



**'Safety gear essential for any water activity'**

Life jacket can make difference between life and death, says Putrajaya Fire and Rescue Department.

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# Data security fear

Proposal to use MyKad and e-wallets for targeted RON95 petrol subsidy distribution raises concern over fraud risks such as privacy breaches, apart from stumbling block posed to non-tech savvy elderly folk.

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Public concern remains a key issue over the government plan to ensure targeted RON95 subsidies. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THE SUN

## PM in Brazil for official visit, G20 Summit

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to meet Brazilian counterpart and world leaders to discuss bilateral cooperation as well as multilateral issues.

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## Understanding Gen Z at workplace

While individuals in age group may come across as rude and unprofessional, an expert says public should not be too quick to judge as they are 'wired differently'.

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# PM's Brazil visit aimed at strengthening bilateral ties

➤ Anwar in largest South American country at invitation of Brazilian president and to attend G20 Summit

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim arrived in Brazil yesterday from Lima, Peru, for an official visit and to attend the Group of 20 (G20) Summit 2024, at which Malaysia is a guest country.

Sixteen other countries, including Chile, Qatar, Egypt, Singapore, Spain, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam, are also guest countries at the summit.

The G20 consists of 19 countries and two unions, namely Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, United States, European Union and the African Union.

Anwar is here on the invitation of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. His special flight touched down at the Rio De Janeiro Galeao Air Force Base at 9.24am Malaysian time.

He was received on arrival by Lt-Col Buch Itamaraty, a representative of Galeao Air Force deputy commander and Councillor Orlando Timponi, a representative of the Brazil foreign affairs ministry.

Other officials present included Malaysia's Ambassador to Brazil Gloria Tiwet, the Malaysian embassy first secretary Muhamad Muhaimin Azmi and



Anwar with US President Joe Biden, Vietnam President Luong Cuong (top right) and South Korea President Yoon Suk Yeol during a photo session at the summit. – REUTERS/SPIC

its third secretary Anwar Umar Ruszaman.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, is being accompanied by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan and Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

The Malaysian delegation also includes Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Deputy Minister Datuk Seri Huang Tiong Sii, Energy Transition and Water Transformation Deputy Minister Akmal Nasrullah Mohd Nasir and other senior Malaysian government officials.

At the summit, Anwar will deliver statements at the "Fight Against Hunger and Poverty" and "Reform of Global Governance Institutions" sessions.

He is also scheduled to meet leaders of G20 countries to discuss bilateral and multilateral issues of mutual concern, Bernama reported.

Anwar will meet Lula da Silva to discuss bilateral cooperation, including in areas of trade and investment as well as the semiconductor industry, and to renew friendship ties between the two countries.

Rio de Janeiro is a vibrant coastal city in Brazil, renowned for its iconic beaches such as Copacabana and Ipanema, the towering 38m Christ the Redeemer statue atop Mount Corcovado and the stunning Sugarloaf Mountain, accessible by cable car.

In 2023, Brazil was Malaysia's 20th largest trading partner, 29th largest export destination and 17th largest import source.

Brazil is South America's largest country, and Malaysia's second-largest trading partner, second-largest export destination and largest import source.

## Border wall land acquisition to cost RM445m

**KOTA BHARU:** The Kelantan government has estimated that RM445.75 million would be needed for land acquisition in areas identified for the proposed construction of a border wall and buffer zone.

Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Mohd Nassuruddin Daud said the proposed security and flood control wall is crucial for the state's economy.

He said Kelantan is serious about combating smuggling activities and addressing flooding issues along the 99km stretch of Sungai Golok.

"The construction of a border wall between Kelantan and Thailand, particularly for national border security, is essential to curb cross-border crimes," he said at an engagement session on the 13th Malaysia Plan at Kompleks Kota Darulnaim yesterday.

On Saturday, Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the National Security Council would study the proposal for the border wall. – Bernama

## Apec lauded for addressing Palestinian issue

**LIMA (PERU):** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said it was encouraging to see the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec), which is predominantly an economy and trade forum, address the atrocities against Palestinians.

He said he was particularly encouraged as he personally attended one of the first few sessions of Apec that addressed some of the calamities of the world.

"And this is one of the few Apec sessions that addressed the clear atrocities inflicted upon the people of Gaza, which we sometimes choose to ignore against the true spirit of humanity."

He was speaking during the Apec Economic Leaders' Retreat here. – Bernama

## Provisions in Budget 2025 for children with disabilities

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Allocations under Budget 2025 demonstrate the commitment of the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry in advocating the needs of children with disabilities, said its minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri.

She said the government is committed to ensuring the welfare of children with disabilities.

"They need to be given attention and treated fairly, this is

our role. If we look at the 2025 budget, we can see provisions for the autism community, which were not included before.

"We are very happy that there has been an improvement compared with before. *Insyah Allah*, we may also look into the needs of other conditions, including rare diseases," she said after attending the Spastic Fun Run 29th Annual Charity Walk-Jog-Wheel-A-Thon at

Dataran Merdeka yesterday.

The event drew 2,000 participants, including 300 persons with disabilities (PwD).

In her speech earlier, she said more than 740,000 PwD have been registered with the Social Welfare Department as of October 31, compared with 633,653 registered in 2023.

"I am pleased to reveal that during the tabling of the 2025

budget, a total of RM200 million has been allocated to extend the special needs student allowance of RM150 per month, which will benefit more than 100,000 PwD students across Malaysia.

"It was also announced that RM5 million will be allocated to develop an autism service centre.

"Our goal is to continue increasing these numbers and gather more accurate data. I would

like to encourage everyone to help us raise awareness and inspire every PwD to register with the department to ensure that no one is left behind, especially in receiving assistance from our ministry."

Nancy said the ministry has approved more than RM412,632 for organisations supporting the spastic and physically disabled community nationwide. – Bernama

## No need to issue new maritime boundary map: Minister

**JOHOR BAHRU:** Malaysia sees no need to issue a new maritime boundary map and remains steadfast in defending the nation's sovereign territories, said Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin.

He said Malaysia prioritises diplomacy, engaging in discussions and negotiations to address challenges arising from overlapping claims.

"Following the Philippines' release of its new map, I believe Malaysia's decision to issue a new one depends on whether changes to the current map are warranted.

"Our map remains unchanged. It is not us altering boundaries – it is them (the Philippines) who periodically adjust theirs. We don't make changes, as doing so implies incorporating areas belonging to others. Our map

stays as it is, and we will continue to defend our territories and sovereignty," he said after the *Wakalah Zakat* handover ceremony by Boustead Petroleum Marketing Sdn Bhd at Masjid Al-Muhajirin in Masai yesterday.

He was responding to a question on whether Malaysia should issue a new maritime boundary map in light of the Philippines' two new maritime

laws, which infringe on Sabah's maritime borders.

Mohamed Khaled said the navy, air force and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency continuously conduct integrated monitoring through a show of presence to assert and protect the nation's sovereignty.

He said protests under established international laws would be lodged if foreign vessels are

detected entering Malaysia's territorial waters.

"We also implement maritime domain awareness, meaning we monitor and know when other vessels enter into our sovereign waters."

Foreign Deputy Minister Datuk Mohamad Alamin said a protest note has been sent to the Philippines on its new maritime laws. – Bernama

# Data security concerns over petrol subsidy plan

➤ Consumers risk making payments to unverified merchants and exposure of private details: Expert

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI  
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**PETALING JAYA:** While the government plan to use MyKad and e-wallets for RON95 petrol subsidies aims to ease the public's burden and address subsidy leakage and smuggling, data security and hacking remain a serious concern.

Universiti Teknologi Mara Institute of Transport head of legal and quality Dr Siti Ayu Jalil said although the details and mechanism of the plan are unclear, worries have arisen over the potential risks to data security and privacy.

"Consumers face heightened security and fraud risks, such as making payments to unverified merchants, exposure of private details or potential data breaches. Additionally, if a phone is stolen, a thief could gain access to the e-wallet."

On Nov 12, Deputy Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan said the subsidy retargeting system, estimated at around RM12 billion for 85% of the population, is expected to be finalised before its rollout in mid-2025.

He said the targeted subsidy approach for RON95 would follow similar principles used for electricity and diesel subsidies, involving a tiered pricing system.

"The main objective is not to burden the public but to curb subsidy leakage and

smuggling, which have primarily benefited foreign nationals and businesses."

However, Siti Ayu said if robust cybersecurity measures are not implemented, data could be vulnerable to unauthorised access, leading to identity theft, financial fraud or misuse of personal information.

She said ensuring data encryption, regular system audits and secure authentication methods are critical to safeguarding user information.

"The government and financial institutions must educate the public and promote safe digital payments. They must be transparent about how users' data are being used to guarantee the security and reliability of the subsidy distribution payment system."

She said using MyKad and e-wallets as the mechanism to distribute RON95 may seem handy for the younger generation who are more familiar with digital tools, but it may not be user-friendly for the elderly.

She added that this group may be cautious about using digital payment systems, given their unfamiliarity with such technology.

"According to chief statistician Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Uzir Mahidin, those aged 60 and above represent 11.6% or 3.9 million of the population.

"Bear in mind that this vulnerable group often has the utmost need for subsidies and the government should be sensitive and cater

to their needs, instead of putting obstacles in their way."

Siti Ayu said the impact of fuel affordability for rural populations with limited digital infrastructure is something to worry about.

She said it could hinder their ability to benefit from the proposed subsidy mechanism, potentially worsening inequalities between urban and rural areas.

"To address these issues, the government must prioritise enhancing digital infrastructure in underserved areas before rolling out the system.

"Creating awareness and being proactive in educating and providing information to rural folks is vital while transparency is equally crucial to building trust among rural populations."

She said the government should address issues about foreign nationals and businesses misusing subsidies meant for Malaysians.

She also said the commercial sector, non-citizens and illegal petrol smuggling account for about 40% of petrol consumption, so it is best to suggest addressing these illegal issues before considering a subsidy redistribution system.

"It is unfair to target individual citizens to resolve the problem. A local study has proposed a flexible fuel subsidy distribution model known as FlexFuel, which could be tailored based on vehicle type, income group and tax residency.

"This approach would ensure that only eligible citizens benefit from the scheme, prevent foreigners from accessing subsidised petrol, minimise subsidy abuse, maintain the country's long-term financial stability and indirectly reduce fuel consumption."

## Clean air scheme to be applied next year

**BAKU (AZERBAIJAN):** The enhanced National Clean Air Action Plan is expected to be implemented next year.

Environment Department deputy director-general (Operations) Dr Norhazni Mat Sari said the department is finalising a draft plan before presenting it to Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad in January.

"This plan would serve as a guide for stakeholders to play their roles in striving towards a healthier environment," she said on Saturday at the Malaysia Pavilion in conjunction with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties.

She said the plan aligns with the conference theme of "In Solidarity for a Green World".

She also said integrated collaboration with Asean and the international community is essential to ensure Malaysia and the region achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, with the support of sustainable investment and green technology to reduce the impact of pollution.

She added that through the department, the government has taken several measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change for the well-being of the people and the country's sustainable progress.

One of the department's key initiatives is the enforcement of the Environmental Quality Act 1974, which covers several aspects, such as the control of air, water, noise and waste pollution.

She said the prohibition of open burning under Section 29A of the Act aims to prevent local haze while enforcement efforts have shown the effectiveness of this law as the number of fines issued has decreased.

At the international level, she said Malaysia is committed to implementing the Montreal Protocol, which phases out the use of ozone-depleting substances. — Bernama

## Varsity student credits success to Quran

**PUTRAJAYA:** Memorising the *Quran* before working on assignments has been the key to success for Universiti Tenaga Nasional (Uniten) graduate Muhammad Hasif Zikry Mohd Ridzwan, who was honoured with the Chancellor's Gold Award on Saturday.

The award was presented by Penang Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak, who is also the university chancellor, during Uniten's 26th convocation, which was held over two days.

After the ceremony, the 22-year-old said he made it a daily routine to memorise the *Quran* for about an hour, or two pages, before tackling tasks given by his lecturers.

"Typically, after memorising the *Quran*, I would work on the assignments. I have noticed that after doing so, everything seems to fall into place more easily," said the graduate of the Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (Software Engineering) (Honours) programme.

Muhammad Hasif, who is also a *huffaz* student at Uniten, said another important aspect of university life that students should focus on is time management. — Bernama



### HAPPY EVENT

... Girl Guides Association president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (centre) accompanied by Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh at the 108th anniversary celebration of the association and launch of a cookie fundraising initiative in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — BERNAMAPIC

## Japan trade organisation expresses trust in M'sia as Asean Chair

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia is in a position to demonstrate leadership in Asean as the country assumes its chairmanship role next year.

Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro) Kuala Lumpur managing director Koichi Takano said there are expectations and trust in Malaysia's leadership.

"The Asean Community Vision 2045, which (outlines) the region's future direction, is expected to be adopted in Malaysia at the Asean Summit next year."

He said the country is gaining attention as a hub for access to the region and third-country markets.

He added that there is a recent trend of increasing Japanese investments in Malaysia, especially in the retail sector.

"Bookstores, drugstores, major furniture companies and secondhand goods stores are expanding their store networks in Malaysia."

He added that several acquisition cases have also been reported in the digital transformation field.

"Due to rising costs and stricter visa acquisition procedures in some other Asean countries, there is a movement to establish regional headquarters in Malaysia (as companies) evaluate the advantages of Malaysia's business environment."

Takano said Japanese investments would focus on carbon neutrality, health and medical care, digital, data centres and *halal* industry hubs.

Japan was the third leading source of foreign direct investment flows into Malaysia last year, with RM5.5 billion

registered, a significant portion of which was in the manufacturing sector, according to the Statistics Department.

He said as an adviser to the Federation of Japanese Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Asean (FJCCIA), Jetro would work with the Japanese Chamber of Trade and Industry Malaysia (Jactim) to connect Asean and Japanese companies to improve the business environment.

Jactim president Takero Sawamura said as a member of FJCCIA, Jactim

would continue to work towards realising the Asean community vision, strengthening Japan-Asean relations and enhancing the business environment through dialogue with the Asean secretary-general and other means.

"I believe that a major theme going forward would be whether the private sector can promote more steady and sustainable growth, so it is necessary to strengthen the relationship between Japan and Asean." — Bernama

# Comprehending Gen Z perspective on work, ethics

BY DEEPALAKSHMI MANICKAM  
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**PETALING JAYA:** When a Gen Z employee (born between 1997 and 2012) recently resigned via WhatsApp with a brief message saying: "Sorry and bye", it reignited a long-standing debate that individuals of the generation are rude and unprofessional.

However, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia sociology and anthropology professor Dr Novel Lyndon said the public should not be too quick to pass judgement as Gen Z employees "are technologically more advanced and wired differently".

"While they may show a lack of commitment and dedication to their jobs and might come across as selfish or even disrespectful, we must address these issues in light of the generational and societal influences on them."

He added that their behaviour results from attitudes shaped by the digital world and may also reflect the failure of the education system and parental roles.

"I believe that today's postmodern world, which emphasises freedom and individualism, has had a significant impact on Gen Z's perspective on work. Their generation is very vulnerable and influenced by

Individuals of age group have *bona fide* preference for fast, informal communication styles sometimes misconstrued as disrespectful

technology, which seems to dictate how they behave."

Lyndon also suggested that some Gen Z employees may face problems stemming from a lack of alignment between their jobs and personal identities, and that understanding the "soul" or interests of young employees will point to why some of them do not fully commit to their jobs.

"Perhaps the work is incompatible with their real interests or the salary offered isn't commensurate with their work. Whichever it may be, let me stress that employers should also play a part in bridging the generational gap."

He suggested that employers engage and communicate directly with Gen Z employees to understand their perspectives and address misunderstandings, as there needs to be worker engagement.

Lyndon said understanding the social identity and technological influences on Gen Z is key to fostering a more harmonious and

productive workplace.

Gen Z employee Kuvineshwaren Nedunjelian, 24, believes mutual respect, transparency and accountability highlight professionalism.

"It's not about being rigid but respecting the role and people involved," he said.

He added that combining a formal resignation notice with a one-to-one conversation or through a video call is the ideal way to resign.

"It is more professional and allows for the personal touch, which shows respect for the employer."

However, Kuvineshwaren emphasised that Gen Z values efficiency over formality and views professionalism as being accountable and respecting another's time.

While he is open to digital communication methods, he believes the older generation might find it too casual.

Like many of his peers, he believes that Gen Z is often misunderstood by

older colleagues, who interpret a direct approach to resignation via channels like WhatsApp as being disrespectful.

"Our approach isn't about being rude or disrespectful. We just prefer faster, sometimes less formal ways of communicating," he said.

Nur Izzati Mohd Isrook, 23, said the most comfortable way to resign is by informing the employer through the easiest and most direct method.

"We need to leave on a good note, but we don't feel that long, formal face-to-face meetings are necessary for resignations unless the job was really important to us."

She said professionalism is about respect, transparency and meeting expectations, and it is meaningless to follow rigid formalities if it is inefficient.

Thivines Pathmanaban, 22, sees value in traditional methods and ethics in submitting a resignation letter as it is the right approach.

"Employers need formal documentation to verify an employee's resignation and without it, the company could face legal challenges."

"Maintaining clear, formal documentation helps set boundaries between personal and professional relationships because people we work with are colleagues who deserve to be respected."

## Royal presence at Relay For Life event

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Raja Permaisuri of Perak Tuanku Zara Salim attended the Relay For Life (RFL) Malaysia 2024 event at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa yesterday morning.

The annual event, organised by the National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM), attracted over 500 participants, including cancer survivors.

NCSM managing director Dr M. Muralitharan and president Datuk Dr S. Saunthari were also present.

Muralitharan announced that this year's RFL would take place at three locations, starting at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa on Nov 16 to 17, followed by Manipal University College in Malacca on Nov 30 and Dec 1 and concluding at Padang Polo in Ipoh, Perak on Dec 7 to 8.

He said the event aims to inspire cancer patients and survivors to continue their fight while raising public awareness about the disease.

"This event has become a symbol of hope and resilience in the fight against cancer," he said during his welcoming speech. — Bernama

## Perak, Johor aerobic teams dance to victory

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A combination of steely determination and creativity by students from Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP) Seri Iskandar propelled Perak to victory in the adult category (18 years and above) at the National Aerobic Dance Competition yesterday.

Performing under the banner of Kelab Interbeatz, the dancers dazzled the audience with their vibrant attire – yellow, black and white to represent the Perak flag – and an electrifying routine.

Their efforts earned them 12.2 points and the top spot, ahead of Perlis (11.6 points) and Sarawak (11.3 points) at the Datum Jelatek Shopping Centre in Ampang.

Perak coach Aminuddin Razif Arman, 20, revealed that the team began intensive training after the conclusion of the 2024 Higher Education Institution Games in September.

In the teenage category (Under-17), Johor claimed the title with 12.6 points, beating Pahang (11.9 points) and Malacca (11.8 points), which clinched second and third place respectively. — Bernama

## Veteran composer S. Atan laid to rest

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Renowned composer Datuk S. Atan was laid to rest at the Sungai Kantan Muslim Cemetery in Kajang at 11am yesterday.

Earlier, his remains were taken to Masjid Jamek Pekan Kajang for funeral prayers at about 9am.

Over 100 people, including family members, relatives, friends and fellow artists, were present to pay their last respects.

S. Atan, whose real name was Hashim Said, died at the age of 75 at his residence in Taman Bukit Kajang Baru in Selangor due to a lung infection.

He was renowned for his catchy *Melayu Deli* songs, which were recorded by popular singers such as the late Datuk Sharifah Aini, the late Datuk Sudirman Arshad, Noor Kumalasari, Herman Tino and Zaleha Hamid. — Bernama



**INTEREST AND INTRIGUE ...** A child exploring with wonder an exhibit during a science event at Setia City Mall in Shah Alam yesterday. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

## 'Civil servants productivity key to success of remuneration system'

**PUTRAJAYA:** The productivity of civil servants is crucial to the successful implementation of the Public Service Remuneration System that will come into effect on Dec 1, said Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar.

He emphasised that salary increases under the initiative must be matched by improved work quality, commitment and dedication from civil servants.

"When we talk about productivity,

civil servants must give more. You have to serve better, you have to deliver more to the government," he said in a special interview marking his 100th day as the 16th chief secretary tomorrow.

Shamsul Azri said the system focuses not only on the welfare and well-being of civil servants but also on motivating them to improve service delivery efficiency.

He explained that measures such as salary increases, job rotation,

rationalisation of positions and reducing functional overlaps between departments aim to enhance the structure and governance of the civil service.

"This ensures that every employee has opportunities to develop skills and adapts to various fields," he said.

When asked about productivity weaknesses among some civil servants, he underscored the importance of adopting a customer-oriented mindset to better

understand the needs of the public.

"We do not position ourselves as customers. When we fail to do so, we tend to serve the public without full commitment. We must give the best to the people," he said.

He previously announced a focus on five "Reform Achievement Areas" (RAA), supported by 20 strategies under his Public Service Reform Agenda.

The five RAA are values and governance adoption, human capital

development, organisational development, service delivery and strengthening public-private synergy.

"I will also employ the 'Associated and Integrated' strategy approach to realise the public service reform agenda. 'Associated' emphasises a whole-of-nation concept involving the private sector, while 'Integrated' represents a whole-of-government concept, fostering integration between government departments," he added. — Bernama

# Appeals court to **decide** on Bung Moktar, wife's graft case

➤ Three-judge panel to deliver verdict on prosecution's appeal against acquittal over bribery charges

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Court of Appeal will announce its decision today on the prosecution's appeal against the acquittal of Kinabatangan MP Datuk Seri Bung Moktar Radin and his wife Datin Seri Zizie Izzette Abdul Samad on three corruption charges involving RM2.8 million.

The decision is set to be delivered at 9am by a three-judge panel comprising Justices Datuk Ahmad Zaidi Ibrahim, Datuk Mohamed Zaini Mazlan and Datuk Noorin Badaruddin.

If the court rules in favour of the prosecution, the case will return to the sessions court for the couple to defend themselves against the charges.

Alternatively, if the panel upholds the acquittal, the couple will remain cleared of the charges.

The prosecution filed its appeal on Sept 18, 2023, following High Court Judge Datuk Azhar Abdul Hamid's decision on Sept 7, 2023 to acquit the couple.

The High Court had allowed a review of the Sessions Court's earlier ruling, made on Sept 2, 2022, which required them to defend themselves.

In the first charge, Bung Moktar, 65, was accused of accepting a RM2.2 million bribe from Public Mutual Berhad investment agent Madhi Abdul Hamid via his wife, Zizie Izzette.

The alleged bribe was said to secure approval from the then finance minister II for Felcra Berhad to invest RM150 million in Public Mutual's unit trust products.

The offence allegedly occurred at Public Bank Berhad, Taman Melawati Branch, Jalan Bandar 12 in Taman Melawati, between 12.30pm and 5pm on June 12, 2015.

The second charge accuses Bung Moktar of accepting a RM262,500 bribe from the same agent through a Public Islamic Treasures Growth Fund account registered under Zizie Izzette's name for the same purpose.

In the third charge, Bung Moktar is alleged to have accepted RM337,500 from another Public Mutual Berhad investment agent Norhaili Ahmad Mokhtar through a Public Itikal Sequel Fund account registered under Zizie Izzette's name, Bernama reported.

Both incidents allegedly occurred at the same location on June 19, 2015 at 12.16pm

and 12.28pm, respectively.

The charges were filed under Subsection 17(a) of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 and are punishable under Section 24(1) of the same Act upon conviction.

The penalties include a jail term of up to 20 years and a fine of either RM10,000 or five times the value of the bribe, whichever is higher.

Zizie Izzette, 46, an actress, has pleaded not guilty to three counts of abetting her husband under Section 28(1)(c) of the MACC Act, which carries similar penalties.



**LARGER THAN LIFE ...** Visitors pose with a 'Giant Panda' at the Pavilion Mall in Kuala Lumpur. — ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

## RM374,000 in compounds for vehicle emission violations

**BUTTERWORTH:** The Penang Department of Environment has issued 187 compounds involving RM374,000 for various emission-related offences during statewide operations conducted between January and Saturday.

Its director Norazizi Adinan said 57 operations were carried out during this period, focusing on emissions from diesel and petrol-powered vehicles, as well as noise and gas emissions from motorcycles.

"These operations aim to enhance enforcement and inspections of motor vehicles to ensure compliance with emission standards and prevent environmental

pollution," he said during the national-level Motor Vehicle Operation (*Ops Gerak*) held in conjunction with World Ozone Day 2024 on Saturday night.

The operation, held in collaboration with the police, Road Transport Department (RTD), National Anti-Drug Agency (AADK), Immigration Department, PLUS Malaysia Berhad and the Seberang Perai City Council, took place at the Penang Bridge Toll Plaza involving 100 officers and enforcement personnel.

Norazizi said the operation, conducted at four key locations across the state since

Wednesday, focused on motorcycle noise levels and emissions from commercial vehicles.

"During *Ops Gerak*, 553 vehicles were inspected, leading to 17 fines totalling RM34,000, issuance of 35 Section 48A notices for vehicle retesting and four prohibition orders," he said, adding that most penalised commercial vehicles were factory buses emitting smoke above the permitted density.

Additionally, police carried out 257 inspections and issued 28 summonses.

RTD issued 157 summonses and seized five vehicles, while AADK detained nine individuals who tested positive for drugs. — Bernama

## Technician duped in investment scheme

**JOHOR BAHRU:** A technician working for an oil exploration company has reportedly lost RM908,305 to an online investment scam in August, Johor police chief Datuk M. Kumar said.

While working in Iraq, the victim received a WhatsApp message from an individual promoting an investment scheme that promised high returns within an hour.

Tempted by the offer, the victim downloaded a mobile application as instructed and registered for the scheme.

"The victim subsequently made multiple payments to various bank accounts, totalling RM908,305. These transactions were carried out between mid-September and this month while he was in Kota Tinggi," Kumar said in a statement yesterday.

Kumar added that the app initially displayed an accumulated profit of RM8 million.

However, when the victim attempted to withdraw the earnings, he was told to pay a RM100,000 deposit.

"The victim refused to pay the deposit and realised he had been scammed. He lodged a police report yesterday." — Bernama

## Woman killed, two injured in collision

**KOTA BHARU:** A woman was killed and two others were seriously injured in a three-car collision near a *keropak lekor* shop in Jalan Kadok, Ketereh, on Saturday afternoon.

Kota Bharu police chief ACP Mohd Rosdi Daud said the crash occurred when the victim's Perodua Viva was travelling from Tunjong towards Ketereh.

A Proton Waja attempted to overtake the Viva but failed, colliding with its front right side.

The impact caused the Viva to spin out of control and veer into the opposite lane, where it struck a Toyota Harrier driven by a man in his 50s.

"The victim suffered severe head injuries and was pronounced dead at the scene. Two passengers in her car were seriously injured and are receiving treatment in the red zone at Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia in Kubang Kerian," Rosdi said.

Witnesses are urged to contact the Kota Bharu District Police Traffic Division or traffic investigation officer Nurul Izzati Mohammad Rosli on 09-775 2315. — Bernama

## Teenage boy feared drowned in river

**SEGAMAT:** A boy, 14, is feared to have drowned after he was swept away by swift currents while bathing with 19 of his friends in Sungai Jeram Badoh, Buloh Kasap on Friday.

Segamat district police chief Supt Ahmad Zamry Marinsah said they received information about the incident at about 4.30pm and dispatched a team to the location.

"A search and rescue operation, with the help of the Fire and Rescue Department, was launched with the control post opened at the incident location to coordinate actions immediately," he said in a statement on Saturday.

He added that the operation involved 35 police personnel and firefighters with 10 assets, including four boats.

"Anyone with information can inform the district control centre at 07-9324222." — Bernama

## Housewife in fatal UiTM crash still under mental health evaluation

**DUNGUN:** The Dungun Magistrates' Court was informed yesterday that a housewife accused of causing the deaths of three Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Dungun campus students in a road crash last month remains under mental health evaluation at Hospital Permai, Johor Bahru.

State prosecution director Azizan Abdullah told the court that a full report on the mental health status of 49-year-old Norizan Ismail has not yet been finalised.

"The accused has no prior record of psychiatric treatment and the hospital has requested an extension under Section 342 of the Criminal Procedure Code," he said.

Norizan's lawyer Norhabibah Norulzahar of Messrs Ghazali Ismail & Co confirmed the update.

Magistrate Nur Amirah Fatimah Osman approved an extension of detention under Section 342 for another month and set Dec 17 for the next mention.

Norizan faces three charges of murder under

Section 302 of the Penal Code in connection with the deaths of Muhammad Akmal Md Tukirin, 25, Ku Adib Aizad Ku Azmi, 20, and Khairil Anuar Jamaluddin, 20.

The charges stem from an incident on Oct 9 when Norizan, driving a sports utility vehicle, allegedly crashed into four UiTM students.

The impact resulted in three fatalities and injuries to another student, Muhammad Ammar Danish Mohamad Ridhuan, 20.

Norizan also faces an attempted murder charge under Section 307(1) of the Penal Code in the Kuala Terengganu Sessions Court for causing injuries to Muhammad Ammar Danish.

The case is also scheduled for mention today.

On Oct 15, during her arraignment, Magistrate Nur Amirah Fatimah ordered Norizan to undergo a one-month mental health evaluation at Hospital Permai, with yesterday initially set for the case mention. — Bernama

# Reluctance to wear **life jackets** raises risks

➤ Public urged to discard 'inconvenience' mindset and acknowledge vital function of personal floatation devices

BY HARITH KAMAL  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**PETALING JAYA:** Considering recent tragedies involving water activities, the Putrajaya Fire and Rescue Department has called on the public to be more cautious and always wear safety gear.

Its Fire Safety Division director Datuk Khirudin Drahan Hussain told *theSun* the public should give more thought to wearing personal floatation devices such as life jackets.

He was commenting on fatal incidents such as the drowning of five people during training for the Sarawak Regatta last month and a water rafting accident in Gopeng that claimed three lives after continuous rain caused the water level in Sungai Jahang to rise rapidly.

"In the regatta incident, the victims were not wearing life jackets. Wearing one is essential during any water activity. It's a simple precaution that can make the difference between life and death.

"While water may appear calm and inviting, its risks are always present and can escalate quickly due to changes in weather or tide. Safety isn't just about wearing a life jacket, it's also about being aware of your surroundings," he said.

Khirudin stressed that people need to be mindful, especially when near or in water.

"It's crucial to avoid water activities during bad weather or when tides are unusually high. The public must always remain alert and take responsibility for their safety.

"They also need to pay close attention to indicators, such as safety flags and warning signs, which can help avoid dangerous areas.



Lee expressed concern that despite the emphasis on water safety, many individuals continue to neglect wearing life jackets. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THE SUN

These indicators are there for a reason, and staying alert to them is crucial."

He advised the public to also be aware of changing weather conditions, as they can quickly turn calm waters into a dangerous situation.

"A sudden change in the weather or an unexpected current can be high-risk, even for those who are highly skilled swimmers or ardent fans of water activities," he said, adding that the reluctance to wear life jackets remains one of the biggest challenges in promoting water safety.

"When dealing with water-related risks, extra precautions must be taken. This must be a habit for anyone engaging in water activities. Even minor non-compliance can lead to tragedy.

"Even for our water rescue specialists, wearing the right safety gear, including life jackets, is a non-negotiable requirement under our SOP," he said.

Alliance for a Safe Community chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye expressed concern that despite the emphasis on water safety, many individuals continue to neglect wearing

life jackets.

He urged everyone involved in water activities, from weekend boaters to daily fishermen, to always wear them, and stressed that they are an essential piece of safety equipment.

"People need to learn from past mistakes and take the necessary precautions. Whether you are on a fishing boat or just taking a river tour, a life jacket should be part of the experience."

Lee added that while some may see not wearing a life jacket as a minor infraction, the consequences can be devastating. Even a momentary lapse in judgement can lead to irreversible consequences, leaving families and communities grieving.

"Life jackets are not just accessories, they are life-saving items. A simple action like wearing a life jacket can make a huge difference in protecting lives.

"The public needs to be more prepared to learn, stay aware and not take water safety lightly, because any activity on water can turn deadly if the proper precautions are not taken," he said.

## Traders lament poor sales at former shopping haven

**NILAI:** The Nilai 3 Business Centre, once considered a shopping haven for wedding items, home decor and textiles, is now facing significant economic challenges as the largest commercial hub in Negeri Sembilan appears to be losing its vibrancy.

Located about 30km from Seremban and 45km from Kuala Lumpur, the centre was once a popular destination for both local visitors and foreign tourists, attracted by its reasonably priced goods.

However, a recent check found that business activity in the area has sharply declined after decades of being in operation. While many shops remain open, the area appears deserted, with few visitors.

Hassan Khan, 32, a carpet and home decor trader, said the number of visitors to Nilai 3 has dropped by nearly 60%, especially on weekdays, with most traders now relying on weekends or holiday periods when customer traffic is higher.

"Before Covid-19, we were making over RM15,000 in profit a month, but now it's difficult to even earn RM5,000. I've been working here for the past seven years, and the business in Nilai 3 is no longer as lively as it used to be. Something needs to be done to breathe new life into this area," he said.

"Customers come in droves to look but rarely buy. Our prices are mostly still the same as before, and if there is any difference, it's only about RM2 to RM3. We can't raise prices just like that, or else people won't buy," he said.

Hassan added that the area used to be vibrant with various events, such as karaoke competitions or weekend "happy hour" sales, but such activities have now disappeared due to a lack of public interest.

Ghani Rahman, 24, a worker at a carpet shop, said the decline in customers might be due to increased competition from online sales.

He said many vendors now sell through online platforms such as TikTok and Shopee, offering prices that are cheaper than those in the physical market.

"They can afford to sell at lower prices because they don't have shops, don't pay rent and don't need to employ as many staff. That's why they can offer cheaper prices on TikTok or Shopee. We here in the shops have to compete with those prices," he said. — Bernama

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# Super Typhoon Man-yi downs trees, power lines

➤ Sixth storm to batter Philippines in a month

**MANILA:** Super Typhoon Man-yi uprooted trees, brought down power lines and smashed flimsy houses to pieces as it swept across the storm-weary Philippines yesterday, following an unusual streak of violent weather.

Man-yi was still packing maximum sustained winds of 185kph and gusts of up to 230kph, after making landfall on lightly populated Catanduanes island late on Saturday.

More than 1.2 million people fled their homes ahead of Man-yi as the national weather service warned of a "life-threatening" impact from the storm.

No deaths have been reported, but there was "extensive" damage to structures on Catanduanes, civil defence chief Ariel Nepomuceno said.

Man-yi is expected to remain a super typhoon as it hits Luzon – the country's most populous island and economic engine – forecasters said, warning of a "potentially dangerous" situation in Aurora province.

Severe flooding and landslides were expected as Man-yi dumped "intense to torrential" rain over provinces in its path, with

more than 200mm forecast in the next 24 hours, the weather service said.

Panganiban municipality in the northeast of Catanduanes took a direct hit from Man-yi.

Photos and a drone video shared on the Facebook page of Mayor Cesar Robles showed fallen power lines, damaged and destroyed buildings, and trees and corrugated iron sheets strewn on the roads.

"Pepito was so strong, I have never experienced a typhoon this strong," Robles said in a post, using the local name for Man-yi, as clean-up efforts got under way and people returned home.

"It is still a bit unsafe, there are still bursts of wind and there are many debris."

Mother-of-three Marissa Cueva Alejandro, 36, who grew up in Catanduanes and sheltered with a relative during Man-yi, said typhoons were getting stronger.

"Before, we would only experience (typhoon) signal number three to four, but now typhoons are getting as strong as signal number five," she said, referring to the weather service's five-tiered wind warning system.

Man-yi is the sixth storm in the past month to batter the archipelago nation. At least 163 people died in the previous storms, that also left thousands homeless and wiped out crops and livestock.

About 20 big storms and typhoons hit the Southeast Asian nation or its surrounding

waters each year, killing scores of people.

The weather forecaster has hoisted its second-highest typhoon signal over several provinces stretching from Luzon's east coast, where Man-yi is expected to make its second landfall, across to the western side of the island where it will exit.

Around 2,000 people were in emergency evacuation shelters in Dipaculao municipality in Aurora province.

Others have stayed home to protect their property and livestock, or because they were sceptical of the warnings, said Geofroy Parrocha, communications officer of Dipaculao disaster agency.

Tourists emptied out of coastal resorts ahead of the typhoon.

"Our facilities are deserted," said Irene Padeo, reservation officer of the L'Sirene Boutique Resort in Baler town in Aurora, shortly before Man-yi was due to make landfall in neighbouring San Luis.

"Our outdoor items have all been packed and taken indoors. We tied down all the rest."

Man-yi will cross north of Manila and sweep over the South China Sea today.

Earlier this month, four storms were clustered in the Pacific basin, which the Japan Meteorological Agency said was the first time such an occurrence had been observed in November since its records began in 1951. – AFP



Filipinos examining an uprooted tree yesterday in San Andres, Catanduanes province. – AFP/PPIC

## Xi ready for 'smooth transition' to Trump

**LIMA:** Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Saturday he was ready to work with Donald Trump's new administration for a "smooth transition" in bilateral ties, as he met outgoing President Joe Biden for the last time.

The leaders of the world's two largest economies met on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific summit in Lima.

After shaking hands to begin their meeting at the Chinese leader's hotel in the Peruvian capital, Xi noted that Beijing's goals for stable ties with Washington remained unchanged.

"China is ready to work with the new US administration to maintain communication, expand cooperation and manage differences, so as to strive for a smooth transition of the China-US relationship," he said in translated comments.

Xi and Biden have led efforts to ease tensions over issues from trade to Taiwan, and Saturday's face-to-face was their second meeting since a landmark ice-breaking summit

in California last year – their third overall.

Biden said he was "very proud of the progress we both made together".

"Our two countries cannot let any of this competition veer into conflict. That's our responsibility and over the last four years I think we've proven it's possible to have this relationship," Biden said.

Trump's impending return to the Oval Office, with several China hawks in his top team, has stirred fears that tensions could return.

In his first White House term, Trump engaged in a bruising trade war with China, imposing tariffs on imports that saw retaliation from Beijing.

Trump has once again signalled a confrontational approach, threatening during the campaign against Democrat Kamala Harris to impose tariffs of up to 60% on imports of Chinese goods.

But in pointed comments, Xi said that China and the United States should "inject more

certainty and positive energy into the turbulent world".

The White House said Biden had raised several key points of tension, including Taiwan.

Biden expressed "deep concern" over Beijing's support of Russia's defence industry as Moscow invades Ukraine, and condemned the deployment of thousands of troops to Russia by China's ally North Korea, the White House said.

But it was the transfer of power in Washington that hung heaviest over the meeting, with Biden and Xi both seeking to calm potentially choppy waters.

US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters Biden had reinforced that it was a "time of transition" where "stability in the US-China relationship is essential".

Sullivan said however that Biden was "not a conduit" for any backchannel messages from Xi to Trump about the shape of future relations.

Sullivan said the president had also taken time for some informal chat with Xi. – AFP

## BRIEFS

### TAIWAN, CHINA GREET EACH OTHER WITH WAVE

**LIMA:** Lin Hsin-i, Taiwan's representative at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum here, said on Saturday that he greeted China's President Xi Jinping with a wave, but there was no handshake or conversation. Speaking at a press conference, Lin, chairman of government-backed investment fund Taiwan Capital and a former economy minister, said that while Taiwan had bilateral talks with many Apec members, with Xi there was just a greeting gesture across the room where leaders were gathered. Taiwan takes part in Apec as "Chinese Taipei" and does not send its president to summits due to China's objections. – Reuters

### JAPANESE TROOPS TO TRAIN REGULARLY IN DARWIN

**SYDNEY:** Japanese troops will begin regular deployments in northern Australia as part of military cooperation with Australia and the US, Australia's Defence Minister Richard Marles said yesterday. Around 2,000 US Marines are already hosted in Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory, for six months of the year amid growing concern among Washington and its allies about China's growing military power in the Indo Pacific region. "Today we are announcing that there will be regular deployments of Japan's amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade to Australia," Marles said at a televised press conference in Darwin, alongside US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Japanese Defence Minister Gen Nakatani. – Reuters

## S'pore offers to host 2030 Apec summit

**SINGAPORE:** The city-state has offered to host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in 2030, *The Straits Times* reported.

Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said this is one way the country will contribute to ensuring more inclusive growth, against a backdrop of increasing geopolitical rivalry and weakening support for free trade.

Wong, who is also the finance minister, told reporters at the end of this year's summit in Peru that Singapore views Apec as a valuable platform and will do its part to support the grouping, including hosting Apec summits.

Singapore is one of the 12 founding member economies of Apec, which was established in 1989. It last held the Apec chairmanship in 2009.

Wong highlighted concerns at this year's summit regarding the weakening support for globalisation and free trade.

The prime minister said many people in Apec economies feel the benefits of free trade have not been equally shared.

Meanwhile, geopolitics is resulting in more things being seen through a security lens, rather than that of win-win cooperation.

He welcomed the fact that, instead of introducing more barriers, Apec members agree that the solution is to strengthen trade and investment links, ensuring that economic growth benefits everyone and becomes more inclusive.

The Apec leaders in a joint statement at this year's summit, reaffirmed their support for the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) at its core, and remain committed to working towards necessary WTO reform, to improve all of its functions.

Regarding US-China relations, Wong said he hopes China will be able to establish similar "guardrails" with the new Trump administration to reduce conflict between the two.

He noted that both countries have a mutual understanding not to escalate thorny issues such as those concerning Taiwan and the South China Sea.

"To the extent that Singapore can help, we will certainly do our part to facilitate," he was quoted as saying.

From Peru, Wong will be attending the Group of 20 summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. – Bernama



# Eight killed in stabbing rampage at college

## ➤ Second mass attack in China in a week

**BEIJING:** A former student went on a stabbing rampage at a vocational college in eastern China, killing eight people and injuring 17, police said yesterday, just days after the deadliest mass killing in the country in a decade shocked Chinese society.

Saturday evening's knife attack took place at the Wuxi Vocational College of Arts and Technology in Yixing, part of Wuxi city in the eastern province of Jiangsu. The suspect was apprehended at the scene and confessed, police said.

Also on Saturday, authorities in the southern Chinese city of Zhuhai said they

had charged a 62-year-old man after a driver last Monday rammed his car into a crowd killing 35 people and injuring 43.

The Zhuhai incident touched off a rare online discussion over the mental health of Chinese society and whether a string of recent high-profile attacks in other major cities could reflect deeper stresses as the world's second-largest economy slows.

At least six other high-profile knife attacks have been recorded this year across China.

Police in Wuxi said the stabbing suspect was angry over not getting his graduation certificate and failing an exam. The Zhuhai suspect was reportedly angry at the terms of a divorce settlement.

"According to preliminary investigations, the suspect, surname Xu – male, 21 years old, a 2024 graduate of the college – attacked others after failing an exam and not receiving his graduation certificate, as well

as being dissatisfied with his internship compensation," the Yixing Public Security Bureau said in a statement.

The flare-up of violence has prompted a heavily censored online discussion on the toll of the economic slowdown and whether young people will find themselves worse off than the generations before them that benefited from China's rapid development.

One online commentator said the Wuxi attack appeared to reflect a sense of entitlement for a generation that had not expected hardship, a "giant baby mentality".

"Always thinking that they are so aggrieved, everyone is persecuting me, I study and struggle just to be a beast of burden," one person wrote on social media platform Weibo.

"I want to 'lie flat', I want to rot, but still want to have this and that, I want to have what others have," the post said. – Reuters

## Tram proposed for part of Mount Fuji trail

**TOKYO:** Japanese authorities seeking to reduce overcrowding at Mount Fuji will propose a trackless, rubber-tired tram system made by China's CRRC (CRRC Corp Ltd) to transport climbers.

The new proposal, which has not been previously reported, would replace the original plan to build a light-rail system connecting the base to the fifth hiking station of the popular Yoshida Trail, which goes to the top, after a local city and other parties voiced concern over its environmental and cost impact.

Yamanashi Prefecture, home of the most popular route used by climbers of the 3,776m volcano, is set to announce the plan soon, a source told Reuters, asking for anonymity because the information is not yet public.

Mount Fuji, which straddles Yamanashi and Shizuoka prefectures, is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Japan, whose numbers have surged in recent years.

Pollution from the constant stream of tourist buses and cars arriving at the fifth station, as well as overcrowding on the trails, have become headaches for authorities seeking to clean up the site, which Japanese people hold sacred.

Mount Fuji was listed as a Unesco World Heritage site in 2013, further boosting its appeal. But the distinction came on the condition that Japan reduce overcrowding, environmental harm from visitors, and fix the artificial landscape, such as the large parking lots built to accommodate tourists.

CRRC's "Autonomous Rapid Transit" is a new-generation tram that uses magnetic road markings and can be operated unmanned.

Yamanashi prefecture plans to use locally produced hydrogen to power the tram, the source said.

The new plan would allow the prefecture to use the existing Fuji Subaru Line toll road and prohibit the entry of all private vehicles and sightseeing buses, the person said. The prefecture hopes to conduct a pilot run as early as the next fiscal year starting in April. – Reuters

## Modi holds talks in Nigeria en route to Rio

**ABUJA:** India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu yesterday as the giants of Asia and Africa push for a greater role in world affairs.

Nigeria's capital Abuja was the first stop in a tour that will take the Indian premier on to the G20 summit in Brazil, and to Guyana.

The visit was billed by New Delhi as a meeting of the largest democracy in the world and the largest in Africa.

"May this visit deepen the bilateral relationship between our nations," Modi posted on social media on arrival.

Tinubu said that the visit would expand "the strategic partnership between both countries".

Photos posted on Modi's account showed him arriving late on Saturday at Abuja airport to be welcomed by Nigerian officials and a cheering crowd from the country's 60,000-strong Indian community.

The visit comes amid a revived push by both India and Nigeria for permanent representation on the UN Security Council.

The five permanent members of the top UN body – the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain – hold a powerful veto.

Supporters of a more "multipolar" world have pushed for more African, Asian and Latin American countries to be added to the group.

Nigeria's 220-million-strong population is comfortably the largest in Africa, but in diplomatic strength it is rivalled by South Africa.

India is the world's most populous nation – its 1.4 billion people representing a sixth of humanity – and is a nuclear-armed power.

It has long sought a permanent UN Security Council seat. – AFP



**SEEKING DIVINE AID ...** Hindu women with earthen oil lamps and other religious materials perform a special prayer for peace and prosperity in Chakla village near Kolkata. – **AFPPIC**

## India joins elite hypersonic missile group

**NEW DELHI:** India has successfully tested a domestically developed long-range hypersonic missile, it said yesterday, attaining a key milestone in military development that puts it in a small group of nations possessing the advanced technology.

The global push for hypersonic weapons figures in the efforts of some countries, such as India, which is striving to develop advanced long-range missiles, along with China, Russia North Korea and the United States.

The Indian missile, developed by the state-run Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and industry partners, is designed to carry payloads for ranges exceeding 1,500km for the armed forces, the government said in a statement.

"The flight data ... confirmed the successful terminal manoeuvres and impact with high

degree of accuracy," it said.

The test-firing took place at Dr APJ Abdul Kalam island off the eastern coast of Odisha state on Saturday, it said.

Video images released by DRDO showed a slender missile blasting into the night sky followed by a surge of flames.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called the test a "historic achievement" in a post on X, adding that it placed India among a select group of nations possessing such critical and advanced technologies.

"This is a historic moment and this significant achievement has put our country in the group of select nations having capabilities of such critical and advanced military technologies," he said.

No further details were given about the missile.

Hypersonics are the new frontier in missile technology, because they fly lower and are harder to detect than ballistic missiles, can reach targets more quickly, and can be ordered to change target in mid-flight.

The test flight comes days after rival and neighbour China showcased its expanding aviation capabilities at an airshow, with the J-35A stealth fighter jet and attack drones displayed.

That, according to China's state media, included the debut of the HQ-19 surface-to-air missile system, designed to intercept ballistic missiles and hypersonic glide vehicles.

India is also a major buyer of Russian military hardware, including Moscow's S-400 missile defence system – despite the threat of US sanctions over the multi-billion dollar deal. – Reuters/AFP



Thick smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted a neighbourhood in the southern Lebanese city of Tyre on Saturday. – AFP/IC



# Dozens killed, wounded in Israeli strikes across Gaza

## ► Beirut residents receive evacuation orders

**CAIRO:** Dozens of Palestinians were killed or injured in an Israeli strike on a multi-storey residential building in northern Gaza's Beit Lahiyah yesterday, medics said.

There was no immediate figure for how many people were killed. The Palestinian Civil Emergency said around 70 people lived in the property.

The Gaza media office put the number of those killed at 72, saying the strike hit a residential building that housed members of six families.

There was no immediate comment from Israel. It has often accused the media office of exaggerating fatalities.

The Israeli army sent tanks into Beit Lahiyah and the nearby towns of Beit Hanoun and Jabalia, the largest of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, last month in what it

said was a campaign to fight gunmen waging attacks and prevent them from regrouping.

It said it has killed hundreds of gunmen in those three areas, which residents said Israeli forces had isolated from Gaza City.

Earlier yesterday, an Israeli air strike killed at least 10 people in the Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip, when a missile hit a house, medics said.

Four other people were killed in the nearby Nuseirat camp, they said.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 43,799 people have been confirmed dead since Oct 7, 2023.

In Lebanon, Israel issued evacuation orders yesterday for parts of south Beirut where it is targeting Hezbollah gunmen, hours after the group said it fired on several Israeli military bases around the

coastal city of Haifa.

Israel ordered residents of three areas in the capital's southern suburbs to leave ahead of planned strikes on buildings, in a warning published on X by military spokesman Avichay Adraee.

Further south, overnight Israeli airstrikes and artillery shelling hit the flashpoint southern town of Khiam, some 6km from the border, Lebanon's National News Agency reported yesterday.

The bombardment came after Israel's military reported a "heavy rocket barrage" on Haifa late Saturday and said a synagogue was hit, wounding two civilians.

Israel has escalated its bombing of Lebanon since Sept 23 and has since sent in ground troops, following almost a year of limited, cross-border exchanges of fire started by Hezbollah in support of Hamas in Gaza.

Security services in Israel said two flares landed near Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's residence in the town of Caesarea, south of Haifa, but he was not home.

Hezbollah fired around 80 projectiles at Israel on Saturday.

Israeli forces also shelled the area along the Litani River, which flows across southern Lebanon, NNA said yesterday.

The agency earlier reported strikes on the southern city of Tyre, including in a neighbourhood near Unesco-listed ancient ruins. Israel's military on Saturday said it had hit Hezbollah facilities in the Tyre area.

In Lebanon's east, the Health Ministry said an Israeli strike in the Bekaa Valley killed six people including three children.

Hezbollah said it fired a guided missile that set an Israeli tank ablaze in the southwest Lebanon village of Shamaa, about 5km from the border.

Late Saturday, Hezbollah said it had targeted five military bases including the Stella Maris naval base. – Reuters/AFP

## Zelensky wants to end war via diplomacy

**KYIV:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that Kyiv would like to end the war with Russia next year through "diplomatic means", as both countries prepare for Donald Trump's return to the White House.

The prospect of Trump returning to power in the United States next year has raised questions about the future of the conflict, as the president-elect has been critical of US military aid to Kyiv.

Zelensky said the war will end "sooner" than it otherwise would have done once Trump becomes president. He also spoke a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin held his first phone call with a major Western leader in nearly two years, speaking to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz who initiated the call despite Kyiv's objections.

"For our part, we must do everything we can to ensure that this war ends next year. We have to end it by diplomatic means," Zelensky said in an interview with Ukrainian radio.

There have been no meaningful talks between Russia and Ukraine, but Trump's re-election has plunged the conflict's future into uncertainty, with Trump repeatedly promising to cut a quick deal to end the war.

"We have to understand what the Russians want," Zelensky said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said he will only accept talks with Ukraine if Kyiv surrenders Ukrainian territory that Moscow occupies.

The Kremlin said he repeated that demand in the phone conversation with Scholz on Friday.

Zelensky has rejected Putin's conditions. – AFP

## Brazil's first lady insults Musk

**BRASILIA:** Brazil's first lady Rosângela "Janja" da Silva on Saturday insulted Elon Musk at an event ahead of the G20 summit in which she advocated tougher regulation of social media.

Speaking on a panel about disinformation, she appeared to be startled by a loud noise.

She said: "I think it's Elon Musk. I'm not afraid of you, ... you, Elon Musk."

A video of the episode quickly spread on X, drawing a response from its outspoken owner.

"They are going to lose the next election," Musk wrote, adding a pair of laughing emojis.

The tycoon and soon-to-be member of US president-elect Donald Trump's administration has a complicated history with Brazil.

The country's supreme court suspended X for 40 days this year as part of a legal tussle over disinformation.

Leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva welcomed the suspension as legitimate measure.

Musk is an ally of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro, who has signalled his intent to run again in 2026.

Bolsonaro posted a screen shot of the first lady making her remark.

"We now have another diplomatic problem," he wrote. – AFP

## Pro-Palestinian march in Rio ahead of G20 summit

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Hundreds of protesters marched in support of Palestinians in Rio on Saturday, in a demonstration aimed at world leaders about to converge on the city for a G20 summit.

The protesters, a few wearing Arabic *keffiyeh* scarves, held aloft the Palestinian flag and banners, including one reading "Break Brazil-Israel Relations" and demands that Israel's allies stop financing its military offensives in Gaza and in Lebanon.

"We're here to make a contrast with the G20 summit," said Tania Arantes, 60, from one of the Brazilian unions organising the protest.

The march, she said, embraced a number of other leftist issues too, such as the fight against poverty and a demand to tax the super-rich, because the leaders at the summit "have economic control over nations they believe are subordinate in this globalised world."

One marcher, Giancarlo Pereira, a 43-year-old veterinarian, said the other issues converged with the Palestinian cause "because the big companies fuelling the war are the billionaires of the world."

A short distance along Copacabana Beach, another protest was being staged with activists placing rows of plates with red

crosses on them in the sand.

The 733 plates laid out represented the 733 million people in the world the UN says suffered from hunger last year.

The various protests happened as activists, NGOs and civil society bodies took part in the final day of a pre-summit G20 social event in Rio promoted by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

At that event, South Africa's foreign minister, Ronald Lamola, called "for accountability for the state of Israel and for the de-escalation of the conflict that is continuing in the Middle East".

He said: "We stand with the

people of Palestine and we call on all members of society to do the same."

South Africa has brought a case to the International Court of Justice arguing that Israel is carrying out "genocide" in Gaza, an accusation that Israel denies.

Several nations have added their weight to South Africa's proceedings, including Spain, Bolivia, Colombia, Mexico, Turkey, Chile and Libya.

At the G20 Social event, Lula received a list of action points drawn up by the civil society groups to help inform summit discussions today and tomorrow. – AFP



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# Trump's victory and economic discontent

**T**HE recent US election results have sparked intense global reflection, with Donald Trump's unexpected victory prompting widespread debates about politics, morality and the economic anxieties underlying American society.

The world is watching this return with a mixture of surprise, curiosity and concern as Trump reclaims his role in an election where his distinct style and approach to governance triumphed over the Democrats' emphasis on progressive ideals.

This outcome signals more than a political win as it indicates a powerful shift in voter priorities and highlights the increasingly complex relationship between political power, public trust and morality.

Trump's campaign, marked by a blend of populist rhetoric and audacious self-assurance, captured a nation growing tired of conventional politics. His victory is particularly noteworthy given the legal challenges he faces, which include numerous charges involving financial misdeeds and alleged improprieties.

Yet, he now stands at the helm of the country, suggesting that the American electorate may be prioritising immediate, tangible concerns over issues of character and legality.

This dichotomy raises questions about the place of morality in modern politics, especially when economic struggles drive voters to seek decisive leaders over upstanding ones.

The proverbial elephant in the room is the US economy, a subject that became the cornerstone of Trump's appeal and an area where the Democrats may have faltered. The American middle class, long viewed as the bedrock of the nation's prosperity, has seen stagnating wages and rising living costs.

Concerns over inflation, healthcare costs, housing and education have intensified, with many families struggling to meet their basic needs. These economic hardships are not new but they have reached a boiling point where the electorate is seeking immediate solutions rather than abstract promises of progress.

Trump's campaign, with its straightforward focus on job creation, tax cuts and economic growth, struck a chord with voters who feel left behind by the current system.

The Democrats appeared more focused on social issues and progressive policies, which, though significant, failed to resonate with voters increasingly anxious about their economic well-being.

While their manifesto championed inclusivity, climate policy and social equity, it offered less in terms of concrete economic measures to address the financial struggles facing everyday Americans.

This disconnect arguably cost them the election as voters obviously prioritised economic stability over idealistic visions of social change.

The Democrats' inability to address these bread-and-butter concerns may reflect a broader struggle within the party to balance progressive values with the immediate needs of a diverse electorate.

For many voters, issues of inclusivity, though important, were secondary to the desire for a more robust economy.

Internationally, Trump's re-election hyped as Trump 2.0 brings a renewed sense of unpredictability. Allies are likely reassessing their diplomatic strategies, particularly given Trump's previous stance on issues such as Nato (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) funding, trade tariffs and foreign policy interventions.

Many European nations, for instance, have expressed unease at his unilateral approach to international relations, fearing that a lack of cooperation could strain alliances that have historically provided stability.

For countries such as China and Russia, however, Trump's win may signal a more predictable relationship as they understand and expect his pragmatic, sometimes isolationist stance. This could shift the balance of power globally, influencing trade agreements, security alliances and international treaties in ways that may reshape the geopolitical landscape.

Domestically, Trump's support has been bolstered by an electorate increasingly disillusioned with traditional politics and desperate for a change that directly impacts their lives. The middle-class experience has been one of economic contraction, with fewer opportunities for advancement and a declining quality of life.

Issues like stagnant wages, expensive healthcare and the high cost of education are immediate and pressing, and voters want politicians who promise real solutions rather than abstract ideals.

Trump, with his promises of lower taxes, job growth and infrastructure improvements, presents a straightforward, though controversial, alternative.

For many Americans, his policies seem to speak to their needs more directly than the



Domestically, Trump's support has been bolstered by an electorate increasingly disillusioned with traditional politics and desperate for a change that directly impacts their lives. — REUTERS/SPIC

Democratic platform, which is seen by some as detached from everyday struggles.

In this political climate, morality and legality appear secondary to pragmatism and economic urgency. The electorate's willingness to overlook Trump's legal controversies suggests a shift in values, where the demand for immediate action on economic issues overshadows concerns about personal integrity.

While some critics argue that this acceptance undermines the democratic process by lowering standards of accountability, others contend that it reflects a deeper frustration with the political system's failure to address core issues.

The growing emphasis on economic relief over character is indicative of an electorate willing to compromise on ethics for the promise of better living conditions.

Trump's victory reveals a transformation within American society and perhaps a wider, global trend: the prioritisation of tangible outcomes over moral expectations.

This election has shown that voters, when faced with economic hardship, may be more inclined to support a flawed leader who addresses their concerns than a morally upright one whose policies feel detached from their struggles.

As we move forward, this dynamic raises critical questions about the future of democracy and the standards we hold for our leaders.

What does it mean to prioritise economic stability over ethical integrity? At what point does the pursuit of economic progress justify overlooking legal and moral considerations?

These questions reflect a changing political landscape where morality is no longer the sole measure of a leader's worth. Trump's triumph, amid legal challenges and ethical doubts, may be a warning sign that democracy itself is evolving, but whether for better or for worse remains to be seen.

The world watches as America grapples with this complex reality, aware that the outcome of this new chapter will resonate far beyond its borders.

A quote from Plato's *The Republic* fits here: "The heaviest penalty for declining to rule is to be ruled by someone inferior to yourself."

This quote emphasises the risk and consequences of disengagement from political responsibility, suggesting that when individuals or societies rank immediate concerns over moral leadership, they may end up being governed by those less virtuous.

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**W**HEN Malaysia's education minister recently declared that the public needs to accept new Malay words because the Malay language is a "living language", one cannot help but wonder if this statement was made with due consideration for linguistic reality.

While no one denies that languages evolve, the approach to such evolution matters significantly, especially when the so-called "new" words already have widely accepted equivalents, or worse, when they border on absurdity.

A living language thrives on organic growth. It adapts to societal needs, borrowing words or coining new ones when there is a genuine linguistic gap.

However, introducing words like *katimbang* to replace the perfectly functional *daripada* or *peluncuran* instead of *pelancaran*, defies this principle. Such changes do not stem from societal demand or linguistic necessity but from an imposed top-down decree.

Linguists like Noam Chomsky argue that language is shaped by its users, not by arbitrary mandates. In this case, the minister's claim that the public is "beginning to accept" these words feels like an exaggerated claim, given that no evidence suggests any real grassroots acceptance. If anything, these terms are being shoved down the throats of officials and the public alike, creating confusion and perhaps, resistance.

Such words are not being "embraced" because they fill a void; they are being forced into public discourse during official events and government documents.

Officials, under pressure to adhere to the new terminology, scramble to use these words correctly, often resulting in embarrassing missteps and unnecessary confusion.

Take for instance the introduction of *mahsul* for "harvest" or *intitha* for "ending". The Malay language already has perfectly functional and familiar

COMMENT by Prof Mohd Said Bani Che Mat Din

# Do not force Malay language into linguistic absurdity

*"Let our language evolve naturally, driven by the needs of its people, not by artificial impositions. Otherwise, we risk turning this 'living language' into a relic of bureaucratic misadventure."*

words for these concepts, such as *hasil* and *penamat*. Why complicate matters?

Similarly, *tatakelola* (effective administration) and *kebinekaan* (diversity) are either redundant or already understood within their original context. Adding layers of unnecessary complexity undermines the accessibility of the language, alienating the people it seeks to serve.

Linguistic experts often emphasise that language evolution must be driven by usage and practicality. Professor Emeritus Datuk Dr Teo Kok Seong, a respected linguist, has previously pointed out that introducing unfamiliar terms risks alienating speakers and causing them to abandon the language altogether.

If Malaysians already struggle to maintain fluency in Bahasa Malaysia in an increasingly English-dominated global environment, why add to the confusion with terms that feel forced and out of place?

Instead of fostering pride in our national language, this approach risks

making Bahasa Malaysia a subject of ridicule. Imagine saying, "*Walhasil, tiwikrama kebinekaan negara kita memerlukan tatakelola yang baik*" during a speech.

While the statement may be linguistically correct, it is also unnecessarily convoluted, obscuring the intended message. Language is meant to communicate, not to confuse.

The minister's claim also reflects a troubling trend: the use of narratives that are not grounded in reality. Malaysians are not asking for new terms like *purbasangka* (prejudice) when *prasangka* is already understood. Nor are they eager to adopt *taakul* (reasoning) when *pemikiran* serves the same purpose. Worse, words like *intitha* and *walhasil* feel archaic, as if they belong in an 18th-century Malay manuscript rather than contemporary communication.

Forcing such terms into public use under the guise of progress is counterproductive. It alienates the

audience it seeks to engage – Malaysians from all walks of life who simply want a language they can understand and use effortlessly. Introducing unnecessary complications only widens the gap between the language and its users.

At its core, my concern is about ensuring Bahasa Malaysia remains relevant, accessible and functional for all Malaysians. The introduction of new words should serve a purpose – filling linguistic gaps or adapting to modern realities, not complicating communication.

If the goal is to preserve and elevate Bahasa Malaysia, the focus should be on improving proficiency, encouraging its use in meaningful ways and ensuring that it remains a unifying force in a diverse nation.

Furthermore, language policy should consider the opinions of experts and the people who use the language daily. Linguists globally agree that language evolution should enhance communication, not hinder it.

At its best, the minister's statement is right in that, Bahasa Malaysia (and all languages) is a living language but that does not justify unnecessary or forced changes that complicate its use and alienate its speakers.

Instead of celebrating the uniqueness of our national language, imposing such words risk making our language the subject of mockery and frustration.

The education minister must open her eyes to the real challenges faced by Malaysians in embracing Bahasa Malaysia. Do not add to these challenges with linguistic experiments that confuse rather than clarify. The focus should be on strengthening the language's relevance and accessibility, preserving its beauty and functionality, and ensuring that all Malaysians, not just a select few, can use and appreciate it.

Let our language evolve naturally, driven by the needs of its people, not by artificial impositions. Otherwise, we risk turning this "living language" into a relic of bureaucratic misadventure.

While I may not be a language expert, I am a well-read person and an experienced communicator. In communication, the ultimate rule is to ensure people understand and embrace your message.

Confusing the public with unnecessary changes to language for the sake of novelty or to fulfil a "feel good" agenda serves no one and risks eroding the very foundation of our linguistic heritage.

**Prof Mohd Said Bani Che Mat Din** is a communications specialist and a passionate advocate for the national language and heritage, with extensive experience in delivering clear, impactful and meaningful messages to diverse audiences. Comments: letters@thesunday.com

COMMENT by Lee Seng Kiat and Prof Geoffrey Williams

## Magic of a universal basic income

**HEALTHCARE**, education and social infrastructure are usually universal benefits that we all automatically benefit from.

However, it is rather strange that in our society there is resistance to the idea of providing a basic income to all citizens universally.

Targeted benefits are the opposite of this. While it seems perfectly sensible to target very limited resources only to those that need them most, these tend to be unpopular policies.

Rooted in a mindset of scarcity, they sow suspicion, breed one-upmanship and are rife with criticism.

Similarly, means-tested cash transfer programmes also tend to be unpopular, leading to envy and a sense of something for nothing.

If cash transfers were made into a universal benefit, like a basic income, this perception may be different. So how would this form of universality work its magic?

With universality, we are no longer divided into two camps of "deserving" and "undeserving". There is no social stigma against recipients, no political tension, no complex and intrusive applications to the government and no inspectors

keeping a watch over you.

Many argue that the government has no place determining between the deserving and the undeserving anyway.

If giving cash to the "rich" does not sit right with you yet, consider the administrative cost savings that come with universality. How many man hours would be saved from trying to discriminate between rich and poor people if we simply included everyone?

Instead of suspicion, basic income would efficiently disburse an agreed amount to all, directly to their bank accounts or MyKad, without any middlemen or room for wastage, leakages and corruption.

Targeted benefits can feel debilitating when you are paid for being poor and when that payment is reduced when you progress through hard work to a marginally higher income. Instead of disincentivising progress, basic income does away with all disincentives by being universal.

By boosting social mobility without tinkering with anyone's social status, there is no more one-upmanship – everyone gets it.

Universality is only one of five tenets of basic income. It also must be

regular or monthly – paid in cash not tokens – vouchers or food parcels, paid to individuals not heads of households and above all it must be unconditional.

These ideas are quickly gaining ground in Malaysia. Under Budget 2025, the unity government announced a significant boost to the *Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah* (STR) and *Sumbangan Asas Rahmah* (Sara) initiatives next year.

Total allocations increased to RM13 billion from RM10 billion and will benefit nine million people or 60% of the adult population.

Financial assistance under the Social Welfare Department (JKM) will rise to RM2.9 billion from RM2.4 billion, enabling higher monthly welfare payments for the underprivileged. A total of 4.1 million households will receive Sara cash transfers compared with 700,000 recipients this year, with a RM100 monthly benefit credited directly to their MyKad.

The maximum household assistance will increase to RM4,600, compared with RM3,700 previously. Combining all forms of assistance, no one in Malaysia needs to have an income of less than RM1,100 per month.



With universality, we are no longer divided into two camps of 'deserving' and 'undeserving'. – ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

Including STR, Sara and JKM, a poor household with three children is eligible to receive over RM13,000 annually, compared to RM11,000 last year. Senior citizens living in poverty, will be eligible for over RM10,000 in aid annually, compared to RM8,000 last year. This is before accounting for additional aid from state governments, *Zakat* or from foundations.

The progressive reforms of welfare assistance will still need to embed the basic principles of regular payments,

paid in cash to individuals on a universal and unconditional basis, but Malaysia has already begun this journey and has the chance to be a leader in the world, creating magic from a universal basic income.

**Lee Seng Kiat** is a volunteer coordinator for the Basic Income Earth Network and **Prof Geoffrey Williams** is an economist and policy specialist. The views expressed are those of the authors. Comments: letters@thesunday.com

## MIAM launches Misi Fund for corporate, institutional investors

**PETALING JAYA:** Maybank Islamic Asset Management Sdn Bhd (MIAM) has launched a wholesale fund, the Maybank Islamic Strategic Income Fund (Misi Fund), developed in collaboration with Maybank Islamic Bhd.

Misi Fund is designed to enhance corporate and institutional investors' cash and liquidity management needs by offering a syariah-compliant solution with the potential to generate net returns of up to 3.7-3.8% per annum. The fund also provides a high level of liquidity, offering T+1 business day redemption, providing quick access to funds.

Misi Fund aims to provide investors with a consistent income stream by investing a minimum of 30% of its net asset value (NAV) in ringgit-denominated sukuk with a minimum credit rating of AA3 by RAM or an equivalent rating by MARC and up to 70% of the fund's NAV in Islamic liquid assets. These liquid assets comprise Islamic money market instruments and Islamic deposits, with 45% of the fund invested in Maybank Islamic's General Investment Account (GIA).

GIA is a term investment account product offered by Maybank Islamic with the objective to provide stable returns through low to moderate risk investment into a portfolio of the bank's financing assets such as mortgage financing, hire purchase, unit trust financing and SME financing. Misi Fund, through GIA invests in Maybank Islamic's strong and high-quality financing assets. This can help investors to mitigate the downside risks in adverse market conditions and provide a steady income stream to the investment portfolio.

MIAM CEO Belqaiqi Taufik said, "The launch of the Maybank Islamic Strategic Income Fund marks an exciting milestone for MIAM as we introduce our first syariah-compliant liquidity management solution."

## VSure Tech announced as winner of Insurance Innovation Challenge Fund

**PETALING JAYA:** Generali and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have announced VSure Tech as the winner of the Insurance Innovation Challenge Fund (IICF), an initiative designed to incentivise the development of innovative insurance products and services in Malaysia.

VSure Tech was selected among five solutions showcased last March in Kuala Lumpur during an event organised by Generali and UNDP dedicated to build up the resilience of small and medium-sized enterprises against climate and other risks.

The IICF was established to identify innovative solutions that focus on risk prevention, financial education, and protection. The goal is to complement insurance offerings with strategies that improve distribution and access to essential services for target communities, aligning with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

The initiative builds on a partnership between Generali and UNDP's Insurance and Risk Finance Facility, which aims to reduce the protection gap for vulnerable communities by increasing access to insurance.

# Selected greentech firms get US\$100,000 from UOB FinLab

**PETALING JAYA:** UOB FinLab, United Overseas Bank Ltd's innovation accelerator, has awarded more than US\$100,000 (RM446,000) to selected green technology (greentech) companies to pilot 15 sustainability solutions with the Singapore-based bank and its corporate partners across Asean.

The pilot solutions and partnerships were unveiled recently at GreenTech Accelerator 2024 Showcase Day as part of Singapore FinTech Festival's Insights Forum.

GreenTech Accelerator 2024 is the second edition of UOB FinLab's six-month regional programme that enables Asean greentech companies to grow and transform, forge partnerships and create pilots

to address sustainability challenges across the region. It is designed to fast-track the development of sustainable technology solutions in Singapore and across Asean. This year, 33 greentech firms were shortlisted from more than 350 applicants to participate in the

▶ Innovation accelerator funds 15 companies to pilot sustainability solutions with United Overseas Bank and corporate partners across Asean

programme, of which 12 are from Singapore, nine from Malaysia and 12 from Thailand.

UOB FinLab head Shannon Lung said, "GreenTech Accelerator 2024 demonstrates our ongoing commitment to build a sustainable future, leveraging collective actions and a collaborative professional network that can spur greater greentech breakthroughs."

"UOB FinLab will continue to be a catalyst for greentech innovation by bringing individuals, businesses, government agencies and greentechs together to tackle real-world sustainability challenges. We believe that with proper support from

a strong network and appropriate resources, greentechs can make transformative progress towards Asean's sustainability ambitions."

According to UOB's Business Outlook Study 2024 (SMEs & Large Enterprises), 87% of businesses in Asean surveyed view sustainability as important for their businesses, but only 44% have adopted green practices. To implement sustainability practices, about one in three cited the need for support to connect to the right solution partners.

Addressing this need, GreenTech Accelerator 2024 called for sustainability challenge statements from businesses across Asean, which highlighted real-world sustainability pain points. This year,

more than 50 statements were contributed by UOB and 26 corporate partners, including DKSH Healthcare, Marina Bay Sands and Ngee Ann Polytechnic from Singapore, Great Cosmo from Malaysia and Impact from Thailand. The challenge statements covered five key areas - circular economy and waste management; energy efficiency; food and agriculture; sustainable cities and urban planning; and sustainability reporting and carbon management.

During the programme, the 33 participating greentech firms proposed solutions based on the challenge statements and 15 pilots were selected for funding by UOB FinLab. Six of these pilots will be deployed with corporate partners in Singapore, three pilots in Malaysia and another six pilots in Thailand.

Malaysian plastic manufacturing company Great Cosmo will pilot greentech firm Co.Efficient Alpha's voltage optimising technology in its factory. This aims to reduce energy consumption for Great Cosmo's machines, potentially resulting in cost savings of about 10%.



## CIMB uplifts underserved Sabah communities via nine economic empowerment initiatives

**PETALING JAYA:** CIMB Islamic Bank Bhd and CIMB Foundation have pledged to support nine economic empowerment initiatives in Sabah, focusing on improving socio-economic growth and well-being of underserved communities.

With total commitments exceeding RM1.3 million in 2024, these targeted initiatives, which are anchored in economic empowerment, community well-being and education, have positively impacted more than 10,000 beneficiaries, reflecting CIMB's broader purpose of advancing customers and society.

CIMB Islamic and CIMB Foundation CEO Ahmad Shahrman Mohd Shariff said, "Economic empowerment and inclusion are core principles that drive our community initiatives as we expand our outreach across Malaysia, including Sabah. Our initiatives are strategically and thoughtfully de-signed with a holistic approach, recognising the interconnectedness of each community as a unified social structure."

"By investing in capacity building, financial literacy and community well-being programmes, we aim to create meaningful opportunities that empower individuals and communities to leap forward, fostering resilience and enabling sustainable livelihoods. These will not only help to elevate their quality of life, but also build a ripple effect of lasting positive impact for their families and community at large. Our commitment to these values remains steadfast, and we



Ahmad Shahrman (second from right) with Kembara Kitchen co-founder William Cheah (right) with the team at Pacos Trust.

continually look at ways to expand our efforts, ensuring that no one is left behind on the path towards a thriving and inclusive future."

Notable programmes include CIMB Islamic's flagship *Program Keusahawanan* series, which recently expanded to Sabah to empower 50 *asnaf* youth in Kota Belud with essential digital and technical skills in smartphone repair. In partnership with non-governmental organisation Darul Bakti, *Program Keusahawanan Digital Pembaikan Telefon Pintar dan Keusahawanan Belia* aims to foster sustainable employment by inspiring Sabahan youths to pursue financial independence through skill-based entrepreneurship. The Sabah chapter of the programme offers participants training in smartphone

software and hardware, guidance on financial management and marketing, along with mentorship.

Meanwhile, CIMB Foundation has joined forces with Kembara Kitchen and Pacos Trust, a community-based organisation dedicated to supporting indigenous communities in Sabah, to ensure food security during disaster relief and improve emergency preparedness for vulnerable communities and frontline responders.

Through this partnership, CIMB has sponsored the production of 5,000 Hero Meals - nutritious, ready-to-eat meals with an extended shelf life in preparation for humanitarian emergencies. These meals are produced via retort machines contributed by CIMB Foundation to Kembara Kitchen, with one unit

placed at Pacos Trust to help expand the production of Hero Meals. These machines enable efficient meal production and distribution, with Pacos Trust serving as the regional hub to supply these essential meals to disaster-affected individuals and frontline responders in Sabah and Sarawak.

Through the CIMB Foundation BeSMART Financial Literacy Education programme, CIMB promotes financial literacy by providing essential financial management skills to youth entering the workforce. The programme was conducted in Kota Kinabalu for students from Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Universiti Teknologi Mara Sabah and Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Gaya to provide a comprehensive approach to financial literacy.



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## Malaysia's economy on track for sustainable growth

■ BY **HAYATUN RAZAK**  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Economists believe Malaysia's economy is on track for sustainable growth for the full year, underpinned by robust investments and improving external demand.

University of Malaya senior lecturer Dr Aidil Rizal Shahrin expects the country's economy to grow by 5-6% in 2024.

"This is higher than the forecast of the global economy growth of 3.2% by World Economic Outlook," he told *SunBiz*.

Aidil Rizal noted that the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the third quarter of 2024 (Q3'24) was slightly lower than that in the first and second quarters, when it was 5.6% and 5.9%, respectively.

"Nevertheless, we might expect the 2024 growth to exceed the earlier forecast of around 4-5% growth," he said.

Aidil said that private consumption, amounting to close to 60% of GDP, became the main contributor to growth at 4.8%.

Besides consumption, Aidil Rizal noted that investments recorded growth of 15.3%.

"Since the pandemic, where in 2020 we recorded negative growth of 5.5%, our growth has been volatile. We recovered from the pandemic with a growth of 3.3% the following year and jumped to a very high growth of 8.9% in 2022," he said.

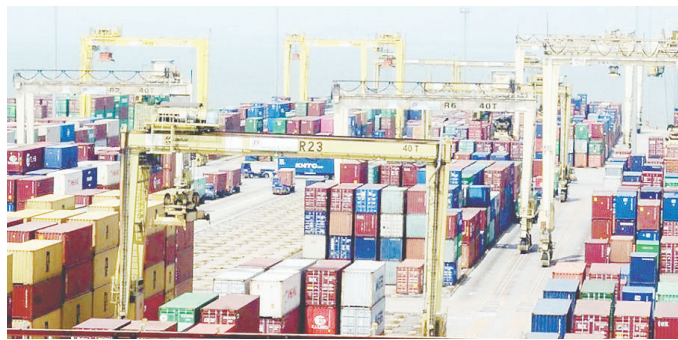
"Unfortunately, the global economic slowdown in 2023 weakened external demand and reduced our growth to around 3.6%. In 2023, our exports were 8% lower than in 2022," he said, adding that Malaysia being a small, open economy, external factors play an essential role in supporting economic growth.

"For 2024, we see an improvement already compared to 2023, where our trade surpassed the RM2 trillion threshold in just nine months, as reported by Miti (Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry)," Aidil Rizal said.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid said the economy should be able to settle at around 5% growth this year, which he said is decent growth.

"For now, I'm still maintaining my GDP projection of 4.9% for 2024. As for Q4, my sense is that the quarter could grow around 4.5% to 5%, taking cues from the moderation in consumer spending while investment and

➤ Economists say robust investments and improving external demand will support GDP expansion



Malaysia's trade surpassed the RM2 trillion threshold in just nine months in 2024. — BERNAMAPIC

the external sector will continue to provide support to the economy," he said.

Mohd Afzanizam said that at a rate of 5.3% during the September quarter, this out-turn was very much in line with the advance estimates. "The growth trajectory was decent as it continues to hover above 5%, albeit at a slower pace compared to the previous quarter."

He noted a deceleration in consumer spending from 6% growth in Q2 to 4.8% in Q3, while net exports contracted by 8.8% after a 3.4% expansion in the preceding quarter. "Despite that, overall growth was largely underpinned by investment activities among the private and public sectors, which saw their growth at a double-digit pace," he said.

Mohd Afzanizam said this and growth in public consumption indicate that consumers may have become guarded in their spending, despite the labour market remaining in full employment status.

Nonetheless, he said investment has really picked up pace and will continue to fuel the country's growth.

Center for Market Education CEO Dr Carmelo Ferlito told *SunBiz* that Malaysia is on track to achieve 5% annual growth by the end of the year.

In relative terms, he said, growth will be

pulled by investments, which he said are currently enjoying "very good momentum".

"Q3 growth is slightly below expectations, and this is due to a gradual slowing down of growth if we look at the data month by month," he said.

Ferlito highlighted Malaysia's improved investment performance, noting that inflows had been sluggish for several years but are now experiencing positive momentum in gross fixed capital formation (private and public investments). "These are good premises for long-term sustainable growth grounded on investments rather than consumption."

Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd economist Muhammad Saifuddin Sapuan commented that Q'24 GDP growth met their projection and aligned with their expectation of moderate growth following a peak in Q'24.

"This is partly because domestic demand has signalled a moderate expansion as the economy returns to normalcy."

Muhammad Saifuddin said his firm maintains a 2024 GDP growth forecast at 5% and expects it to moderate to 4.8% in 2025.

"We anticipate a recovery in manufacturing, particularly the export-oriented sector, to continue supporting our growth outlook," he added.

## AirAsia X's maiden flight to Nairobi achieves 90% passenger load factor

**NAIROBI:** Long-haul low-cost carrier AirAsia X Bhd (AAX) made its inaugural direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to Nairobi, Kenya on Friday with a passenger load factor of nearly 90%, marking its foray into East Africa.

Chief executive officer Benjamin Ismail said AAX's four-day weekly Kuala Lumpur-Nairobi service is currently the only direct flight connecting Malaysia and Africa.

He stated that 90% load factor equated to about 278 passengers on board.

The return flight from Nairobi to Kuala Lumpur experienced a passenger load of around 75%.

"The profile of the passengers from Kuala Lumpur to Nairobi saw Australians, Chinese, Malaysians and Kenyans who came back home. While for the 75% of passengers flying to Kuala Lumpur, up to 90% were Kenyans," he told a press conference here on Saturday.

Benjamin said if the load factor is maintained at around 85% per trip, he is confident that the target of carrying more than 156,000 travellers annually on this route can be achieved, or even exceeded.

On the acquisition of AAX's sister company, Capital A Bhd's airline businesses, Capital A co-founder and executive chairman Datuk Kamarudin Meranun said barring any unforeseen circumstances, the exercise is on track to be completed either by the end of this month or early December, as scheduled.

He said the company has gone through all the necessary processes, and it is now awaiting the court's approval of the proposed distribution to shareholders via capital reduction.

In October, 99.08% of AAX shareholders voted in favour of the proposed acquisition of Capital A's entire equity interest in the aviation business within AirAsia Aviation Group Ltd and AirAsia Bhd for RM6.8 billion.

Following the acquisition, Kamarudin said, the company will continue to explore and expand into more destinations moving forward, especially the underserved destinations. "We are always on the lookout."

Meanwhile, in his speech earlier, AAX chairman Datuk Fam Lee Ee said AAX operates flights to more than 20 destinations from Malaysia.

"This new direct flight is more than just a connection between two cities, as it represents the strengthening of bilateral relations between Malaysia and Kenya, and we also see immense potential for mutually beneficial business collaborations for travellers in both nations. — Bernama

## MSC reports RM14.3m net profit for Q3, proposes 17 sen special dividend

**PETALING JAYA:** Tin miner and metal producer Malaysia Smelting Corporation Bhd's (MSC) net profit for the third quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (Q3'24) increased 20.88% to RM14.29 million from RM11.82 million in Q3'23.

Revenue for the quarter under review increased 29.14% to RM470.05 million from RM364.02 million in Q3'23.

The growth was driven by higher average tin prices of RM141,500 per tonne and increased sales of refined tin.

In line with favourable tin prices, the group's tin mining segment recorded a 26.1% year-on-year (y-o-y) increase in net profit to RM22.5 million during the quarter from RM17.9 million a year ago.

Meanwhile, the tin smelting arm was affected by foreign exchange losses resulting from the

ringgit's appreciation against the US dollar between August and September 2024, compounded by lower smelting performance. This resulted in a net loss of RM10.3 million during the quarter, against a net loss of RM2.7 million in Q3'23.

For the nine months of FY24 (9M'24), MSC's revenue grew by 20.6% y-o-y to RM1.24 billion, from RM1.03 billion in 9M'23, fuelled by more favourable tin prices of RM140,100 per tonne and higher sales volume of refined tin.

The tin mining segment posted a higher net profit of RM61.7 million on the back of higher tin prices.

Nonetheless, the tin smelting division recorded a net profit of RM4.3 million, impacted by various factors, including lower incoming feed for smelting, reduced sales of refined tin

from processed tin intermediates, and foreign exchange losses.

As a result, the group's net profit contracted to RM49.2 million in 9M'24, against RM75.7 million in the prior year.

MSC group CEO Datuk Dr Patrick Yong said that despite the challenges posed by the global economic environment, the company remains steadfast in building a more resilient business through operational improvements and strategic investments in mining and smelting businesses.

"For our tin smelting division, we are working to address these challenges and are confident in our long-term strategy. Moreover, the recent conclusion of the US 2024 presidential election and the strengthening of the US dollar against the ringgit provide a more stable backdrop for our operations."

For the tin smelting business, Yong said, the group is on track to phase out the old smelting plant at Butterworth, Penang, which is on track for full closure by 2025.

"We expect to benefit from an approximate 30% in cost savings from the planned closure and from the efficient Top Submerged Lance furnace technology in the Pulau Indah smelting facility, which will lower operational and manpower costs and reduce our overall carbon footprint."

For Q3'24, the MSC board has proposed a second interim single-tier special dividend of 17 sen per share for a total dividend payout of RM71.4 million. This follows the first interim single-tier dividend of 7 sen per share declared on Sept 25, which amounts to RM29.4 million.

# Challenges in defending capital gains

**A** HIGH profile case that was reported in the media in September which involved the Inland Revenue Board (IRB) and the disposal by DRB-Hicom Bhd of a long-term investment in subsidiary Alam Flora Sdn Bhd, which was held for 24 years, is a very good example of the current climate where such sales are being challenged and brought to tax under income tax.

A long holding period is becoming less significant in the eyes of the IRB.

The difference here is if the gain from such a sale was brought to tax under income tax, then the taxpayer has to pay 24% compared to capital gains tax (2% of sale proceeds or 10% on gains) or real property gains tax (RPGT, 0% to 30% on gains for individuals, 10% to 30% on gains for

companies).

Lately, there has been a noticeable increase in challenges by the IRB on transactions involving real property where taxpayers have declared and paid their RPGT. Now they are facing additional income tax and penalties ranging up to 45%.

## Where is the challenge coming from?

The IRB is relying on the badges of trade to challenge taxpayers to bring such income as business income. The original six badges of trade are: the motive or the intention at the time of the purchase of the property, existence of similar trading transactions or interests, frequency of transactions, period of ownership, circumstances responsible for the realisation of the property, and the nature of the asset. Other badges of

trade include the way the sale was carried out, improvements to the asset, and method of financing.

Taxpayers must be very clear they can defend their position so that none of the above badges of trade will negatively impact them. The facts must be supportable with evidence. For example, circumstances responsible for the disposal of the asset can go either way. If the taxpayer is able to show that the sale occurred within a short period of time, but it was an unanticipated offer which was too good to refuse or unsolicited, or a sale was made because there was an urgent need for cash within the group, the case for supporting the capital gains argument is strengthened.

What is worrying now is that the IRB is frequently connecting peripheral facts to support its challenge. Examples of such issues are where an individual has any

history of dealing in or developing properties. The IRB is of the view that disposals by such individuals will always be subject to income tax. There are sufficient case laws such as the Lim Foo Yong case which clearly stated that it is possible for individuals or companies to have both investments and trading assets.

Another argument put forward by the IRB is that a company's constitution allows both trading and investment holding. This condition is found in most companies' constitutions, and that should not be the basis for challenging such transactions.

Another common challenge is the location of the property. If a property is located in a prime area, the IRB seems to think the property is highly valuable and saleable and therefore becomes stock-in-trade. If such a notion exists, then all properties in this country located in prime areas

will be all stock-in-trade. That should not be the basis for determining whether it is stock or investment.

The other common challenge is that if companies acquire properties through loan financing, then the chances of the asset being classified as stock-in-trade increase. The classification in the accounts is extremely important as it reflects the intention of the owners, thus it is important to look at the board minutes.

Any changes or modifications made to the asset to make it more marketable, and the method of the sale (e.g. using agents to solicit offers) will affect the case.

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## Selangor expects RM2.35b revenue next year

BY HAYATUN RAZAK  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Selangor is aiming to achieve revenue of RM2.35 billion next year, an increase of RM150 million compared to this year's estimate, said Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari.

He said revenue collection this year has reached RM2.43 billion as of November, surpassing the estimate of RM2.2 billion for 2024.

"For this year, we estimated RM2.2 billion. However, as of November 2024, we have already recorded RM2.4 billion," Amirudin told reporters at the Selangor International Business Summit 2024 Appreciation Dinner on Friday.

He said the growth in 2025 will be driven by the state's newly introduced Zero Discharge Policies and Polluters Pay Principle.

"These initiatives are expected to contribute between RM72 million and RM80 million to the state's income."

When presenting the state budget earlier, Amirudin emphasised the importance of everyone in the Selangor government, businesses and society in understanding the potential, capacity and risks of artificial intelligence (AI).

"Rather than viewing artificial intelligence as a looming threat, we should approach it as a powerful force that we must harness. By doing so, we can ensure that AI's benefits work in humanity's favour, enhancing the quality of life for every Selangorean," he said.

"As industry practitioners, finding a way where workers are at the heart of your development philosophy is paramount.

"I am not suggesting that profits are unimportant; indeed, they are the cornerstone of the capitalist economy in which we live. However, we must be cautious not to fall into the pitfalls identified by economist Daron Acemoglu in his book *Why Nations Fail*, co-authored with James A. Robinson, where he outlines the critical factors that lead to the failure of nations," he said.

Amirudin assured that the Selangor government is ready to work hand-in-hand to reap the benefits of new technology, increase the productivity of each worker, and increase the government's efficiency through AI.

"That was the guiding philosophy of why I launched the Speed Selangor Policy, which will kick off next year, to reduce the processing and wait times businesses currently face when



Amirudin delivering his speech at the Selangor International Business Summit 2024 Appreciation Dinner. — **BERNAMAPIC**

dealing with aspects like the planning permission or acquiring your business licence after receiving approval of your certificate for completion and compliance (CCC)," he said.

Selangor aims for local authorities to provide business licences within 24 hours of ticking all the CCC boxes beginning next year.

Amirudin said Selangor also has ambitious targets in the field of semiconductors.

With a sizeable investment for 2025, it aims to attract more companies from China and Taiwan to call Selangor their new home, especially in the design phase of integrated circuits.

"These two are just some of the areas we are looking to expand and should be given requisite focus in next year's Selangor International Business Summit (SIBS)."

One of the big components that will be fundamental to SIBS 2025 is Visit Selangor Year, which coincides with Malaysia's chairmanship of Asean.

"Now is the time to leverage our networks and strengthen existing relationships. If there is a company you have interacted with in the past but hesitated to invest in Selangor, reach out to them.

"Initiate a conversation, arrange a meeting, and identify a location that would be ideal for their operations.

"Remind them of our Soft Landing Incentive, which allows them to bring their team and take full advantage of the co-working spaces available," Amirudin said.

Looking ahead, he said SIBS's next focus will be on promoting high-growth sectors, embracing technological innovation, and cultivating a highly skilled international workforce capable of meeting the evolving demands of global industries.

SIBS 2025 will return to the all-in-one format and will be held in a single week, from Oct 8 to 11, at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

## Labuan receives RM32.9m for seven development projects

**LABUAN:** The federal government has allocated RM50 million for Labuan's operating expenditure under Budget 2025, maintaining the amount provided in Budget 2024, with RM32.917 million earmarked for seven development projects in this island for the upcoming year.

Deputy Finance Minister Lim Hui Ying said the projects include upgrading the Patau-Patau 1 Bridge, the construction of a sanitary landfill cell, and the enhancement of the Leachate Treatment Plant.

"These initiatives reflect the government's ongoing commitment to improving infrastructure and addressing environmental challenges in Labuan," she said at a press conference after officiating the Madani Financial Carnival 2024 at Financial Park Complex here on Saturday.

The carnival, organised by the Finance Ministry, serves to provide a wide array of services directly to the people in Labuan through the participation of various government agencies and departments, including banking counters by Bank Simpanan Nasional, advisory and direct services from government departments, such as the unclaimed money counter of the Accountant General's Department, the Inland Revenue Board, the Social Security Organisation and company registration services by the Treasury of Malaysia Sabah.

The Employees Provident Fund, Kumpulan Wang Persaraan Retirement, Royal Malaysian Customs Department and other agencies also showcased their offerings at the fair.

Lim said the event designed to educate the public on the roles and functions of each agency, which features financial literacy talks delivered by experts from institutions, "companies, and government agencies throughout the two-day event.

The initiative has also attracted participation from private companies eager to promote their services and products through exhibitions. Notable participants include the Labuan Financial Services Authority, Financial Park Labuan and Global Art.

"This carnival is a key government initiative to enhance accessibility to public services and financial resources for the Labuan community. It also seeks to strengthen relationships between the government, the people, and private companies, ultimately striving to improve community well-being," Lim said. — **Bernama**

# AirAsia expands foreign routes to Andaman Islands

➤ New service marks the shortest route between Malaysia and India for the airline

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Low-cost carrier AirAsia is continuing to grow its presence in India by serving underserved markets and strengthening regional connectivity to meet increasing demand for travel to emerging destinations like Sri Vijaya Puram.

This was further cemented with the carrier's recent inaugural flight from Kuala Lumpur to Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly known as Port Blair), the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, marking the start of six flights weekly linking both capital cities.

The carrier, in a statement, said both Malaysia and India have a vast, untapped tourism potential and AirAsia is the only airline in Malaysia offering affordable direct flights on this unique route.

The introduction of this new service also marks the airline's shortest connection between Malaysia and India, enabling avid travellers to easily access this hidden island escape.

AirAsia Malaysia managing director Datuk Captain Fareh Mazputra said this marks a major milestone in the airline's ongoing efforts to strengthen its presence in India, one of its



Passengers and AirAsia crew celebrating the airline's inaugural flight to Port Blair.

largest and most rapidly expanding markets.

"Our vision and mission have always been to enhance affordable connectivity across Asia and by flying this new route to Sri Vijaya Puram, we are supporting the Indian government's target of over 10 million foreign tourist arrivals by the end of this year, as well as the Tourism @2047 vision, which aims to increase inbound tourism 10-fold.

"We are proud to contribute to India's rise as a premier global destination.

"With over a thousand seats available weekly, this service is set to boost regional travel

and make travelling abroad easier for people on the island. We are excited to welcome travellers from the island who want to visit Kuala Lumpur, which offers affordable connections to other parts of Malaysia, Southeast Asia and beyond on our extensive network," he said.

Furthermore, the new e-visa entry facility at Port Blair Seaport is expected to attract more foreign tourists to this picturesque archipelago.

AirAsia's network also opens up affordable connections, making it easier to explore more of Southeast Asia including Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam.

## Meta Bright unit bags RM60m deal to supply concrete for Sabah project

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Meta Bright Group Bhd's (MBG) 70%-owned subsidiary Expogaya Sdn Bhd signed a concrete supply agreement with Megamas Jaya Sdn Bhd (MJSB).

This agreement solidifies Expogaya's role as a key supplier in Sabah's rapidly expanding construction landscape and represents a total contract value of at least RM60 million.

Under the terms of the contract, Expogaya will supply ready-mixed concrete to MJSB and its appointed procurement representative Pembekal Mewah Enterprise Sdn Bhd (PME) for the 88 Avenue mixed-development project.

MBG executive director of corporate and strategic planning Derek Phang Kiew Lim said this significant contract with MJSB strengthens the company's foothold in Sabah's concrete supply industry.

"As the largest ready-mix concrete supplier in the region, we are proud to contribute to the infrastructure growth that is vital to Sabah's continued economic expansion," he said.

88 Avenue is a high-profile development in the central business district of Kepyang, Kota Kinabalu, poised to become a landmark destination.

The project comprises residential units, serviced residences, and retail outlets and benefits from close proximity to Kota Kinabalu International Airport, catering to local and international demand.

Expogaya's role in providing high-quality concrete materials aligns seamlessly with the strategic infrastructure expansion initiatives highlighted in Malaysia's Budget 2025, which earmarked substantial resources for infrastructure growth in Sabah.

With RM6.7 billion allocated for rural development in the state including essential infrastructure such as roads and utilities, and an additional RM9.7 billion dedicated to the Pan Borneo Highway project, Sabah is positioned as a core region for growth, and Expogaya's presence as the leading concrete supplier places MBG at the forefront of this expansion.

The strategic location and scale of the 88 Avenue project promise to further enhance Kota Kinabalu's appeal as a vibrant hub, with MJSB's vision of a well-integrated, mixed-use development that will serve residences and businesses alike.

## EA Technique's Q3 profit soars fivefold, driven by marine services

**KUALA LUMPUR:** EA Technique (M) Bhd (EATech) posted a revenue of RM31.6 million for the third quarter (Q3) ended Sept 30, 2024 (FY24) alongside a net profit that surged over fivefold to RM27.6 million, reflecting the success of its comprehensive turnaround strategy.

The company's robust earnings highlight its disciplined cost management, high utilisation rates, and strategic creditor waivers that have significantly safeguarded its financial position.

For the first nine months of FY24, EATech recorded revenue of RM93.4 million, slightly lower than RM99.9 million in the same period last year due to the expiration of an FSO vessel contract.

Despite this, the company achieved a net profit of RM129.2 million, compared to RM20.4 million in FY23, mainly due to the writebacks to other income caused by the creditor scheme.

In addition, core earnings remain supported by EATech's diversified portfolio in oil and gas (O&G) and marine services, as well as a robust order book that provides earnings visibility for the coming years.

The company's firm contracts are valued at RM146.6 million, with additional optional contracts worth RM240.2 million, providing a strong foundation for continued profitability and growth.

Executive director Datuk Wira Mubarak

Hussain Akhtar Husin said the company's diversified operations across oil and gas and marine services have been instrumental in driving recovery, ensuring revenue stability, and adapting to a competitive market.

"This resilience has strengthened our profit margins, with Q3'24 gross profit rising 35% to RM13.1 million, showcasing the effectiveness of our turnaround initiatives and the robust foundation of our business model," he said.

Mubarak also reaffirmed EATech's commitment to its PN17 upliftment journey, noting, "Our regularisation plan is complete, and we are diligently working toward completing the final steps to achieve full regulatory compliance."

### WARRANTS WATCH

## HSI remains in focus despite slipping below 20,000 points

**OVERALL** warrants turnover for the week saw a decline of 19% week-on-week (w-o-w) to RM562.6 million. However, warrants over the Hang Seng Index (HSI) still maintained their popularity, forming up 76.4% of the overall turnover at RM429.8 million traded. Likewise, trading activity on warrants over local stocks saw lower demand, falling 24.5% w-o-w to RM88.3 million, despite continued interest in warrants over 99 Speed Mart (99SMART) and Jaya Tiasa (JTASIA), among others.

The HSI fell below the psychological threshold of 20,000 points for the first time since Beijing announced a large package of stimulus measures in late September. The index fell 2.8% to 19,846.88 at the close on Tuesday, bringing it to the lowest point since Sept 25 and erasing all gains from the policy-induced rally (South China

Morning Post, Nov 12). The index then continued to head lower throughout the week, closing 6.3% lower w-o-w to 19,426.34 on Friday. Similarly, the HSI November futures fell 5.7% w-o-w to close at 19,419, marking its sixth consecutive day of losses. The moves led to active trading in both call and put warrants over the HSI, with put HSI-PWBB charting the highest volume traded, followed by call warrants, HSI-CYV, HSI-CYC and HSI-CXY, among others.

Another global index that made its mark last week was the S&P 500® Index (SP500) as it closed at 6,001.35 on Monday, a new psychologically important level after just less than a week after Donald Trump has been elected to return to the White House as the 47th US president. The index then experienced a pullback for the rest of the week, closing the week at

### Top HSI warrants by volume traded

Warrant name	Volume ('mil)	Issuer	Exercise level	Expiry date
HSI-PWBB	833.3	Kenanga	17,000	30 Dec 2024
HSI-CYV	470.5	Kenanga	22,000	28 Nov 2024
HSI-CYC	441.4	Macquarie	23,200	30 Dec 2024
HSI-CWAO	382.0	Kenanga	26,000	27 Jan 2025
HSI-CXY	223.3	Macquarie	23,600	28 Nov 2024

5,870.62, posting a weekly loss of 2.1%. On the back of the pullback, investors have been trading the put warrant SP500-H51 which saw 3.2M units changing hands. Investors should note that all index warrants issued by Macquarie track their respective futures for the relevant futures contract month and not the index level. All of Macquarie's warrants over the S&P 500® Index (SP500)

currently track the December 2024 futures contract.

On the local front, warrants over 99SMART continued to take centre stage as the underlying closed a slight 0.4% higher w-o-w at RM2.33, though it traded at month-to-date November's high of RM2.42 on Thursday. The call warrants 99SMART-CB, 99SMART-CP and 99SMART-CL registered the highest volumes traded

of 34.8 million, 16.4 million and 8.4 million units, respectively. Other popular underlyings last week include JTASIA, which saw its warrants being the second highest traded among warrants over local shares, despite its share price falling 7.9% w-o-w last week.

To view the full list of structured warrants available on Bursa Malaysia, visit [malaysiawarrants.com.my](http://malaysiawarrants.com.my).

Provided for Malaysian residents' information only. This commentary has not been reviewed by the Securities Commission Malaysia. It is not an offer or recommendation to trade and is not research material. Past performance is not indicative of future performance. You should make your own assessment and seek professional advice.

The warrants will not be offered to any US persons.



# Top Japanese banks post record annual profits

➤ Lenders benefit from higher borrowing costs after seven years of negative policy rates

**TOKYO:** Japan's three megabanks raised their annual profit forecasts to all-time highs last week, fuelled by robust lending demand and higher margins following a July interest rate hike by the Bank of Japan.

The lenders are benefiting from higher borrowing costs after seven

years of negative policy rates kept lending margins razor-thin.

Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, the top bank by assets, said second-quarter profit surged 90% on higher interest rates and the sale of cross-held shares.

It raised its forecast for annual net profit to ¥1.75 trillion (RM50 billion) from a previous estimate of ¥1.5 trillion.

It saw higher loan and deposit interest income generated by its domestic retail and corporate lending businesses thanks to higher interest rates and improved lending spreads.

MUFJ also booked healthy growth in fees from its asset and wealth management businesses, but net income in its global investment banking business dropped on higher

credit costs. It said it would aim to meet a return-on-equity target of around 9% this fiscal year, earlier than expected.

Mizuho Financial Group, the No. 3 player, said its second quarter net income rose more than 60% and raised its full-year earnings forecast to a record ¥820 billion.

Underscoring the bumper results, Mizuho announced a share buyback of up to ¥100 billion – its first in 16 years – while lifting its previous dividend estimate by ¥15 to ¥130 for the year.

"We have entered a new stage of growth investment and strengthening shareholder returns," CEO Masahiro Kihara told a media briefing.

Japan's central bank raised its

policy rate to 0.25% in July after ending negative interest rates in March, pushing Mizuho's loan and deposit rate margin for its domestic lending business up for the second consecutive quarter.

Mizuho estimated the financial impact from the pair of rate hikes would total ¥85 billion over the course of this financial year.

For the July-September period, it reported a group net profit of ¥277 billion, up from ¥170 billion in the same quarter a year earlier.

Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, the second-largest lender by assets, raised its annual net profit guidance to a record ¥1.16 trillion after a 27% jump in second-quarter profit. – Reuters

## Foxconn expects 2025 to be 'year of AI'

**TAIPEI:** Taiwanese tech giant Foxconn reported a forecast-topping net profit for the third quarter on robust demand for artificial intelligence servers and said it expected 2025 to be the "year of AI".

The firm, also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry, is the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles devices for major tech companies, including Apple's iPhones.

It has been moving to diversify beyond electronics assembly, pushing into areas ranging from electric vehicles to semiconductors and servers.

Foxconn said net profit for the three months to September hit NT\$49.3 billion (RM6.7 billion), up 14% from a year ago and beating the NT\$45.9 billion expected by analysts surveyed by Bloomberg.

Revenues for the period rose 20% on-year to NT\$1.9 trillion.

The figures represent the fifth consecutive quarter of profit growth for the firm as it rides a wave of demand for generative AI – following the runaway popularity of products such as ChatGPT since it launched two years ago.

Chairman Young Liu said Foxconn's revenue from AI servers more than doubled in the first three quarters of this year from the same period last year.

Servers now accounted for more than 40% of total revenue, Liu said during an earnings call with analysts.

"Regarding the full-year outlook, we maintain our previous forecast for substantial growth, with visibility further improved compared to August."

But Liu warned "heightened uncertainty in the economic environment and geopolitical factors" could hurt consumer smart products demand in the fourth quarter.

Foxconn has invested significantly to be part of the AI market.

In documents released ahead of the earnings call, the company said it expected "rapid growth" in its AI server business in 2025.

AI servers were expected to exceed 50% of total server revenue next year and become a "primary growth driver for the company", Liu said.

Liu said that "2025 will be the year of AI", adding Foxconn was set to "enter another growth phase".

"We won't just be an AI supplier but also an AI user."

"With significant advancements in AI computing power, we are constructing supercomputing centres, positioning ourselves as a major manufacturer with AI supercomputing capabilities." – AFP

## JD.com notches Q3 revenue growth

**BEIJING:** Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com announced accelerated third-quarter growth last week, a positive sign for the firm as it grapples with lacklustre consumer spending and tough competition with its main competitor, Alibaba.

Total revenue during the three-month period ended Sept 30 was 260.4 billion yuan (RM161 billion), up 5.1% year-on-year, a filing at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange showed.

Revenue growth picked up from the slower 1.7% expansion recorded in the same period last year.

The latest quarter also saw JD.com record surging net income of 11.7 billion yuan, up 47.8% year-on-year, the filing showed.

"We saw an uptick in our topline growth, as well as healthy profitability in the third quarter, as overall consumer sentiment continued to brighten," CEO Sandy Xu said in the statement.

Consumer spending in China has not fully recovered since the end of the pandemic, presenting a hurdle for JD.com and its e-commerce sector peers.

The firm's latest results are being closely scrutinised by analysts and investors for signs that recent measures taken by the government to



People standing near banners for the Singles Day shopping festival at JD.com's headquarters in Beijing. – REUTERS/PIC

boost activity are having an impact.

Beijing-based JD.com is a top player in China's vast e-commerce sector, where it is engaged in a

prolonged battle for market share with archrival Alibaba.

Both firms announced strong performances in the annual "Singles

Day" shopping bonanza that ended earlier last week, though they stopped short of publishing detailed sales totals. – AFP

## Indian regulator proposes tighter regulations for custodians

**BENGALURU:** India's markets regulator has proposed changes to the regulatory framework for custodians, including doubling their minimum net worth requirement.

Custodians provide services such as safekeeping of assets and

maintenance of securities accounts for clients like foreign portfolio investors, mutual funds, and portfolio managers.

Currently, India has 17 registered custodians.

Assets under their custody jumped to 278.5 trillion rupees by September

2024 from 2.7 trillion rupees in 2002.

Given the substantial growth, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has proposed to bring regulations in line with those for stock brokers.

It has proposed that custodians should have a minimum net worth of

one billion rupees (RM53 million) against 500 million rupees currently.

SEBI has also proposed a framework for orderly winding down of these firms, in line with that for stock brokers.

It has suggested new frameworks for business continuity planning and

disaster recovery for custodians.

Other proposals include doing away with the requirement for vaults for custodians who do not hold physical assets.

SEBI has sought public comments on the proposals by Nov 28. – Reuters



# Crisis-era regulation has 'gone too far': Reeves

**LONDON:** Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves promised a reboot of regulation governing Britain's "crown jewel" financial industry, which she said has shackled the City's prospects since the global financial crisis and stifled British economic growth.

In a speech at the City of London's ornate Mansion House last week, Reeves vowed not to take Britain's status as a global financial centre for granted and pledged a raft of growth-focused reforms.

Her speech came as leaders across the industry brace for a possible bonfire of regulation on Wall Street during President-elect Donald Trump's second term in office, with leaner taxes and lighter rules on capital likely to widen an earnings gap between US banks and their global competitors.

"While it was right that successive governments made regulatory changes after the global financial crisis, to ensure that regulation kept pace with the global economy of the time, it's important we learn the lessons of the past," Reeves said.

"These changes have resulted in a system which sought to eliminate risk taking. That has gone too far and, in places, it has had unintended consequences which we must now address."

The former Bank of England economist proposed five areas to maximise growth in British financial services – capital markets, fintech, sustainable finance, asset management and wholesale services, and insurance and reinsurance.

Reeves said the government would publish a financial services strategy early next year as part of a broader 10-year industrial plan.

"The UK has been regulating for risk, but not regulating for growth," the chancellor said, announcing that she had written to the Bank of England and Britain's Financial Conduct Authority to instruct them to put greater effort towards supporting government growth goals as well as financial stability.

Reeves and Prime Minister Keir Starmer promised voters in July's election that they would turn Britain into the fastest-growing Group of Seven economy after years of sluggishness.

Her latest proposals were broadly backed by financiers.

"It's crucial the UK's regulatory framework is effective and well-calibrated. We therefore welcome the chancellor's recognition of the need for a more balanced approach to risk," said Patrick Thomson, EMEA CEO of J.P. Morgan Asset Management and chairman of Britain's Investment Association trade body. – Agencies

## ► British minister pledges raft of growth-focused reforms to unshackle finance sector's prospects



Reeves delivering a speech during the Financial and Professional Services Dinner, previously known as the Bankers dinner, at Mansion House in London. – AFP/PIIC

## Novo Nordisk phasing out human insulin pens

**LONDON:** Novo Nordisk is gradually ending production of human insulin pens, the drugmaker told Reuters, as it spends billions to ramp up manufacturing of its popular obesity and diabetes injections.

It declined to comment on the timeline. "Globally (human insulin pens) will be phased out over time and human insulin will be available only in vials," a spokesman said.

In wealthy nations like the US, the majority of people with diabetes now use modern or analogue insulin, not human insulin, because the former enables better blood sugar control.

In low and middle income countries, human insulin is more commonly used than analogue

insulin, which is more expensive and harder to make.

Booming sales of the Danish drugmaker's new obesity and diabetes medicines, delivered in injection pens, have propelled it to become Europe's most valuable company by market value, at about US\$572 billion.

Novo Nordisk said in a statement to Reuters that the pens it uses for human insulin are not the same as those for its GLP-1 agonists Wegovy – a weight-loss treatment – and Ozempic, a diabetes drug.

But the delivery devices are similar, and the company said last year it was shifting away from its century-long focus on making insulin to treat

diabetes to making weight-loss drugs to combat obesity as a precursor to type 2 diabetes.

Medical charity Medicens Sans Frontières and advocacy group T1 International criticise Novo Nordisk's focus on manufacturing pens for its new medicines – which are not yet available in poorer nations.

The groups see an emerging double standard in diabetes care – people with diabetes in high-income countries will not suffer from the halting of insulin pen production, because the company is continuing to make analogue insulin pens for those markets.

Pens are easier and more precise to use than syringes for injecting insulin. – Reuters

## Burberry launches turnaround plan after posting loss

**LONDON:** Troubled British fashion house Burberry last week announced cost-cutting plans after posting a loss, with the global luxury sector pressured by weak Chinese demand.

Burberry reported a net loss of £74 million (RM420 million) in the six months to the end of September, down from profit after tax of £158 million in the same period last year.

Revenue slid 22% to £1.09 billion, the group famed for its trench coats and trademark red, camel and black check design said in a statement.

"Today, we are acting with urgency to ... stabilise the business and position Burberry for a return to sustainable, profitable growth," said recently-appointed chief executive Joshua Schulman.

Schulman said Burberry would refocus on outerwear, in-store productivity and reignite a "high-performance culture".

It came following reports that Italian fashion brand Moncler had shown interest in buying the 168-year-old label.

Burberry on Thursday added that it had halted dividend payments as it looks to save about £40 million.

"Over the past several years, we moved too far from our core with disappointing results," the group said.

Schulman was appointed CEO in July, replacing Jonathan Akeroyd.

In September, Burberry exited London's top-tier FTSE 100 stocks index after 15 years, with analysts citing strategic mistakes and weak demand from China.

"The company has a long way to go and is not through its annus horribilis yet," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at trading group XTB.

She added that the brand needs to "focus on new markets due to the continued slump in demand for luxury goods in China".

The Asia Pacific region saw Burberry's largest slump in sales, with mainland China store turnover sliding 24% in the first half of the year. – AFP

## Russia cuts gas supplies to Austria

**MOSCOW:** Russia halted gas supplies to Austria on Saturday in a dispute over payments but was still pumping steady volumes to Europe via Ukraine after remaining buyers asked for more gas.

Russia, which before the Ukraine war was the biggest single supplier of natural gas to Europe, has lost almost all of its European customers as the EU tries to reduce its dependence and after the Nord Stream pipeline to Germany was blown up in 2022.

Now one of the last main Russian gas routes to Europe – the Soviet-era Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhgorod pipeline via Ukraine – is due to shut at the end of this year, as Kyiv does not want to extend a five-year transit agreement which brings northern Siberian gas to Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Austria.

Austria said on Friday that Moscow had informed it that the gas would be shut off following an arbitration award to OMV, Austria's biggest energy supplier, over unfulfilled supplies to its German unit by Russia's state firm Gazprom. On Saturday, Austria's energy regulator E-Control said Gazprom's deliveries to OMV had stopped, adding that prices and supplies to Austrian customers were steady.

OMV is seeking to recover the €230 million (RM1.08 billion) damages, awarded during arbitration, from Gazprom by offsetting the claim against invoices for deliveries to Austria – essentially stopping some payments for gas supplied via Ukraine.

Slovak state-owned firm SPP said it was still receiving gas from Russia and added other customers were buying more. – Reuters



# Cash-strapped US farmers switch to generic chemicals

➤ Analysts say downgrading could hit bottom lines of big agrichemical companies

**NEW YORK:** US farmers struggling with slumping incomes and depressed grain prices have been switching to cheaper generic pesticides and fungicides as they plan for spring planting next year, which market analysts said could hit the bottom lines of agrichemical companies like Bayer.

Signs of these financial impacts are already emerging.

Bayer shares fell sharply to a 20-year low last week, after the chemical company warned that weak global agricultural markets and a slumping US farm economy are likely to pressure profits further.

Agrichemical competitors Syngenta, Corteva and the agriculture unit of Germany's BASF could also face challenges in the sector, analysts said.

Nearly one-third of all the pesticides and fungicides that Paul Butler uses on his Illinois soybean and corn farm are generic to help him cut costs in a tight year, he said.

Fellow Illinois grain grower Jeff O'Connor is doing the same.

"It's like if you grew up eating Fruity Pebbles and now you go to Dollar General and get Fruity Bites," he said.

Despite the cost savings, farmers say there can be drawbacks to downgrading.

Manufacturers of generic chemicals typically do not cover the cost of respraying if the product does not work, said Caleb Hamer, an Iowa corn and soy farmer.

Still, distributors and grain elevators say they have seen customers cutting back their spring pesticide and herbicide budgets.

Some farmers are shifting away from branded products, said Matt Carstens, chief executive of farm cooperative Landus and agricultural financing company Conduit.

Others are investing in equipment that targets and treats weeds and pests in their fields – allowing them to buy less herbicides and pesticides altogether, he said.

"It comes down to this: What does the farmer really need? Do they need a name brand, with protection insurance and complaint policies backing it? Do they need to pay for all of that?" Carstens said.

When it comes to chemistry, a farmer's buying decisions often are rooted in the seed.

Farmers typically

base their chemical purchases with trait-specific seeds they want – such as ones that produce a drought-tolerant crop or can withstand herbicide applications that kill weeds without harming the plant.

If there is a generic option to brand-name herbicides, and the seeds that a farmer purchases can tolerate it, then it can make sense to go with a less expensive product, said Mac Marshall, founder of agriculture advising firm Balcony View Consulting.

The number of generics available to farmers is growing.

The patent for glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup and the world's most widely used herbicide, expired in 2000, according to Rabobank agricultural analysts Owen Wagner and Sam Taylor.

More than two dozen active ingredient patents have expired in the past five years – spurring a boom in off-patent use, which now accounts for about 80% of the agrichemical market share, they said.

Now, with farmers facing weak margins this spring, they're more likely to look for cost savings among their fertiliser or crop protection chemicals, Taylor said.

– Reuters



Soybeans are harvested from a field on Hodgen Farm in the US town of Roachdale. – REUTERS/SPIC

## 'Deadpool & Wolverine' helps Disney beat earnings forecasts

**LOS ANGELES:** Walt Disney reported earnings that topped Wall Street's estimates last week, propelled by blockbuster ticket sales from the rude and irreverent summer Marvel film *Deadpool & Wolverine*, and provided an upbeat forecast for the coming year.

The firm projected adjusted earnings-per-share percentage growth in the high single digits in fiscal 2025, even with capital expenditures of roughly US\$8 billion (RM36 billion).

It also said it expects to buy back US\$3 billion worth of stock.

The entertainment giant's recent success at movie theatres helped offset a decline in operating income at the company's Experiences and Sports divisions.

Lower attendance at international locations dragged on theme parks results, and higher programming and production costs hurt ESPN.

Disney reported adjusted per-share earnings of US\$1.14 for its fiscal fourth quarter that ended in September. That compares with consensus estimates of US\$1.10 per share, according to analysts polled by LSEG.

Revenue reached US\$22.6 billion, slightly ahead of Wall Street forecasts of US\$22.45 billion.

Operating income rose 23% from a year earlier to nearly US\$3.7 billion.

CEO Bob Iger, who returned to the company from retirement in November 2022, undertook aggressive cost-cutting and worked to revitalise the film and TV units after a period of misfires.

"Thanks to the significant progress we've made, we have emerged from a period of considerable challenges and disruption well positioned for growth and optimistic about our future," Iger said in a statement.

Operating income at the entertainment unit, which includes film, television and streaming, more than doubled to US\$1.1 billion in the quarter, reflecting the return of Hulu's Emmy-nominated comedy *Only Murders in the Building* and summer movies including *Deadpool & Wolverine*, the first R-rated Marvel film, and *Alien: Romulus*.

The *Deadpool* movie brought in \$1.3 billion at global box offices.

Disney's flagship streaming video service, Disney+, boasted more than 122.7 million subscribers outside of India, a gain of 4.4 million from the prior quarter.

The company intensified efforts to crack down on password sharing in September.

Disney+, Hulu and ESPN+ produced operating profit of US\$321 million for the quarter, marking the streaming services' second straight quarter of profitability.

Disney's experiences segment, that includes parks and consumer products, declined 6% to US\$1.66 billion.

In addition to the fiscal 2025 projection, Disney said it expected double-digit adjusted EPS growth in fiscal years 2026 and 2027.

"If you add it all up, our strategies are working, working very well, and we've got good visibility on where those strategies are likely to lead us," Disney CFO Hugh Johnston said. – Reuters

## Argentina's monthly inflation falls to three-year low

**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentina's monthly inflation rate fell to 2.7% in October, its lowest level in three years, the national statistics agency said, a development welcomed by cost-cutting President Javier Milei.

Annual inflation, however, remains among the highest in the world, at 193% in October, figures from the Indec statistics agency showed.

The government of self-described

"anarcho-capitalist" Milei has applied a drastic austerity programme aimed at erasing the budget deficit and taming the high inflation that has plagued Argentina for years.

In December, when he took office, monthly inflation leapt by 25.5% after he devalued the peso by more than 50%.

Inflation has since been on a downward trajectory, coming in at

under 5% each month since May.

"We are decreasing the tax that creates the most distortion – inflation," Economy Minister Luis Caputo told a meeting at the Foundation for Latin American Economic Research.

Salaries continue to rise more slowly than inflation – increasing 181.9% over the past 12 months, when prices rose by 209%, according to Indec.

Milei, who wielded a chainsaw on

the campaign trail last year as a symbol of his plan to slash public spending, has cut energy and transport subsidies and thousands of public sector jobs.

His policies have produced Argentina's first budget surplus in 15 years but have also been blamed for plunging the country into a deep recession and driving the proportion of Argentines living in poverty up 11

points to 52.9% in the first half of 2024.

Addressing a meeting of entrepreneurs last week, Milei pointed to a slight increase in industrial output and construction as signs the economy had turned a corner.

"We are emerging from the desert, the country is starting to grow again," he said. – AFP



# MARKETS/FROM THE BROKERS

SUNBIZ presents extracts of a selection of commentaries and research reports received from stockbrokers on counters that could be of interest to investors.

Compiled by SunBiz Team

**DISCLAIMER:** The information is extracted from stockbrokers' commentaries and research reports and do not represent the views or opinions of Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd. It is not a solicitation, recommendation or an offer to buy or sell the equities featured. Sun Media Corporation shall not be liable or responsible for any consequences resulting from usage of the information.

## Farm Price expands to Sabah via stake in The Fresh Story

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Farm Price Holdings Bhd (FPH) is expanding its distribution to Sabah, aiming to provide the state with affordable fresh produce.

This is facilitated through the signing of a subscription and shareholders agreement between FPH, Thian Chu Chin and Jong Nyuk Sheng, collectively referred to as the partners, and The Fresh Story (KK) Sdn Bhd (TFS).

Under the agreement, FPH will subscribe to 1.1 million shares in TFS at RM1 per share, for a total of RM1.1 million.

Meanwhile, the partners will increase their shareholding in TFS via share subscription to 450,000 shares each at RM1 per share.

Upon completion of the share subscriptions, TFS will have an enlarged share capital of RM2 million from the present RM500,000, giving FPH a 55.0% stake and each partner a 22.5% stake.

Upon completion of the subscription, TFS will become a 55%-owned subsidiary of FPH.

FPH managing director Dr Tiong Lee Chian said the company's expansion into Sabah represents a strategic opportunity driven by customer references, highlighting their capability to meet the growing demand for a diverse range of fresh vegetables.

"As we extend our reach to Sabah, we are completing the geographic expansion across East Malaysia, where we are already distributing in Sarawak.

"This move strengthens FPH's national foothold and enables us to leverage our partners' understanding of the local market to enhance our regional distribution capabilities. We look forward to the initiative contributing positively to the group earnings from 2025 onwards," he said.

## Ringgit ends losing streak against US dollar

**THE** ringgit staged a rebound last Friday after recent losses to finish the week higher against the American dollar despite a rising greenback buoyed by anticipation of slower US interest rate cuts, an economist said.

At 6pm, the local note rose by 125 basis points to 4.4715/4780 against the greenback compared with Thursday's close of 4.4840/4870.

Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd chief economist Dr Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid noted that the local currency bounced back on Friday after having endured a run of losses last week. "The markets could have become uneasy with the latest comments by US Federal Reserve (Fed) chairman Jerome Powell last night that the central bank might not be easing its monetary policy hastily," he told Bernama.

It was reported that in his remarks to business leaders in Dallas on Thursday, Powell said strong US economic growth will allow policymakers to take their time in deciding how far and how fast to lower interest rates.

At the close, the ringgit traded mostly lower against a basket of major currencies.

It appreciated versus the British pound to 5.6573/6656 from 5.6750/6787 at Thursday's close but slid vis-a-vis the euro to 4.7224/7292 from 4.7172/7203.

The local unit traded mixed against its Asean peers.

It strengthened against the Philippine peso to 7.617/7.63 from 7.637/7.63 and climbed versus the Indonesian rupiah to 281.6/282.2 from 282.6/282.9 from Thursday's close.

It slipped against the Thai baht to 12.8307/8541 from 12.7706/7838 at Thursday's close and weakened vis-a-vis the Singapore dollar to 3.3330/3381 from 3.3284/3309.

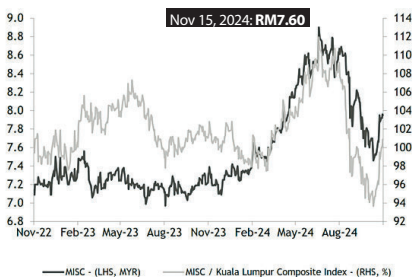
## Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5510	4.4170	4.4070
1 Australian Dollar	2.9620	2.8440	2.8280
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3790	3.2820	3.2740
1 Canadian Dollar	3.2470	3.1610	3.1490
1 Euro	4.8020	4.6480	4.6280
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.6800	2.5820	2.5660
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3790	3.2820	3.2740
1 Sterling Pound	5.7740	5.5940	5.5740
1 Swiss Franc	5.1630	4.9450	4.9300
100 UAE Dirham	125.3600	118.9000	118.7000
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.8880	3.6210	3.4210
100 Chinese Renminbi	63.2600	60.6000	N/A
100 Danish Krone	66.0000	60.7400	60.5400
100 Hongkong Dollar	59.1100	56.1800	55.9800
100 Indian Rupee	5.4800	5.1400	4.9400
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0297	0.0269	0.0219
100 Japanese Yen	2.9230	2.8300	2.8200
100 New Taiwan Dollar	15.0000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.9200	38.5700	38.3700
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6700	1.5600	1.3600
100 Philippine Peso	7.8500	7.4000	7.2000
100 Qatar Riyal	126.2400	119.8400	119.6400
100 Saudi Riyal	122.4900	116.2800	116.0800
100 South Africa Rand	25.8200	23.3200	23.1200
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.6000	1.4700	1.2700
100 Swedish Krona	42.6700	38.8700	38.6700
100 Thai Baht	13.5900	12.0500	11.6500

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

## MISC Bhd

Hold. Target price: RM8.09



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

**MISC'S** Q3'24 core net profit of RM329 million (-40% QoQ, -29% YoY) brought 9M'24 cumulative core earnings to RM1,577 million (-4% YoY). The results fell short - at 65%/63% of ours/consensus FY24. Key variance against our estimates was due to MISC's offshore segment slipping into losses, caused by an increase in operating expenses to fix a production risk issue for the Mero 3 FPSO. A 3rd interim DPS of 8sen was declared for FY24.

LNG shipping charter rates is expected to remain uninspiring over the next few quarters due to a high number of vessel deliveries (which will add to global supply), amidst limited additional liquefaction capacities. Term-to-spot ratio for MISC's LNG fleet and petroleum tanker segments are 85:15 and 90:10 respectively. Also, based on TotalEnergies official press release, we gather that Mero 3 has successfully achieved first oil on Oct 30. We think that a stake sale (we suspect to range between 30-50%) of Mero 3 would take precedence over job wins for now for "capital recycling" purposes.

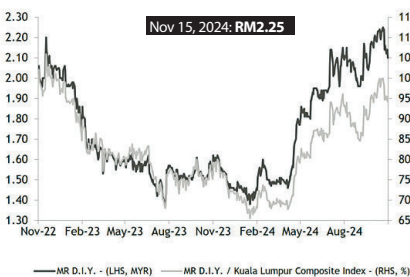
MISC is defensive in nature, via its LT LNG, Petroleum tankers and FPSO/FSO assets which provide recurring and stable earnings & cash flows. Our annual DPS estimate of 36 sen implies a 4.5% yield, which we believe is decent and would be supportive of MISC's share price.

There are several risk factors affecting our earnings estimates, target price and rating for MISC. Abrupt changes in the momentum of petroleum tanker rates and bunker prices may lead to lower earnings for MISC.

HOLD with RM8.09 TP. - **Maybank Investment Bank, Nov 15**

## MR D.I.Y. Group (M) Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM2.35



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

**MRDIY'S** Q3'24 net profit of RM122 million (-2% YoY, -22% QoQ) brought 9M'24 net profit to RM422 million (+5% YoY). The latter reflected just 65%/66% of our/consensus FY24. The earnings shortfall was largely due to under-performance in sales, along with higher-than-expected operating expenses. A 3rd interim DPS of 0.1sen brings YTD DPS to 3.2sen (DPR: 70%).

Q3'24 revenue grew +6% YoY led by added contribution from new stores (+49 stores YoY), but partially offset by weaker SSSG of -1.8% YoY given softer average basket size of RM24.90 (Q3'23: RM25.50). Q3'24 pre-tax profit declined by -2% YoY on higher administrative expenses (+26% YoY) from one-time charges of RM3.7 million in relation to its new automated warehouse, and higher interest expense (+15% YoY). On a QoQ basis, the absence of festive spending and softer consumer sentiment attributed to its weaker topline (-5% QoQ) and bottom-line (-22% QoQ).

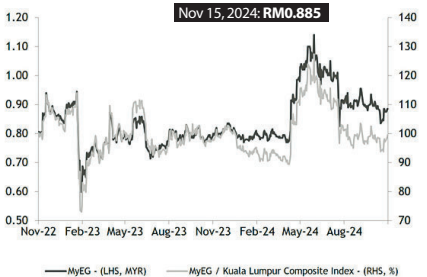
MRDIY's total store count stands at 1,383 stores as at end-Q3'24 (YTD: +128 stores, 71% of its FY24 target of +180 stores). The group targets to open +190 new stores in FY25. Q4'24 earnings are expected to come in stronger QoQ as consumer spending increases during the year-end festive season, coupled with potentially stronger sales momentum after the civil service salary hike on Dec 1.

There are several risk factors for our earnings estimates, price target and rating for MRDIY. As more than 70% of its products are sourced from foreign end suppliers, particularly in China, any major changes in currency, tax, trade policies or tariffs in China may adversely impact earnings.

BUY with RM2.35 TP. - **Maybank Investment Bank, Nov 15**

## MY E.G. Services Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM1.68



Source: Maybank Investment Bank

**MYEG** is a digital services-centric business, centred on government concessions of portals (primarily IMI, RTD, MOH) and commercial services which complement its existing digital infrastructure with these government departments.

MYEG was successful in reducing its Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 23% in FY23 via the streamlining of operations at approved sites. Last year, MYEG also began tracking Scope 3 emissions encompassing employee commute and business travel. Crucially, both electricity and emissions intensity were also substantially lower in FY23 vs. FY21. MYEG's "E" score has the potential to improve further in FY24 if it performs better in waste metrics.

MYEG's largely digital business model allows it increased scope for a high level of female representation, as evidenced by the proportion of women in its workforce that remained >40% from FY21-23. Positively, the percentage of women in senior mgmt roles has shown an impressive increase in trend from 15.4% in FY21 to 41.7% in FY23. MYEG could however, do better with its employee training that showed a YoY decline from 8,325 total hours in FY22 to 8,244 in FY23.

MYEG's board and CEO compensation in relation to reported PAT was amongst the industry's lowest in FY23 at <0.3%/0.4% respectively. Although MYEG's independent representation at board level remained healthy at 57% over the last 3 years, it has the potential to improve on its "G" score further if it increases female board representation as the current 29% falls just short of the MCGG-recommended 30% threshold guideline.

BUY with RM1.68 TP. - **Maybank Investment Bank, Nov 15**



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## WEEKLY FOCUS

### MONDAY

Technology and social media

### TUESDAY

Travel and leisure

### WEDNESDAY

Fashion and beauty

### THURSDAY

Home and living

### FRIDAY

Food and beverage

# Pride of Malaysia

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Appeal of horror movies

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Wolf is great comedy caper

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K-pop duo to play live in KL



# Slimmest laptops face off

## ➤ Top 10 ultra-thin notebooks in Malaysia from RM4,399

BY **MARK MATHEN VICTOR**

**L**OOKING for a laptop that will not weigh you down? Here are the slimmest laptops available in Malaysia that combine portability with performance. These laptops represent some

of the slimmest options available in Malaysia, each offering unique features and capabilities to suit different needs and budgets.

Whether you are a creative, professional or an everyday user, there is likely a slim laptop here that matches your requirements.



### Acer Swift 14 AI

*Specifications: Thickness 9.7mm | Weight 1.3kg*

A powerhouse packed into an ultra-slim aluminium chassis, the new Swift 14 AI features the latest Intel Core Ultra processor series with built-in AI capabilities. Its standout features include a vibrant 14-inch OLED display, impressive 17-hour battery life and AI-powered features such as eye contact correction and background noise reduction.

The laptop comes in two variants with different RAM configurations (16GB/32GB) and includes Microsoft Office software. The PurifiedView 2.0 and PurifiedVoice 2.0 technologies enhance video call quality while features such as User Sensing 2.0 provide automatic device security.

*Price range: RM4,399 - RM4,999*

### Apple MacBook Air M2 and M3

*Specifications: Thickness 11.3mm | Weight 1.24kg*  
The MacBook Air M2 and M3 lines represent Apple's engineering prowess with its incredibly thin yet durable design. The two chips deliver exceptional performance and battery efficiency while the 13.6-inch Liquid Retina display offers stunning visuals. Its MagSafe charging port, improved 1080p webcam and robust speaker system make it a premium choice for professionals.

*Price range: RM4,499 - RM7,499*



### Samsung Galaxy Book3 Ultra

*Specifications: Thickness 13.2mm | Weight 1.17kg*

Despite its slim profile, the Galaxy Book3 Ultra packs serious power with its NVIDIA RTX graphics and Intel Core i7/i9 processors. The 16-inch AMOLED display with 120Hz refresh rate makes it ideal for content creators and power users who need colour accuracy and smooth performance.

*Price range: RM7,999 - RM9,999*

### ASUS ZenBook S 13 OLED

*Specifications: Thickness 10.9mm | Weight 1kg*

The ZenBook S 13 OLED stands out with its magnesium-aluminium alloy body and stunning 13.3-inch OLED display. Its Intel Core processors and long battery life make it ideal for business professionals who prioritise portability without compromising performance.

*Price range: RM5,499 - RM6,999*

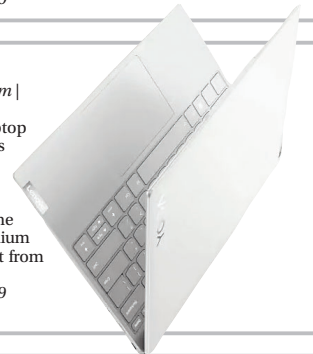


### Lenovo Yoga Slim 7i Carbon

*Specifications: Thickness 14.8mm | Weight 0.97kg*

This ultra-lightweight laptop features a carbon fibre chassis that is durable and portable. With Intel processors and a QHD display, it offers excellent performance for its size. The white colour scheme and premium build quality make it stand out from the crowd.

*Price range: RM4,999 - RM6,499*



### Dell XPS 13 Plus

*Specifications: Thickness 15.28mm | Weight 1.23kg*

The XPS 13 Plus features a revolutionary design with a haptic touchpad and capacitive function row. Its InfinityEdge display minimises bezels while powerful Intel processors handle demanding tasks with ease. The premium build quality and excellent keyboard make it ideal for professionals.

*Price range: RM6,899 - RM8,999*



### HP Elite Dragonfly G4

*Specifications: Thickness 16.4mm | Weight 0.99kg*

This business-focused laptop combines extreme portability with enterprise-grade security features. Its 13.5-inch display offers excellent visibility, while the long battery life and optional 5G connectivity make it perfect for mobile professionals.

*Price range: RM7,999 - RM9,999*



### LG Gram Style

*Specifications: Thickness 15.9mm | Weight 1.23kg*

The Gram Style stands out with its iridescent design and exceptionally light weight despite its 16-inch screen size. It features a high-resolution display, good battery life, and enough power for everyday computing tasks and light creative work.

*Price range: RM6,999 - RM8,499*



### MSI Prestige 13 Evo

*Specifications: Thickness 16.9mm | Weight 1.19kg*

The Prestige 13 Evo balances performance and portability with its Intel processors and lightweight design. It features a comfortable keyboard, good port selection and solid battery life, making it suitable for work and entertainment.

*Price range: RM4,999 - RM6,499*



### Huawei MateBook X Pro

*Specifications: Thickness 15.6mm | Weight 1.26kg*

The MateBook X Pro impresses with its 14.2-inch 3.1K touch display and premium aluminium build. It offers good performance with Intel processors, a comfortable keyboard and Huawei's Super Device features for seamless connectivity with other Huawei devices.

*Price range: RM6,299 - RM7,999*





Lim is the second Malaysian to have held this spot.

**M**ALAYSIA'S Sandra Lim has clinched a coveted spot in the top 30 at the 73rd Miss Universe pageant in Mexico, marking the nation's first Miss Universe placement in 54 years.

The last Malaysian to achieve this honour was Josephine Lena Wong in 1970.

The pageant gathered a record 125 delegates from around the globe, crowning Victoria Kjaer Theilvig of Denmark as Miss Universe 2024.

Lim's performance during the preliminary round last Thursday captivated the selection committee.

"I am very grateful and honoured to represent Malaysia. I have always aimed for a placement and it has

# Miss Universe Malaysia secures top 30 spot

➤ Sandra Lim's placement is historic for country, breaking 54-year interval

been my dream to make Malaysia proud. This achievement is dedicated to my country, family, friends, the Miss Universe Malaysia Organisation

team and all my fans who have supported me every step of the way," said Lim in a statement yesterday. Lim brought the Malaysian

heritage to life on stage with a Princess Walinong Sari-inspired national costume by Ezuwan Ismail. In the National Costume segment,

Lim showcased her martial arts skills with a *wushu* performance.

A multi-talented actress, model and martial artist, Lim has excelled in various fields, including earning first runner-up at an international pageant in 2022 and a national *wushu* gold medal earned at just 13.

## Beauty content makes bigger impact on IG

**BEAUTY** content is always popular on social networks yet some platforms seem to stand out. Indeed, Instagram is the app on which this kind of content has the biggest impact, revealed the latest report from influencer marketing platform Traackr.

In just one year, views of beauty videos have skyrocketed on Instagram, according to Traackr's *State of Influence: Beauty* report 2024 based on research conducted in the US, UK and France.

While the Meta group's social network saw the number of active influencers fall by 10% between the first half of 2024 and the same period in 2023, with mentions also down by 14%, engagement rose by 5% while the number of views jumped by 68%.

The report said the improving performance of beauty content on Instagram may see creators and brands turn increasingly to the platform, potentially driving a rebound in the number of beauty creators active on the app.

Instagram's performance largely outstrips those of its competitors. Although TikTok performed well in terms of mentions (+22%) and number of active influencers and views (+6%), it saw no growth in terms of engagement.

While YouTube has established itself as one of the world's most popular platforms, the video streaming giant suffered a decline in every category: -30% in mentions, -25% in active influencers, -24% in the number of



Instagram's performance on beauty-related content largely outstrips those of its competitors such as YouTube and TikTok. - FREEPIKPC

views and -21% for engagement. Influencers with fewer than one million followers benefited most from the overall increase in views.

Mid-influencers (between 50,000 and 250,000 subscribers) saw an increase of 46% in views, compared with 41% for micro-influencers (10,000 to 50,000 subscribers), 39% for nano-influencers (1,000 to 10,000 subscribers) 39% and 35% macro-influencers (between 250,000 and one million subscribers).

In France, Sephora has established itself as the most mentioned beauty brand. Its Brand Vitality Score (VIT), a measure used to evaluate influencer marketing performance on social

networks in terms of visibility, impact and trust, has increased by 90% compared with 2023.

However, Huda Beauty beats all others with an exceptional 200% growth, moving up 16 places in the ranking of France's top brands to sixth place.

Sephora also leads the ranking in the US while the Skkn By Kim has moved up 30 places to seventh, with a 213% increase.

In the UK, French brands are on the up. L'Oreal Paris takes the lead with an 84% increase while YSL posts the second-highest rise with a 137% increase in one year. Armani leads on growth at 193%. - ETX Studio

## Artificial intelligence to boost Windows Notepad, Paint

**MICROSOFT** has announced the arrival of new artificial intelligence (AI)-based functionalities in Notepad and Paint in Windows 11. Members of the Windows Insider programme, who preview and test new features of the operating system, will be the first to have access to these tools. However, they will need to have recent hardware, namely a Copilot+ PC, to try out all of these new features.

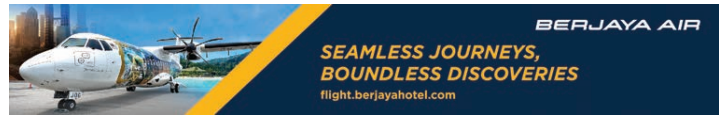
Notepad will benefit from AI-assisted writing enhancements via the "Rewrite" feature that lets you rephrase sentences, adjust tone or modify text length. By selecting any passage and choosing this option, the AI tool will be able to propose various alternative versions of the text, whether to achieve greater clarity or to change the writing style.

For its part, Paint will offer new possibilities thanks to AI-enhanced creative tools. For example, the "Generative fill" feature will enable users to add or modify the elements of an image by entering a simple text description. To use it, simply select an area of the image, describe the desired addition and the AI will again generate several proposals from which to choose. It will also be possible to remove an element from the image by replacing it with a suitable background, ensuring the removal is not visible afterward.

All these innovations point towards Microsoft's commitment to integrating AI into all its flagship applications, with the aim of enriching the user experience and boosting everyone's creative and editorial potential. - ETX studio



Microsoft is committed to integrating AI into all its flagship applications. - PELEXSPIC



**W**HILE some people prefer romance or fantasy, others delight in the frights of horror movies. A study published in the journal *Scientific Reports* revealed why people enjoy these terrifying tales.

It may seem surprising but some people enjoy entering into the darkness of a movie theatre in order to scare themselves with all kinds of onscreen frights. For researchers at the University of Pecs in Hungary, this penchant may well be explained by the excitement of fear itself.

The study, titled *The Role of Excitement and Enjoyment through Subjective Evaluation of Horror Film Scenes*, explored how curiosity about morbid subjects plays a key role in driving people to watch horror movies as do the realism of the scenes and intensity of the fear felt.

The study, led by University of Pecs's Institute of Psychology PhD student and research assistant Botond Kiss recruited 558 participants. They were asked to fill out online questionnaires about their movie-watching habits, emotional regulation, curiosity about morbid subjects, beliefs in the supernatural, sensitivity to disgust and sensation-seeking personality traits.

Participants then watched 10 short scenes from different horror movie sub-genres, ranging from supernatural to psychological and monster movies. After each scene, they rated their experiences in terms of excitement, pleasure, fear, disgust and realism.

The results of the study are revealing. Feelings of fear, the realism of scenes and curiosity about morbid subjects are all strong predictors of excitement and pleasure. In other words, for some viewers, the more realistic these films are, the more exciting and entertaining they are. Fear, especially, is particularly associated with excitement and pleasure.

On the other hand, scenes that evoke a strong sense of disgust tend to diminish the viewer's pleasure, without necessarily reducing excitement.

"Previous approaches did not distinguish between enjoyment and excitement. In contrast, our current research suggests, although they are quite similar constructs, they are influenced by different factors. The former is more influenced by perceived disgust while the

# Study reveals why people love scary movies

## Audiences stimulated by excitement of fear

latter is more influenced by perceived fear," said Kiss.

The study even dispelled a long-held cliché in suggesting horror movie fans are not necessarily thrill-seekers. And whatever their personal beliefs in the supernatural or their sensitivity to disgust, these parameters did not seem to influence viewers' reactions either.

"As some horror consumers can be described as thrill-seekers, they experience the fear-induced adrenaline as rewarding. This seems to have an indirect effect through other factors," explained Kiss.

It is important to note the limitations of this study. Most of the participants were horror movie fans and therefore, already had a certain taste for this genre.

"In this research, we looked at direct effects. So, if one factor had an effect through another factor, we could not detect it. This would require more complex analyses. Moreover, the content of the different genres of horror films is quite different. Just think about how different the content of a psychological horror movie and a zombie horror movie is. So, in the future, it might be worth taking this into account.

"Our direct long-term plan is to identify certain motivations for why people consume such content. Indirectly, we have the opportunity to identify the factors that influence the perception of disgust and fear. This could be important in understanding specific phobias, (in which) fear and disgust are of particular importance (for example animal phobias or blood-injury-injection phobia)," said Kiss. – ETX Studio



Feelings of fear, the realism of scenes and curiosity about morbid subjects are strong predictors of excitement and pleasure. – PEXELSPIC

## Indonesian horror film to return with new sequel next year

**INDONESIAN** horror film *Qodrat*, which made waves in 2022, is set to return with *Qodrat 2*, scheduled for release in the first quarter next year.

Astro Shaw recently announced its collaboration to produce the sequel, bringing *Qodrat 2* to Malaysian cinemas. Astro Shaw and *Qodrat 2*'s producer Magma Entertainment signed a memorandum of understanding at Mipcom Cannes in France as part of their efforts to strengthen the regional film industry.

*Qodrat 2* will delve into a darker and more profound story. Audiences will follow the journey of spiritual healer (Ruqyah) Qodrat, seeking for his wife Azizah, who sold her soul to the demon Asu'ala in a desperate attempt to save their son Alif.

The film will be directed by Charles Gozali, who also directed the first *Qodrat*. It will feature the return of its main star Vito G. Bastian, along with new characters played by Acha Septriasa, Della Dartyan and Dony Alamsyah.



The collaboration will strengthen the regional film industry.

## Second instalment of *The Priests* to premiere early 2025

**GET** ready for a thrilling return to the world of exorcism! The sequel to the 2015 Korean horror film *The Priests*, titled *The Priests 2: Dark Nuns*, has revealed its release date and unveiled a chilling poster.

Following the success of *The Priests*, which starred Kim Yun-Seok and Kang Dong-Won, the sequel promises to deliver a fresh dose of supernatural horror.

This standalone sequel will feature a new cast of characters facing terrifying encounters with the demon.

A young boy, Hee Joon (Moon Woo-jin) experiences great pain and suffering after being possessed by an evil, malignant spirit.

Priest Paul (Lee Jin-Uk) who is also a psychiatrist believes the boy can be cured with conventional medical treatment.

Priest Andrew (Heo Jun-Ho) believes an exorcism is the only way to save Hee Joon.

Taking on the lead roles in *The Priests 2: Dark Nuns* are two of South Korea's most celebrated actresses – Song Hye-Kyo and Jeon Yeo-Been.

Filming began on Feb 22 this year and is expected to have a similar impact as *The Priests*.



A new chapter in supernatural horror. – NEXTEENTERTAINMENT WORLDPIC

While the official release date is confirmed for South Korea on Jan 24 next year, details regarding international distribution remain under wraps.

However, with the popularity of Korean horror films and the star power attached to the project, a global release seems likely. – Hallyubeat





Pitt and Clooney's characters are an unlikely duo who are polar opposites



**Cast:** Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Amy Ryan, Austin Abrams, Poorna Jagannathan  
**Director:** Jon Watts

**E-VALUE** 7  
**ACTING** 7  
**PLOT** 7

# Comedy-thriller with famous faces

► Clooney, Pitt reunite yet again after 17 years for action movie

BY **STAMARAI CHELVI**

**H**OLLYWOOD A-listers Brad Pitt and George Clooney are back together again after *Ocean's Thirteen* (2007) for another movie titled *Wolfs* but this time, they are in an even bigger trouble.

The two lone wolves or professionals at "cleaning up a mess" (read: murder or crimes) embark on a ride around Manhattan in New York City on one night, trying to dispose of a dead body and to figure out the real "target" of a conspiracy.

The movie starts with a half-naked man jumping on a bed in a hotel room and accidentally crashes on the glass coffee table. An elderly woman and a district attorney named Margaret (the boy's companion) fears that the boy is dead and makes a desperate call.

She reaches out to a "professional", seeking help from an unknown man for his expertise in "fixing things" to avoid embarrassment.

The man (an unnamed character played by Clooney), shows up at the door.

A few minutes later, another "professional" (a nameless character played by Pitt) turns up unexpectedly at the hotel room but the question is: who called the second guy?

It turns out hotel owner Pamela Dowd-Herdry (voiced by Frances McDormand) had been watching the entire incident via a hidden spy camera. To ensure the image of the new hotel does not get tarnished, she called the second guy.

Given the circumstances, the two men had no choice but to work together, although they were reluctant.

However, the "job" was not as simple as they thought it would be at first. Much to their dismay, the boy is also apparently a drug dealer, seeing that there were drugs stored in his room – and they must crack the mystery before the sun rises.

**Dynamic duo**  
Clooney has a commanding screen



Pitt (left) and Clooney first shared a screen in *Ocean's Thirteen* in 2007.

presence while Pitt captivates the very moment he makes an entry on screen.

In the scene, where Pitt turns up in the hotel room, you could already anticipate a banter between the two, which entertains the audience.

The rivalry, competition and witty conversations back and forth between the two were fun to watch.

Their unique "chemistry" is the highlight of the 107-minute movie.

It reminds us of the camaraderie they had in the *Ocean's* franchise but in this one, they are rivals.

There is nothing more entertaining than two charismatic actors and box-office stars coming together to share a screen as they each command "the stage" with their own style.

Clooney's character appears serious at first but towards the end, the character displays compassion.

It is hard not to like the charming Pitt, who evokes excitement with his macho character and style.

The story intrigues from the very first scene. A dead body, drugs, high rank district attorney, two individuals who are polar opposites and above all, a conspiracy.

All the right ingredients to make an action cum thriller movie.

Eventually, Pitt and Clooney's characters, despite their differences, had figured out the truth while getting rid of the boy's corpse and his drug packages found in the room.

Viewers are kept on the edge of their seats with a series of unsuspecting plot twists, which includes coming face-to-face with their old enemy, mass shoot out and crashing into a wedding party!

**Unresolved mystery**

Although the movie is filled with unexpected twist, thrills, surprises, stunts and comedy, the questions still remains: an accident or a set up as well as who and why?

More importantly, if the video recording was a leverage for something bigger or to help someone. Who is the target and who is behind it all?

The movie is rather short – so, another 15 minutes worth of content could have been added to fill plot holes because even after the mystery reveals itself – the audience is left wanting to know more.

**Entertaining movie**

Nonetheless, the movie is a fun watch. It is an archetypal action-thriller movie that is reminiscence of the 90s action movie format. The movie itself is breezy with a good story, actors and stunts.

The only downside of the movie is that the dialogue between the duo when "racing" during the final part was too fast to comprehend at one-go.

*Wolfs* is streaming on the AppleTV+.



Clooney's dynamics with Pitt is the highlight of the movie.



Kinabatangan's endangered Bornean pygmy elephants.

## BBC's wildlife series 'Asia' to feature Borneo

UK's BBC Studios is featuring Malaysian Borneo in its upcoming "Asia" series, highlighting Mount Kinabalu, Bornean pygmy elephants and sun bears on its channels.

Filmed over the course of nearly four years, this is the first time Asia has been the focus of a major BBC wildlife series.

Presented by Sir David Attenborough, the latest landmark series will premiere this month on BBC Earth across Asia on BBC Player in Malaysia, Singapore and Taiwan.

Through this seven-episode series, audiences will journey through Borneo. They will get to witness the Mountain treeshrew (*Tupaia montana*) in Mount Kinabalu in the second episode *Above the Clouds* and learn about the endangered Bornean pygmy elephants in Kinabatangan in the fourth episode *Tangled Worlds* and adore the sun bears in Sabah in the seventh episode *Saving Asia*.

In the other episodes, audiences will get to explore other regions of Asia such as Nepal, Tibet, Sri Lanka and the Western Pacific.

The series will also take a look at the conservation challenges facing the continent and shine a light on the potential solutions suggested by the region's conservation heroes.

In the final episode, audiences will get to witness the first filming of a sun bear release from a helicopter for a natural history landmark series.

The series is streaming on BBC Earth channel – Unifi TV channel 501 and Astro channel 554.

# Super Junior-D&E set for Eclipse World Tour in KL

➤ K-pop duo to excite fans with gig early next year

**K**-POP duo Super Junior-D&E is gearing up to deliver an unforgettable performance with its Super Junior-D&E World Tour: Eclipse in Kuala Lumpur next year.

Promising a night of non-stop excitement and dynamic performances, the concert, organised by Star Planet, will take place on Jan 4, 2025, at 5pm in Mega Star Arena KL.

Super Junior-D&E is a popular sub-unit comprising Donghae and Eunhyuk from the K-pop group Super Junior. Since its formation in 2011, the duo has carved a unique path in the K-pop scene, blending its individual strengths to create a musical experience that resonates with fans worldwide.

Known for pushing creative boundaries, the two members continue to evolve while staying true to the essence that makes them unique.

This world tour follows the success of its sixth mini-album *Inevitable*, released on September this year. The album's bold and innovative approach has deepened Donghae and Eunhyuk's connection with fans, offering emotional lyrics and high-energy performances that showcase their talent even further.

The tour will begin in Seoul and proceed to several cities across Asia, including stops in Taipei, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Macau, Malaysia and more.

The concert is themed around the concept of an eclipse, drawing from the duo's symbolic identities – the sun and moon. Much like an eclipse, the performance will unfold in layers, captivating audiences with its powerful visuals and stunning choreography. Fans can expect a setlist filled with hits along with new tracks from its latest releases.

Limited tickets for the Super Junior-D&E World Tour: Eclipse in Kuala Lumpur are still available for sale.



Super Junior-D&E is a sub-unit of the group Super Junior.

## Tribulation aims for wider appeal on new album

BY R.BALA

IT is a path well-trodden. A band releases an underground classic, stray from its roots seeking greener pastures, alienating fans who gave the outfit its big break in the first place.

Mull on Opheth's grand moves since its debut and branching out into progressive territory with later releases. In Flames met with huge success moving on from its death metal roots, appealing to a more emo-crowd in the 2000s as it

graduated from underground darlings to festival headliners.

Attempting to follow in those Scandinavian pioneers footsteps is Tribulation. Formed in Stockholm in 2005, the quartet quickly established themselves as worthy addition to the Swedish death metal scene.

More gothic in approach, Tribulation's early albums such as *The Children of the Night* and *Down Below* were a fine balancing act between tunefulness and crushing heaviness, a trait that the best of the Scandinavian bands seem to master.

The epic *Where the Gloom Becomes Sound* in 2021 marked a band that had matured and was now straining at the seams to break out from the confines of the genre.

The result can now be heard on Tribulation's latest release – *Sub Rosa In Aeternum*. Released on Nov 1 on the Century Media imprint, the band goes all out with the clean singing element as it attempts to gain a wider following.

Does it work? The gothic atmospherics are very much still in place, colouring proceedings with a dark, shade of melancholy. But does it move listeners to go "wow"? It is solid but not quite mind-blowing.

It is quite telling that the two tracks that feature death metal like growls are

the highlights on this album. *Time & Vivid Ore* absolutely rock but maybe it is just a natural response after the mid-tempo middling of the other tracks.

The cod-David Bowie vocal stylings will surely lead to many a debate on fan forums, just as Opheth's and In Flames' attempts at a "cleaner" sound divided opinions.

Opener *Tainted Skies* and *Reaping Song* are solid but not spectacular but things pick up with *Poison Pages*, offering fans a glimpse of what is possible.

Perhaps a darker, more haunting sound is required to offset the band moving away from its death metal roots. Symphonic stylings would also be a welcomed addition as the band seeks to enrich its sound and to let its songs truly soar.

Only time will tell if Tribulation made the right move. On the strength of this album, there is still some ways to go before it reaches In Flames' breakout appeal or even Opheth levels of fandom. Those past Scandinavian masters have shown it is possible.

In the meantime, listeners can judge for themselves by streaming the album online, which is available on all major platforms. If convinced, vinyl copies were spotted at Varmt Stal Records retailing at RM140.



Tribulation was formed in Stockholm in 2005.



The new album dropped on Nov 1 and is released via Century Media. – PICS FROM FACEBOOK @TRIBULATION



## Tyson says 'no regrets' over loss

**FORMER** world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson said Saturday he has no regrets over losing to Jake Paul in their heavyweight boxing matchup after climbing into the ring "one last time."

"This is one of those situations when you lost but still won," Tyson posted Saturday on X. "I'm grateful for last night. No regrets to get in ring one last time."

Tyson, who said he nearly died in June over health issues, had left open chances for another ring return in comments shortly after the defeat.

He said it was a victory simply to fight - detailing medical issues that forced the fight to be postponed from July after he had a medical scare on a flight from Miami to Los Angeles in May where he vomited blood.

"I almost died in June," Tyson said. "To have my children see me stand toe to toe and finish 8 rounds with a talented fighter half my age in front of a packed Dallas Cowboy stadium is an experience that no man has the right to ask for."

Paul posted on X as well, hyping the viewership and his next competition.

"Record breaking. Love you Mike. Numbers don't lie. Announcement coming soon..." - AFP

## Hull clings to one-shot lead at Annika

**ENGLAND'S** Charley Hull fired a 2-under par 68 and clung to a one-stroke lead over top-ranked Nelly Korda and China's Zhang Weiwei after Saturday's third round of the LPGA Annika tournament.

Hull found water at the 18th hole and made bogey but kept the lead alone when Korda three-putted for bogey in near-darkness at Pelican Golf Club in Belleair, Florida.

"Played pretty solid. I felt like I played well all day," Hull said. "But finishing in the dark wasn't that fun. Shame to finish on a bogey but it was a good up-and-down."

That left Hull on 12-under 198 with US star Korda, a six-time winner this year, shooting 67 to stand second on 199 with Zhang, who fired an LPGA career-low 62 to leap into contention.

"I just felt it was amazing day," Zhang said. "I don't know how to play that well today. Just keep patient and just like normal and then I holed a lot of putts. That made me so surprised on some holes."

Thailand's Wichanee Meechai and South Korea's Im Jin-hee shared fourth on 201 with Germany's Olivia Cowan fifth on 202 and a



Charley Hull. - AFPPIC

pack on 203 including Japan's Minami Katsu, Mexico's Gaby Lopez and Americans Rose Zhang and Bailey Tardy.

World No. 12 Hull opened with a birdie, added another at the par-5 seventh and had three birdie-bogey runs in the final seven holes - at the par-3 12th and par-4 13th, the par-5 14th and par-3 15th and the par-4 17th and 18, where she sank a four-foot bogey putt after a splashdown on her approach.

"It was kind of dark. Then it got the wind up, and I hit a really good 7-iron in and hit it pure. It just came up short in the water," Hull said.

"Tricky little up-and-down, but my putt, I could barely see the hole. I couldn't see the break or anything. So it was pretty dark to finish in."

Korda stumbled early with bogeys at the second and fourth holes but closed the front nine with back-to-back birdies. She added birdies at 11 and 14, birdied 16 and 17 then had a three-putt bogey at 18 after a four-foot par putt miss.

"I had a good middle of the round. Just played some solid golf on the back nine and started hitting my driver a little better," Korda said.

She wasn't happy about finishing in the dark either. - AFP

### 322 Notices

**DALAM MARKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI KUALA LUMPUR**  
DALAM KESEKUTUAN PERSEKUTUAN KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA (BERKASAM DUNIA)  
PETISYEN PENGULANGAN SYARIKAT  
NO. WA-200CC-288-19/2024

Dalam perkara China Railway 17th Bureau Group (M) SDN BHD (No. Syarikat: 20161002816 (1210757-X)).

Dan Dalam perkara Sekyen 4651(N) dan Sekyen 4661(N) Aka Syarikat 2016;

Dan Dalam perkara Kaedah-Kaedah (Pengumpulan) Syarikat 1972

**ANTARA**  
DESUARWA (M) SDN BHD (No. Syarikat: 1920103871 (088073-0)) - PEMPETISYEN

**DAN**  
CHINA RAILWAY 17TH BUREAU GROUP (M) SDN BHD (No. Syarikat: 20161002816 (1210757-X)) - RESPONDEN

#### IKLAN PETISYEN

NOTIS ADALAH DENGAN IN DIBERI bahawa suatu Petisyen untuk pengalangan Syarikat yang dimajukan di atas oleh Mahkamah Tinggi telah dikemukakan oleh DESUARWA (M) SDN BHD pada 21 Oktober 2024.

DAN bahawa Petisyen tersebut diserahkan supaya dipertimbangkan di hadapan Mahkamah Tinggi yang berstatus di Kuala Lumpur pada pukul 9:00 pagi pada 09 Januari 2025.

DAN mana-mana pihak pemegang atau penyumbang Syarikat tersebut yang ingin menyatakan atau menentang sesuatu perkara mengikut Petisyen tersebut boleh hadir dengan laporan ke atas perkara atau membuat permohonan kepada mahkamah pada masa perbicaraan. Selain Petisyen tersebut akan dibacakan oleh pihak yang bertanggungjawab di bawah ini kepada mana-mana pemegang atau penyumbang Syarikat tersebut yang memintanya dengan membuat bayaran yang ditetapkan.

Alamat berdaftar Pemegangan adalah di NW-3A-2B Cove Square, Jalan Teknologi P/1/ 5, Kota Damansara, 47810 Putrajaya, Selangor manakala alamat perbicaraan Pemegangan adalah di 6-1A-18 & 19-16, Jalan MAC, Taman Desa Melawati, 53000 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan.

Pegawangan Pemegangan ialah Tuan Kheng Hoe & Lee Yuen (dibekalkan dengan sebagai Tuan Chong & Kheng Hoe) yang berstatus di 43-3-6, Block A3, Solari Dutamas, 1 Jalan Dutamas 1, 50480 Kuala Lumpur.

Kheng Hoe & Lee Yuen  
Tuan Kheng Hoe & Lee Yuen  
(dibekalkan dengan sebagai Tuan Chong & Kheng Hoe)  
Pegawangan Pemegangan

NOTA - Sesiala yang ingin hadir pada perbicaraan Petisyen tersebut hendaklah menyampaikan, atau menyerahkan dengan pos, kepada Tuan Kheng Hoe & Lee Yuen (dibekalkan dengan sebagai Tuan Chong & Kheng Hoe), pegawangan yang dimajukan di atas, suatu notis bertulis tentang rundingan mengenai Petisyen tersebut kepada pihak yang dimajukan di atas sebelum pukul 12:00 tengahari pada 1 Januari 2025 (sebelum sebelum tarikh yang ditetapkan untuk perbicaraan Petisyen tersebut).

IKLAN PETISYEN ini dibekalkan oleh Tuan Kheng Hoe & Lee Yuen (dibekalkan dengan sebagai Tuan Chong & Kheng Hoe), pegawangan Pemegangan dengan alamat perbicaraan di 43-3-6, Block A3, Solari Dutamas, 1 Jalan Dutamas 1, 50480 Kuala Lumpur.  
(No: 24102045 / Tel: 03-8255 3928 / E-mail: ask@khoyaw)

# End of an era

**SPANISH** superstar Rafael Nadal is aiming to cap his emotional farewell from tennis with another Davis Cup triumph in Malaga next week.

Nadal, 38, has battled injuries over the past few years and the extent to which he can compete for his country is unknown, but all eyes will be on the 22-time Grand Slam winner.

The veteran led Spain to victory in Madrid five years ago - the last time they won the trophy and Nadal's fourth.

However, he admitted Saturday that his role in Malaga may be limited to doubles rather than singles.

"First off, we'll have to see how I feel in training and, if I really don't feel I have a chance to win the singles, I'll be the first to not want to play," Nadal said in

Rafael Nadal. - REUTERS/SPIC



... as Nadal aims to win Davis Cup for farewell

comments to the Spanish Tennis Federation (RFET).

"If I don't feel ready, I'll be the first to speak to the captain (David Ferrer). I've already told him on a few occasions not to make any decisions based on the fact that it's my last week as a professional tennis player."

French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz will be Spain's leading player and his presence offers Nadal a real chance of retiring on a high note.

"Probably one of the most special tournaments that I'm going to play. Last tournament of Rafa, I'll be able to be next to him in the last moments on a tennis court for him," said Alcaraz who played alongside Nadal in doubles at the Olympics in Paris this year.

"I think it's most important for Rafa, for his last tournament. I really want him to retire with a

title. It's going to be really, really emotional and a really special tournament for me."

Representing Spain, Nadal won singles gold at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and triumphed in the doubles at Rio 2016 alongside Marc Lopez.

But former world No. 1 Nadal's injury setbacks in the twilight of his career have seen his ranking slump to 155.

The last of his 92 career titles came with his 14th French Open and 22nd major at Roland Garros in 2022.

He hasn't played a competitive singles match since losing to Novak Djokovic at the Olympics in July while in 2023 he played just four times.

Many are hoping for Spain and Alcaraz to meet world No. 1 Jannik Sinner's Italy, the defending champions, in the final, as the two young stars continue to build on a gripping rivalry.

Record 32-time champions the United States have selected a strong team spearheaded by US Open finalist Taylor Fritz and are also among the most likely contenders.

Spain face the Netherlands on Wednesday (12.01am Malaysian time) in the last eight, with the winner taking on Germany or Canada in the semifinals.

Italy ended a 47-year wait to win the Davis Cup again a year ago as they beat Australia in the final with Sinner their key player and are favourites to defend their title.

Italy face Argentina (Fri, 12.01am) in the quarterfinals with the winner taking on the United States or Australia.

The final takes place on Nov 24 with all matches held at the indoor hard-court Martin Carpena arena. - AFP

## Swiatek leads Poland into BJK Cup semis against Italy

**POLAND** will face Italy in their first ever Billie Jean King (BJK) Cup semifinals after beating the Czech Republic 2-1 in a hard-fought tie that ended in the early hours yesterday.

Czech Marie Bouzkova won the opener against Magdalena Frech 6-1, 4-6, 6-4, and it was up to Swiatek to keep Poland's chances alive to reach the tournament's semi-finals for the first time.

The world No. 2, undefeated in BJK Cup in the last five years, did just that but was well tested by teenager Linda Noskova, whom she beat 7-6(4) 4-6 7-5 in a tight encounter that lasted two hours and 39 minutes.

The Pole took the match to even the tie 1-1 before returning on court with Katarzyna Kawa for the

decider against doubles world No. 1 Katerina Siniakova and Bouzkova sealing a stunning 6-1, 6-4 victory over the Czechs.

"I'm so happy to play with Iga and that we made it. I mean, it's really great day, the start of the great day," Kawa said.

The five-time Grand Slam winner Swiatek added: "In 20 minutes I'll be dead! It was an exhausting day, but everything worked. We did a great job, we won."

Meanwhile, Italy became the first nation through to the last four after they beat Japan 2-1 with a deciding straight sets doubles victory by Jasmine Paolini and Sara Errani over Shuko Aoyama and Eri Hozumi earlier on Saturday.

The tie was locked at 1-1 after French Open and Wimbledon runner-up Paolini beat 56th-ranked Moyuka Uchijima 6-3, 6-4 in the second singles match to put the Italians on the board.

Paolini returned for the doubles with Errani dominated to beat the Japanese duo 6-3, 6-4.

"The strategy was to serve well and try to be aggressive because the game was really fast. They played amazing in doubles, so it was a really stressful match. But in the end, I'm grateful that we did it as a team," Paolini said after their doubles win.

"This year I'm a little bit used to it," the 28-year-old added. "But I will rest now, I will work with the physios here." - Reuters



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# Windies restore pride

... with stunning run chase in victory over England

**WEST INDIES** restored some pride by securing a thrilling five-wicket victory against England with a blistering run chase in their Twenty20 international in St Lucia yesterday.

A big-hitting 55 from opener Phil Salt and an even more aggressive unbeaten 62 from Jacob Bethell, who brought up his second T20I half-century with three

successive sixes, helped England post an imposing 218 for five from their 20 overs.

In reply, West Indies openers Shai Hope and Evin Lewis smashed 136 off the first nine overs to put the hosts in the driving seat, with captain Rovman Powell's 38 steering his side to their highest-ever successful run chase in the Caribbean with six balls to spare.

England nonetheless take an insurmountable 3-1 series lead

into the fifth and final T20I showdown on Sunday.

"We've been losing early wickets so we needed to understand the best remedy to combat their bowlers," Hope said.

"I just believe in doing what the team requires. Obviously different situations require different approaches. Just doing what the team need in a particular moment."

With the series victory already wrapped up, England's aggressive top order could really loosen the shackles after being put into bat first, with Salt, a centurion in the opening T20 of the series, in particularly fine fettle, racing to a 32-ball 50.

Salt, who now has 640 runs against West Indies in T20 cricket - more than any other England batsman has scored against a single opponent - helped the tourists amass more than 100 runs inside the first 10 overs of a T20I when batting first for only the seventh time.

Skipper Jos Buttler continued the big hitting, but it was Bethell who stole the show, hammering nine boundaries to all corners of the ground en route to his highest T20I score to date.

With England firmly in the driving seat and the West Indies top order struggling in the series before yesterday's encounter, few gave the hosts any chance of victory, but Lewis and Hope slammed 10 sixes on their way to match-winning contributions of 68 and 54, respectively.

"It was an excellent wicket and we got off to a great start with our openers putting them under plenty of pressure," Buttler said. "We thought we needed at least 220."

"Their openers then played exceptionally well too. We were trying to do some things differently, create some opportunities with fielders in other areas of the field." - Reuters

Shai Hope of the West Indies hits 4 during the 4th T20I match against England. - AFP/ICC



# Another blow for India as Gill suffers injury

**INDIA** have suffered another injury blow as they prepare for this week's first Test against Australia, with batsman Shubman Gill fracturing his thumb in a training session in Perth on Saturday, according to multiple media reports.

India opted to prepare for the Perth Test, which starts on Friday, with squad sessions behind closed doors rather than take on a local side in a tour match.

Gill injured his left thumb while fielding and is a major doubt for the match, the *Times of India* and other media outlets reported, citing sources. The team did not provide immediate comment when contacted by Reuters about Gill's condition.

The news further compounds India's issues at the top of the batting order with skipper Rohit Sharma not yet in Australia after staying home for the birth of his second child, who was delivered on Friday.

Gill has batted at number three since midway through last year but opened for most of his first 30 Tests and was a leading candidate to top the order, with



Shubman Gill. - AFP/ICC

Yashasvi Jaiswal in Rohit's absence.

Another candidate, KL Rahul, left the field on Friday's first day of the intra-squad session after being struck on the elbow by fast-bowling teammate Prasidh Krishna.

The 32-year-old lost his place in the team during their recent 3-0 home series loss to New Zealand after scoring 12 runs over two innings batting at No. 6 in the first Test.

The Test team have been practising match simulations against a side comprising India A squad members and fringe players at the WACA ground in Perth.

Devdutt Padikka, who made his Test debut in March and is in Australia with the India A squad, has been asked to stay in the country, *Espncricinfo.com* reported.

There is less concern about Virat Kohli, the *Times of India* reported, after the batting mainstay took part in the sessions despite having scans on an undisclosed injury earlier in the week. - Reuters

## SHORTS

### Aguirre left bloodied after Honduras match

**A CAN** thrown from the stands struck Mexico coach Javier Aguirre and left him bleeding after a 2-0 away loss to Honduras in the first leg of a Concacaf Nations League quarterfinal tie on Saturday.

Aguirre was walking along the touchline to shake hands with counterpart Reinaldo Rueda after the match when he was hit on the top of his head by the can, with blood seeping from the wound.

"This is football, and there's no point in mentioning the other stuff because I'm not one to complain," Aguirre told reporters after the match at the General Francisco Morazan Stadium in San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

Concacaf said it strongly condemned the incident.

"The security of the teams and fans is a priority for Concacaf. These types of violent behaviors have no place in football," the governing body added in a statement.

"The incident will now be referred to the Concacaf Disciplinary Committee for further review and investigation."

Aguirre took charge of Mexico's national soccer team for a third time in July, replacing Jaime Lozano who was sacked after a disappointing Copa America group-stage exit.

### Guirassy help boost Guinea in Afcon qualifying

**BORUSSIA DORTMUND** striker Serhou Guirassy scored in added time to give Guinea a key 1-0 victory over the Democratic Republic of Congo on Saturday in 2025 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying.

The 28-year-old France-born star scored off a cross to the far post, slamming the ball past goalkeeper Dimitry Bertaud.

Guirassy has scored six times in Afcon qualifiers to lead the Golden Boot race, with four-goal Moroccan Brahim Diaz his closest challenger.

Victory lifted Guinea to nine points, two more than Tanzania, and the west Africans will join already-qualified DR Congo at the finals if they avoid defeat in Dar es Salaam on Wednesday.

Earlier, Tanzania defeated bottom team Ethiopia 2-0 in Kinshasa through goals from Simon Msuva and Feisal Salum.

### Hoilett gives Canada win as Mexico lose to Honduras

**JUNIOR HOILETT** struck an 81st-minute winner as Canada earned a 1-0 victory at Suriname in their Concacaf Nations League quarterfinal on Saturday while Mexico fell 2-0 at Honduras.

The 34-year-old Hoilett, who plays for Hibernian in Scotland, latched on to a ball from Jonathan David and fired past Etienne Vaessen for the winner.

It was a deserved victory for Jesse Marsch's team, which can book a place in the semifinals by taking care of business in the return leg in Toronto on Wednesday.

Suriname, coached by former Ajax and Dutch international Stanley Menzo, are an improving force in Concacaf with their team filled with players performing in various European leagues and they made life difficult for the Canadians.

Canada were without their star performer, Bayern Munich wingback Alphonso Davies, and they missed the quality he usually brings in the final third.

Ali Ahmed should have done better from a central position but his shot was easily dealt with by Vaessen and then Tani Oluwaseyi saw his first-time shot hit one post, fly across the goal line and come out off the other post.

But Hoilett had the final say and was delighted with his 14th goal for his country.

"It's amazing to get the win, to get on the scoresheet. I worked hard to get back in the team. I'm just delighted we got the win with it," he said.

Mexico have a lot of work to do on Tuesday in Toluca if they are to overturn a two-goal deficit after strikes from Honduras substitute Luis Palma handed them a 2-0 loss in San Pedro Sula.

Honduras grabbed the lead in the 64th minute when Edwin Rodriguez's low drive was parried out by Guillermo Ochoa and Palma pounced to fire home the loose ball.

Palma made sure of the win, seven minutes from the end, when he finished off a counter-attack with a brilliant solo goal, cutting in from the left flank before driving past Ochoa.

There were ugly scenes after the final whistle, however, when Mexico coach Javier Aguirre was struck by an object thrown from the crowd and left the field with blood pouring down his face. - AFP

# Kane hopes Tuchel will help end England's trophy wait

**ENGLAND** captain Harry Kane expects incoming coach Thomas Tuchel to have the backing of fans despite his nationality, adding that the German's track record could help the team end a 58-year wait for a major trophy.

England reached a World Cup semifinal and two European Championship finals under Gareth Southgate, but have not won the World Cup, or any other major trophy, since 1966.

Former Paris St Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich coach Tuchel was appointed last month, becoming the first German to manage England and just the third foreigner to take charge after Sweden's

Sven-Goran Eriksson and Italian Fabio Capello.

He will take charge of England in January.

"I think the fans will (back Tuchel). It will be results-dependent, really and probably the way we're playing. Ultimately England fans want to win," Kane told reporters on Saturday.

"We all want to win. I think Thomas gives us a great opportunity to do that with his history of winning the Champions Leagues and big major competitions.

"Obviously he knows he's going to have to - I don't want to say win the fans over but he has to

produce and that's by playing style and results. Ultimately, in 19 months, if we win the World Cup together I don't think anyone's going to have a problem with him."

Kane, England's captain and record goalscorer, worked with Tuchel at Bayern, where the pair forged a strong relationship.

"Thomas is really disciplined in what he wants and he won't shy away from confrontation if need be," Kane said.

"He gets that balance right of having a relaxed environment when you're not training, with a bit of banter and a laugh and a joke, but when you're on the pitch it is full focus.

"For international football, having that energy in short bursts is really important, especially when you get to major tournaments and you're away for six weeks and you see the same faces all the time." - Reuters



## Germany hit seven

... as Oranje cruises into Nations League quarterfinals

**RECORD-SETTING** Germany hammered Bosnia and Herzegovina 7-0 while Netherlands outclassed Hungary with a 4-0 victory in their winner-takes-all Nations League encounter yesterday.

Germany cemented their spot at the top of the group with a 7-0 win over Bosnia - the heaviest in the six-year history of the Nations League.

"It was good fun tonight. After a couple of goals we did the work defensively and then everything came together offensively. The more that happens, the more fun we have on the pitch," German attacker Jamal Musiala told Uefa's website.

Musiala opened the floodgates after two minutes with a header from Joshua Kimmich's cross.

Tim Kleindienst scored his first goal for Germany in the 23rd minute and Kai Havertz made the game safe eight minutes before the break, slotting home after a slick one-two with Florian Wirtz.

Wirtz then made it four on 50 minutes with a sublime swerving freekick from wide on the left, before doubling up seven minutes later.

"Seeing Flo (Wirtz's) freekick was kind of nice but just in general everyone played well, had good moments. We're just playing good football," added Musiala.

Substitute Leroy Sane scored Germany's sixth in the 66th minute and Kleindienst completed the rout just over 10 minutes from time as he guided home a pinpoint cross from centre-half Antonio Rudiger.

The emphatic result leaves Germany five points ahead of Netherlands with only one match left to play.

Meanwhile, Netherlands and Hungary went into the match tied on five points each and with the winner set to join Germany in ensuring their progress from Group A3 to the quarterfinals.

First half penalties by Wout Weghorst and Cody Gakpo sent the Oranje on their way, before Denzel Dumfries and Teun Koopmeiners made the game safe in the second period.

"There are always things we can improve upon," Dutch captain Virgil van Dijk told SBS6. "But in the end, we deserved to win."

The match at the Johan Cruyff Arena was briefly interrupted in the seventh minute following a medical emergency on the

Hungarian bench.

The referee stopped play for some 10 minutes while Hungary's assistant coach Adam Szalai received treatment, shielded from view by huddled players and staff members, as well as a large white sheet.

Szalai, 36, was stretched off to applause from spectators and players alike, the Hungarian FA later released a statement saying he was "conscious" and in a "stable condition" at an Amsterdam hospital.

"It was a scare of course," Gakpo told NOS. "Fortunately, I just heard he regained consciousness on the pitch. Things like this are more important than football."

Almost forgotten in the aftermath of the worrying incident was the handball by Tamas Nikitscher as the ball was crossed into the Hungarian box.

The referee consulted the touchline video monitor and promptly restarted play by pointing to the spot, allowing Weghorst to sweep the Netherlands in front.

Denes Dibusz was the busier of the two goalkeepers as the first period wore on and had to be alert to keep out efforts from Tijjani Reijnders and Donyell Malen.

In the 11th minute of added time, Dutch dominance told and Malen was clipped by Zsolt Nagy in the box.

Gakpo dispatched the resulting spot-kick, sending Dibusz the wrong way and Netherlands into a two-goal lead.

Rightback Dumfries sealed the Netherlands' spot in the quarters as he latched onto Malen's flick-on at the back post and fizzed a volley back into the far corner shortly after the hour.

Koopmeiners marked his first international match since 2022 by nodding in a fourth in the 86th minute.

In Group B1, Georgia played out a 1-1 draw at home to Ukraine and stay two points ahead of the fourth-placed visitors.

The Czech Republic drew 0-0 in Albania and remain top of the group on eight points, one ahead of Georgia in second and their third-placed opponents.

Turkey stayed top of Group B4 with a 0-0 draw at home to Wales, while Iceland beat Montenegro 2-0.

Turkey were presented with a golden opportunity to grow their two-point lead over Wales but Kerem Akturkoglu sent his 89th-minute penalty wide. - AFP

**TOTO SPORTS TOTO RESULTS**

DRAW NO: 5885/2024 DATE: 17/11/2024 (SUN)

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**TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL**

**1st Prize** **9163**

**2nd Prize** **1786**

**3rd Prize** **9295**

Special	Consolation
9250 5287	5815 0457
5801 9600	7375 7666
6374 8996	9542 5755
7448 0470	1381 6100
4147 8796	7779 2983

**4D JACKPOT**

Jackpot 1 **RM 16,680,533.97**

9163 1786	1786 9163
9163 9295	9295 9163
1786 9295	9295 1786

Jackpot 2 **RM 227,621.24**

Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

**4D Zodiac**

1st Prize **9163** + HORSE

2nd Prize **1786** +

3rd Prize **9295** +

4th Prize **Special Prize** +

5th Prize **Consolation Prize** +

6th Prize **Any 4D drawn number**

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**TOTO 5D & 6D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL**

**5D**

1ST **5 8 1 9 8**

2ND **0 7 7 8 8**

3RD **0 2 5 5 8**

4TH **8 1 9 8**

5TH **1 9 8**

6TH **9 8**

**6D**

1ST **5 7 6 7 7 1**

2ND **5 7 6 7 7** or **7 6 7 7 1**

3RD **5 7 6 7** or **6 7 7 1**

4TH **5 7 6** or **7 7 1**

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Draw Date: 17/11/24 (Sun) Draw No: 5832/24 Venue: PERAK TURF CLUB

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**1+3D SUPER 1+3D**

**1st Prize** **0575**

**2nd Prize** **3216**

**3rd Prize** **4470**

Starters	Consolation
4302 9633	8846 0200
1162 2864	1727 8286
1382 1500	0829 8699
5549 6758	5834 0431
5482 0445	8333 7852

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**1+3D Jackpot**

**Jackpot 1** **RM 9,834,280.20**

0575 + 3216	3216 + 0575
0575 + 4470	4470 + 0575
3216 + 4470	4470 + 3216

**Jackpot 2** **RM 119,289.00**

Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

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**3+3D Bonus**

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
410 575 + HORSE		<b>RM 1,176,410.40</b>
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
563 216 + DRAGON		<b>RM 955,532.30</b>
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
924 470 + OX		<b>RM 1,496,188.40</b>

Starters	Consolation
874 302 029 633	458 846 160 200
761 162 922 864	531 727 258 286
341 382 321 500	840 829 788 699
215 549 606 758	915 834 820 431
485 482 780 445	978 333 717 852

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**3D**

1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
575	216	470

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**3D Jackpot**

**Jackpot** **RM 684,275.40**

575 + 216 + 470	216 + 470 + 575
575 + 470 + 216	470 + 575 + 216
216 + 575 + 470	470 + 216 + 575

Winning combination matches the Top 3 Prizes in any order.

**1+3D Jackpot 2** **RM 317,293.80 won on 16/11/2024!**

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SCAN ME

# Haikal TKOs Rodtang

Malaysia Muay Thai teen topples former ONEFC flyweight champion's younger brother



Mohd Haikal Salami from Hallo Fightlab (right) in action with Nong Ice Rodtang during their Kuda Merah International grand final match. - BERNAMAPIC

**T**AKING full advantage of a golden opportunity was the key to victory for Hallo Fightlab boxer Mohd Haikal Salami, who defeated Nong Ice Rodtang from Thailand via Technical Knockout (TKO) at the Grand Final of the Kuda Merah International Muay Thai Challenge 2024 'King of the Ring' on Saturday.

The Form Four student from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Teloi Kanan, Kedah, said that although he was initially nervous, he managed to calm himself by thinking positively that he could defeat the younger brother of ONE Championship (ONEFC) champion Rodtang Jitmuangnon in their first bout. "I am calm and stay positive to overcome nervousness when fighting. It was the key for me to defeat Nong Ice. "I am very grateful because all the hard work paid off (and I got the TKO in the third round out of five). My goal is to reach a higher level like ONE Championship, but I know it is quite challenging as it requires hard training. "Currently, as I am still in school, I schedule my time by focusing on studies in the morning and start training at around 4pm. So, it really requires self-discipline," he told reporters after claiming the championship belt sponsored by ICU/JPM and Radio Era at the Titiwangsa Stadium.

Recounting his background, Mohd Haikal said he began his journey in Muay Thai at the age of nine when he was trained by his father, Salami Nayan, 48, who is also a Muay Thai coach in Felda Teloi Timur, Sik, Kedah. The second of six siblings said that thanks to the teachings he received, he now makes significant sacrifices, sometimes having to leave his family to participate in tournaments outside his home state of Kedah, which he feels is well worth it. Meanwhile, Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Johari Abdul, who was present to witness the bout, expressed pride in Mohd Haikal's achievement and hoped that he could shine like Muhammad Johan Ghazali Zulfikar, also known as Jojo, who has achieved various successes both locally and internationally. "Insha-Allah, I will discuss with the Ministry of Youth and Sports to support our athletes," he said. In another bout, Kuda Merah PDRM Club boxer Mohd Rais Mohd Junaidi, defeated Mohd Juwaidi Abd Wahab, representing Urat Merah Narathiwat Thailand, to win the Pulapol and Celcius Belt through a points victory. "I dedicate this victory to the head coach of Kuda Merah, Rosli Yaacob, who will be retiring on Monday (Nov 18). All five of my participations were under his guidance, and I have won four times in a row. "Thanks also to the team manager for financial and training support. I hope to represent Malaysia in the SEA Games next," he said. - Bernama



End of an era

Story on page 28



Windies restore pride

Story on page 29



Germany hit seven

Story on page 30