams scheduled to face Pakistan will be awarded 2-0 wins (15-0, 15-0) in both the quadrant and regu events.

Pakistan had been drawn in Group A of the quadrant event alongside Vietnam, Singapore, and South Korea, while in the regu category, they were placed in Group C with Vietnam, China, and Japan. – *Bernama*

**N**ATIONAL badminton legend Datuk Rashid Sidek has taken a swipe at a small group of national shuttlers for not walking the talk despite their proclamations of wanting to become world champions or be among the top 10 in world ranking.

Describing this group of shuttlers as "all talk but no action", he also lambasted them for their half-hearted efforts during training sessions.

"I'm not saying that the players are molly-coddled now, but what is their goal?" he said when met after receiving the recognition as a Sports Icon at the Universiti Malaya Sports Award Night on Wednesday.

But it is not all gloom and doom though as Rashid is optimistic that the national badminton squad can serve up a tough fight in the 2026 Thomas Cup.

To achieve that, however, he said the team must come up with the right strategy, particularly as they currently possess three strong men's doubles pairs

## Put up or shut up!

*Rashid takes swipe at shuttlers who are 'all talk, no action'*

who can contribute points.

"Definitely can (put up a strong fight in the Thomas Cup). We now have three solid pairs. If Lee Zii Jia can get a point in men's singles, we only need one more from the likes of Justin Hoh or Leong Jun Hao.

"With the right strategy and player lineup, we have a very good chance of emerging victorious.

"For me, if we are strong in four out of the five (three singles and two doubles) match-ups, that should be enough – lose one and the other three can make up for it," he said.

Reflecting on his past successes, Rashid said the 1992 Thomas Cup squad only relied on two singles players and two doubles pairs and that was enough for them to win the prestigious Cup.

Meanwhile, Rashid expressed his gratitude to UM for recognising him with the Sports Icon award, saying it will continue to drive him to contribute to the development of badminton in the country.

"I will continue to be involved in the sport and, for now, as a coach. All the experience I have gained, I will share with the players," he said. – *Bernama*



National badminton players undergoing a training session in preparation for the Super 500 Championship, Toyota Thailand Open 2025 at the Malaysian Badminton Academy in Bukit Kiara yesterday. – *BERNAMA*

## Mixed doubles pairs to miss Thailand Open

**TWO** national mixed doubles pairs – Toh Ee Wei-Loo Bing Kun and Chen Tang Jie-Chan Wen Tse – won't be competing in the May 13-18 Thailand Open, said mixed doubles head coach Nova Widianto.

Nova said the decision was made to ease their burden of having to compete in three back-to-back tournaments – this week's Taiwan Open, the Thailand Open and the Malaysia Masters (May 20-25).

He, however, confirmed that the two pairs will compete in the Malaysia Masters.

"They chose not to compete in the Thailand Open and to play in the Malaysia Masters," he told reporters after the national team's training session at Akademi Badminton Malaysia (ABM) yesterday.

In March, the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) confirmed that Tang Jie-Ee Wei had been temporarily split following proposals from the coaching panel, including (national doubles coaching director) Remy (Mainaky) and Nova, during the recent performance committee meeting.

Tensions between the pair reportedly began during the Paris 2024 Olympics, where they were eliminated in the quarterfinals after losing 19-21, 14-21 to South Korea's Kim Won Ho-Jeong Na Eun.

As such, the Ee Wei-Bing Kun and Tang Jie-Wen Tse partnerships were forged temporarily and fielded for the Taiwan Open, Thailand Open and Malaysia Masters.

In April, BAM, however, announced that Tang Jie and Ee Wei would resume their partnership, starting with the Singapore Open (May 27-June 1) following a request from both players and after extensive discussions between them and the coaching panel. – *Bernama*

## Jonassen to give Tze Yong time to get up to speed

**NATIONAL** singles coaching director Kenneth Jonassen does not want to put any pressure on men's singles shuttler Ng Tze Yong, who only recently returned to international competition after a long injury layoff.

Kenneth said Tze Yong's main focus is not about producing immediate results but steadily working his way back to full fitness.

He said that the Johor-born shuttler's return is part of a gradual process, with the primary goal of regaining rhythm and consistency after his lengthy absence.

"Looking at the bigger picture, coming off the Badminton Asia Championships (BAC) and now competing in the Taiwan Open, it has been a good progression. It has always been seen as a long-

term matter for us.

"We are taking it tournament by tournament, learning new things and slowly getting back into the tournament groove, so to speak.

"I was really happy to see him go all out for three full games this time (in the Taiwan Open on Wednesday)," he told reporters after the national team's training session at Akademi Badminton Malaysia (ABM) in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

After being sidelined for over a year following back surgery, Tze Yong returned to action at the BAC in April and lost 9-21, 12-21 in 44 minutes to reigning world champion and third seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand.

On Wednesday (May 7), he suffered another early exit, going down 21-18, 18-21, 17-21 to world

No. 71 Wang Po Wei in the opening round of the ongoing Taiwan Open.

As such, Kenneth, who said the 24-year-old has shown encouraging improvement with each tournament since his comeback at the BAC, wants Tze Yong to enjoy himself at every tournament as he works towards regaining his form.

"I saw clear progression compared to his first tournament. That's the key in this process. Of course, we want him back at his best, but that takes time and I'm okay with that.

"The main focus is to learn from each tournament, evaluate what we need to work on in training, and build from there, in line with the long-term plan we have for him. So, we don't want to put too much pressure on him," he said. – *Bernama*





# theSun Sports

SATURDAY | MAY 10, 2025

Read theSun iPaper at [www.thesun.my](http://www.thesun.my)  
 Free access to iPaper PDF Download  
 or download theSun app from the App Store or Google Play™.

SCAN ME

## 'We deserve it'

Amorim believes fighting spirit carried Man Utd to Europa League final

**RUBEN AMORIM** felt Manchester United's fighting spirit helped mask their weaknesses as Mason Mount inspired a comeback victory against Athletic Bilbao to help set up an "all or nothing" Europa League final against Tottenham.

The Red Devils overcame a slow start to win 3-0 at a stunned San Mames and did so again having stuttered in yesterday's semifinal second leg at Old Trafford, where Mikel Jaureguizar brilliantly put Ernesto Valverde's visitors ahead.

Substitute Mount settled nerves in the 72nd minute with a fantastic turn and finish, with Casemiro and Rasmus Hojlund scoring before the United midfielder wrapped up a 4-1 victory with a stunning strike from distance.

The 7-1 aggregate semifinal triumph flattered the Red Devils, who will now return to Bilbao to take on fellow Premier League strugglers Spurs in an mouthwatering all-English final on May 21.

"It was a good result," United head coach Amorim said. "I think if you look at both games it was so much tougher than if you look just to the result.

"We have so many (areas of) weakness and you can understand that in the game, but we are fighting and we managed to pass (through). I think we deserve, if you look at two games, to be in the final."

The Europa League final sees the sides 15th and 16th in the Premier League standings go head to head, offering both the chance to save their seasons with silverware and Champions League qualification.

Spurs have already beaten United three times this term and Amorim is hoping it will be fourth time lucky.

"Every game has its history," Amorim said. "So, we lost the three last games, we can win this one.

"So, if you look at the odds, we are closer to win than to lose. Both teams are going to play like all or nothing in this kind of game. It's quite similar.

"The position of

Manchester United display a Tifo (Banner) in the stands before the match against Athletic Bilbao yesterday. - REUTERS/SPIC



Casemiro

Rasmus Hojlund

Mason Mount

the coach is quite similar. I know that Ange (Postecoglou) has one more year. It is different the context, but we are struggling, both of us.

"So, I don't know what is going to happen - that is a good thing and a bad thing with this team. I never know. I will try to prepare the game, but I think we are improving.

"If we have more solutions... and you can see that we can take (Alejandro) Garnacho that gives us the speed the transition for Amad (Diallo), and to have that possibility can help us to win games.

"Mason Mount, Kobbie Mainoo, all these players we can choose from these players, and to prepare a final in a better way.

"We have to understand that it's a final. It's completely different from Premier League games."

Amorim said the belief that would come with winning the Europa League is worth more to his side than any financial gain.

"The money is not the most important thing," Amorim said. "To win a title as a coach brings a feeling, a feeling we can do good things, that we can give something to our fans.

"I agree it is not just playing Champions League next season. It is that feeling we can change things."

Yesterday was a particularly sweet evening for Mount, who has endured all manner of injury setbacks since his big-money move from Chelsea to United in July 2023.

He has been ridiculed at times for his limited involvement but finally appears to be starting to change the narrative.

Put to Amorim he had a massive smile on his face when the England international struck from distance, he said: "Not just me. If you look at the bench, that is the best thing.

"That is the best feeling as a coach when we look at the other guys on the bench, and they are so happy for Mason (Mount) because everybody in that dressing room sees Mason doing everything he can to be available.

"He's a really good player and you can see both goals are really, really good goals."

- The Independent/Agencies