



## Murdered college student had 107 injuries, court told

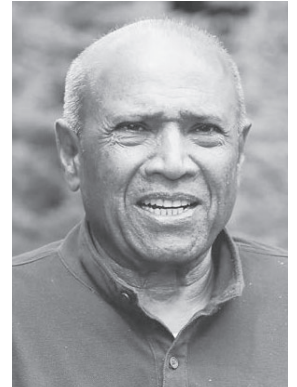
Based on post-mortem findings, victim died from chest and soft tissue injuries due to blunt force trauma: Witness

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# Ananda 1938-2024

T. Ananda Krishnan, one of Malaysia's richest men who made significant contributions to nation-building and corporate world, and whose philanthropic initiatives touched many lives, passed away peacefully yesterday, aged 86.

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**IN SAFE HANDS ...** Members of the Malaysian Armed Forces evacuate bedridden Zainab Mat Dhari, 76, from flood in Kampung Kuala Nal, Kuala Krai, Kelantan yesterday. - **BERNAMAPIC**

## Child marriage remains a bane in M'sia

NGO questions government's commitment to follow through with National Strategic Plan to address root causes of underage nuptials - poverty, lack of education, and harmful social norms.

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## Pneumonia No. 1 cause of death first time in over two decades

Covid-19 has left many Malaysians with weak lungs, increasing their vulnerability to severe infections, say experts.

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## Business tycoon Ananda Krishnan dies aged 86

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Business tycoon Tan Sri Ananda Krishnan passed away yesterday. He was 86 years old.

This was confirmed in a statement by his flagship investment company, Usaha Tegas Sdn Bhd.

"It is with great sadness that we announce the demise of our chairman Mr Ananda Krishnan Tatparanandam, who passed away peacefully on Nov 28.

"He has made significant contributions to nation-building and the corporate world, and his philanthropic initiatives have touched many lives. We humbly ask that the family's wishes to mourn in private be respected."

Born on April 1, 1938, in Brickfields, Ananda, who goes by the full name Tatparanandam Ananda Krishnan or T. Ananda Krishnan, rose to become one of Malaysia's most prominent business figures and was listed as one of the wealthiest individuals in the country.

In April this year, *Forbes* listed Ananda as the third-richest person in Malaysia, after hotel and real estate tycoon Robert Kuok and Hong Leong co-founder Tan Sri Quek Leng Chan.

Ananda, who was a Harvard Business School alumnus, founded the country's second-largest mobile operator, Maxis Bhd, as well as broadcasting and media company Astro Malaysia Holdings Bhd.

He also launched Measat Satellite Systems, pioneering Malaysia's satellite industry, *Bernama* reported.

Through the Yayasan Ananda Krishnan foundation, he contributed significantly to education, arts, sports and humanitarian initiatives.

Despite his billionaire status, he was a private person with a quiet demeanour and shunned media publicity.

Ananda reportedly helped finance the Live Aid concert, the biggest and most significant concert in 1985, which featured rock band Queen and its frontman Freddie Mercury.

The concert helped raise US\$240 million for African famine relief.

According to *Forbes'* real-time billionaire list, Ananda's net worth stood at US\$5.1 billion (RM22.6 billion) as of Nov 27, making him the 667th richest person in the world.

Ananda, who was a devout Buddhist, is survived by a son who became a Buddhist monk, and two daughters.

## Thirteen GOF static posts hit by floods

**KOTA BHARU:** A total of 13 static posts of the General Operations Force (GOF) in *Ops Taring Wawasan* Kelantan on the Malaysia-Thailand border, Sungai Golok have been affected by floods.

GOF Southeast Brigade commander Datuk Nik Ros Azhan Nik Ab Hamid said of the 13 posts, five of them have been closed because they were flooded up to the floors of the posts, and threatened the safety of GOF personnel on duty.

"All personnel at the closed posts have been transferred to other assignment locations."

He said *Ops Taring Wawasan* Kelantan personnel have been instructed to assist local residents in their respective sectors whose houses have been affected by flooding.

On Wednesday, the Meteorological Department issued a warning of heavy rains expected throughout Kelantan and Terengganu as well as the Kuantan and Jerantut districts in Pahang. — *Bernama*



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### DEFT HANDS ...

The Tengku Ampuan of Pahang Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah at the Seri Mutiara Songket workshop during a visit to the Seberang Perai prison in Nibong Tebal yesterday. — *BERNAMAPIC*

# M'sia to continue supporting Palestinian cause, says PM

► 'Economic considerations no deterrent in voicing out nation's stance on global issues, including oppression, tyranny in Gaza'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said economic considerations, although very important, will not constrain Malaysia from demanding justice for the Palestinian people.

He said Malaysia, as an independent and sovereign country, would continue to voice its stance on international issues, including the oppression and tyranny in Gaza.

Citing Malaysia's relationship with the United States (US), Anwar

said it is still good diplomatically, and both countries continue to have comprehensive partnerships and cooperation, including meetings of leaders.

"From January to October, the total bilateral trade between Malaysia and the US increased by 29.1% to RM264.28 billion, a relatively high increase from RM204.78 billion for the same period in 2023," he said in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He was responding to a question from RSN Rayer (PH-

Jelutong) on whether Malaysia faces any risk of trade sanctions by the US due to Anwar's outspokenness in defending the rights of the Palestinian people.

Anwar said Malaysia would continue to monitor the latest developments in US policy.

"We are also concerned about the latest developments including the tariff hikes for Mexico, Canada and China. So far, we have been monitoring, it does not involve foreign policy issues, including the Gaza or Palestine issue.

"It involves the balance of payments issue between the two countries where there is a deficit."

Previously, US President-elect Donald Trump announced that he would impose high import tariffs on all goods from Mexico and Canada as well as additional tariffs

on goods from China as soon as he returns to the White House.

Responding to a question from Ahmad Tarmizi Sulaiman (PN-Sik) on whether Malaysia would consider taking stronger action by following South Africa in filing a case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) under the 1948 Genocide Convention, Anwar said Malaysia is sending a representative as a sign of support for the case.

He added that Malaysia does not have the same position and voice as South Africa to bring cases to the ICJ because the country has not signed the Rome Statute.

He said several provisions in the statute cannot be accepted by Malaysia such as those which touch on the Bumiputera policy, religious and LGBT issues.

## Acquiring helicopters via leasing cost-effective: Anwar

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government is using a leasing system for acquiring helicopters for use by government agencies and security forces because it is more transparent and helps avoid a financial burden on the nation, the Dewan Rakyat was told yesterday.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the leasing arrangement allows the government to save on maintenance and repair costs, which are currently a major issue.

"Although it might be cheaper if we just buy them, in the end, we find that the maintenance costs of the helicopters are higher than the initial purchase price."

Anwar was replying to Datuk

Seri Ikmal Hisham Abdul Aziz (PN-Tanah Merah) who wanted to know the reasons the lease contract for helicopters for the Malaysian Armed Forces was not offered via an international open tender or executed on a government-to-government basis.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin had previously said the government would lease 28 helicopters from Italian defence firm Leonardo through a contract worth RM16 billion for a period of 15 years.

Anwar said Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni had given an assurance of full cooperation in fulfilling the Leonardo helicopter leasing contract, as Italy holds a

30% stake in the company.

"Under this leasing arrangement, the manufacturing company must ensure that the availability and readiness of the supplied helicopters is maintained at 85%."

Anwar said the Malacca International Airport in Batu Berendam would be used as a Leonardo helicopter training centre, and technology transfer would be carried out in the country, taking into account Malaysia's preparations to become a hub for Leonardo.

To a supplementary question from Onn Abu Bakar (PH-Batu Pahat) on whether a similar leasing arrangement would be used in the

acquisition of other assets such as fighter jets, Anwar said not all acquisitions of assets are suitable to be done through the leasing system.

"The Armed Forces has also said there are urgent requirements of assets that Malaysia must acquire promptly without waiting for leasing (arrangements), that is through direct purchase."

To a supplementary question from Ikmal Hisham on whether the Parliamentary Special Committee could verify that Leonardo could meet the specifications required for helicopters by each agency, Anwar said this matter could not be discussed openly for security purposes. — *Bernama*

# Calls for stronger action to address child marriage

➤ Youth with older partners at higher risk of experiencing domestic violence while young mothers unequipped to fulfil demanding maternal role: Expert

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Over the years, Malaysians have expressed serious concerns over teenage pregnancies, child marriages and baby abandonments, but in the past five years over 44,263 teenagers got pregnant nationwide, including 17,646 who did so out of wedlock, said Sisters in Islam communications manager Ameena Siddiqi.

"Only Selangor and Kedah have raised the minimum marriage age for Muslim women to 18 years and while this seems like a step forward, the lack of action from other states to amend their laws allows the practice to continue."

She said the federal government has repeatedly claimed that addressing child marriages is challenging and an uphill battle.

"Such statements are baffling and disheartening. They expose its lack of decisive action to protect vulnerable children," she said, adding that the government launched a national strategic plan in 2020 to address the root causes of underage marriages, such as poverty, lack of education and harmful social norms.

However, she said little to no progress has been made to implement the plan and questioned the government's commitment to

addressing the issue.

Reports show a decline in the number of individuals under 18 years old entering marriage from 1,467 in 2019 to 1,035 in 2022.

The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry said Sarawak registered over 1,600 child marriages between 2017 and 2024.

"There is a shortage of comprehensive and transparent national data, making it difficult to fully comprehend and address the scale of child marriages in Malaysia," said Ameena.

She said child marriages often force young girls to abandon their education, as proven in the Education Ministry's Student Database Application System, which shows a rise in student dropout rates from 2019 to 2023, with marriage being a significant factor.

"Marriage is frequently seen as a solution to prevent children from becoming involved in romantic relationships and committing *zina* (fornication) or experiencing out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

"Some families force rape victims to marry their rapists, leading to power imbalances and increasing the risk of continued abuse."

According to the NGO Girls Not Brides, those marrying before the age of 15 are 50% more likely to suffer from intimate partner violence than those who marry later while pregnancy complications are the leading cause of death among girls aged 15 to 19.

Universiti Putra Malaysia obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr Nurul Iftida Basri echoed similar concerns as the risk of domestic violence is higher among youngsters with older partners.

She said teenage pregnancy increases the risk of death due to physical and mental health complications.

"About 30% of postpartum teenage mothers experience depression compared with adults due to poor social support, unpreparedness for motherhood and the need to adapt to maternal roles that are physically and emotionally demanding.

"Teenage mothers are likely to have low education and socioeconomic status, and may come from dysfunctional families, causing the vicious cycle to continue in their family."

She said teenagers are not equipped to become mothers or care for a child, so the newborn is at risk of abandonment, low body weight and less prepared for kindergarten and school.

She said teenage sex education is important in order to learn about the risk of pregnancy, adding that girls may not be physically or emotionally ready for intercourse at an early age.

"Sex education is critical. Family planning and advice through healthcare services are available before, during and after pregnancy, so referral to an obstetrician would benefit health risk assessments.

"Access to a counsellor is not readily available in Malaysia but is essential, especially when mental health is affected. Teenagers are usually unaware of what marriage entails and should not enter into one."



Nurul Iftida said teenage sex education is important in order to learn about the risk of pregnancy, adding that girls may not be physically or emotionally ready for intercourse at an early age. — SUNPIC

## Selangor first to launch Care Economy Policy

**SHAH ALAM:** Selangor has become the first state to launch the Care Economy Policy as part of its efforts to address the challenges posed by an ageing population.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari said the policy focuses on five key areas: advocacy and promotion; governance and regulation; trained carers and workforce; investment and collaboration; and innovation, technology and data.

He said the initiative, which will run until 2030, aims to address elderly care, childcare and support for people with disabilities, strengthening both formal and informal caregiving communities.

He also said 8.1% of the state's population is aged 65 and above, Bernama reported.

"Although Selangor ranks fifth in terms of the percentage of its elderly population, after Perak, Kedah, Sarawak and Perlis, it has the highest total number due to its dense population of 7.36 million," he said after launching the policy at Wisma Dewan Negeri Selangor here on Wednesday.

Amirudin said Kuala Selangor, Sepang and Hulu Langat have the highest proportions of elderly residents in the state.

He also said the policy includes the involvement of state agencies and local authorities to facilitate training and

recognition for informal carers, particularly those who look after children or elderly family members at home.

He added that next year, the state government would host the Selangor Care Economy Summit, bringing together experts in childcare, elderly care and nutrition, as well as other stakeholders.

"The aim is to ensure that those involved in the care economy are recognised for their vital roles, including through fairer compensation.

"I hope the full implementation of the Selangor Care Economy Policy would benefit the elderly, children, people with disabilities, caregivers and the people of Selangor."

## Diagnosis system to address medical costs

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Health Ministry is studying the development of a national diagnosis-related group (DRG) system for hospital care across the country in an effort to address rising medical costs.

Deputy Minister Datuk Lukanisman Awang Sauni said DRG, which classifies patients based on diagnosis, type of treatment and resources used in an episode of care, is essential for financing the healthcare sector by calculating health treatment costs, management and tariffs.

"We are considering ways to implement this system nationwide so that university hospitals, military hospitals and private hospitals could also adopt its use.

"This would allow the M40 and B40 groups to access treatment in the private sector without the concern of excessive costs," he said when replying to a supplementary question from Datuk Dr Ahmad Yunus Hairi (PN-Kuala Langat) in Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said the ministry is in discussions with the Finance Ministry regarding DRG implementation.

Regarding complaints against private healthcare facilities and services, he said 720 complaints have been received by the Health Ministry medical practice division as of Nov 27.

"Of these, 263 were related to complaints against personnel and of these cases, only five complaints per year involved the issue of prescribing medication beyond the patient's needs." — Bernama

## 'Most flash floods due to sanitation issues'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Most flash floods that occur in Malaysia are due to sanitation issues, such as clogged drains and drainage systems, said Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Aiman Athirah Sabu.

"The real issue is clogged drains, so if we could increase public awareness (on the importance of cleanliness) that would be great," she said at Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

She was answering a supplementary question by Wan Razali Wan Nor (PN-Kuantan) on the findings of the Housing and Local Government Ministry's planning with other government agencies to resolve the flood issue.

Responding to a question by Wan Razali's, who also wanted to know whether the ministry is prepared to use a drainage system or water diversion technology similar to that in Japan to address the problem of flash floods, she said the matter is being considered.

"It costs quite a lot of money but that is okay because that is something we pay attention to from time to time to improve our work in dealing with the problem of flash floods." — Bernama

## Matriculation registration starts Dec 1

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The first phase of registration for the matriculation programme for the 2025/2026 session will open from Dec 1 to Feb 28 next year for students who will be sitting for the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM) 2024 examination.

The Education Ministry said the second phase of application and student data updates will be open for five days after SPM results are announced.

"Applying for the ministry's matriculation programme is free of charge. Students can apply at [matrikulasi.moe.gov.my](http://matrikulasi.moe.gov.my)," the ministry said in a statement.

It said the matriculation division of the ministry would announce the results through the website within 21 working days after the announcement of the 2024 SPM results.

It added that students who have received an offer for the programme must download and print the offer letter and application forms through the website. — Bernama

# Pneumonia surges as leading cause of death

➤ Post-Covid-19 impact, ageing population and limited vaccination key factors in rising mortality: Experts

BY DEEPAKASHMI MANICKAM  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Experts believe the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has left many individuals with weakened lungs, increasing their vulnerability to severe infections such as pneumonia – a lung infection that causes inflamed air sacs filled with fluid or pus.

In its report “Statistics on Causes of Death, Malaysia 2024”, released on Oct 29, chief statistician Datuk Seri Mohd Uzir Mahidin revealed that pneumonia accounted for 18,181 deaths or 15.2% of the 119,952 medically certified deaths last year.

This marks the first time in over two decades that pneumonia has overtaken ischaemic heart disease as the leading cause of death, excluding 2021 when Covid-19 was the primary cause.

Three internal medicine and respiratory physicians from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and one from Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) told theSun that the primary contributors to pneumonia-related deaths post-Covid-19 are community-acquired infections, particularly among individuals with weakened immunity or pre-existing health conditions such as asthma and heart disease.

UKM’s Assoc Prof Dr Andrea Ban Yu-Lin noted that patients with underlying conditions such as diabetes, chronic lung diseases or a history of Covid-19 are at higher risk of severe pneumonia.

She said the pandemic significantly impacted pneumonia trends in Malaysia, with post-Covid-19 complications such as breathlessness, fatigue, and persistent coughing, worsening pneumonia cases and complicating long-term management and treatment.

Other factors driving pneumonia mortality include an ageing population with declining immunity, smoking, air pollution, delayed medical attention, antimicrobial resistance, limited vaccination coverage and healthcare-associated infections.

Assoc Prof Dr Ng Boon Hau, also from UKM, warned that pneumonia can progress rapidly, particularly in immunocompromised patients.

Common early symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, chest pain and fatigue.

“If symptoms do not improve within a few days or worsen rapidly, immediate medical attention is advised,” he said.

Ng added that infants, young children, individuals over 65, and those with chronic illnesses or weakened immune systems are at higher risk of developing severe pneumonia, especially those with malnutrition, low birth weight or incomplete vaccinations.

UKM’s Dr Nik Nuratiqah Nik Abeed emphasised the importance of prevention through vaccination and healthy habits.

“Lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking, limiting alcohol intake, eating a balanced diet, staying physically active and avoiding air pollution play a crucial role. Effectively managing chronic illnesses can greatly reduce the risk of pneumonia, while vaccination against pneumococcal infections is pivotal for protecting high-risk populations, including the elderly and those with chronic illnesses,” she said.

She added that pneumonia can cause long-term complications, potentially affecting other organs and resulting in chronic health issues.

To improve lung health and prevent future infections, survivors of pneumonia are advised to engage in pulmonary rehabilitation, practise breathing exercises and stay updated on vaccinations.

USIM’s Dr Nor Safiqah Sharil called for increased public awareness about the seriousness of pneumonia.

“Pneumonia is often underestimated. Public education campaigns are necessary to ensure people seek timely medical attention and understand the importance of prevention,” she said.

To tackle Malaysia’s high pneumonia-related deaths, Nor Safiqah stressed the need for healthcare efforts to focus on prevention, early detection and timely treatment.

“Promoting pneumococcal vaccinations for high-risk groups and implementing smoking cessation programmes are critical measures to reduce mortality.

“Families and caregivers play a crucial role in supporting loved ones with pneumonia by ensuring they adhere to their medication plans, maintain good ventilation at home, assist with breathing exercises, provide emotional support and stay alert to warning signs such as difficulty in breathing,” she said.



Physicians (from left) Dr Ban, Dr Nik Nuratiqah, Dr Nor Safiqah and Dr Ng stress on prevention, early detection and timely treatment to tackle pneumonia-related deaths. – AMIR HAMZAH/THE SUN

## JPJ cracks down on quarry lorries

**NILAI:** The Road Transport Department (JPJ) is intensifying efforts to monitor lorry and heavy vehicle movements operating in quarry areas across the country.

JPJ director-general Datuk Aedy Fadly Ramli said recent complaints had highlighted cases of lorry drivers violating movement time restrictions and carrying excessive loads.

“JPJ is actively conducting monitoring and intelligence operations in quarry areas nationwide to ensure that quarry operators and their vehicles comply with regulations under the Road Transport Act,” he said during a recent inspection of lorries at a quarry site in Labu.

The inspection was conducted in collaboration with the National Anti-Drugs Agency and the Negeri Sembilan Land and Mines Office.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke had earlier announced that the ministry had instructed JPJ to deploy personnel and enforcement officers to quarry sites to ensure stringent action against lorries exceeding weight limits.

Aedy Fadly noted that JPJ had issued 230 notices to lorries for violations, including failure to comply with operating hours in quarry areas around Nilai.

“We must consider that the roads here are narrow and there are schools nearby, making it hazardous for residents. For this reason, lorry movements are restricted to between 8am and 5pm. We do not want these vehicles on the roads before 8am or after 5pm,” he said.

He added that the department is conducting nationwide inspections of heavy vehicles, particularly through special commercial vehicle operations. – Bernama

## Bentong land encroached for durian farming

**KUANTAN:** Approximately 404 hectares of state-owned land in Sungai Perdak, Mukim Sabai, Bentong have been encroached upon, according to Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Wan Rosdy Wan Ismail.

He said the encroached area is in a remote location, situated between the Lentang Tambahan Permanent Forest Reserve and the Negeri Sembilan border.

Initial investigations revealed that the land had been planted with durian trees, prompting the state government to take the matter seriously.

In response, Wan Rosdy instructed the Pahang State Enforcement Unit to act.

“The unit conducted a raid at the site on Wednesday, seizing workers’ quarters and equipment found there. I have also ordered the destruction of the durian trees to ensure the encroachment activities do not continue,” he said in a statement.

He stressed that such encroachment activities not only violate the law but also pose potential risks to the environment and local communities. – Bernama

## Incinerator plant to resume operations in June next year

**ALOR SETAR:** The incinerator plant in Langkawi is expected to resume operations in June next year, following the completion of repair work on its main components, the Kedah State Legislative Assembly was told on Wednesday.

State Housing, Local Government and Health Committee chairman Major (Rtd) Mansor Zakaria said significant damage to the plant’s main components had necessitated extensive repairs, which are expected to take six months.

“The incinerator plant has been operating under the supervision of Drizzle Engineering Sdn Bhd since passing testing and

commissioning in October 2022.

“On May 3, the operation and maintenance contract for the plant was awarded to Bumi Segar Indah Sdn Bhd for a six-year period,” he said in response to a question from Datuk Dr Mohd Hayati Othman (PAS-Tokai).

Mansor added that the operator was currently handling custodial tasks, including housekeeping, landscaping, security control and environmental management.

He also noted that the company was responsible for the plant’s operation and maintenance, including its upgrading, which

involves adding new components over the next two years.

“The operator has been instructed to conduct waste incineration operations for a minimum of 3,000 hours annually, or 11 days per month.

“This schedule allows the operator sufficient time for maintenance and repair work, ensuring the plant operates at an optimum level with the capacity to incinerate up to 100 tonnes of waste per day,” he said.

On a separate matter, Mansor addressed the Kulim Municipal Council’s collaboration with a

private company for the proposed construction of a waste-to-energy (WTE) plant, stating that no final decision had been reached.

“This WTE plant requires a substantial site of approximately 50 acres and a minimum of 1,000 tonnes of waste per day to operate.

“We have received proposals from several companies suggesting that the WTE disposal centre be located centrally within the state to facilitate waste delivery from all districts. However, as of now, no final decision has been made regarding the WTE project,” he said. – Bernama

# 107 injuries found on body of college student, court told

➤ Based on post-mortem, cause of death concluded as chest, soft tissue wounds due to blunt force trauma, says forensic expert

**TAWAU:** A forensic pathologist specialist told the High Court here that there were 107 injuries on the body of student Mohamad Nazmie Azzat Mohd Narul from the Lahad Datu Vocational College.

The fifth prosecution witness Dr Dzureena Abdul Multalib, 39, said based on her examination of the victim's body, the injuries comprised 102 bruises and five abrasion wounds.

"There was a total of 107 injuries, while the abrasion wounds refer to injuries that occur due to destruction of the superficial layer of the skin (epidermis) caused by friction against a hard surface," she said during the trial before Judge Datuk Duncan Sikodol on Wednesday.

Thirteen students, aged between 16 and 19, are charged with jointly murdering Mohamad Nazmie Azzat, 17, in rooms 7 *Resak* and 5 *Belian* at the Lahad Datu Vocational College between 9pm on March 21 and 7.38am on March 22.

The charge, framed under Section 302 of the Penal Code read together with Section 34 of the same code, carries the death penalty or imprisonment for 30 to 40 years and not more than 12 strokes of the cane, upon conviction.

Dzureena said based on the post-mortem examination findings, the cause of death of

Mohamad Nazmie Azzat was concluded as chest and soft tissue injuries due to blunt force trauma.

In response to deputy public prosecutor Nur Nisla Abd Latif's question on whether the 107 injuries were sufficient to cause death to the victim, Dzureena acknowledged that they were, and informed the court that the victim's injuries were from head to toe, with injuries around the left and right arm, possibly indicating defensive wounds.

When asked by Nur Nisla to further elaborate on what could possibly be considered blunt force trauma, Dzureena said it refers to injuries caused by a fall onto a hard surface, kicking, punching, impact with a blunt object or a combination of the above, which can cause damage to the underlying structures, Bernama reported.

Nur Nisla: How about striking or swinging a cable cord towards the deceased, does it fall under blunt force trauma?

Dzureena: Yes.

Nur Nisla: Considering the injuries you have observed, in your opinion, if the deceased in this case was struck with cable cords, punched repeatedly all over his body, kicked at his waist and stomach area, kicked at his behind, his head was stomped on the

floor and he was pushed to metal lockers, what is the action that could possibly cause the death of the deceased?

Dzureena: All of the above, specifically the chest and soft tissue injuries in combination, caused the death of the deceased.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere at the Tawau High Court turned emotional when the fourth prosecution witness, Siti Hamidah Jumari, 45, who is the victim's mother, could not hold back her tears while being asked to identify a photograph of her late son.

Duncan warned the families of the 13 students charged with the murder of Mohamad Nazmie Azzat not to intimidate or threaten witnesses involved in the trial.

He said he had received reports of witnesses being threatened and emphasised that such actions were a serious offence.

"If this (report) reaches the court again, I will issue an order prohibiting any of the families from attending the trial or coming to Tawau during the proceedings," he said.

Earlier, Nur Nisla requested the court to issue a warning to the families of the accused regarding the disturbances, as there had been reports of prosecution witnesses being harassed, and a police report had been filed.

The prosecution is led by Nur Nisla, Ng Juhn Tao and Nur Batrisyia Mohd Khusri.

Eight of the 13 accused are represented by lawyers Datuk Ram Singh, Kamaruddin Mohamad Chinki and Chen Wen Jye, while the remaining five are defended by Mohamad Zairi Zainal Abidin, Abdul Ghani Zelikha, Vivian Thien, Jhassany P. Kang, and Kusni Ambotuwo.

## Singer's son denies stealing Ferrari

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The son of a singer from a popular 90s band and his friend pleaded not guilty at the Ampang Magistrate's Court on Wednesday to charges of stealing a luxury car belonging to a businesswoman two weeks ago.

Norqyym Zainori, 29, Mohd Aliff Naim Mohd Azmir, 38, and another suspect still at large were charged with stealing a Ferrari worth RM300,000.

The car, which belonged to a 53-year-old businesswoman, was taken from a car wash in Jalan Hillview, Hulu Kelang, at 11.08am on Nov 17.

They were charged under Section 379A of the Penal Code, which carries a prison term of between one and seven years, as well as a possible fine upon conviction. The duo also pleaded not guilty to an alternative charge of knowingly retaining a stolen property, namely the Ferrari.

This offence, under Section 411 of the Penal Code, is punishable by imprisonment of between six months and five years, a fine, or both, upon conviction.

Magistrate Amalina Basirah Md Top granted bail of RM3,500 with one surety for each accused, and set Feb 6, 2025, for case mention and document submission.

Deputy public prosecutor Wan Nur Iman Wan Ahmad Afzal appeared for the prosecution, while both the accused were represented by lawyers Mohd Firdaus and Wan Nur Afifah Che Bakar. - Bernama

## Mom gets 1-month jail for neglecting sons

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A woman was sentenced to one month in jail by the Ampang Sessions Court here on Wednesday after she pleaded guilty to neglecting her two sons, by leaving them unsupervised at home last month.

Judge Norshila Kamaruddin ordered the 41-year-old masseuse to serve her sentence from the date of arrest.

The woman was charged with neglecting her six-year-old son and a 14-month-old infant at an apartment in Taman Kosas, Ampang on Oct 7.

The offence, under Section 31(1)(a) of the Child Act 2001, carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison, a maximum fine of RM50,000, or both upon conviction.

According to case details, police received a report from a man who found the two children locked inside the house.

Investigations showed that the mother had been absent for two days, leaving the children without supervision. Firefighters were called to the scene and had to force open the door to rescue the boys. - Bernama

## Teacher held for trafficking ganja

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A male teacher was arrested on suspicion of involvement in trafficking of ganja around Damansara Damai, Petaling Jaya, near here.

Petaling Jaya district police chief ACP Shahrulnizam Ja'afar said in a statement that the arrest of the 40-year-old local suspect was made by a team of police from the Petaling Jaya district police headquarters at 6.45pm on Wednesday.

He said the results of the inspection found drugs suspected to be ganja with an estimated weight of 0.21kg, and a confiscated value of RM6,300.

"Preliminary urine screening tests found that the suspect was positive for cannabis. The suspect is a teacher and does not have any past record."

"The Petaling Jaya Magistrate's Court has granted a remand order for the suspect under Section 117 of the Criminal Procedure Code starting today (Thursday) until Dec 1," he said. - Bernama

## Extension granted to resolve suit

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The High Court granted SRC International Sdn Bhd and its two subsidiaries a two-week extension to resolve their lawsuit against Umno and Umno Selangor, involving RM19.5 million allegedly misappropriated in 2015.

Judge Datuk Raja Ahmad Mohzanuddin Shah Raja Mohzan granted the extension after lawyer Razlan Hadri Zulkifli, representing SRC, Gandingan Mentari Sdn Bhd, and Jendela Pinggiran Sdn Bhd, informed the court that settlement negotiations were still ongoing between the parties.

"The discussions are progressing and are closer to a resolution, but not in the immediate future. We require more time to receive further instructions from our clients regarding the settlement," Razlan Hadri said on Wednesday, requesting a postponement of the trial.

Lawyers Mohamed Shahrul Fazli Kamarulzaman, representing Umno, and Muzzammil Merican Hasnal Rezua, representing Umno Selangor, confirmed that the settlement talks were continuing and assured the court they would update it once an agreement was reached.

Judge Ahmad Mohzanuddin agreed to postpone the trial, stating that if no settlement is reached, the case will proceed on Jan 20 next year, with a status update on the settlement scheduled for Dec 12.

"The court has prioritised this case, and I advise the parties involved not to lose momentum in reaching a resolution. At this stage, I will not entertain any request for postponement," he said. - Bernama



**FACING THE MUSIC ...** Khoo Keik Sing is charged in the Magistrate's Court for cheating an individual of RM100,000 by offering to help him obtain a non-existent title of 'Datuk' three years ago. He pleaded not guilty. - **BERNAMAPIC**



# 'Many avoid help due to social stigma'

➤ Individuals with mental health issues silently bear emotional burden for fear of being perceived as weak, says expert

**PUTRAJAYA:** Social stigma surrounding mental health issues, which associates them with weakness or a lack of willpower, remains prevalent in society, causing many individuals to silently bear their emotional burden.

Universiti Sains Malaysia School of Educational Studies dean Assoc Prof Dr Rahimi Che Aman said this issue is particularly prevalent among young people and university students.

"Despite being aware of the availability of counselling services, many hesitate to seek treatment, fearing that they will be perceived as weak.

"While awareness is present, there is still a significant gap in the courage to seek help. The social stigma, which brands individuals who seek treatment as 'weak' or 'abnormal', remains one of the most significant barriers," said Rahimi at the "Prioritising Mental Health and Well-Being Forum", held in conjunction with the Putrajaya Festival of Ideas (Putrajaya FOI) here on Wednesday.

The forum, which lasted over two hours, was facilitated by Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad and featured four panellists who are experts in psychological services, counselling, and clinical psychology.

Rahimi, who is one of the panellist, further emphasised that limited access to mental health services, especially in rural areas, poses a significant challenge for individuals seeking proper care.

Despite the availability of various assistance agencies such as the Social Welfare Department and the National Population and Family Development Board in major cities, individuals in rural areas or from the B40 group often encounter significant barriers to accessing mental health treatment.

"These challenges are not just geographical; they also involve economic factors, a lack of facilities, and the mismatch between available services and the specific needs of these communities," she said.

Psychospiritual Institute clinical psychologist and co-founder Mohd Akif Farhan Ahmad Basri emphasised that mental health issues arise from a variety of factors, and are not solely attributed to work-related stress. Past

trauma also plays a significant role in shaping one's mental well-being.

"Sometimes, these problems are layered. For instance, a recent graduate may secure a job, but the salary is insufficient, leading to financial instability. This lack of security can trigger emotional imbalances," he said.

"It's not a matter of weakness or failure; it's a reflection of the challenges we face in a complex world. What we need is a robust support system for mental health, one that not only focuses on treatment, but also emphasises education and social support," he added.

Earlier, in his keynote address, Dzulkefly highlighted that mental health has become one of the most pressing challenges facing the global community, including Malaysia, Bernama reported.

He referenced statistics from the World Health Organisation, which indicate that between 10% and 20% of

the global population will experience mental health disorders at some point in their lives. This means that one in every 10 people, or more, will face mental health challenges, which can range from conditions such as anxiety and depression.

Dzulkefly also cited data from the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2023, revealing that one million Malaysians, or 4.6% of the population aged 15 and above, are suffering from depression. The survey further showed a disturbing trend, with the number of people suffering from depression having doubled since the 2019 NHMS.

The Putrajaya FOI is being held at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre from Wednesday until today. The event gathers over 80 leaders, subject matter experts, academics, and industry professionals, on stage for forums and parallel sessions through the Malaysia Ideas Conference.



**SPOILT FOR CHOICE ...** Chef Bo Ibrahim showing his products at the 19th Malaysia International Branding Showcase 2024 in Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre yesterday. – ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

## Penang affordable homes to be rebranded as 'Rumah MutiaraKu'

**GEORGE TOWN:** Affordable homes in Penang will be rebranded as *Rumah MutiaraKu* effective January 2025, said state Housing and Environment Committee chairman Datuk Seri S. Sundarajoo.

He said the rebranding aims to enhance the sense of home ownership for future owners, in line with the slogan "My Home, My Paradise".

He said in accordance with the Penang 2025 Budget tabled last Friday, the state government has set a target to build 220,000 units under the Penang2030 Agenda.

"As of Oct 31 this year, a total of 162,689 units (73.94%) have been achieved, comprising 51,680 completed units, 22,456 under construction, and 88,553 in the planning stage," he said during the

winding-up session of the 2025 Supply Bill and the motion on Development Estimate 2025 at the Penang State Legislative Assembly, here on Wednesday.

He said the state is monitoring developers responsible for delivering the remaining 88,553 units still in the planning phase.

In another development, Sundarajoo said the state Land and Mines Office is preparing a draft of the Penang Mineral regulations following the discovery of rare earth elements in several areas of the state.

He said the office has obtained regulatory documents from other states that have already undertaken rare earth elements exploration as reference.

"Additionally, following the state government's visit to a pioneer site in

Gerik, Perak, which has already commenced exploration, the office has written a letter to the company to submit a proposal for exploration in Penang, but has yet to receive a reply.

"Nevertheless, the state government remains open to any company interested in exploration and will consider proposals that offer greater benefits to the state," he said.

On the discovery of hydrocarbons in Penang, Sundarajoo said Petronas is processing newly acquired two-dimensional (2D) seismic data. The process will involve seismic interpretation to identify potential resources, and it is expected to be completed early next year.

Earlier, Petronas announced that it was conducting a new multi-client 2D offshore survey in the northern area of the Straits of Malacca. – Bernama

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# Prabowo's coalition wins key provinces, except Jakarta

► Expected results will make it easier to implement president's national agenda

**JAKARTA:** Candidates backed by new President Prabowo Subianto look set to secure victories in key regional elections, with the exception of Jakarta, which analysts said should make it easier to implement his agenda and reinforce his political club.

More than 200 million Indonesians voted on Wednesday for leaders in 37 provinces, 93 cities and 415 districts. While the official results will be announced between tomorrow and Dec 15, pollsters have released their election counts.

Candidates backed by Prabowo's

broad coalition, some of whom were also endorsed by former President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, won most key provinces, including Central Java, West Java and East Java, according to the pollsters.

"This is a triumph for Prabowo and also Jokowi, but with Jakarta, it's a failure," said Yanuar Nugroho, visiting senior fellow at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

"The executors of Prabowo's programmes are regional leaders."

Central Java, West Java, and East Java are seen as pivotal because they are the most populous provinces,

while Jakarta has national significance as the capital and, as seen with Widodo, can be a stepping stone to run for the presidency.

"The victory is important so that Prabowo's programmes could be implemented well and integrated," said Sufmi Dasco Ahmad, a senior official at Prabowo's Gerindra party.

In Jakarta, the candidates for governor and deputy governor backed by the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle had between 49.49% to 51.1% of votes, pollsters said, ahead of the ticket backed by a coalition of 13 government-aligned parties and an independent pairing.

Candidates must secure an outright majority to win in Jakarta, or there will be a second round of voting.

Election analyst Titi Angraini said the overall results would smoothen the way for Prabowo to implement his election pledges and give him room to start building a platform to run for re-election in 2029.

Yanuar said the results will make it easier for Prabowo to implement his policies such as free meals for schoolchildren, poverty eradication and food self-sufficiency.

"Prabowo wants to consolidate his power so that there's no disruption of his programmes," he said.

Prabowo was sworn in as president last month, after a landslide election victory earlier this year. He has secured support from seven out of eight parties in parliament. – Reuters



Electoral officers counting votes at a polling station in a Jakarta slum area on Wednesday. – REUTERS/PIC

## Anti-fraud campaign nets 240 suspects

**BEIJING:** China repatriated 240 gambling and fraud suspects from Cambodia yesterday, with over 500 more expected to be escorted back as it stepped up a years-long effort to combat Chinese-organised crime in Southeast Asia.

The suspects constituted the second batch China has chartered planes to repatriate from Cambodia after a first round in April when more than 680 were escorted back, CCTV reported.

As part of efforts to stem cross-border online gambling and fraud carried out through telecom networks, China has partnered with Cambodia, Myanmar and the Philippines to nab Chinese suspects and have them brought back to China.

The latest deportation follows a week after China and Myanmar dismantled large telecom fraud centres in northern Myanmar, with over 53,000 Chinese nationals arrested since a campaign to combat such fraud began last year.

In September, China and Cambodia strengthened their cooperation against gambling and fraud, signing agreements to enhance enforcement collaboration and fight organised crime.

Cambodia banned online gambling in 2019.

China has also repatriated thousands of suspects under its covert global "Operation Fox Hunt" operation launched a decade ago to fight corruption and economic crimes and has since recovered billions of dollars in assets. – Reuters

## Activists accuse Vietnam of rights abuses

**HANOI:** Rights activists accused Vietnam of infringing freedom of religion after a court handed jail sentences this week to six Khmer Buddhist monks and three activists.

A court in the southern province of Long An condemned the men to prison terms between two and six years after finding them guilty of "abusing democratic freedoms to infringe upon state interests" and illegally detaining people.

Among them, Khmer Krom Buddhist monk Thach Chanh Da Ra was given a six-year prison term during a trial on Tuesday, Vietnam's Public Security Ministry said.

Asia Human Rights and Labour Advocates (AHLRA) said late on Wednesday the sentences against the monks were "outrageous and unacceptable".

The police said Thach Chanh Da Ra instructed his followers to illegally detain and attack local authorities when they tried to search the temple where he resides.

It was not clear why the temple was searched and the motives for the monks' resistance.

"What was on trial was the Khmer Krom people's right to practise their religion, language and culture without interference," said AHLRA director Phil Robertson, referring to the Khmer ethnic group living in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, most of whom are Buddhists. – Reuters

## ICC prosecutor seeks arrest warrant for Myanmar leader

**THE HAGUE:** The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) said on Wednesday he would seek an arrest warrant for Myanmar's State Administration Council Chairman Min Aung Hlaing for crimes against humanity.

Myanmar's government said the country was not a member of the court and that it does not recognise its statements.

A million Rohingya fled, most to neighbouring Bangladesh, to escape a Myanmar military offensive launched in August 2017, a campaign that UN investigators have described as a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

Soldiers, police and Buddhist residents are alleged by UN investigators to have razed hundreds

of villages in Myanmar's remote western Rakhine state, torturing residents as they fled, carrying out mass killings and gang rapes.

Myanmar has denied the allegations, saying security forces were carrying out legitimate operations against gunmen who attacked police posts.

Most refugees now live in camps in Bangladesh.

"He (Min Aung Hlaing) is responsible for orchestrating the genocide against the Rohingya people," said Mohammed Zubair, a Rohingya researcher living in a Bangladesh refugee camp.

Seeking a warrant for "the person who holds the highest military position in Myanmar sends a strong message to perpetrators that no one

stands above the law," said Nicholas Koumjian, head of the UN Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, which assisted the ICC investigation.

A panel of three judges will now decide if they agree there are "reasonable grounds" to believe Min Aung Hlaing bears criminal responsibility for the deportation and persecution of Rohingya in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

There is no set time frame for their decision but it generally takes around three months to rule on a warrant.

With 124 member nations, the ICC prosecutes individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide and aggression. With no police force to make arrests, it relies

on states to do this. It faces a challenge to get Min Aung Hlaing into custody, as he does not travel.

The United States, Russia, China and India have not signed onto the ICC. It is backed by the European Union, Australia, Canada, Britain, Brazil, Japan and dozens of African and Latin American countries.

It has issued several arrest warrants for serving national leaders including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Sudan's Omar al-Bashir. So far, only one sitting head of state, Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta, who was charged by the ICC before he was elected president in 2013, appeared in court to face charges. The case was later dropped. – Reuters

## India parliament suspended after row

**NEW DELHI:** Both houses of Indian parliament were suspended temporarily yesterday within minutes of opening as opposition lawmakers disrupted proceedings for the third day this week seeking a discussion on allegations against the Adani Group.

US authorities have accused Gautam Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani and managing director of Adani Green, Vneet S. Jaain, of being part of a scheme to pay bribes of US\$265 million (RM1.1 billion) to secure Indian solar power supply contracts, and misleading US investors during fund raises there.

"We want a discussion on this in parliament. It is going to be the third day that we are demanding a reply from the prime minister" on the Adani issue, said Manickam Tagore, a lawmaker from the Congress party, which has been leading the protests against the group.

Many of India's opposition parties accuse Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of favouring Adani and blocking investigations against him in India, accusations both have denied.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who has been a vocal critic of Adani, said Gautam Adani, 62, should be arrested.

While the government has not made any comment on the indictment, Modi's BJP has said it had no reason to defend Adani. - Reuters

## UK tightens sanctions on errant employers

**LONDON:** Britain yesterday set out stronger sanctions against employers who exploit foreign workers, following research showing abuses particularly in the social care sector.

Businesses that repeatedly flout visa rules or commit serious employment breaches, such as not paying the minimum wage, will be barred from recruiting foreign workers for two years, up from 12 months now.

Migration and Citizenship Minister Seema Malhotra said worker exploitation was unacceptable.

"Shamefully, these practices have been seen particularly in our care sector, where workers coming to the UK to support our health and social care service have all too often found themselves plunged into unjustifiable insecurity and debt. This can, and must, end."

Britain opened up a new visa route for social care jobs in 2021 to fill thousands of vacancies, but a range of factors including low pay and poor working conditions have made migrant workers in the sector more vulnerable to exploitative treatment. - Reuters

## Ex-ByteDance intern faces US\$1.1m suit

**BEIJING:** ByteDance is suing a former intern for US\$1.1 million (RM4.89 million), alleging he deliberately attacked its artificial intelligence large language model training infrastructure.

The parent company of TikTok is seeking 8 million yuan (US\$1.1 million) in damages from the former intern, Tian Keyu, in a lawsuit filed with the Haidian District People's Court in Beijing, the *Legal Weekly* reported this week.

While lawsuits between companies and employees are common in China, legal action against an intern and for such a large sum is unusual.

The case has drawn attention due to its focus on AI LLM training, a technology that has captured global interest amid rapid technological advances in generative AI, used to produce text, images or other output from large bodies of data.

ByteDance declined to comment on the lawsuit yesterday. Tian, whom other media outlets have identified as a postgraduate student at Peking University, did not respond to emailed messages. - Reuters

**BOGOTA:** Authorities from dozens of countries seized 225 tonnes of cocaine in a six-week mega-operation where they unearthed a new Pacific trafficking route from South America to Australia, the Colombian Navy said on Wednesday.

The latest phase of global naval operation "Orion" resulted in the seizure of more than 1,400 tonnes of drugs, including 225 tonnes of cocaine and 128 tonnes of marijuana, said Navy official Orlando Enrique Grisales.

More than 400 people were arrested in the operation targeting oceans, coasts, rivers and ports around the globe in October and November.

The massive bust involved the security agencies of the United States, Brazil, Spain, the Netherlands and several other nations, as well as international organisations.

The seizure deprived drug cartels of more than US\$8.4 billion (RM37.3 billion), according to a Navy statement.

Grisales said officials also seized a semisubmersible wood-and-fibreglass vessel on its way to Australia with five tonnes of Colombian cocaine.

This was the third such vessel discovered in this area, revealing a "new route" of trafficking with sophisticated boats that can cover the distance of some 16,000km without needing to refuel.

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# 225 tonnes of cocaine seized

Drug bust unearths new trafficking route from South America to Australia

A kilogram of cocaine is sold for up to US\$240,000 in Australia, said Grisales - about six times more than the price in the United States.

"It is a route that is becoming increasingly profitable because prices are much higher in Australia," said a security source.

"Initially, these boats were used mainly to take the drugs out of the country and move them off the coast of Colombia and then transfer them to ships," said the source.

"It has been found that these semisubmersibles, sometimes even submersibles, are now increasingly sophisticated, with very fine engineering."

The operation also uncovered previously unknown alliances between cartels from Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru with groups from Europe and Oceania.

"It is not just a pyramid structure as the cartels once were. Today they are organised crime networks joined together," said Grisales.

Colombia is the world's biggest cocaine producer and exporter, mainly to the United States and Europe.

Last year, the South American country set a new record for cocaine production and cultivation of the coca leaf it is made from. - AFP



**SNOW'S NO BAR ...** Keep-fit enthusiasts exercising during a snowy day in Shenyang, in northeastern China's Liaoning province. - AFP/IC

## China defence minister's fate unclear

**BEIJING:** The fate of Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun remained unclear, as two US officials said he was being investigated for corruption while another urged caution.

The *Financial Times* first reported that Dong was being investigated as part of an anti-corruption probe that has roiled the top ranks of the People's Liberation Army.

One US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a Chinese investigation into its strategic rocket forces had expanded to other issues in the military and procurement.

The official said the investigation into Dong was significant because Chinese President Xi Jinping had appointed Dong himself.

But another senior US official, also speaking on condition of anonymity, urged caution without offering details on whether the report was accurate.

Dong would be the third consecutive serving or former defence minister to be investigated for alleged corruption.

When asked at a daily press briefing about the report, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said it was "chasing shadows".

The Defence Ministry did not reply to requests for comment.

China's military underwent a sweeping anti-corruption purge since last year, with at least nine PLA generals and a handful of defence industry executives removed from the national legislative body.

Dong, a former PLA Navy chief, was appointed defence minister in December 2023. His predecessor, Li Shangfu, was removed after seven months into the job.

Dong last week declined to meet US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin during a meeting of defence ministers in Laos citing US actions over Taiwan, a move the Pentagon chief said on Wednesday was unfortunate.

US officials said they were not concerned about military-to-military relations between Washington and Beijing if Dong was removed, adding that China would be able to quickly put in place a successor.

As defence minister, Dong is responsible for military diplomacy. He oversaw a recent thaw in US-China military-to-military ties, with both nations holding theatre-level commander talks in September for the first time.

But he was not promoted to the six-member Central Military Commission (CMC), China's highest-level military body, during a

major Communist Party plenum earlier this year, where personnel reshuffles would normally be announced.

The defence minister has traditionally been a member of both the CMC, which is headed by Xi, and the State Council, China's Cabinet-level executive body.

Dong was not appointed to the State Council either during a government reshuffle in March.

"Frankly nothing would surprise me anymore," said Dennis Wilder, a professor at Georgetown University and former US intelligence analyst.

"The history with these investigations in the PLA are that once the string of corruption is pulled many other threads are revealed and the sweater unravels."

Dong's two immediate predecessors, Li and Wei Fenghe, were expelled from the Communist Party in June for "serious violations of discipline", a euphemism for corruption.

The pair were also found to have received huge sums of money in bribes and sought to provide "personnel benefits" for others, the statement said, such as promotions or higher rankings in the military. - Reuters



# Central Gaza strikes kill 17 people

► Tanks push deeper into enclave

**CAIRO:** Israeli military strikes killed at least 17 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip yesterday, medics said, as forces stepped up bombardments on central areas and pushed tanks deeper in the north and south of the enclave.

Six people were killed in two separate air strikes on a house and near the hospital of Kamal Adwan in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip, while four others were killed when an Israeli strike hit a motorcycle in Khan Younis in the south.

In Nuseirat, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, Israeli planes carried out several air strikes destroying a multi-storey building and hitting roads outside mosques. At least seven people were killed in some of those strikes, health officials said.

Medics said at least two people, a woman and a child, were killed in tank shelling that hit western areas of Nuseirat, while an air strike killed five others in a house nearby.

In Rafah, near the border with Egypt, tanks pushed deeper into the northwest area of the city, residents said.

There has been no Israeli comment on the fighting in Gaza overnight and early yesterday.

Israel's 13-month campaign in Gaza, with the avowed intent of eradicating Hamas gunmen, has killed nearly 44,200 people and displaced nearly all the enclave's population at least once, according to Gaza officials. Vast swathes of the territory are in ruins.

The war was launched in response to an attack which killed around 1,200 people and captured more than 250 hostages in Israel on Oct 7, 2023, Israel has said.

Months of attempts to negotiate a ceasefire have yielded scant progress, and negotiations are now on hold. Mediator Qatar has suspended its efforts until the sides are prepared to make concessions.

A ceasefire in the parallel conflict between



Mohammed Sleem hugs his daughter Menisa Sleem in Tyre, Lebanon, as he meets her after two months on Wednesday. – REUTERS/SPIC

Israel and Hamas' Lebanese ally Hezbollah took effect before dawn on Wednesday, bringing a halt to hostilities that had escalated sharply in recent months and overshadowed the conflict in Gaza.

Announcing the Lebanon accord on Tuesday, US President Joe Biden said he would now renew his push for an elusive agreement in Gaza, urging Israel and Hamas to seize the moment.

In southern Lebanon, an Israeli tank fired two rounds into Markaba town yesterday, said two Lebanese security sources.

One of the security sources said two people were wounded. Lebanon's state news agency said two people were wounded and transferred to hospital after an Israeli attack on the town, without specifying the type of attack.

There was no comment from Hezbollah and Israel on the tank rounds. – Reuters

## Palestinian leader Abbas lays out succession plan

**RAMALLAH:** Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas on Wednesday announced who would replace him in an interim period when the post becomes vacant, effectively removing Hamas from any involvement in a future transition.

Abbas, 89, still rules despite his term as head of the Palestinian Authority ending in 2009, and has resisted pressure to appoint a successor or a vice-president.

Under Palestinian law, the speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) takes over the Palestinian Authority in the event of a power vacuum.

But the PLC, where Hamas had a majority, no longer exists since Abbas officially dissolved it in 2018 after more than a decade of tensions between his secular party, Fatah, and Hamas, which ousted the Palestinian

Authority from power in the Gaza Strip in 2007.

In a decree, Abbas said the Palestinian National Council chairman, Rawhi Fattuh, would be his temporary replacement should the position become vacant.

"If the position of the president of the national authority becomes vacant in the absence of the legislative council, the Palestinian National Council president shall assume the duties ... temporarily," it said.

The decree said that following the transition period, elections must be held within 90 days. This deadline can be extended in the event of a "force majeure", it said.

The PNC is the parliament of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which has over 700 members from the Palestinian territories and abroad.

Hamas, which does not belong to the PLO, has no representation on the council. The PNC deputies are not elected, but appointed.

The decree refers to the "delicate stage in the history of the homeland and the Palestinian cause" as war rages in Gaza between Israel and Hamas.

There are also persistent divisions between Hamas and Fatah.

The decree comes on the same day that a ceasefire entered into force in Lebanon after an agreement between Israel and Hamas' ally, Hezbollah.

The Palestinian Authority appears weaker than ever, unable to pay its civil servants and threatened by Israeli far-right ministers' calls to annex all or part of the occupied West Bank, an ambition increasingly less hidden by the government of Benjamin Netanyahu. – AFP

## Syrian rebels launch attack against army in Aleppo

**AMMAN:** Syrian rebels in the last opposition enclave in northern Syria launched on Wednesday a wide-scale military operation against the Syrian army and seized territory in the first such advance in years, army and rebel sources said.

The rebel offensive overran at least 10 areas under the control of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in northwestern Aleppo province, said a source in the operations room run by a coalition of insurgent groups led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham.

The land incursion is the first such territorial advance since March 2020 when Russia, which backs Assad, and Turkey, which supports the rebels, agreed to a ceasefire that led to military action halting in Syria's last major rebel

stronghold in the country's northwest.

Rebels advanced almost 10km from the outskirts of Aleppo city and a few kilometres away from Nubl and Zahra, two towns where Lebanon's Hezbollah has a strong militia presence, an army source said.

They attacked Al-Nayrab airport east of Aleppo, where pro-Iranian militias have outposts.

Rebels say the campaign was in response to stepped-up strikes in recent weeks against civilians by the Russian and Syrian air force on areas in southern Idlib, and to preempt any attacks by the Syrian army, which was building up troops near front lines with rebels.

The army pounded areas near rebel-held Idlib city and the cities of Ariha and Sarmada

along with other areas in southern Idlib province, according to an army source.

Official media did not report the fighting but pro-government websites said the army had pounded Hayat Tahrir al-Sham hideouts and killed dozens.

Witnesses said hundreds of families in the last refuge for opponents of Assad fled to safer areas along the Turkish border.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, listed as a terrorist organisation by the United States, has long been targeted by Syrian-government and Russian forces.

It competes with Turkey-backed mainstream rebels groups that also control swathes of territory along the border with Turkey in northwest Syria. – Reuters

BRIEFS

### UKRAINE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE HIT

**KYIV:** Russia unleashed yesterday its second big attack on Ukraine's energy infrastructure this month, cutting power to more than 1 million people. Damage to the energy and other critical infrastructure was reported by officials in Lviv, Volyn, Rivne and Khmelnytskyi regions in the west; the Mykolayiv and Kherson regions in the south; and Zhytomyr in the centre. The attack reinforced fears of long power cuts during winter as temperatures across Ukraine hover around zero. Officials said it was the 11th major strike on the energy system since March. Russia has knocked out about half of Ukraine's available generating capacity. – Reuters

### ISRAEL SHOTS DOWN DRONE SMUGGLING WEAPONS

**CAIRO:** The Israeli military said it shot down a drone carrying weapons that had crossed from Egypt to Israel. Egyptian security sources said they had no knowledge of such an incident. In two incidents in October, Israel also said it downed two drones smuggling weapons from Egyptian territory. Israeli officials have said that Hamas used tunnels running under the border into Egypt's Sinai region to smuggle arms. However, Egypt says it destroyed tunnels leading to Gaza years ago and created a buffer zone with fortifications to prevent smuggling. – Reuters

### RUSSIA WILL RESPOND TO U.S. MISSILES IN JAPAN

**MOSCOW:** Russia said on Wednesday that if the United States stationed missiles in Japan, this would threaten its security and prompt a retaliation. Kyodo news agency reported on Sunday that Japan and the US aim to compile a joint military plan that includes deploying missiles. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said: "We have warned the Japanese side that if American medium-range missiles appear on its territory, this will pose a real threat to the security of our country and we will be forced to take the necessary, adequate steps to strengthen our own defence capability." – Reuters



UNDER ONE ROOF

# Parenting through intuition

**Q:** I am fairly new to parenting. Are there times and situations when I should simply "chill out" and refrain from disciplining my child for misbehaving?

**Focus on the Family Malaysia:** Child discipline is more of an art than a science – it is a skill acquired gradually and almost imperceptibly.

So, relax, take one day at a time, and allow the parent-child relationship to unfold naturally. As the years go by, you will perfect your skills in a normal and intuitive way.

In the meantime, the only behaviour that merits disciplinary action is wilful disobedience. Otherwise, there are some rather obvious situations where traditional disciplinary action is not appropriate:

➔ **Normal exploratory behaviour in infants and toddlers:** Little ones need the freedom to discover their environment without getting their hands slapped. "Childproof" your home by keeping fragile items out of their reach.

➔ **Toilet training:** This cannot be rushed. A harsh response to failure only creates confusion,

anxiety and frustration for the child.

➔ **Bedwetting:** This physiological problem is usually not under conscious control, and the child will rarely – if ever – respond to rewards or punishment.

➔ **Accidents:** If a behaviour was not wilful or intentional, it does not warrant discipline. However, it is fair and appropriate to require an older child to help clean up or fix things, especially if carelessness was involved.

➔ **Irritability and negativity due to illness or fatigue:** Show grace for moments of grumpiness when your child is unwell, hungry or tired.

➔ **Less-than-perfect report cards:** If your child's performance is falling short of his or her capabilities, the solution may lie in fostering more self-discipline – not punishment. Children should not be penalised for not getting straight As.

➔ **Performance in sports:** If your child is interested in sports, your support and encouragement are essential. However, they should not be forced to participate against their will or beyond their abilities.

**Q:** My spouse and I are trying to visualise our future but we are struggling to look beyond our present state. What would you suggest?

**Focus on the Family Malaysia:** Thinking about the future can be exciting but it can also be hard to envision, especially when you are feeling "stuck". In times like this, it is helpful to reflect on your past together as a couple.

There is a bond that forms between two people who have shared experiences together. Your past is more than a collection of random memories. It represents a journey you and your spouse have taken together, one that infuses your relationship with richness and meaning. And this will be the "launch pad" for your next phase of discovery.

That is why reminiscing is especially helpful for those who have been married for a long time.

It is healthy to remember the good times you have shared and the difficulties you have faced and overcome together.

It can encourage you to hope for good times ahead and remind you of the troubles you can

get through if you stick together.

However, reminiscing is not just for long-time couples; it is also for newlyweds. You may not have many years of shared experiences to reminisce about but you likely have meaningful memories from your time before marriage. Reflect on those times even if they were not that long ago.

Intimacy does not come from the novelty of a relationship; it develops over time as you share experiences and grow together.

The fond memories from when you first met or the funny, heartwarming moments you shared are the foundation that will help carry you both into the future.

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

LETTERS letters@thesundaily.com

## Saving Malayan tigers from roadkill incidents

THE Malayan tiger, our national icon and a symbol of bravery, is teetering on the brink of extinction. With fewer than 150 individuals left in the wild, every loss is a devastating blow to Malaysia's biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Recent incidents in the Belum-Temengor forest complex lay bare a heartbreaking reality: human lives lost to tiger encounters, and tigers killed by vehicles on the Gerik-Jeli Highway. These tragedies are preventable, yet they persist.

The Gerik-Jeli Highway, cutting through the Royal Belum State Park and Temengor forest reserve, is an economic lifeline. Yet, for our Malayan tigers, it has become a death trap.

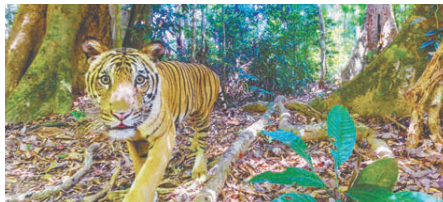
For tigers, shrinking habitats and dwindling prey – worsened by the African Swine Fever – have forced them to roam further into human-dominated areas. This increases their risk of crossing busy highways, where fatal collisions are common.

Since 2023, six tigers have died in roadkill incidents, with two tragic incidents on the Gerik-Jeli Highway in the past two months. Each death serves as a stark reminder of the urgent need for decisive action to protect our wildlife.

**Encouraging progress, but more needed**  
The recent Third National Tiger Conservation Task Force meeting showed promising momentum in addressing the multiple threats faced by the Malayan tiger, including roadkills and human-tiger conflicts.

WWF-Malaysia and Rimau commend the tiger range states (TRS) – Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan – for stepping up to make roads safer for tigers and other wildlife. However, bold and immediate action is crucial to prevent further losses.

Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability Minister Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad's proposals, including warning systems and studies into wildlife crossings, are welcome steps forward. These efforts must be paired with night-time speed restrictions, prey augmentation and public education to effectively mitigate the risks.



Saving the Malayan tiger is not just about conserving a species; it is about preserving the very fabric of our nation. – IMAGE CREDIT: EMMANUEL RONDEAU

Meanwhile, Public Works Minister Datuk Seri Alexander Nanta Linggi's call for ecological fiscal transfers to incentivise states to protect wildlife corridors reflects a growing commitment, but time is of the essence – these ideas must quickly translate into on-the-ground action.

**Solutions within reach**

To prevent further tragedies, the following measures are clear and actionable:

➔ **Wildlife crossings:** Construct safe passageways, such as overpasses and underpasses, designed specifically for wildlife to safely cross highways. These structures should be strategically placed in areas with high wildlife movement, identified through ecological studies and monitoring. Effective fencing should also guide animals toward these crossings, reducing the likelihood of roadkills.

➔ **Speed enforcement:** Strictly reduce, regulate and monitor speeds in wildlife corridors, especially at night when most animals cross highways. Speed-monitoring systems, such as automated cameras and road sensors, can ensure compliance. Installing visible warning signage and speed bumps in critical areas can further alert drivers to the presence of wildlife.

➔ **Prey augmentation:** Address the scarcity of prey in tiger habitats by restoring populations of native prey species, such as deer and wild boar, through breeding and reintroduction programmes. This effort can help reduce tigers' need to roam outside protected areas, lowering the risk of road encounters and human-wildlife conflict.

➔ **Public awareness:** Educate road users and communities on the importance of

protecting wildlife. Conduct awareness campaigns targeting road users and local communities, emphasising the importance of wildlife conservation and safe driving practices in wildlife-rich areas.

**Call to action**

Saving the Malayan tiger is not just about conserving a species; it is about preserving the very fabric of our nation.

Protecting the Malayan tiger requires a collective action. WWF-Malaysia and Rimau together call on the government to urgently form a taskforce to address tiger roadkills.

Extending the collaboration exemplified by the National Wildlife Crime Unit on a global scale to include local road safety measures can significantly reduce tiger mortality along key highways like Gerik-Jeli. From wildlife crossings to education campaigns, every effort counts.

We commend the government for its renewed commitment to protecting the Malayan tiger, including the allocation of RM200 million for conservation and strengthened enforcement efforts with Perhilitan, the police and Interpol.

Let us build on the government's commendable efforts by addressing the crisis of roadkill with urgency. Together – TRS, federal agencies, NGO and all Malaysians – we can ensure this iconic species continues to roam our forests for generations to come.

**Sophia Lim**  
Executive Director and CEO  
WWF-Malaysia  
**Lara Ariffin**  
Rimau President

## Expulsion of cadets sends strong message against bullying

I REFER to the expulsion of five cadet officers at the National Defence University of Malaysia for their involvement in bullying incidents. It was the right decision and should serve as a strong warning to cadet officers to respect university rules and adhere to a code of conduct.

Sadly, this bullying occurred in the wake of the tragic death of cadet officer Zulfarhan Osman Zulkarnain, who died in June 2017 from severe injuries inflicted by six of his fellow coursemates. These individuals were initially spared jail sentences but were later sentenced to death by hanging, as confirmed by the Court of Appeal.

The court deemed their actions to be malicious and cruel, showing a lack of compassion for the deceased. This tragedy should never have happened, yet the five cadet officers involved in the latest case reportedly went on a "rampage", causing serious harm to their coursemates.

Their indiscipline not only undermines the university's authority but also wastes taxpayers' money. The actions of these officers have attracted national attention and anger, particularly as they were selected from thousands of applicants to pursue military careers, which reflects their earlier commitment to serve the nation.

Bullying in schools and institutions of higher learning continues to be an issue, causing physical, emotional and mental harm to students. Many of these cases are quietly resolved, with little information about the punishments imposed on the bullies.

Schools and institutions must take bullying seriously, ensuring their environments are safe for learning.

It is hoped that the five

expelled cadet officers will reflect on their actions and learn from this unfortunate incident.

In addition to being expelled, they are required to pay compensation for the costs incurred during their studies, and may face legal consequences if charges are pressed.

In hindsight, these officers could have avoided inflicting harm if they had exercised better judgement and self-control. Unfortunately, their reckless, emotional and rash behaviour led them down a destructive path.

It is a sad day for their parents, who had high hopes for their children's success in serving the nation. While those aspirations may have been dashed, there is still hope that these young individuals can turn things around in the future and become well-behaved, responsible members of society.

Parents should teach their children that bullying is unacceptable and encourage them to report any bullying incidents to the authorities without fear. Similarly, the Higher Education Ministry should conduct a thorough study on bullying in schools, colleges and universities, with the aim of developing measures to prevent it.

Every child has the right to a safe learning environment. Schools and universities must ensure that any bullying is swiftly addressed to prevent fear and intimidation.

The decision to expel the cadet officers is the correct one, as we need future military personnel who are disciplined, with impeccable character and integrity.

**Dr Tan Eng Bee**  
Kajang



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# Christmas feasting

*Delectable dining options this festive season - P12*

## WEEKLY FOCUS

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### WEDNESDAY

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Food and beverage

- 123RPPIC

**INSIDE** **P21** Pork-free dumplings **P22** *Gladiator III* coming soon **P23** Keeping lid on anxieties

BY S.TAMARAI CHELVI

**R**OASTED turkey with cranberry sauce, freshly baked salmon and grilled lamb barbecue are the usual highlights of Christmas buffets in Klang Valley hotels. These sumptuous cuisines are just a part of a whole range of local and international food. Suffice to say, there is something for everyone.

There are a lot of options when it comes to buffets for Christmas and the Twixmas period but to make it easy for you - here are three options of Christmas buffets to explore this year.

**Back to 1920s @ Sunway Resort Hotel**

Indulge in delightful flavours of the 1920s at the Christmas of Good Taste buffet. The delicious buffet is in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts Boston at Sunset Terrace Restaurant in Sunway Resort Hotel. Inspired by the stylistic legacy of French illustrator George Barbier in the 1920s, the celebration reimagines the glamour of the bygone era.

Sunset Terrace recently unveiled a festive spread of old-world culinary finesse with vintage recipes such as cranberry-orange roast duckling, roast lamb, rolled turkey breast with cranberry and chestnut stuffing, chicken roulade with mushroom gravy, lamb shank pie and Christmas wreath salad.

Tempting cuisines such as Salmon Coulbiac with Salmon Roe Butter Sauce, Pate en Croute and Prawn Tower took centre stage, prepared by head chef Afiq Matkhir and his team.

The accompanying live jazz music provided a pleasant ambience to the endless cuisines filled with classic desserts, ranging from the traditional yule logs, mincemeat pies and chocolate-flavoured Panettone to a plethora of vintage-style exquisite cakes and cookies.

The grand buffet was influenced by the French. The cuisines were not only a feast for eyes but the senses. Meanwhile, the desserts were crafted with sophistication.

**Feast of flavours @ Sheraton Petaling Jaya**  
The feast at Sheraton Petaling Jaya lives up to its name by serving a tapestry of flavours, crafted to delight every palate.

The buffet features an array of Christmas Carvery Classics, including Citrus Apple Cider Roasted Turkey with Glazed Brussels Sprouts with its signature cranberry sauce and seafood selection such as fresh and raw oysters, tiger prawns and slipper lobster with a variety of dipping sauces, including zesty lemon and spicy chilli lime ginger.

The highlight of the spread is the Turducken, a combination of turkey, duck and chicken - all roasted with different flavours that are familiar to Malaysians.

Speaking to *theSun*, chef Aizat Feisal said the taste reflects *muhibbah*.

"We have incorporated three flavours. Turkey marinated with *tandoori* (Indian) stuffed with *ayam perik* (Malay) and duck with five spices (Chinese). We want our food to have the different flavours and we have incorporated (that) into our Christmas celebration," said Aizat.

The buffet also has a luxurious chartuerie spread featuring whole poached salmon,



Salmon Coulbiac with Salmon Roe Butter Roe at Sunway Resort Hotel.



1920's style desserts at Sunway Resort Hotel.



Lamb shank pie at Sunway Resort Hotel.



The Prawn Tower is the centre of attraction of the opulent buffet at Sunway Resort Hotel.

# Enchanting Christmas buffets

## » Sprinkling holiday cheer with tantalising dishes

Turkey Marbre and a curated selection of truffle cheese, such as pecorino, gouda, variety of sushi cuisines and desserts such as Red Berries Royal Charlotte, White Coffee Cream with prune compote and caramel cream with nutmeg compote.

The Christmas Day dinner buffet was a generous spread of delectable dishes, from *sushi* to *satay*. The sumptuous dishes were satisfying and leaves a memorable taste!

### Elegant spread of dessert @ Element Kuala Lumpur

Get dazzled by an array of picture-perfect Christmas themed desserts in Trace at Element Kuala Lumpur. The Christmas dessert table is charming with festive desserts.

From classic fruit cake, creme caramel, raspberry pannacotta, berry pavlova, chocolate or cheese mousse to classic fruit cakes with a moving toy train in the middle of the table.

The highlights of the A Starlit Christmas Buffet were the classic roasted turkey with orange and cranberry, fresh Salmon with Parmesan cream Espelette and Hyderabad *lamb briyani* with *raita* and *chutney*.

The best thing about Trace is the open kitchen concept where you can see the being made freshly. The show-stopper grill station is crowd puller as visitors can see fresh meat being barbecued or grilled under big flames by the chef.



Dessert table at Element KL.



Traditional roasted whole turkey with orange and cranberry at Element KL.

Next is the *pasta* station, where pastas such as *marinara* and *aglio oglio* are freshly prepared for each person. Another station serves local favourite *asam laksa* and other Malaysian dishes

Then guests can finally cleanse their palate with ice cream from the rolled ice cream station. There is also plenty of local dishes for the traditional palates and other selections including fresh seafood, assorted charcuterie and cheese.

Apart from lavish spread, the place evokes Christmas feel with festive decoration and the view from the 40th floor is unforgettable!

This holiday, embrace the Christmas spirit of good food and family reunion. Treat yourself and your loved ones to vibrant buffets as you create core memories. Happy Christmas!



An assortment of Christmas sweets at Element KL.



Sushi in a fish-boat at Sheraton PJ.



Cakes and desserts at Sheraton PJ.



Whole salmon at Sheraton PJ.



The signature Turducken at Sheraton PJ.



A delectable cake at Sheraton PJ.



Yule logs at Element KL.

- ALL PICS BY S.TAMARAI CHELVI/THESUN

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SCAN ME



## Highway concession unit targets 2-3% revenue growth from toll collection

**KUALA LUMPUR:** AFA Infrastructure and Development Sdn Bhd (AID), the concessionaire for Kuala Lumpur-Karak Expressway and East Coast Expressway, is targeting revenue growth of 2-3% from toll collection annually, stemming from economic, tourism and logistic activities along the highways.

The highways link the East Coast Economic Region and major projects such the Genting Integrated Tourism Plan, which will also contribute to the target revenue growth.

AFA Group chairman Tan Sri Azmil Khalili Khalid said that in the last financial year, the company posted revenue of RM480 million from toll collection.

"The projected revenue growth of 2-3% for the highways reflects the status of KL-Karak and ECE as mature infrastructure assets. The primary revenue driver remains traffic volume, with other income sources contributing minimally. As such, our focus is firmly on optimising and managing traffic flow to sustain and enhance revenue generation," he said at a media briefing yesterday.

AID maintains the entire 235.4km stretch from Gombak at KM19.2 in the Klang Valley to Jabor at KM250.6 in Terengganu.

Azmil emphasised sustainability remaining central to AID's operations, with initiatives aligned with Malaysia's National Energy Transition Roadmap and net-zero emissions as early as 2050.

Under the plans for environmental and sustainability commitments, the company has been tracking Scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions since 2023, with plans to include Scope 3 in its reporting. Furthermore, AID is exploring the installation of solar panels and energy-efficient systems at rest areas.

AID's investments in green technology include electric vehicle charging stations and the use of sustainable construction materials. - by **JOHN GILBERT**

# Berjaya Corp registers Q1'25 revenue of RM2.23b

**PETALING JAYA:** Berjaya Corporation Bhd (BCorp) registered revenue of RM2.23 billion for the first quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (Q1'25) compared to revenue of RM2.57 billion in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year.

The group incurred a pre-tax loss of RM101.58 million in the quarter under review compared to a pre-tax profit of RM97.30 million in the previous year's corresponding quarter.

The performance of the group in Q1'25 is attributed to the following segments:

Retail (Non-Food) recorded lower revenue, mainly contributed by H.R. Owen Plc. The company reported lower revenue in its reporting currency, the pound sterling and this decline was further increased when converted into ringgit due to unfavourable foreign exchange effects. The drop in revenue was mainly attributed to lower sales volume from the new car sector, which was impacted by the product life cycle of car models being phased out. Additionally, manufacturers' shift towards electrification and hybrid car re-engineering, coupled with challenging economic conditions and uncertain sentiments in the United Kingdom following the general election held in July further softened sales in the quarter under review.

A pre-tax loss was reported, primarily due to H.R. Owen's reduced revenue and margin compression. This was a result of intense price competition caused by an oversupply of

cars from certain manufacturers. Consequently, H.R. Owen incurred a pre-tax loss, compared to a pre-tax profit recorded in the same quarter last year, reflecting the combined impact of reduced revenue and margin compression.

Retail (Food) also reported lower revenue and pre-tax loss, mainly due to the prolonged impact from the ongoing sentiment in relation to the Middle East conflict.

Property reported lower revenue and pre-tax loss, mainly due to the completion of The Tropika Bukit Jalil project in the preceding quarter and lower sales of the residence units of an overseas project.

Hospitality posted higher revenue driven by increase in overall occupancy rates during the quarter compared to the previous year's corresponding quarter. The lower pre-tax profit reported was mainly due to the higher operating expenses incurred.

Services reported a lower revenue in the first quarter, mainly due to the gaming business operated by STM Lottery Sdn Bhd having two fewer draws and lower average sales per draw, following smaller accumulated jackpot prizes in the quarter. However, this was mitigated by higher revenue reported by the managed

telecommunications network services (MTNS) and Cloud & Internet-of-Things businesses. Additionally, a higher pre-tax profit was reported, mainly due to the higher gross profit from the MTNS business, as well as the deconsolidation effect of Singapore Institute of Advanced Medicine Holdings Ltd. These factors offset the lower pre-tax profit reported by STM Lottery.

On a consolidation basis, the group incurred a pre-tax loss for the quarter under review after taking into account of fair value losses from other investments and impairment on investment in associated companies, as well as higher foreign exchange losses incurred in the current quarter.

The board did not recommend any dividend for the financial period ended Sept 30, 2024.

On prospects, BCorp said Malaysia's economic growth is expected to be driven by strong domestic demand and the moderation of average inflation rate despite the uncertainties arising from geopolitical tensions. The group will monitor the prevailing global and local political development in the countries where it has business operations.

Directors are cautiously optimistic that the performance of the group's business segments for the remaining quarters of the financial year ending June 30, 2025 will be satisfactory.



## AFA allocates RM2.3b to upgrade KL-Karak and East Coast highways



Azmil speaking at AFA Group's media briefing.

BY **JOHN GILBERT**  
[sunbiz@thesundaily.com](mailto:sunbiz@thesundaily.com)

**KUALA LUMPUR:** AFA Infrastructure and Development Sdn Bhd (AID) has allocated RM2.1 billion for the Kuala Lumpur-Karak Expressway widening project, which will address congestion and safety challenges on one of Malaysia's busiest highways.

The company has also allocated RM200 million for the East Coast Expressway (ECE) flood mitigation project to improve the highway's resilience during adverse weather.

AFA Group chairman Tan Sri Azmil Khalili Khalid said the company will finance both projects with internally generated funds and bank borrowings without government funding.

"We are managing two mature highways. Our mission now is to create a transportation network that strengthens the nation's connectivity, uplifts local communities, and drives sustainable development," he told reporters in a media briefing yesterday.

"Together with key stakeholders, AFA is committed to delivering infrastructure projects that will propel Malaysia forward in alignment with its economic and social goals," he said.

The KL-Karak project involves widening the highway from Gombak Toll Plaza to Bentong Toll Plaza, new tunnel construction and enhanced safety measures.

The project involves two sections. Under Section 1, the Gombak Toll Plaza to Genting

Sempah will be upgraded from dual three-lane to dual four-lane, with a new two-lane tunnel. Section 2 from Genting Sempah to Bentong Toll Plaza will be upgraded from dual two-lane to dual three-lane.

Upon completion, the widened KL-Karak Expressway will reduce congestion, enhance safety, improve regional connectivity and manage incidents. It will be able to accommodate 1,400 additional vehicles per hour in a lane per direction, which translates to a 25% increase in capacity.

Work will begin in January and will take 48 months to complete.

As for the ECE flood mitigation project, AID is taking measures to raise the mainline profile at flooding locations and potential flooding locations along the highway.

Other upgrades include expanding highway drainage systems to manage larger water volumes, extending and reinforcing culverts for improved flow and load support, stabilising slopes to prevent erosion and landslides in flood-prone areas, raising road levels in frequently flooded zones, and implementing strategic vegetation management to reduce runoff and enhance water absorption.

The project is slated to be completed by December 2028.

Azmil said the domestic economy relies heavily on infrastructure development, encompassing new projects such as building roads, properties, and other developments.

On AID's part, he said, the company practises transparency in its tender bids.

"When the government initiates infrastructure projects, it creates opportunities for companies to bid for contracts. From the outset, we have emphasised a transparent process for negotiating tenders. Every tender is conducted on an open basis, ensuring that any company meeting the required criteria can participate. Once qualifications are met, contractors are eligible to tender.

"The entire process is designed to be both open and transparent."

Ultimately, Azmil said, such a practice not only bolsters the economy by driving construction activity but also generates significant job opportunities, enabling construction companies to engage actively in new projects.

For context, AID was established through the integration of ANIH Bhd, now known as AFA Prime Bhd, Alloy Maintenance Engineering Sdn Bhd, now renamed AFA Construction & Engineering Sdn Bhd, and Alloy Toll Management Sdn Bhd, which has been rebranded as AFA Systems and Services Sdn Bhd.

AFA Prime is the concessionaire of the KL-Karak and the East Coast expressways, while AFA Construction & Engineering Sdn Bhd handles maintenance and engineering services for highway assets and structures, including drainage, pavement and slopes. AFA System & Services Sdn Bhd handles toll management and collection.

# Radium to obtain green status for future projects

➤ Company to integrate sustainable practices across its developments with the help of GreenRE

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Radium Development Bhd's future developments will integrate green certifications, according to group managing director Datuk Gary Gan (*pic*).

He said Radium is pledging to pursue green certifications to provide its customers with benefits such as improved mortgages and upgraded facilities.

"It's really a pledge from Radium to give our consumers the testament to say that, in the future, for any Radium development, we will definitely try to score a green certificate, for which we will be able to pass on the benefits to our customers, such as better mortgages and better facilities," he said at a media interview after a memorandum of understanding signing with GreenRE Sdn Bhd at the Chancery Ampang Sales Gallery here yesterday.

Radium has partnered with GreenRE Sdn Bhd to integrate green building practices across the property developer's projects. Radium will leverage GreenRE's expertise in

sustainable design and building certification to incorporate green principles into its developments while ensuring they meet environmental standards.

Gan said the partnership with GreenRE reflects its commitment to building sustainable communities and contributing to Malaysia's green agenda.

"By certifying our developments with GreenRE, we are reducing environmental impact and providing long-term benefits to our customers and stakeholders through greener, healthier spaces and enhanced value propositions. This partnership is a key step in our commitment to reducing carbon footprints in all our developments while creating meaningful value for homeowners, financiers, and the broader public," he said.

Radium has achieved Provisional GreenRE Gold Certification for its prime development, Chancery Ampang, KL (Chancery), and recently launched urban residence, Radium Arena @ Old Klang Road, as well as a Provisional GreenRE Silver Certification for urban residence Radium Adesa @ Sungai Besi.

GreenRE Sdn Bhd executive director Ashwin Thurairajah said its collaboration with Radium Development to promote green building practices align with the nation's sustainability goals. "Through this partnership, we aim to drive innovation and set benchmarks in the property



development sector."

Radium and GreenRE said the collaboration offers benefits for stakeholders. For end-financiers, it provides access to green financing options that align with global sustainability standards. "For consumers, there is enhanced value from energy-efficient homes with reduced environmental footprints," they said.

Meanwhile, for the public, they said, it contributes to a greener urban landscape and a more sustainable future.

Following the MoU signing, Radium Development chief marketing officer Kenneth Khoo introduced Chancery, Kuala Lumpur city centre's first hybrid SoHo featuring a 10,000 sq ft pet-friendly lifestyle park. Chancery unit sizes range from 452 sq ft to 1,873 sq ft and prices starting from RM422,000. "By incorporating landscape features like a pet-friendly garden and a pickleball court - one of today's fastest-growing and trending sports - we are redefining city living. These spaces are designed to nurture both people and pets, providing a harmonious environment where they can thrive together," said Khoo.

Located along Jalan Ampang and minutes from Kuala Lumpur city centre, Chancery is in proximity to the proposed Tasik Ampang station on the recently announced MRT Circle Line that is undergoing an inspection exercise. - by **HAYATUN RAZAK**

## HLFG's Q1 results buoyed by commercial banking and insurance divisions

**PETALING JAYA:** Hong Leong Financial Group Bhd (HLFG) yesterday reported that net profit attributable to shareholders (Patami) for the first quarter of financial year 2025 (Q1'25) increased by 14.3% year-on-year (y-o-y) to RM848 million, driven by improved commercial banking and insurance performance.

In the commercial banking division, Hong Leong Bank Bhd's (HLB) profit before tax (PBT) for Q1'25 increased by 7.7% y-o-y, underpinned by robust loans/financing growth, improved non-interest income and stable contributions from their associates.

Insurance division HLA Holdings Sdn Bhd's PBT grew by 142.3% y-o-y from stronger investment income and higher net insurance service results.

In the investment banking and asset management division, Hong Leong Capital Bhd's PBT was lower by 20.5% y-o-y due to delays in the completion of mandated deals, mark-to-market decline in valuation of hedging instruments and lower equity investment returns.

This translates to an improved return on average equity of 11.3%, compared to 10.8% a year ago.

Book value per share increased to RM26.28 as at Sept 30, 2024 from RM24.25 last year.

HLFG president and CEO Tan Kong Khoo said the group is encouraged by its strong Q1'25 financial performance led by its focused execution of strategic priorities in growing the topline, which increased by 20% y-o-y.

"This is evident by the group's robust non-interest income growth of 46.7% y-o-y following fee-income expansion initiatives and investment gains, especially in the insurance segment. We also saw positive results from net interest margin recovery efforts and continued above-industry loan growth, resulting in sustained net interest income growth of 10.2% y-o-y. The group's Q1 FY25 performance was also aided by healthy contributions from our associates and our steadfast discipline in asset quality, capital and liquidity management."

He said the group anticipates Malaysia's positive economic momentum will carry into 2025, but is mindful of downside risks and external headwinds stemming from evolving geopolitical and trade tensions between major economies.

Overall, he added, HLFG is well positioned to capture economic growth and deliver sustainable value creation for its stakeholders through enhancing its digital capabilities, expanding its suite of products and delivering customer-centric solutions.

"We will also continue to uphold our sound loan monitoring and management of credit risk, while exercising prudent cost control and digital investment in operational resiliency and digital capabilities across the group," said Tan.

The group actively drives and aligns its environmental, social and governance efforts under a group-wide approach in line with its operating companies' endeavours to create a positive impact for stakeholders, communities and the environment.

HLFG's commercial bank recently unveiled its inaugural Sustainable Finance Framework, which aims to mobilise RM20 billion over the next five years to support green projects, further solidifying HLB's commitment to environmentally sustainable financing.

On investments, HLFG said Hong Leong Assurance's portfolio does not carry any investments which harm the environment following its half-yearly assessment conducted based on Bank Negara Malaysia Climate Change and Principle-based Taxonomy.

## Sime off to good start in FY25 with higher revenue, earnings

**PETALING JAYA:** Sime Darby Bhd (Sime) reported a higher net profit of RM800 million for its first quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (Q1'25).

The group's revenue rose by 30.6% to RM18.26 billion, compared with RM13.98 billion in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year.

The strong performance was mainly driven by profit contribution from the UMW division and gain on the disposal of Malaysia Vision Valley land. The group's core net profit for the quarter also increased, with the UMW division contributing RM214 million in profit before interest and tax (PBIT), primarily from its automotive business in Malaysia.

For the quarter under review, the industrial division recorded a PBIT of RM343 million, reflecting a marginal decrease of 4.2%. While



Australasia recorded lower profit mainly due to the impact of a parts price reduction, this was partially offset by contributions from the group's two new subsidiaries, Onsite Rental Group and Cavpower Group.

The motors division reported an overall PBIT of RM190 million in Q1'25, lower by 6.4% compared to the same period last year. Strong electric vehicle (EV) sales in Singapore helped offset challenges in other markets.

"Despite very trying economic conditions, we are excited to kick off FY2025 on a positive note. We are already benefitting from the contribution from the Toyota and Perodua businesses - the two iconic brands which we added into our Malaysian portfolio following the UMW acquisition," said Sime group CEO Datuk Jeffri Salim Davidson (*pic*).

The motors division, he added, is seeing

encouraging trends, particularly in Singapore where the shift towards EVs continues to gain momentum.

"While conditions remain challenging in China, we are taking proactive steps to optimise our portfolio," he said.

Jeffri said it lowered inventories during the quarter, which resulted in higher operating cash flows.

He also highlighted that the group's newly launched brand, Sime reflects its ongoing commitment to innovation, sustainability and customer-centricity, ensuring it remains at the forefront of the industries it operates in.

"Our refreshed identity reflects who we are today and our aspirations for the future. We remain focused on strengthening our core businesses of industrial equipment and automotive and will continue to bridge opportunities to unlock value for our stakeholders," Jeffri said.

## MKHOP posts RM21m Q4 net profit, declares 2 sen dividend

**PETALING JAYA:** MKH Oil Palm (East Kalimantan) Bhd (MKHOP), an upstream oil palm plantation company based in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, reported a net profit of RM21 million on the back of revenue of RM90.59 million for its fourth quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (Q4'24).

Earnings per share stood at 2.73 sen for the quarter.

In a statement yesterday, the company said there were no comparative quarterly figures as the company was only listed on the Main Market of Bursa Malaysia Securities on April 30.

The good results were driven by a combination of higher crude palm oil (CPO) and palm kernel (PK) prices, which have been steadily trending up. Its efficiency levels

improved, with the company generating a higher oil extraction rate (OER) of 21.2% for the financial year ended Sept 30, 2024 (FY24), compared to 20.6% in FY23.

The stellar quarterly results brought MKHOP's net profit for FY24 to RM64.21 million, a 95.8% jump from RM32.8 million in FY23, and bringing the company's full-year EPS to 8.25 sen. Revenue increased by 4.16% to RM352.22 million.

MKHOP declared a second interim single-tier dividend of 2 sen per share to be paid on Dec 30, 2024. A first interim single-tier dividend of 2 sen per share was already paid on June 12. This would bring total dividends declared in FY24 to 4 sen per share, or a yield of about 6% based on MKHOP's current share price of 67 sen.

To date, MKHOP has a total land area of 18,205ha, with a planted area of 17,009ha.

The company remains strong financially and has almost no borrowings. It has a cash pile of RM225.22 million as of Sept 30.

MKHOP chairman Tan Sri Alex Chen Kooi Chiew @ Cheng Ng Chong said: "I am extremely pleased with the superb results of FY24. We will continue to enhance our expansion programme, mechanisation and smart app to maximise efficiencies and propel our growth moving forward."

He disclosed that the company is in the midst of conducting its due diligence exercise for its planned land acquisitions.

MKHOP is also conducting research on the integration of fish-rearing within its plantations to boost efficiency, Chen said.

# Alliance Bank first-half earnings rise

➤ Improved results fuelled by robust growth in revenue and loans

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd announced a 9.1% year-on-year (yoy) increase in net profit to RM366.6 million for the first half of the financial year ending March 31, 2025 (1H'25).

Revenue for this period rose 15.2% yoy to RM1.15 billion.

The performance was mainly driven by a 15% growth in net interest income to RM955.9 million attributable to higher loan volumes with a net interest margin of 2.47%. Non-interest income increased 16.1% to RM189.5 million led by gains in wealth management income, foreign exchange sales, trade fees, and treasury and investment income. Cost-to-income ratio improved to 46.5%.

Loans continued to grow at 14.8% yoy to RM59.1 billion, with all business segments recording double digit yoy growth: SME loans up

16.4%, commercial loans up 16.2%, consumer loans up 14.3% and corporate loans up 11.6%. Customer deposits expanded 13.8% yoy, supporting the bank's healthy funding base. The Casa ratio remains one of the industry's highest at 40.9%.

Operating expenses rose to RM532.9 million from RM476.8 million in the prior year, reflecting ongoing investments in people and technology for growth and efficiency initiatives. Notwithstanding this, the bank's pre-provisioning operating profit increased by 18.4% to RM612.6 million.

Net credit cost for 1H'25 was 24.5 bps, while the bank's loan loss coverage ratio stood at 112.1%.

Alliance Bank continues to maintain strong capital and liquidity positions, with Common Equity Tier-1 (CET 1) ratio of 12.4% and a total capital ratio of 17.1%. Liquidity



In FY25, Alliance Bank aims to grow acquisitions, strengthen client relationships, and expand its Islamic banking segment. — **BERNAMAPIX**

coverage remained robust at 149.5% and the loan to fund ratio stood at 88.7%.

The bank declared a first interim cash dividend of 9.5 sen per share, translating into a dividend payout ratio of 40%.

In FY25, Alliance Bank is focused on maintaining acquisition momentum, deepening its client relationships, and advancing Islamic banking growth.

The bank's commitment to drive positive impact through its Sustainability Impact Programme, designed to support business clients on their ESG journey. In 1H'25, the bank approved RM399 million in cumulative loans under this programme, representing 71% of its FY25 stretch target of RM560 million.

The bank is also making strides toward becoming a regional

champion, with double-digit yoy growth in key economic corridors including Johor, Penang, and Sarawak. Combined, these states recorded 16% and 20% increase in loan and deposit growth respectively.

Alliance Bank has made significant progress in its sustainability objectives, achieving RM13.7 billion in cumulative new sustainable business since FY22, with RM1.1 billion achieved in the first half of FY25.



From left: BMW Group Malaysia corporate communications & sustainability director Sashi Ambihapahan; BMW Group regional parts distribution centre Malaysia director Rizal Abu Bakar, Equalbase CEO Susan Tan, Mida services department executive director Zuaida Abdullah, Nagel, MARII CEO Azrul Reza Aziz, and BMW Group Malaysia finance director Markus Lang.

## BMW Group Malaysia expands regional parts distribution centre in Johor

**JOHOR BAHRU:** BMW Group Malaysia yesterday commemorated the 20th Year Anniversary of the BMW Group Regional Parts Distribution Centre in Malaysia, marking this significant milestone with a landmark expansion of the cutting-edge facility, located at the Free Industrial Zone of the Senai International Airport in Johor Bahru.

First established at the Port of Tanjung Pelepas (PTP) in Gelang Patah in 2004, the BMW Group Regional Parts Distribution Centre relocated to its current state-of-the-art facility in 2016. As one of the largest BMW facilities of its kind in the Asia Pacific region, the current centre originally spanned 45,000 sq m of warehouse space.

With the completion of its new expansion, the facility now spans a

remarkable 65,000 sq m, further solidifying the BMW Group's commitment to operational excellence in the region and investments in the country.

Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) CEO Datuk Sikh Shamsul Ibrahim Sikh said this facility is more than an operational hub; it symbolises BMW Group's trust in our ecosystem while reinforcing Malaysia's role as an integral part of its Asia Pacific supply chain, serving a dual purpose of supporting the group's after-sales operations and functioning as a strategic base for their regional supply network.

BMW Group Malaysia managing director Benjamin Nagel said, "As we celebrate 20 years of our Regional

Parts Distribution Centre in Malaysia, we reflect on the significance of this facility, not only in terms of the success of the BMW Group as the leading premium automaker in Malaysia, but also in reinforcing the status of Malaysia as a strategic logistics hub for the group in the Asia Pacific region. Since the beginning, the facility and its capabilities has stood as a symbol of operational excellence, having evolved into a state-of-the-art facility that is recognised regionally and globally."

The expanded BMW Group Regional Parts Distribution Centre not only strengthens the BMW Group's logistical capabilities but also positions the facility to support the region's evolving automotive landscape.

# EDUCATION

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## Axiata returns to black in third quarter with RM976.67m net profit

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Axiata Group Bhd's net profit for the third quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (Q3'24) made a significant turnaround, reaching RM976.67 million from a net loss of RM797.41 million in the same quarter a year ago.

The strong performance was driven by higher earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT), foreign exchange gains in Q3'24 versus losses in Q3'23, and a gain from the early redemption of debt, it said in a filing to Bursa Malaysia yesterday.

However, revenue declined to RM5.32 billion in Q3'24, from RM5.62 billion last year, mainly due to the depreciation of the Indonesian rupiah and Bangladeshi taka against the ringgit.

For the cumulative nine months of FY2024, the group posted a net profit of RM1.17 billion, reversing a net loss of RM1.30 billion last year, while revenue increased to RM16.74 billion from RM16.21 billion.

In a separate statement to Bursa Malaysia, Axiata said the year-to-date (YTD) revenue growth of 3.3% was contributed by all operating companies (OpCos) except Link Net, Dialog and Robi.

"The strong performance was driven by higher revenue, finance income, share of results from associates, and improved forex gains."

Group CEO Vivek Sood said Axiata is making notable progress in its value-creation journey,

underpinned by operational excellence and fiscal discipline, delivering revenue growth, improved margins, and creating a sustainable balance sheet.

"Key milestones include the completion of the Dialog-Airtel merger in Sri Lanka and advancing potential merger discussions between XL Axiata and Smartfren in Indonesia, in line with our market consolidation strategy."

"In September, we completed our delayering strategy in Indonesia with the transfer of customers from Link Net to XL."

"This firmly establishes Link Net as a FibreCo and XL as a ServeCo, enabling both entities to scale, accelerate their organisational agility, and

maximise value," the chief executive said.

Vivek noted that the group foresees potential opportunities from stabilising currencies, synergy extraction from merged companies, and sustained benefits from portfolio optimisation and asset monetisation.

"While we acknowledge challenges such as heightened competition in Indonesia and Malaysia, uncertainties in Bangladesh, and funding requirements for fibre development in Indonesia, the group remains optimistic."

"We expect to achieve full-year revenue growth targets, with EBIT growth anticipated to exceed headline key performance indicators." – Bernama

## DNeX records higher earnings of RM9.1m in Q3

➤ Technology segment is largest revenue contributor, generating RM161.5 million

**CYBERJAYA:** Dagang NeXchange Bhd (DNeX) has recorded a profit after tax and non-controlling interest (Patanci or net profit) of RM9.1 million for its third quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (Q3'24) on the back of a revenue of RM263.0 million.

This marks an improvement compared to the RM5 million recorded in the immediate preceding quarter (Q2'24).

The technology segment was the largest revenue contributor, generating RM161.5 million or 61% of the total revenue.

The energy segment followed with RM52.4 million, contributing 20%, while the Information Technology (IT) segment accounted for the remaining RM49.1 million, representing 19% of the total revenue.

Revenue from the technology segment rose by 3% to RM161.5 million compared to RM156.2 million in Q2'24 driven by higher average selling prices on the product mix.

Meanwhile, the energy segment reported a softer revenue in Q3'24 of RM52.4 million as compared to RM92.0 million in Q2'24.

The performance was primarily impacted by lower average oil prices (Q3'24: 74.98/bbls; Q2 2024: 85.30/bbls) and reduced lifting volume resulting from a planned well maintenance shutdown for maintenance purposes.

The IT segment delivered a revenue of RM49.1 million in Q3'24 from RM50.0 million in Q2'24. Subsea telco as well as technology consulting and system integration (Tech Consulting and SI) businesses recorded increased contributions due to completion of cable installation and repair work services, and progress milestone of the ongoing projects,

respectively.

This was, however, offset by lower revenue from trade facilitation in tandem with completion and progressive work done of certain projects.

DNeX's net profit for the nine-month period ended Sept 30, 2024 amounted to RM28.6 million, with total revenue reaching RM871.0 million.

Due to the change in the financial year-end from June 30 to Dec 31, there is no year-on-year comparison available for the quarter.

DNeX is advancing its trade facilitation services through new software solutions that modernise and

streamline processes, from document submission to the transmission of digital forms across borders.

Additionally, the integration of AI into DNeX's smart solutions can significantly enhance their capabilities and lead to increased operational efficiency and cost savings for both government agencies and private enterprises.

With a proven track record in successful project implementations, including the National Single Window for Trade Facilitation (NSW), Integrated Government Financial and Management Systems (iGFMAS), and the Hasil Integrated Taxation Systems (HITS), DNeX is well-positioned to support Malaysia's transformation agenda and the MyDigital initiative.

DNeX executive chairman Tan Sri Syed Zainal Abidin Syed Mohamed Tahir Jamalullail (*pic*) said: "As we reflect on our progress this quarter, we are encouraged by the continued strength of our diversified business model and the opportunities that lie ahead."

"Our focus remains on building a sustainable future by leveraging our expertise, expanding our capabilities, and embracing new technologies. "We are committed to growth locally and internationally and are confident that our strategies will deliver long-term value for all stakeholders."

As at Sept 30, 2024, the group maintains a strong net cash position, with a total cash balance of RM476.3 million, surpassing its total borrowings of RM74.7 million.



## Yinson secures US\$59m financing for solar project in Peru

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Yinson Holdings Bhd's renewables business unit, Yinson Renewables (YR), has secured a US\$59 million (RM262 million) senior secured green financing facility for the Matarani solar project in Peru from IDB Invest and Natixis Corporate & Investment Banking (Natixis CIB).

YR chief financial officer Vegard Urnes said yesterday the financing marked a significant milestone for the company in Latin America.

He said this achievement not only underscores YR's commitment to advancing

renewable energy solutions but also highlights the importance of strategic partnerships with institutions like IDB Invest and Natixis CIB.

"This collaboration is a testament to our shared vision of fostering sustainable development and addressing climate change."

"We look forward to continuing our work in Peru and beyond, leveraging these strong partnerships to drive future projects that contribute to a greener and more resilient energy landscape," he said in a statement.

YR said Natixis CIB acted as the sole structuring bank, green loan coordinator, and joint lead arranger alongside IDB Invest.

The 97 MWp (megawatt peak) Matarani Solar Plant, located near Arequipa, Peru, is backed by a long-term power purchase agreement with Orygen, the country's leading renewable energy supplier and generator.

The project is a milestone in Peru's energy sector, as it is the first non-subsidised operational solar plant to be financed through a green project finance facility. – Bernama

## CIMB posts better quarterly and 9-month results

**KUALA LUMPUR:** CIMB Group Holdings Bhd posted a higher net profit of RM2.03 billion in the third quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (3Q 2024), compared to RM1.85 billion in the same period last year.

In a filing with Bursa Malaysia yesterday, it said revenue improved to RM5.74 billion from RM5.31 billion previously.

For the first nine months of its financial year ending Dec 31, 2024 (9M FY2024), its net profit grew to RM5.93 billion from RM5.27 billion in 9M FY2023, while revenue rose to RM16.97 billion versus RM15.64 billion previously.

"The increase in revenue was buoyed by improvements in net interest income (NII) and non-interest income (NOII).

"NII increased by 6.0% year-on-year (y-o-y) driven by asset growth, while NOII grew 14.4% y-o-y to RM5.39 billion on the back of stronger fees, treasury client sales and trading income," it said in a statement.

The company's overall performance was underpinned by robust operating income growth, disciplined cost controls and improvement in asset quality, contributed by the group's diversified Asean portfolio, which serves diverse client segments, it added.

On a constant currency basis, the group's total gross loan growth was positive at 4.3% y-o-y, underpinned by strong demand across markets, while deposits increased marginally y-o-y.

Total current account saving account (CASA) balances expanded by 4.5% y-o-y, increasing the CASA ratio to 42% as of Sept 24.

CIMB group CEO Novan Amirudin said the banking group is on track to achieve its FY2024 targets as it approaches the final quarter of its Forward23+ journey and will continue to explore strategies to optimise cost, while remaining vigilant in managing risk amid economic headwinds and market volatility.

He said the group remain cautious of external uncertainties and will monitor the macroeconomic backdrop while being confident in its current strategies.

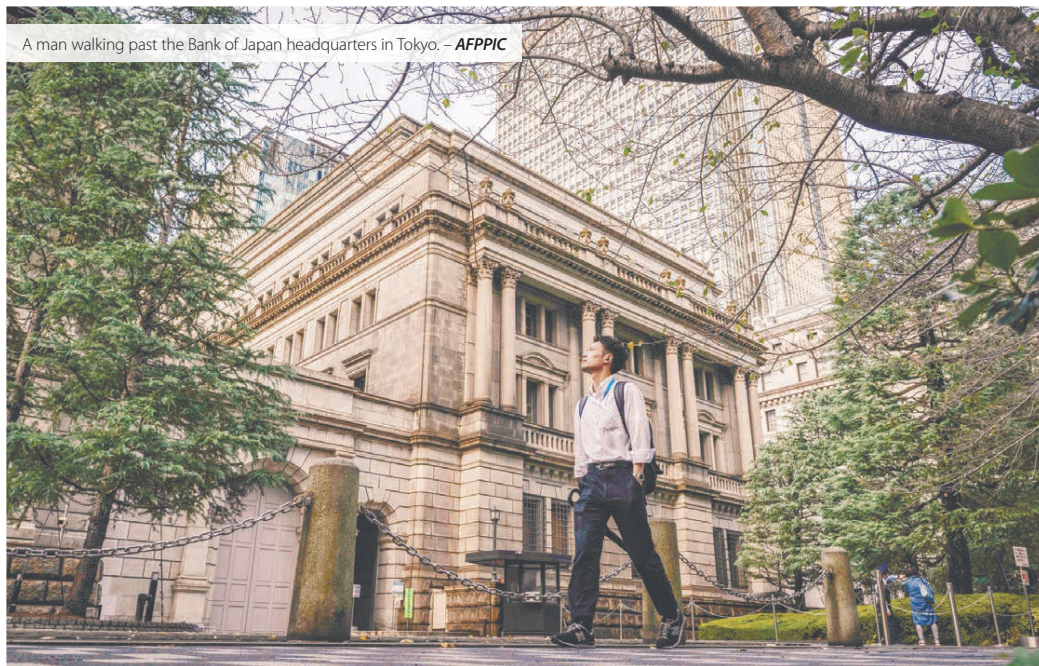
"We have also made significant investments in strengthening our technology resiliency to deliver superior customer experience."

"We aim to strengthen our deposit franchise and embrace the theme of 'simpler, better, faster' throughout our business, which will be central to our new strategic plan."

"This builds on our competitive strengths, endowments and anticipated key market trends, with further details to be announced in the first quarter of 2025," he said. – Bernama



A man walking past the Bank of Japan headquarters in Tokyo. — AFP/IC



# BOJ incurs record losses on bond holdings

➤ Japanese central bank's portfolio down by ¥13.66 trillion as yields rise

**TOKYO:** The Bank of Japan suffered record valuation losses on its government bond holdings in the first half of the fiscal year as its interest rate hikes pushed up bond yields, the bank's earnings report showed.

Central banks typically see the value of their bond holdings fall when they raise interest rates, as such moves weigh on bond prices which move inversely to yields.

The central bank's bond holdings incurred valuation losses of ¥13.66 trillion (RM400 billion) in the six months to September, bigger than the ¥9.43 trillion loss registered in March, the earnings report showed.

The BOJ's holdings of long-term government bonds stood at ¥582.99 trillion at the end of the fiscal first half, down ¥1.6 trillion from a year earlier and marking the

first decline in 16 years.

The BOJ's holdings of exchange-traded funds reaped paper profits of ¥33.07 trillion, down from ¥37.31 trillion in March, the report showed.

The central bank ended negative interest rates and stopped buying risky assets such as ETFs in March in a landmark shift away from a decade-long, massive stimulus programme.

In July, it raised short-term interest rates to 0.25%, and laid out a plan to taper its huge bond buying in an effort to scale back its huge balance sheet.

The BOJ said it reaped ¥1.26 trillion in dividends from its ETF holdings in the April-September fiscal first half, up from ¥1.14 trillion in the year-before period.

Such proceeds helped offset losses the BOJ incurred to push up borrowing costs, such as by paying interest to excess reserves financial institutions park with the central bank.

The BOJ paid ¥392.2 billion worth of interest to excess reserves parked with the central bank in the fiscal first half, 4.3 times the amount it paid a year ago, the report showed.

Meanwhile, three sources said Japan is expected to increase the amount of government bonds sold in regular auctions to around ¥173.5 trillion for the fiscal year ending in March 2025, up from the initially planned ¥171 trillion.

The increase will be made to fund a ¥13.9 trillion stimulus package aimed at cushioning the blow to households from rising living costs.

The Ministry of Finance, which oversees the debt programme, will increase the issuance of Treasury Discount Bills due to strong market demand for the notes, the sources said.

There will be no change to the amount of interest-bearing government bonds sold to the market, said the sources who requested anonymity as they were not authorised to speak publicly.

Including debt issued to roll over maturing bonds, the outstanding balance of Japanese government bonds has ballooned to ¥1.1 quadrillion – twice the size of Japan's economy and the largest among advanced nations. — Reuters

# Foxconn says global presence to shield it from tariffs

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan's Foxconn said it expects any impact of new tariffs from US President-elect Donald Trump to hit it less than its rivals, citing its global manufacturing footprint.

Young Liu, chairman of the contract manufacturer, told reporters that it saw the primary impact of any fresh tariffs falling on its clients because its business model was based on contract manufacturing.

"Clients may decide to shift production locations, but looking at Foxconn's global footprint, we are ahead. As a result, the impact on us is likely smaller compared to our competitors."

US President-elect Donald Trump said on Monday that on his first day in office he will impose a 25% tariff on all products from Mexico and Canada, and will charge goods from China an additional 10% tariff.

Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics maker, has large manufacturing facilities in China including a giant iPhone assembly plant.

However, it has been increasing its investments in other countries such as the United States, Mexico, and Vietnam as part of a supply chain diversification effort.

In Mexico, it is building a large manufacturing facility to produce Nvidia's GB200 AI servers.

Liu said Foxconn would only be able to share more details about the company's US plans after Jan 20, once Trump takes office and his policies and tariff changes become clearer.

"After that, we will have a corresponding strategy in place," he said.

"What you're seeing now is a game between nations, not yet between companies. Whether

it's 25% or an additional 10%, the outcome is uncertain as they continue to negotiate.

"We are constantly adapting and refining our global strategy."

During Trump's 2017-2021 presidency, Foxconn announced a US\$10 billion (RM44.4 billion) investment in Wisconsin that the company later mostly abandoned.

On Tuesday, Foxconn said a subsidiary had spent US\$33 million to acquire land and factory buildings in Harris County, Texas.

Liu added Foxconn will continue investing in Mexico, as it believed the trend was moving towards regional manufacturing.

Mexico, with 100 million people and its proximity to the South American market, presented a significant opportunity, he said. — Reuters

# Star Entertainment shares hit record low on liquidity concerns

**SYDNEY:** Embattled casino operator Star Entertainment closed 7.1% lower yesterday, hitting an all-time low of A\$0.195, as it flagged challenging operating conditions, near-term liquidity challenges and deteriorating earnings.

Australia's No. 2 casino operator has been in the eye of a perfect storm that has hit Australian casino operators for years, with Star and Blackstone-owned larger rival Crown Resorts being engulfed by multiple regulatory inquiries as well as a drop in tourist visits and lengthy closures.

The stock has lost more than 50% since Sept 27, when it resumed trading after being suspended for more than three weeks by the Australian bourse operator following its failure to lodge its financial results for fiscal 2024 by the required due date.

Star posted unaudited earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortisation (EBITDA) before items in the negative yesterday.

It posted an EBITDA loss of A\$8.5 million (RM24.5 million) for October, taking its loss for the first four months of fiscal 2025 to A\$27 million.

"We have a difficult road ahead and The Star remains in an extremely challenging position," it said in a statement, adding that its revenue continues to decline while costs of the external advice required to meet regulatory standards remain at elevated levels.

Last month, the company swung to a first-quarter loss and reported a drop in revenue, as a result of restrictions implemented in March such as mandatory carded play and cash limits.

The New South Wales state gaming regulator said in October that Star will be able to keep its struggling Sydney casino open but has been ordered to pay a fine of A\$15 million.

Over the last few years, Star has been hit with two regulatory inquiries, lost its CEO and chairman and has hovered near bankruptcy. — Reuters

# South Korea surprises with second successive rate cut

**SEOUL:** South Korea's central bank cut interest rates yesterday for the second time in a row in a surprise move, citing stabilising inflation and the need to mitigate growing economic risks.

The Bank of Korea's 0.25 percentage point reduction, which followed a similar move in October, lowers the benchmark rate to 3% and comes as authorities around the world ease monetary policies after years of hikes aimed at tackling soaring prices.

It also cut its growth outlook for the economy. BOK said in a news release that it made the decision because "inflation stabilisation has continued along with an ongoing slowdown in household debt, and downward pressure on economic growth has intensified".

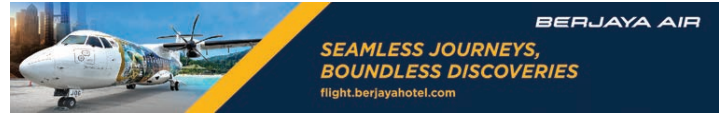
The monetary policy board called the cut "appropriate ... to mitigate downside risks to the economy".

"The currently available information suggests that the global economy has been facing heightened uncertainties surrounding growth and inflation, driven by the new US administration's policies," it added, referring to the re-election of Donald Trump, who has pledged to renew his hardball approach to trade.

The pace of further rate cuts will be "determined by how the current rate cuts affect inflation, growth, household debt, and the currency rate down the road", BOK chief Rhee Chang-yong said at a news briefing.

The consecutive rate cuts follow a sharp fall in consumer inflation to 1.3% in October, largely driven by declining energy prices.

The bank also lowered its economic expansion forecast for this year to 2.2%, from an earlier projection of 2.4%, citing a slowdown in export growth. — AFP



# Arabica coffee price hits highest level since 1977

➤ Record-breaking drought this year in top producer Brazil hits supplies

**LONDON:** The price of Arabica coffee hit the highest level since 1977 on Wednesday, approaching a record high as drought in top producer Brazil this year hits supplies.

A pound of Arabica beans listed in New York struck 320.10 US cents, extending the commodity's rally over 2024.

The all-time high is 337.50 US cents, seen in 1977.

Brazil, the world's largest coffee producer, faced a record-breaking drought this year which has raised significant concerns for 2025/2026 crops amid already tight supplies.

This is despite "significant rains" in October, leading to an "excellent flowering",

according to Guilherme Morya, senior analyst at Rabobank.

He added that farmers were selling less than was needed to meet demand.

Analysts said that price support came also from geopolitical factors such as disruptions to shipping in the Red Sea, potential US tariffs and future European Union regulation on deforestation.

"It is clearer and clearer that this (supply situation) is going to have a significant impact on the consumer," John Plassard, senior asset specialist at Mirabaud group, told AFP.

Companies are preparing to negotiate their coffee contracts early next year, with food giants like Nestle set to pass on price increases to consumers.

The Swiss group announced this month that it would increase prices and reduce the size of its coffee bags to protect margins.

In London, some coffee drinkers approached by AFP on Wednesday vowed to

keep on buying their beans, but owing to recent price hikes added that they had already begun to buy fewer cups in cafes.

"I've noticed that the prices have gone up," said Julie, 34, as she held a cup of coffee purchased from a coffee shop.

"I prefer to buy packs and brew it at home. It's rare for me to buy it in the shop, but it used to be more frequent."

Nicky, 26, said she was not ready to give up purchasing cups of coffee in stores.

"I would still pay for it. Maybe that's me being financially reckless."

She described coffee drinking as "a lifestyle, it's how people start their day".

Vietnam has also faced supply concerns this year for its cheaper Robusta bean that is used for instant coffee, as the country faced dryness during the growing period.

Robusta, listed in London, is trading at around US\$5,200 per tonne, after reaching a record price of US\$5,829 in mid-September. – AFP



Cafe owner Nguyen Duc Hieu making coffee in Vietnam capital Hanoi.

## StanChart mulls sale of wealth, retail operations in Africa

**LONDON:** Standard Chartered is exploring a potential divestment of its wealth and retail banking operations in Botswana, Uganda and Zambia, it said on Wednesday, as the banking giant looks to free up capital in the midst of a broad shake-up.

The Asia-focused lender, like rival HSBC, is restructuring its business to focus more on affluent individual customers and international companies that are likely to yield more in fees for the bank.

It has for some time been pivoting away from its once globe-spanning empire to focus on core businesses as it bets on strong economic growth in Asian markets and aims to rein in expenses.

Standard Chartered said the potential exits in Africa would be the first in a small number of business divestitures in accordance with its new target of doubling investment in its wealth unit while paring back retail banking.

"The group will concentrate its resources in these markets on serving the cross-border needs of global corporate and financial institution clients," said Standard Chartered.

The bank, like HSBC, has in the recent past reaped the benefits of higher borrowing costs and comparatively resilient wealth generation and economic growth in Asia.

"This new move, if it happens, is therefore not a surprise and was something they had hinted at in their most recent results presentation," said Gary Greenwood, equity research analyst at Shore Capital.

StanChart said while announcing its third-quarter earnings in October that it was looking at opportunities to sell some or all of a small number of businesses where the "strategic rationale is not sufficiently compelling".

The cost-cutting measures will see the lender save around US\$1.5 billion (RM6.7 billion) over three years while expenses climb amid expanding business operations and rising pressures from sticky inflation. – Reuters

## EasyJet profit rises 40% on package holidays

**LONDON:** British no-frills airline EasyJet on Wednesday reported a 40% rise in annual net profit on strong demand for its package holidays.

Profit after tax stood at £452 million (RM2.5 billion) in the 12 months to the end of September, building on its return to profit last year following losses in the wake of the Covid pandemic.

"The outlook for EasyJet is positive," said chief financial officer Kenton Jarvis, who will take over as chief executive next year.

He pointed to the popularity of longer travel routes like North Africa and the Canaries, where the airline said it will continue to grow.

"We plan to take 25% more customers away on package holidays" which continue to "thrive", he added.

The airline reported that for its package holiday division – which it launched in 2019 – customer numbers increased by 36% from the previous financial year.

"The launch of the holidays unit has come at the right time with cost-conscious consumers searching for value packages," said Richard Hunter, head of markets at investment platform Interactive Investor.

"The family holiday remains almost sacrosanct and outside of normal budgetary restraints, which has played into the hands of EasyJet and its keenly priced offerings of flights and holiday packages."

The company's board recommended dividend payments totalling £92 million to be made to shareholders, up from £34 million last year. – AFP

## US Fed's favoured inflation gauge ticks up

**WASHINGTON:** US inflation – set to be a key issue for incoming president Donald Trump – accelerated slightly last month, according to data published on Wednesday, underscoring price pressures in the world's largest economy.

The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rose 2.3% in the 12 months to October, up from 2.1% in September, the Commerce Department announced.

This was in line with the median forecast from economists surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Despite the small uptick last month, headline PCE inflation remains close to the Fed's long-term target of 2%, keeping the bank's inflation fight largely on track.

The Fed – the independent US central bank – is responsible for tackling inflation and unemployment, largely by hiking or lowering interest rates to affect demand.

This indirectly impacts the cost of borrowing for consumers and businesses, affecting everything from mortgages to car loans.

"Today's data show inflation has fallen to 2.3%, similar to the level before the pandemic, while our economy has continued to expand by nearly 3% per year," White House national economic adviser Lael Brainard said in a statement.

"After a hard-fought recovery, we are making progress for working families," she added.

"Those readings are encouraging enough, in our opinion, for the Federal Reserve to go ahead and cut rates 25 basis points next month," Nationwide chief economist Kathy Bostjancic told AFP.

"But you know, it's still a close call."

The increase in inflation was driven by the services sector, where prices increased by 3.9% from a year earlier.

Goods prices decreased 1% over the same period.

The largest contributor to the increase was health care, which includes both hospitals and outpatient services.

On a monthly basis, the PCE price index rose 0.2% between September and October, the same as the month prior, the Commerce Department said.

This was also in line with expectations.

Excluding the volatile food and energy segments, the core PCE price index was up 2.8% from a year earlier, and by 0.3% from a month earlier.

Personal income rose 0.6% month-on-month, an acceleration from September, when it rose by 0.3%.

"The acceleration in nominal personal income growth in October is encouraging," Oxford Economics chief US economist Ryan Sweet wrote in a note to clients.

The rate of personal saving as a percentage of disposable income also rose, edging up 4.4% from a revised figure of 4.1% a month earlier.

This indicates that consumers saved more money last month than they did in September. – AFP

# MARKET ROUND-UP: NOVEMBER 28

**BURSA MALAYSIA**

## Trade Statistic 28 Nov 2024



SUNBIZ presents a summary of the day's trading activity on Bursa Malaysia and other markets in an easy-to-digest format.

Sources: Bursa Malaysia, Bernama, shareinvestor.com and websites

**DISCLAIMER:** The data and reports are provided as a service to investors. Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd shall not be liable or responsible for any consequences resulting from usage of the information.

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	12,145.20 -45.73
FBMVKLI	1,597.49 -6.76
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	543.52 -0.20
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	170.60 -1.09
CONSTRUCTION	295.02 +1.86
FINANCIAL SERVICES	19,107.30 -129.50
ENERGY	815.88 -2.81
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	534.67 -0.21
HEALTH CARE	2,178.00 +7.66
TRANSPORTATION	1,048.34 -2.54
PROPERTY	1,059.91 -6.53
PLANTATION	7,489.20 +7.90
FBMSHA	12,087.50 -24.85
FBMACE	5,149.14 -29.60
TECHNOLOGY	58.73 -0.93

**TURNOVER: 2.788 bil** **VALUE: RM2.897 bil**

## Banking heavyweights drag FBM KLCI below 1,600 points

**THE** fall in shares of banking heavyweights weighed heavily on Bursa Malaysia, causing the index to slip below the crucial 1,600 mark.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI eased 6.76 points, or 0.42%, to settle at its intraday low of 1,597.49 from Wednesday's close of 1,604.25.

The index opened 2.07 points higher at 1,606.32 and peaked at 1,608.01 in the early session before declining for most of the day until closing.

Losers outnumbered gainers 604 to 415 while 486 counters were unchanged, 964 untraded and 89 suspended.

Turnover declined to 2.79 billion units valued at RM2.90 billion versus 3.19 billion units valued at RM2.96 billion on Wednesday.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan attributed yesterday's performance to broader weak market sentiment as Wall Street retreated overnight, which marked the first decline in over a week, as investors adjusted positions following recent gains.

Heavyweight CIMB led the decliners, losing 12 sen to RM8.25, Public Bank eased three sen to RM4.41, Hong Leong Bank was 24 sen weaker at RM20.56, and RHB Bank slid 11 sen to RM6.67.

Maxis, in which business tycoon Ananda Krishnan, who passed away yesterday, owns a controlling stake, was five sen lower at RM3.51.

KLK continued to be among the top gainers, surging 50 sen to RM21, followed by Axiata which put on three sen to RM2.34.

Among the active stocks, Sapura Energy rose one sen to 4.0 sen, Genetec Technology added two sen to RM1.19, Nationgate fell 17 sen to RM2.18, Notion Vtec shed one sen to RM1.19, and Microlink Solutions slipped 1.5 sen to 10 sen. - Bernama

### Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-PWBB	0.075	0.010	15.38	1,187,033
SAPNRG	0.040	0.010	33.33	1,126,257
HSI-CWAM	0.135	-0.015	-10.00	917,954
GENETEC	1.190	0.020	1.71	729,067
NATGATE	2.180	-0.170	-7.23	646,173
WCT	0.825	-0.060	-6.78	455,723
JCY	0.440	0.035	8.64	375,249
HSI-PWB4	0.160	0.015	10.34	348,671
NOTION	1.190	-0.010	-0.83	322,933
MICROLN	0.100	-0.015	-13.04	301,698
MYEG	0.880	-0.010	-1.12	300,105
HSI-CYB	0.160	-0.040	-20.00	295,580
AMBANK	5.370	-0.120	-2.19	295,287
ARMADA	0.550	-0.015	-2.65	260,452
RHBANK	6.670	-0.110	-1.62	228,428
CNSAIA	0.060	0.025	3.79	219,198
YMHPROP	0.685	0.025	3.79	219,198
CIMB	8.250	-0.120	-1.43	213,746
YTL	2.110	0.020	0.96	212,288
YTLPOWR-C64	0.045	0.000	-	210,400



### Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	96.000	1.000	660
DLADY	31.000	0.560	328
KLK	21.000	0.500	7,844
FBN	27.900	0.440	1,149
KOTRA	4.580	0.260	558
GCB	3.210	0.200	39,338
BAT	7.740	0.170	4,351
TIMECOM	4.850	0.170	14,080
ALLIANZ	20.260	0.160	131
KERJAYA	2.310	0.160	22,090
UTDPLT	30.000	0.160	2,735
KFIMA	2.200	0.130	13,762
CARLSBG	20.920	0.120	1,108
SBAGAN	5.620	0.120	55
GENP	5.610	0.110	1,300
AJI	15.360	0.100	486
GOHUB	1.360	0.100	29,103
HUPSENG	1.270	0.100	89,997
KLCC	8.100	0.100	141
WARISAN	1.480	0.100	3,176

### Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
GCB-C12	0.020	300.00	500
DRBHCOMC3H	0.010	100.00	141
IJM-C83	0.030	100.00	25,124
KANGER-WB	0.010	100.00	269
KGROUP	0.010	100.00	4,663
SPSETIA-C84	0.010	100.00	3,800
YTL-C89	0.020	100.00	1,490
GCB-C13	0.125	78.57	40
GCB-C11	0.030	50.00	8,439
GCB-C9	0.030	50.00	2,695
SAPNRG-WA	0.015	50.00	3,633
JCY-C18	0.110	46.67	12,476
GCB-C8	0.165	43.48	8,229
BAT-C33	0.050	42.86	5,373
IJM-C86	0.050	42.86	41,832
GCB-C81	0.100	33.33	7,037
JTIAA-CX	0.020	33.33	11,160
KERJAYA-C3	0.180	33.33	1,630
LHI-C17	0.020	33.33	9,839
MI-C23	0.020	33.33	1,700

### World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	44,722.06	-138.25	-0.31
S&P 500 (US)	5,998.74	-22.89	-0.38
NASDAQ (US)	19,060.48	-115.10	-0.60
NYSE (US)	20,209.82	-9.63	-0.05
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	4,771.38	+38.23	+0.81
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,290.39	+15.64	+0.19
DAX (GER)	19,395.44	+133.69	+0.69
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	38,349.06	+214.09	+0.56
TOPIX (JPN)	2,687.28	+21.94	+0.82
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	19,366.96	-236.17	-1.20
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,872.55	-34.49	-0.88
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,295.70	-14.08	-0.43
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,504.67	+1.61	+0.06
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	183.45	+1.04	+0.57
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,444.34	+37.67	+0.45
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,700.00	+40.44	+0.47
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	79,280.19	-953.89	-1.19
FBM KLCI	1,597.49	-6.76	-0.42
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,724.01	+15.92	+0.43
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	68.51	-0.21	-0.31
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	72.68	-0.15	-0.21
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,669.00	+4.20	+0.16
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	30.44	-0.12	-0.40
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	936.92	+6.78	+0.73
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	412.95	-0.95	-0.23
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,020.00	19.50	0.22
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	428.00	0.00	0.00
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	548.50	-9.50	-1.70
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	40.92	-1.79	-4.19
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	9,068.00	-168.00	-1.82
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	197.00	+2.10	+1.08

As at 5pm, Nov 28

### Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
LYSAGHT	2.830	-0.590	614
MPI	23.620	-0.380	3,367
HARISON	8.370	-0.330	1,416
KLUANG	5.570	-0.270	21
HLBANK	20.560	-0.240	47,989
NATGATE	2.180	-0.170	646,173
HLFG	18.400	-0.160	892
KESM	3.350	-0.160	1,182
TGL	1.130	-0.160	515
D&O	1.900	-0.130	33,239
FRONTKN	3.980	-0.130	45,629
HTPADU	3.180	-0.130	9,137
MASTER	3.430	-0.130	1,408
SEM	1.880	-0.120	1,358
AMBANK	5.370	-0.120	295,287
CIMB	8.250	-0.120	213,746
INARI	2.850	-0.120	187,812
DKLS	1.790	-0.110	80
RHBANK	6.670	-0.110	228,428
TM	6.350	-0.110	78,177

### Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
ALIBABA-C38	0.005	-95.00	41
FBMKLCI-CQE	0.015	-72.73	2,000
HIAPTK-CD	0.005	-66.67	20
INARI-C2Q	0.005	-66.67	500
WCT-C31	0.015	-57.14	17,750
ARMADA-C91	0.010	-50.00	6,700
BJFOOD-CK	0.005	-50.00	1,836
GTRONIC-C34	0.005	-50.00	1
IJM-C88	0.010	-50.00	6,610
MFLOUR-CG	0.010	-50.00	1,880
PBBANK-C1C	0.020	-50.00	15,000
TRIVE-WD	0.005	-50.00	104
WCT-C32	0.005	-50.00	150
YTL-C79	0.005	-50.00	40,000
YTL-C91	0.005	-50.00	1,000
YTL-C83	0.005	-50.00	708
GENETEC-CD	0.015	-40.00	36,874
INARI-C2N	0.015	-40.00	5,250
D&O-C12	0.025	-37.50	2,500
TM-C1Q	0.045	-35.71	2,250

# 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.

## Glomac has higher Q2 pre-tax profit, declares 1 sen dividend

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Glomac Bhd announced the financial results for the second quarter of its financial year ending April 30, 2025 (Q2'25), with the group recording a higher unaudited revenue of RM56.4 million and profit before tax (PBT) of RM6.2 million in Q2'25, up from a revenue of RM55.8 million and PBT of RM0.7 million in Q2'24.

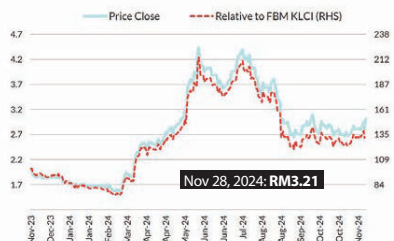
In its six-month period ended October 2024 (1H'25), Glomac recorded a revenue growth of 11.9% to RM129.7 million, compared to RM115.9 million in the corresponding period of last year, driven by steady construction progress across its ongoing developments. Key contributors included Saujana Perdana and two high-rise residential developments Plaza @ Kelana Jaya and 121 Residences. Meanwhile, PBT surged to RM18 million as compared to RM6.9 million in 1H'24. The improved financial performance was primarily attributed to increased revenue and enhanced profit margins, driven by higher contributions from projects with better margins.

Glomac's balance sheet remains strong, with negligible net gearing of 0.04 times, supported by shareholders' funds of RM1.2 billion. Cash and deposits remained healthy at RM218 million as at end-October 2024, providing ample liquidity to further drive its development activities. The group's net assets per share stood at RM1.57, translating to price-to-book ratio of 0.26 times.

During the quarter under review, Glomac declared a single-tier interim dividend of 1 sen per ordinary share in respect of FY25, to be payable on Dec 30, 2024. This follows the earlier approval of a single-tier final dividend of 1.25 sen per ordinary share for FY24 at Glomac's recent AGM.

### Guan Chong Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM6.22



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

**SALES** tonnage rose 15.6% YoY and 6.6% QoQ on higher sales on cocoa solids but production tonnage fell 2% QoQ (+3.3% YoY) due to delay in bean delivery (port congestion), while its overall plant utilisation rate was slightly lower at 94%. Ivory Coast factory utilisation rate improved to 87% QoQ from certain power outages in Q2. In Europe, Schokinag experienced some delays in order uptake due to the high selling prices as customers delayed in taking delivery to better manage working capital but overall utilisation should improve on robust demand. In UK, the new industrial chocolate plant delivered a maiden revenue of £5 million in Q3'24 with 22 tonnes (current 16k) of capacity expected to be ready by 2H'24.

Cocoa bean prices have re-accelerated. Major chocolate makers are guiding for a flattish or marginal downtrend in their overall sales volume against lower grinding output of -6% YoY and bean production of -14% YoY – implying demand remains healthy as chocolate makers opt to deplete their inventory while delaying purchases. These factors, coupled with a downward revision in estimated crop output (affected by weather, swollen shot virus, poor bean quality) have prompted major chocolate makers to cover their forward buying – resulting in the sharp surge in the terminal cocoa bean price – amid the expectation of persistent tight supply in the near term.

The acquisition of a 25% stake in Transcao Coté d'Ivoire (CI) will allow GUAN to market the 70k-80k-tonne additional capacity at minimal capex to capture more sales and market share amidst current favourable market conditions. Meanwhile, an established partnership with the local authority would aid in securing the highly sought-after EUDR-compliant beans.

BUY with RM6.22 TP. – RHB Research, Nov 28

## Ringgit ends flat in quiet trading before US Thanksgiving

**THE** ringgit ended flat against the US dollar yesterday in a quiet trading session due to significantly reduced demand from key investors ahead of the US Thanksgiving holiday, an analyst said. At 6pm, the local currency stood at 4.4440/4490 against the US dollar compared to Wednesday's close of 4.4440/4465.

SPI Asset Management managing director Stephen Innes said the ringgit trade mirrored the day's broader Asian forex trends, driven primarily by local currency exchanges. "The session (yesterday) saw a slight regression from the previous day's gains, largely steered by domestic transaction flows where there was a marginal preference for acquiring US dollars, all set against the backdrop of the upcoming holiday pause in the US," he told Bernama.

US markets are closed on Thursday for Thanksgiving. Trading resumes on Friday but will end earlier.

The ringgit traded mostly lower against a basket of major currencies.

It weakened versus the British pound to 5.6217/6280 from 5.5962/6044 and slipped against the euro to 4.6800/6852 from 4.6691/6759 on Wednesday, but rose vis-a-vis the Japanese yen to 2.9258/9293 from 2.9311/9356.

The local unit also traded mostly lower against Asean currencies.

It was almost flat against the Singapore dollar at 3.3056/3095 versus 3.3055/3106 on Wednesday and fell against the Indonesian rupiah to 279.9/280.5 from 278.6/279.1 previously.

It went down versus the Thai baht to 12.8999/9211 from 12.8342/8597 on Wednesday and dipped against the Philippine peso to 7.57/7.58 from 7.56/7.57.

### IJM Corporation Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM4.39



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

**PROFIT** before tax (PBT) for the construction arm surged 88% YoY in Q2'25 as jobs in hand have moved higher along the S-curve. Meanwhile, the property segment recorded a PBT decline of 60% YoY in Q2'25, partly due to lower absence of land sales combined with FX losses from the Royal Mint Garden in the UK. Nonetheless, the coming quarters are expected to be backed by RM3 billion worth of GDV in planned launches for the next six months.

The industrial segment saw a 7% YoY increase in PBT for Q2'25 as higher operating efficiency mitigated the lower deliveries of piles, quarry, and mixed concrete products. The toll division saw a loss before tax of RM1.1 million in Q2'25 (Q2'24 PBT: RM11.9 million) due to lower traffic volumes in overseas highways and absence of toll compensation. Likewise, the port division saw a 19% YoY PBT drop in Q2'25 due to lower throughput.

IJM secured RM2.1 billion worth of new jobs in FY25 YTD (FY24: RM3.7 billion) with an outstanding orderbook of RM6.4 billion. With the construction arm already showing commendable progress in 1H'25, there are still some projects below the meaningful threshold which will ramp up in the coming quarters – namely data centre, semiconductor factories, and warehouse jobs. New projects to meet FY25's RM5 billion new job win target may come from the civil servant housing project in Indonesia's Nusantara capital city (RM1 billion), New Pantai Expressway extension (RM1 billion), plus factories and warehouses among others.

IJM's 50% stake acquisition in JRL Group Holdings Ltd (JRL) is more towards reassessing the capital allocation of JRL, which has some non-income generating property development assets which IJM may look to sell off to lighten the JRL's balance sheet (8M'24 net gearing: 1.3x).

BUY with RM4.39 TP. – RHB Research, Nov 28

## Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.509	4.374	4.364
1 Australian Dollar	2.947	2.828	2.812
1 Brunei Dollar	3.358	3.259	3.251
1 Canadian Dollar	3.214	3.127	3.115
1 Euro	4.764	4.609	4.589
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.67	2.571	2.555
1 Singapore Dollar	3.358	3.259	3.251
1 Pound Sterling	5.722	5.538	5.518
1 Swiss Franc	5.142	4.923	4.908
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.852	3.586	3.386
100 Danish Krone	65.48	60.25	60.05
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.57	55.64	55.44
100 Indian Rupee	5.43	5.1	4.9
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0293	0.0265	0.0215
100 Japanese Yen	2.977	2.881	2.871
100 Norwegian Krone	41.77	38.4	38.2
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.65	1.55	1.35
100 Philippines Peso	7.79	7.34	7.14
100 Saudi Arabian Riyal	121.38	115.23	115.03
100 South African Rand	25.66	23.17	22.97
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.59	1.46	1.26
100 Swedish Krone	42.58	38.76	38.56
100 Thai Baht	13.64	12.1	11.7
100 UAE Dirham	124.19	117.75	117.55
100 Qatar Riyal	125.05	118.71	118.51
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.9	N/A	N/A
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.64	59.98	N/A

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

### Kerjaya Prospek Group Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM2.67



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

**THE** construction arm saw a PAT of RM44 million (+19% YoY) in 9M'24, backed by higher progress billings from ongoing jobs – sustaining a commendable PAT margin of 10.1% (9M'23: 10.7%). Meanwhile, the property development segment recorded a PAT of RM6.9 million in 9M'24 (9M'23: RM2.4 million), backed by property sales for The Vue @ Montez (GDV: RM300 million) and Papyrus @ North Kiara (GDV: RM500 million) projects with 74% and 44% take-up rates (bookings and signed sales & purchase agreements) as of end Q3'24.

KPG's construction orderbook as of Nov 26 is RM4.4 billion (3x cover ratio). The group has secured RM1.6 billion worth of new jobs YTD vs our FY24 job replenishment target of RM1.7 billion. KPG has tenders worth between RM3 billion and RM4 billion, with RM1.5 billion related to a data centre and logistics warehouse job.

Penang still has ample opportunities – e.g. dredging and reclamation works for Phases 2B and 2C of Seri Tanjung Pinang (STP) Phase 2 (GDV: RM60 billion) – which could be in excess of RM500 million, combined with upcoming launches with a total GDV of >RM500 million for STP in the next six months. Eastern & Oriental's (EAST MK, BUY, RM1.38) land at Elmina West (66 acres) could likely see the first launch of 360 stratified landed terrace houses in FY25 followed by >110 shophouses in FY26. Recall: KPG secured a RM25 million job in Q3'23 to undertake earthworks for said development at Elmina West. All in, we view the stock's FY25 P/E of 14x to be undemanding vs the Bursa Malaysia Construction Index's 16-17x during the 2017 construction upcycle.

BUY with RM2.67 TP. – RHB Research, Nov 28

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

**C**HINESE dumplings hold a cherished spot in culinary tradition. Each bite is a harmony of texture and flavour, wrapped in delicate dough that transforms simple ingredients into something tasty. If you are exploring non-pork options, this guide will walk you through five iconic dumpling recipes made pork-free, retaining their authentic allure.

**Har Gow (crystal shrimp dumplings)**  
Renowned for their translucent wrappers, *Har Gow* showcases the delicate interplay of prawns and chewy, crystal-like skin.

#### Ingredients

##### For the wrapper

100g of wheat starch  
50g of tapioca starch  
120ml of boiling water  
1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

##### For the filling

200g of peeled prawns (roughly chopped)  
1 teaspoon of sesame oil  
1 tablespoon of sugar  
1 teaspoon of light soy sauce  
1 teaspoon of cornflour  
½ teaspoon of grated ginger

#### Instructions

1. Mix the wheat and tapioca starch in a bowl. Gradually add boiling water, stirring until a dough forms. Add oil and knead into a smooth dough. Cover with a damp cloth.
2. Combine the filling ingredients in a bowl. Mix thoroughly.
3. Divide the dough into small portions and roll out thin circles.
4. Place a teaspoon of filling in the centre of each wrapper. Fold into pleats to form a crescent.
5. Steam for six to eight minutes until translucent.



Open-faced and tender, these chicken and prawn morsels are savoury bites of joy.  
– PIC FROM YOUTUBE @KHIN'SKITCHEN

#### Siew Mai (steamed open-face dumplings)

Traditionally pork-filled, this recipe replaces it with chicken and prawns for a juicy, savoury bite.

#### Ingredients

200g of minced chicken  
100g of chopped prawns  
2 tablespoons of water chestnuts (finely diced)  
1 tablespoon of light soy sauce  
1 teaspoon of sesame oil  
1 teaspoon of cornflour  
20 wonton wrappers

#### Instructions

1. In a bowl, mix chicken, prawns, water chestnuts, soy sauce, sesame oil and cornflour.
2. Take a wonton wrapper, place a tablespoon of filling in the centre and form a small open cup shape by squeezing the edges around the filling.
3. Top with a garnish of diced carrot or a prawn piece.
4. Steam for eight to 10 minutes until the filling is cooked.



Delicate and translucent, these shrimp-filled dumplings are a *dim sum* classic. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @CHINESECOOKINGDEMYSTIFIED

## Delicious dumplings

➤ Explore *dim sum* with non-pork alternatives



Soup-filled delights that burst with flavour and warmth in every bite.  
– PIC FROM YOUTUBE @MORGANERECIPES

#### Xiao Long Bao

This gelatinous chicken version melts into soup when steamed, creating the characteristic burst of flavour.

#### Ingredients

**For the filling**  
200g of minced chicken  
50g of chicken stock (reduced to a gel by chilling)  
1 tablespoon of soy sauce  
1 teaspoon of sesame oil  
1 teaspoon of ginger (grated)  
½ teaspoon of sugar

#### For the wrapper

300g of all-purpose flour  
140ml of warm water

#### Instructions

1. Mix flour and water to form a dough. Knead until smooth, cover and let it rest for 30 minutes.
2. Mix the filling ingredients, including diced chicken stock gel.
3. Roll dough into thin circles. Place a spoonful of filling in the centre and pleat into a sealed pouch.
4. Steam for eight to 10 minutes, ensuring the broth inside remains intact.



Versatile and light, these dumplings shine in broths or crispy fried forms.

– PIC FROM YOUTUBE @PAILIN'SKITCHEN

#### Wonton

Wonton, often served in broth or fried, are light yet satisfying. A vegetarian filling gives these dumplings a fresh twist.

#### Ingredients

**For the filling**  
200g of silken tofu (crumbled)  
1 cup of spinach (blanched and chopped)  
2 spring onions (finely chopped)  
1 tablespoon of light soy sauce  
1 teaspoon of sesame oil

#### For the wrapper

20 store-bought wonton wrappers

#### Instructions

1. Combine tofu, spinach, spring onions, soy sauce and sesame oil in a bowl.
2. Place a teaspoon of filling on each wrapper. Fold diagonally into a triangle, then pinch the ends together to form a classic wonton shape.
3. Boil in water or broth for two to three minutes or fry until golden brown.



Fluffy steamed buns with sweet and savoury BBQ chicken filling. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @SAMMYWONGSKITCHEN

#### Char Siew Bao (BBQ chicken buns)

Replacing pork with chicken, these buns deliver the sweet and savoury satisfaction of *char stew*.

#### Ingredients

**For the dough**  
250g of plain flour  
1 teaspoon of baking powder  
1 tablespoon of sugar  
1 teaspoon of yeast  
100ml of warm water

#### For the filling

200g of cooked chicken (diced)  
2 tablespoons of hoisin sauce  
1 tablespoon of oyster sauce  
1 teaspoon of sugar

#### Instructions

1. Dissolve sugar and yeast in warm water. Mix with flour and baking powder to form a dough. Knead until smooth, cover and let rise for one to two hours.
2. Mix chicken with hoisin, oyster sauce and sugar.
3. Divide the dough into small balls and roll into flat circles. Place filling in the centre and seal into a bun shape.
4. Steam buns for 10 to 12 minutes until fluffy.

Chinese dumplings embody the beauty of tradition and adaptability. So, gather your ingredients and your loved ones – dumpling-making is as much about the experience as the delicious results.

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**ARIES**  
**Mar 21 – Apr 19**  
 This week nudges you to reflect on where you are headed and what you truly want. Professionally, opportunities arise, but only if you assert your worth. Financially, focus on saving rather than spending impulsively. In relationships, you may feel torn between independence and connection. Romantic energy runs high but lean into honesty. Listen to friends who seek your fiery energy for guidance for platonic bonds.



**TAURUS**  
**Apr 20 – May 20**  
 Stability is your keyword this week. Your hard work pays off but make sure you balance ambition with rest. Finances are steady but a surprise expense may test your budgeting skills. In romantic relationships, security and open communication deepen bonds. Friends admire your grounded nature and one may seek your advice. Take time to indulge in life's small pleasures.



**GEMINI**  
**May 21 – June 20**  
 Life feels like a whirlwind this week as ideas and opportunities buzz around you. At work, multitasking works in your favour but focus on quality over quantity. Financially, review long-term goals before making any big decisions. In romance, your charm is magnetic and meaningful conversations can lead to breakthroughs.



**CANCER**  
**June 21 – July 22**  
 Emotions run high this week, urging you to focus on self-care and boundaries. Career growth is possible if you let go of self-doubt. Finances feel manageable but avoid emotional spending. In love, a heartfelt conversation deepens understanding with your partner or someone you are interested in. Friends value your nurturing nature but do not overextend yourself.



**LEO**  
**July 23 – Aug 22**  
 Your confidence shines this week, drawing attention to your career and personal life. At work, a leadership opportunity may come your way so do not hesitate to take charge. Financially, remain cautious with any big expenses. In romance, passion and connection are strong, single individuals may attract someone special. Your social circle is buzzing but focus on deeper connections rather than spreading yourself too thin.



**VRIGO**  
**Aug 23 – Sept 22**  
 Details are everything for you this week, especially at work. Your practical approach impresses colleagues or clients, paving the way for future success. Financially, stick to your budget as holiday spending looms. In love, vulnerability strengthens bonds so do not shy away from expressing your feelings.

## Your weekend horoscope



Scott (left) and Mescal at the premiere of *Gladiator II*. – AFP/IC

# Gladiator III in works

**R**IDLEY Scott's long-awaited *Gladiator* sequel has just hit US theatres but the veteran director is already hard at work on a third instalment.

*Gladiator II*, which arrived in North American cinemas last week, stars Irish actor Paul Mescal as Lucius, the son of Russell Crowe's Maximus from the multiple Oscar-winning original.

A bloody, blockbuster epic of revenge, treachery and gladiators, it has drawn positive reviews and hauled in US\$87 million (RM387 million) at the global box office since opening in several countries last week.

"Given the performance in the rest of the world that we have seen yesterday, there is certainly going to be a *Gladiator III*."

"Because it also becomes financial and you would be insane not to consider a third version," said the British director of seminal films such as *Blade Runner* and *Thelma & Louise*.

Scott was in Los Angeles on Nov 18 for the movie's glitzy US premiere. The plot of *Gladiator II* was also planned to leave it wide open to a sequel, said Scott, a prolific filmmaker who is still directing roughly a film per year at the age of 86.

The second film opens with Lucius, sent into exile by his mother to avoid certain death in Rome, battling in vain to defend his adopted North African home city from the arrival of seemingly unstoppable Roman soldiers.

Captured as a prisoner of war, he is brought back to the imperial metropolis, where he must prove his worth in the Colosseum in order to exact revenge on invading general Marcus Acacius, played by Pedro Pascal.

Danish actress Connie Nielsen reprises her role as Lucilla from the 2000 original while Denzel Washington is already earning Oscar buzz for his conniving, mercurial and highly flamboyant ringmaster Macrinus.

"Jewellery, sandals and everything – I just looked like a Roman pimp... I could not put on enough rings," joked Washington at the premiere.

### Political arena

Mescal, whose character battles bloodthirsty baboons, rhinos and sharks in addition to humans in *Gladiator II*, also expressed



*Gladiator II* has been wildly successful at the box office. – PIC FROM FACEBOOK @GLADIATORII

excitement about returning for another film.

However, he said Scott had discussed a new direction for the plot that would not go back to the arena.

"The last time I spoke to (Scott) he said he had nine pages. Yesterday, he said he had 14," Mescal told journalists.

He added that he would be excited for the movie to go into a more political sphere with Lucius thrust into a world of court intrigue that he does not want to inhabit, such as Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*.

On how the second film's themes tackled power and politics differently, some 24 years after the original, Scott said: "They are exactly the same."

"A super-rich man thinks he can take over the Empire. Is that familiar?"

"We do not learn historically anything. We keep repeating the same mistakes," he said, just days after billionaire Donald Trump's re-election as US president. – AFP



**LIBRA**  
**Sept 23 – Oct 22**  
 Balance feels elusive this week as career demands ramp up but your natural charm keeps things running smoothly. Financially, careful planning now sets you up for success later. Romantic energy is soft and harmonious so lean into moments of intimacy and shared dreams. Platonic relationships flourish as you mediate and bring harmony to any tension.



**SCORPIO**  
**Oct 23 – Nov 21**  
 This week invites transformation as you go deep into personal and professional changes. Career progress feels intense but rewarding, trust your instincts. Financially, you are motivated to build security and a new opportunity may arise. In relationships, your passion is palpable but remember to temper intensity with patience. Friends appreciate your loyalty but be mindful not to overanalyse every interaction.



**SAGITTARIUS**  
**Nov 22 – Dec 21**  
 You are feeling expansive and optimistic this week. Career-wise, a bold move could pay off, so do not hold back. Financially, a chance for growth arises, trust your adventurous instincts but weigh risks carefully. In love, your enthusiasm draws people closer, plan something exciting with your partner or crush. Platonic relationships are fun and carefree, though one friend may seek deeper advice.



**CAPRICORN**  
**Dec 22 – Jan 19**  
 This week calls for steady progress and reflection. At work, your diligence earns respect but take time to assess whether you are truly fulfilled. Financially, stay disciplined and avoid impulsive decisions. In romance, vulnerability strengthens your connection so show your softer side. Friends value your practical advice but let them support you too.



**AQUARIUS**  
**Jan 20 – Feb 18**  
 Innovation is your theme this week as new ideas propel you forward in your career. Collaboration leads to unexpected breakthroughs, so do not shy away from teamwork. Financially, stay creative but grounded with your plans. In love, someone values your individuality so authenticity deepens your bond. Platonic relationships thrive as you inspire others with your vision.



**PISCES**  
**Feb 19 – Mar 20**  
 Your intuition is a guiding force this week, helping you navigate personal and professional matters. At work, trust your gut when making decisions. Financially, a thoughtful approach ensures stability. In love, tenderness and understanding bring harmony, lean into your natural empathy. Friends may seek your insight, appreciating your deep perspective. Take time to connect with your dreams and inner world.

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

**I**NSECURITIES are something we all grapple with at some point in life. They can take a toll on our mental health and well-being, whether it is about body image or career performance. However, with the right strategies, it is possible to manage insecurities and develop a healthier relationship with yourself. Here are seven effective ways to handle insecurity and improve your self-confidence.

#### Identify and challenge negative thoughts

Many insecurities stem from self-critical or negative thoughts that play on a loop in our minds. Identifying these thoughts is the first step towards regaining control over them. Once you recognise the patterns, try questioning their accuracy and replace them with positive affirmations. A consistent shift in mindset helps reduce self-doubt over time. You can also use journaling as a tool to reflect on recurring thoughts and evaluate their validity.

#### Stop comparing yourself to others

Social media has amplified insecurities by making it easy to compare our lives to curated images of others. Comparing yourself with others often leads to feelings of inadequacy, robbing you of joy and self-satisfaction.

To counter this, take breaks from social media if necessary and remind yourself that everyone has a unique journey. Focusing on personal growth instead of external validation helps shift attention inwards, where meaningful progress happens. Track your achievements no matter how small and appreciate the process instead of fixating on outcomes.

#### Embrace imperfection

Striving for perfection can often trigger feelings of insecurity. It is essential to acknowledge that nobody is perfect and making mistakes is part of learning as well as growth. Trying to meet unrealistic standards can increase anxiety, leaving you feeling frustrated or unworthy.

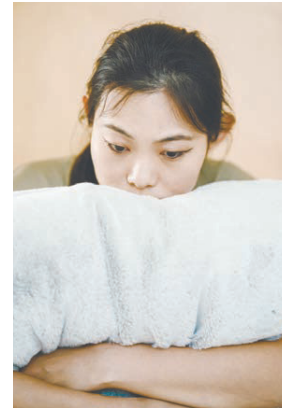
Instead of aiming for perfection, focus on doing your best in any given situation. Accepting flaws, in yourself and others, allows you to release the pressure to be "perfect" and approach situations with a healthier mindset. This creates more space for growth and self-acceptance.

#### Build strong connections

Having a support system is crucial when it comes to managing



Embracing imperfection fosters self-acceptance. — ALL PICS BY PEXELS



Insecurities arise when we doubt our worth or abilities.

acknowledge emotions without judgement, promoting emotional balance.

#### Set boundaries and say no when necessary

Sometimes insecurity stems from overcommitting and trying to meet everyone's expectations. Learning to say no and setting boundaries is crucial for maintaining self-esteem. When you prioritise your well-being, you give yourself the space to focus on what truly matters and avoid burnout.

Saying no does not mean you are selfish – it shows you value yourself and your time. Boundaries help you avoid situations that trigger insecurity or anxiety, fostering a healthier relationship with yourself and others.

Insecurity is a common experience but it does not have to define your self-worth. Remember, the journey to self-confidence takes time. Be patient with yourself as you work towards becoming the best version of yourself.

# Handling insecurity

## ➤ Seven effective ways to build self-confidence

insecurities. Surround yourself with people who uplift and offer honest feedback without judgement. Healthy relationships can remind you of your worth and provide reassurance when insecurities arise.

However, it is equally important to establish boundaries with people who contribute to negative self-talk or comparisons. Being intentional with your relationships fosters emotional security, making it easier to trust yourself and others.

#### Develop skills and focus on self-improvement

One of the best ways to combat insecurity is by investing in yourself. Take up new hobbies, learn skills or set personal goals that are meaningful to you. Personal growth builds confidence and gives you something to feel proud of. As you develop competencies in areas you care about, your sense of self-worth naturally improves.

While it is essential to work towards improvement, avoid tying

your self-esteem entirely to accomplishments. Celebrate progress, even if it is gradual, and remember growth is not always linear. The aim is to build inner confidence that is not dependent on external success.

#### Practice mindfulness and stay present

Insecurities often arise when we dwell on the past or worry about the future. Practicing mindfulness can help ground you in the present moment, reducing overthinking and self-doubt. Techniques such as deep breathing, meditation or grounding exercises can calm your mind and bring clarity to overwhelming thoughts.

Being mindful also allows you to respond to situations more thoughtfully instead of reacting impulsively out of insecurity. It encourages you to recognise and

Comparing yourself with others fuels unnecessary self-doubt.



Healthy relationships provide support and help ease insecurities.





# theSun Motoring

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Difficult to believe that this motorcycle costs just RM17,800.



## A bike for everyone

Suzuki V-Strom 250SX a dual-purpose motorcycle that anyone can appreciate

BY WAHID OOI

**T**HE motorcycling world has been shifting towards dual-purpose, adventure and sport-touring motorcycles for many years now.

Mention "dual-purpose" and people usually think about those 1000cc and above behemoths such as the GS, Africa Twin, Super Adventure, V-Strom 1050.

But, there is a demand for lightweight adventure bikes as well - hence the fierce competition in the 250cc dual-purpose/adventure market, which is fought over teeth and nails by manufacturers.

There is the Honda CRF250 Rally, KTM 250 Adventure, Kawasaki/Modenas Versys 250, and several more models not made available in Malaysia. This is where the 2024 Suzuki V-Strom 250SX fits in.

### What is it?

The smallest of the V-Strom family is not new, it was in fact one of the very first 250cc adventure bikes, known as the DL250 since 2017. However, the updated bike, now wearing the "V-Strom" family name has just arrived in Malaysia, adding another lightweight adventure motorcycle in the segment.

### Is it a simple bike?

The engine is a 248cc, single-cylinder, SOHC, oil-cooled unit which produces 26hp at 9,300 RPM and 22.2Nm at 7,300 RPM. Before we forget, the bike is a certified EEV - an Energy Efficient Vehicle.

Suzuki is well-known for building great oil-cooled engines, which cuts down on weight.

That power is sent through a constant mesh six-speed transmission. There is no assist and slipper clutch, much less a quickshifter.

The engine is housed in a tubular steel frame, to which the front telescopic forks and rear



Seats are soft and comfortable, which makes it great for long distance riding.



The digital instrument cluster is easy to read during the day, even with the sun reflecting on it.

monoshock are also mounted.

The forks are non-adjustable, while the monoshock is adjustable for spring preload. Brakes are discs front and rear, with dual-channel ABS as standard.

Steering angle is a relaxed 27°, seat height is 835mm, and kerb weight is 167kg.

Lighting is LED all-around, and the headlight is bright.

The instrument panel consists of an LCD screen, with a USB charging port at the side of the instrument "tower".

Speaking of the tower, the windscreens occupies a high position and is non-adjustable.

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Engine:** 1249cc, single-cylinder, 4-stroke

**Power:** 26.5PS @ 9300rpm

**Torque:** 22.2Nm @ 7300rpm

**Transmission:** 6-speed Constant Mesh

**Suspension:** Telescopic, coil-spring, oil damped (front) / Swing arm, coil spring, oil damped (Rear)

**Brakes:** Single disc (Front & Rear)

**Fuel tank size:** 12 litres

### Price (as tested):

**RM17,800**



Impossible not to love it.



MRF tyres are slippery in the wet.





The double-barrel exhaust sounds decent for a single-cylinder engine.

There are several adventure bike features fitted as standard such as hand protectors, a small sump guard, and rear luggage rack.

### Riding the Strom

The seat height of 835mm is not low but it is not the highest among its rivals, either. Suzuki did a great job of slimming the area where the seat meets the tank, allowing the rider to place a foot on the ground easily. Anyway, just an advice which we learned from motorcycle riding guru Chris Birch. "The biggest mistake among new adventure bike riders is trying to place both feet on the ground at the same time. Putting one foot down is more secure."

Having ridden other 250cc adventure bikes before, we expected the engine's torque to be further up the rev range. Instead, the Suzuki pulled away briskly when the clutch was released, pulling quite hard for a 250 from down low and through its midrange.

It turned out to be a good thing because it made short work of riding through heavy traffic. We took the bike off-road and that low-down torque made the bike easy to manage, too. All we needed to do was open the throttle slightly and modulate the clutch. Easy.

However, we discovered that the gear lever needed a hard push to upshift and finding neutral in idle was a little difficult, perhaps due to a strong central clutch spring.

It will probably get better in time. In any case, it was not something to detract from the overall experience.

While the engine makes a "mere" 26hp in the spec sheets, it was more than sufficient while cruising at 120-130kph on highways. Additionally, it was rather smooth for a one-banger without putting your hands to sleep from buzzy vibes.

But, if you are looking for high top speeds from this bike, you are missing the point: This bike is all about getting you out of tough spots and carrying luggage for long distance rides.

Road handling is good, just like other Suzukis, but the bike turned in a little slower before plopping on its side. We attributed that to the MRF tyres.

They offered some good grip on dry roads and light off-road trails, but they were super slippery in the wet. The first to go was the front as it tried to

slide underneath.

So, to overcome this, we pushed the bike down on wet roads and leaned to the inside when it was dry. Again, this was not a big issue because we are sure owners will swap them out for other tyres later, anyway.



You get LED lights all around.



LED lights make it safer to ride the bike in all conditions.

The true revelation of the Suzuki V-Strom 250SX, however, was the suspension. Despite being completely basic, it was supple yet is held its own when hitting bumps and potholes.

In fact, we had to confirm it by purposely riding over bumpy roads and even directly

through potholes.

That rear shock had a lovely damping rate so it did not try to kick us out of the seat when we ran over bumps. Not only that, we even used speed bumps as jumps. Sorry, Suzuki Malaysia.

The good suspension, mated to superbly padded seats, makes riding the bike around Kuala Lumpur easy and comfortable. The seats will have you riding north to the "Land of Smiles" without feeling sore.

The icing on the cake is the fuel frugal engine. We averaged 31km/litre consistently despite riding the bike between 110-130kph.

### Build quality

The bike's build quality is superb: Flush fitting panels, even the paint. There is no wayward cables. Even the undersides of luggage rack was smooth to the touch.

### Pricing

It is actually hard to believe that the 2024 Suzuki V-Strom 250SX is priced at only RM17,800, while all its rivals are above RM20,000. You get a lot of value given its quality, engine, suspension, comfort, and looks.

### Conclusion

The friendly engine, low seat height, easy handling, pliant suspension results in a motorcycle that is easy to live on a daily basis.

You can park your 200hp superbike or 160hp 1300cc at home and ride the Suzuki V-Strom 250SX for your daily grind.

In fact, it felt like a bigger bike but with lower weight and easier handling and a non-threatening friendly powerband, to boot. Slap on some luggage and you have an adventure tourist.

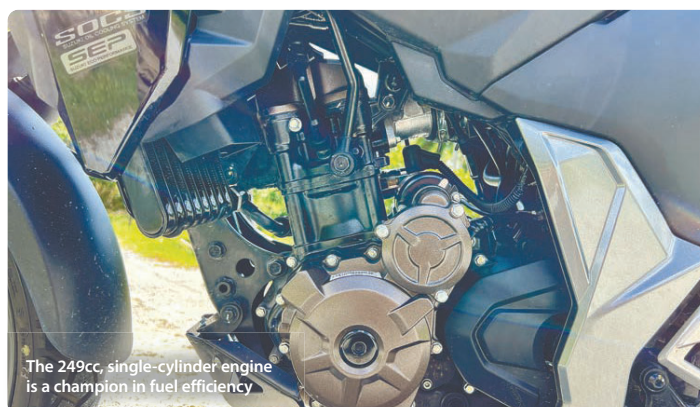
Truth is, if you want a user-friendly and wholly approachable beginners adventure bike, or a lightweight adventure bike for the daily commute, this is it.

Beginners can use the V-Strom 250SX to learn the intricacies of off-road riding, while veteran riders can look forward to a bike they can jump on and ride away without hassle.

In closing, it is a great buy. Just make ours in Champion Yellow No. 2.



Wheels are kept in check by a single disc grabbed by a Bybre caliper.



The 249cc, single-cylinder engine is a champion in fuel efficiency.

**S**AIC Motor Malaysia has officially revealed the pricing and details for the highly anticipated all-new MG HS SUV, available in two distinct variants: Standard and Lux.

Priced at RM129,900 for the Standard and RM145,900 for the Lux, the MG HS combines striking aesthetics, advanced technology, and a focus on practicality, making it a standout option in its segment.

The MG HS's design exudes sophistication and dynamism. At the front, Bi-Functional LED headlights with Daytime Running Lights (DRL) complement a bold grille and a redesigned bumper, setting a luxurious tone.

The rear styling features a sporty spoiler, dual exhaust outlets, LED taillights, and a refined bumper, ensuring the vehicle commands attention from every angle.

The addition of 18-inch diamond-cut alloy wheels, red brake callipers, and a "Super Sport" button enhances its sporty character, making it both elegant and aggressive.

Inside, the MG HS impresses with a cabin designed for comfort and connectivity. It offers 64-colour ambient lighting, a panoramic sunroof, and supportive sports seats wrapped in premium soft-touch leather.

The high-tech dashboard includes a 12.3-inch virtual cluster display with customisable themes and a 10.1-inch high-resolution infotainment system.

This system features a 360° camera, Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and MG iSMART phone connectivity, ensuring a seamless integration of technology into every drive.

For practicality, the MG HS provides 463

# Time for an MG

HS SUV priced between RM129,900 and RM145,900



litres of cargo space, expandable to 1,287 litres with the rear seats folded. Features like a power tailgate and 60/40 split-folding rear seats enhance convenience, while roof rails capable of supporting up to 50kg add to its versatility.

Under the hood, the MG HS is powered by a 1.5L turbocharged petrol engine paired with a 7-speed twin-clutch transmission, delivering an output of 162PS and 250Nm of torque.

This efficient yet powerful engine is engineered for durability, with a lifespan up to 320,000km, promising long-term reliability.

Safety is at the forefront of the MG HS's design. It comes equipped with six SRS airbags and an extensive suite of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) under the MG PILOT program.

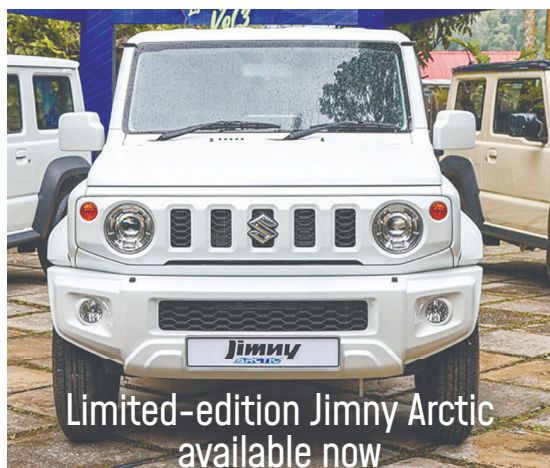
Key features include Front Collision Warning, Adaptive Cruise Control, Lane Departure Warning and Prevention, Blind Spot Detection, and Rear Cross Traffic Alert. These systems, combined with the 360° camera, ensure peace of mind for drivers and passengers alike.

The MG HS is available in four striking exterior colours: Black Pearl, Arctic White, Camden Grey, and Dynamic Red, all paired with elegant black upholstery.

To further enhance its appeal, SAIC Motor Malaysia offers a comprehensive warranty package, including a five-year unlimited mileage vehicle warranty and a seven-year unlimited mileage powertrain warranty, ensuring buyers have complete confidence in their purchase.

To celebrate MG's 100th anniversary, SAIC Motor Malaysia is offering an exclusive RM5,000 introductory rebate on both the Standard and Lux variants, making it an excellent time to experience the blend of luxury and practicality that the MG HS offers.

With its bold design, advanced features, and competitive pricing, the all-new MG HS is set to redefine the SUV segment in Malaysia, offering drivers an exceptional combination of style, performance, and reliability.



Limited-edition Jimny Arctic available now

**NAZA EASTERN MOTORS SDN BHD**, the exclusive distributor of Suzuki vehicles in Malaysia, has introduced the Suzuki Jimny Arctic, a limited-edition addition to the Jimny 3-Door lineup.

The highly anticipated reveal took place at the 3rd edition of the Jimny Lifestyle Drive, a gathering of nearly 50 Suzuki Jimny vehicles for an adventurous convoy to Aman Rimba Private Estate in Janda Baik, Pahang.

Speaking at the launch, Mohamad Irwan Shahril highlighted the significance of the Jimny Arctic's unveiling, calling it a "milestone for Suzuki Cars Malaysia."

He emphasised the brand's commitment to offering vehicles that cater to off-road enthusiasts while maintaining Suzuki's hallmarks of quality, reliability, and style.

"The Jimny Arctic is a testament to our dedication to providing exceptional vehicles tailored for our local customers. With its unique design enhancements and features, it brings a fresh level of excitement to the SUV market in Malaysia," Mohamad Irwan said.

The Jimny Arctic is priced at RM167,900 (before insurance) and is

accompanied by an early bird promotion offering up to RM7,000 in rebates.

The Arctic Edition features sleek door visors, a 3-panel glass tint, an Arctic-themed soft tyre cover, and black mud flaps for off-road readiness. Inside, it includes a premium audio garnish bumper, deluxe carpet mats, and two-tone Nappa leather seats, combining practicality with a touch of luxury.

These features combine to create a refined yet adventure-ready vehicle that stands out in the compact 4x4 segment.

Naza Eastern Motors also introduced two new colour options for the Jimny 3-Door All Grip variant: Pearl White and Chiffon, further expanding choices for Malaysian buyers.

The Jimny Lifestyle Drive not only showcased the brand's latest innovations but also strengthened the connection between Suzuki and its community of adventurous drivers.

The convoy provided participants with an exclusive hands-on experience with the Jimny Arctic, further deepening their engagement with the Suzuki brand.

## Versatile choice for any terrain

**PHS** Automotive Malaysia, the official distributor of Audi vehicles in Malaysia, has unveiled a new recommended retail price for the Audi Q5 Sportback.

Known for its sleek coupe-inspired design, top-tier features, and remarkable performance, the Q5 Sportback is now available at RM368,990.

At the core of the Audi Q5 Sportback is its powerful 2.0L TFSI engine, which produces an impressive 249PS and 370 Nm of torque.

Paired with a responsive 7-speed S tronic transmission, the vehicle delivers seamless gear shifts and smooth acceleration, ensuring an exhilarating drive on both city roads and open highways.

The renowned quattro all-wheel-drive system with ultra technology further enhances grip, stability, and performance, making the Q5 Sportback a versatile choice for any terrain or weather condition.

The Q5 Sportback's advanced suspension setup – featuring multi-link systems on both front and rear axles – provides a harmonious

blend of exceptional handling and ride comfort.

Its bold S-line silhouette, complemented by a striking Singleframe Grille and LED headlamps with headlight washers, adds to the SUV's timeless design, exuding confidence and elegance.

Inside, the Q5 Sportback offers a luxurious and technologically advanced cabin. Passengers can enjoy an immersive audio experience with the Bang & Olufsen premium sound system, featuring 19 speakers and a 16-channel amplifier.

For added comfort, the 12-way electrically adjustable front seats include electric lumbar support and a memory function for the driver. The 3-zone climate control system allows personalised temperature settings, while a generous 510-litre luggage capacity ensures ample storage for any journey.

Safety and convenience are at the forefront of the Audi Q5 Sportback's design, with intelligent driver assistance features such as adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning, lane change assist, and a 360-degree camera

system. These technologies ensure peace of mind during urban driving and long-distance travel.

The Audi Q5 Sportback is available in an array of stunning colours, including Mythos Black, Navarra Blue, Glacier White, Chronos Grey, Daytona Grey, and Floret Silver.

In conjunction with the year-end festivities, Audi Malaysia is also offering special savings across its e-tron range, starting from RM378,990. The detailed pricing for these premium electric models is as follows:

The e-tron GT Dynamic Package is priced at RM399,990, while the high-performance RS e-tron GT is available at RM499,990. The Q8 e-tron 50 Sportback and SUV are offered at RM384,990 and RM378,990, respectively.

For those seeking enhanced performance, the Q8 e-tron 55 Sportback is priced at RM388,990, matching the RM378,990 price of the Q8 e-tron 55 SUV. These prices exclude the optional Audi Assurance Package, which can be added for additional coverage and benefits.

## Mini Cooper Convertible back in production

**MINI** Plant Oxford, the historic home of the Mini brand, has resumed production of the Mini Cooper Convertible for the first time since 2015. The convertible now joins the Mini Cooper 3-Door and Mini Cooper 5-Door, establishing Oxford as the production hub for the entire Mini Cooper family.

The relaunch of the fourth-generation Mini Cooper Convertible, announced last month, brings a refreshed design inside and out alongside an advanced digital experience.

Production of the Mini Convertible is supported by three UK-based BMW Group facilities:

Plant Swindon for body pressings and sub-assemblies, Plant Hams Hall for advanced four-cylinder petrol engines, and Mini Plant Oxford for body shell production, paintwork, and final assembly.

Since its 2004 debut, the Mini Convertible has seen three generations. The first (2004–2008), produced at Oxford, delivered 160,000 units with retro styling and chrome roll-over arches.

The second (2009–2015) built 165,000 units, introducing updated Cooper styling while keeping the drop-down hinged boot.

The third (2016–2023) saw 150,000 units produced at VDL Nedcar in the Netherlands to

accommodate Oxford's production of the Mini Clubman.

One of the world's oldest automotive production facilities, Mini Plant Oxford celebrated its 110th anniversary in 2023. The plant accounted for over 20% of UK car manufacturing that year and has been in continuous operation since 1913.

As the Mini Cooper Convertible returns to its birthplace, it continues a tradition of innovation and craftsmanship that has defined the brand for decades.

With its blend of heritage, modernity, and iconic open-air driving, the Mini Convertible remains a standout in its class.





## SIDENETTING

## Van Nistelrooy set to be Leicester manager

**RUUD VAN NISTELROOY** is set to be appointed as the new manager of Leicester just weeks after leaving Manchester United. The Red Devils icon is set for a quick return to the Premier League after impressing in caretaker charge ahead of Ruben Amorim's arrival at Old Trafford. Leicester have moved speedily after sacking Steve Cooper after just 12 league games in charge. The axe fell on the former Nottingham Forest boss following Saturday's 2-1 defeat by Chelsea. Van Nistelrooy emerged as the strong favourite to replace Cooper earlier this week. It is claimed that he is primed to agree a deal to join the Foxes, who he defeated twice in his four-game spell in the United hotseat. According to the *Mirror*, the 48-year-old has agreed a two-and-a-half-year contract which could scupper any potential return to United. Van Nistelrooy has admitted that he would like to be his former club's permanent boss in the future.

## Lamps to take over at Coventry

**FORMER** Everton and Chelsea boss Frank Lampard is set to take over at Coventry City. Lampard has been out of work since ending his second spell at Stamford Bridge in May 2023 but is the frontrunner to succeed Mark Robins at the Ricoh Arena. Robins was surprisingly sacked earlier this month, after a seven-year spell where he led the Sky Blues from League Two to a Championship playoff final and FA Cup semifinal. If a deal is agreed, Lampard could be in charge for tomorrow's clash with Cardiff. Lampard, 46, retired as a player in 2017 and in May 2018 took on his first managerial role at Derby, who he led to the Championship playoff final in his first season.

## Bayern apologise to PSG for offensive banners

**BAYERN MUNICH** apologised to Paris Saint-Germain yesterday for the presence of banners with offensive messages aimed at the French club's president Nasser al-Khelaifi during their Champions League clash. PSG visited Bayern's Allianz Arena on Tuesday and a section of the home support unveiled a banner with a profanity aimed at the "plutocratic Nasser". A separate banner with a picture of Nasser's head crossed out was also displayed, as well as two banners reading "Minister, club owner, TV rights holder, Uefa Exco member & ECA chairman all in one". Some Bayern fans also reportedly sang insulting chants about the French club itself after the match, which the hosts won 1-0. "FC Bayern would like to apologise when its opponents and their representatives in its stadium feel personally attacked in this manner and tone and are offended as a result," read a statement on Bayern's website. "The club would like to make it clear that these banners were not authorised by FC Bayern and do not reflect its stance."

## Lille fans stabbed in 'ambush'

**TWO** Lille fans were stabbed during an attack carried out by dozens of Bologna supporters before the two teams' Champions League fixture, the French Ligue 1 club said yesterday. In a statement, Lille said the two fans "received medical treatment" after the attack outside a bar in the northern Italian city late on Tuesday. "The club unreservedly condemns this cowardly and intolerable attack, which contravenes all the values of football," said Lille before yesterday's game. Italian media, citing local police, said 80 people, most likely Bologna supporters, assaulted around 30 Lille fans outside a bar in the city's university district while armed with metal bars and belts. Lille are in contention for a spot in the playoffs for the Champions League's last 16 as they sit 12th, after yesterday's 2-1 win.

## 'He has to want it'

New Devils boss Amorim explains key to getting Rashford back to his best

**RUBEN AMORIM** has vowed to help Marcus Rashford get back to his best – but said it is up to the Manchester United forward to take the lead and show he wants it.

Rashford scored the first goal of Amorim's reign, and his 136th for the club, after just 81 seconds in Sunday's 1-1 draw at Ipswich.

But after scoring a career-best 30 in 2022/23, the England international struck just eight times in 43 matches last season and only scored one Premier League goal under Erik ten Hag this year.

Amorim fielded Rashford as a striker at Portman Road and believes it was tough for him to compete with Ipswich's tall centre-backs but thinks the 27-year-old's attitude will be the key part if he is to return to his top levels.

"I will try to help him," pledged the new manager. "That position is not the best one for him, especially in a game like that, we have to kick with high pressure, we have to kick the ball

so many times and it was like fighting with two giants. We'll try to find the right solution for him, as for the other players.

"But he has to be Marcus, first of all, to try to return to that moment and then he will have all the help of the staff, the club and the fans because he's a Manchester United boy. But he has to be the first one to want it."

The manager also acknowledged that United's lack of goals this season is a significant issue that needs addressing but he expressed confidence in his players' ability to score more frequently.

"Of course there is a concern in that, but I think we have to improve as a team," Amorim declared. "We have quality players who can score so many goals."

"But you could feel it in the second-half – we controlled possession of the ball but we were not dangerous. Maybe it was because we spent the week

trying to work on build up and then the rest was not working."

Amorim denied he needs a new striker, instead looking to get more goals from players such as Rasmus Hojlund, Joshua Zirkzee and captain Bruno Fernandes, as he focused on getting his current side to add a more potent streak.

He explained: "There is a concern in that but I think we have to improve as a team. Because we have quality players who can score so many goals."

"We will try to improve as a team and Rasmus and Josh and Rash will score more goals, even Bruno has to score more goals. Amad has to be better near the goal, all these guys need to improve and we can score so many goals."

"If I need a new striker scoring goals... we need to improve as a team and these players can score goals." – The Independent/Express Newspapers



Club Brugge's Ferran Jutgla (centre) scores a goal against Celtic that is later disallowed following a referral to VAR. – REUTERS/SPIC

## Rodgers praises Celtic mentality

BY GAVIN MCCAFFERTY

**CELTIC** manager Brendan Rodgers praised Cameron Carter-Vickers and his side's mentality after they dug out a Champions League point following the defender's disastrous own goal against Club Brugge.

The normally reliable centreback passed the ball into his own net in the 26th minute after failing to spot goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel's positioning.

But a brilliant turn and finish on the hour mark from Daizen Maeda changed the game and ultimately earned the Scottish champions a 1-1 home draw.

On the opener, Rodgers said: "Mistakes happen and it was just unfortunate. He's played that pass a million times and it's gone back and then we've been able to play forward.

It was just one of those unfortunate moments in the game that happens.

"But he's a really, really tough character. He's a great guy, he picked himself up. He was really strong and aggressive again in the game and got on with it and had a real bravery in the second half, because he was the one carrying the ball forward for us to start the attack."

Despite the gift, Brugge were worthy of their lead and Rodgers admitted his side were too passive in their pressing in the opening half.

Some tactical tweaks – and the introduction of Paulo Bernardo – helped Celtic dominate after Maeda's equaliser, although Brugge had a goal disallowed for a marginal offside.

"I can only credit the players for the second half, because we had to fight," Rodgers said. "And we're still one of those teams that's

really pushing to try and make a mark at this level. So to make the comeback, score the goal, play with that courage, I was so pleased.

"You want to win but I've been here enough times to have lost a game like that, but we didn't. We showed a real strong mentality and we kept pushing right to the very end and the players did well."

"I thought they showed great courage in the second half because we weren't at our level in the first half. Sometimes a game like that can get away from you, but it didn't."

"We stayed with it, showed that determination, showed that mentality, never to quit, to keep going."

"So we're on eight points, nine to play for. We're still very much on course to get to where we want to get to and still three games to go." – The Independent

## Dortmund up to 4th after Zagreb win

**GOALS** from Jamie Gittens, Ramy Bensebaini and Serhou Guirassy took Borussia Dortmund to a 3-0 win at Dinamo Zagreb in the Champions League yesterday.

English winger Gittens opened the scoring with a stunning long-range solo effort before halftime, shooting in from the edge of the box.

Bensebaini headed in a Pascal Gross corner early in the second half and Guirassy came off the bench to add a third late, sealing the result.

The win, Dortmund's first away victory in any competition since September, sent them into the top four and all but sealed at least a spot in the knockout rounds.

"We did really well and didn't let many

chances in. We were very dominant with the ball – it was a really good game from us," Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel told DAZN.

"We're just happy," said defender Nico Schlotterbeck. "We won in Zagreb and we had the whole game under control. Things are going well."

One concern for Dortmund coach Nuri Sahin will be Julian Brandt's fitness ahead of Saturday's game against Bayern Munich.

"I hope it's not too bad. Brandt is extremely important for our game," Sahin said, adding the 28-year-old was "almost irreplaceable".

"It'll be a huge fight," Kobel said of the Bayern clash.

"If we give everything, we can try and get the maximum out of it."

Midfielder Brandt, captaining the side with Emre Can on the bench, was replaced after limping off before halftime with a reported thigh injury.

Zagreb had rebounded in the Champions League after an opening round 9-2 thrashing at the hands of Dortmund's German rivals Bayern, winning two and drawing another to climb into the knockout places.

Dortmund have now won four of five outings in the Champions League, other than their 5-2 humbling in the Champions League final rematch against Real Madrid in October. – AFP

## Defeat against Reds could end City title hopes, says Gundogan

**ILKAY GUNDOGAN** admits defeat at Premier League leaders Liverpool on Sunday could end Manchester City's Premier League title challenge as they scramble to end their poor run of form.

City squandered a 3-0 lead against Feyenoord in the Champions League on Tuesday – following five consecutive defeats in all competitions.

For the first time in what was the 942nd game of his managerial career, manager Pep Guardiola saw his side fail to win a match after leading by three goals.

### SHORTS

#### Pep explains self harm comments

**PEP GUARDIOLA** insisted yesterday he did not mean to make light of issues of self harm after comments about a cut on his nose following Manchester City's Champions League collapse against Feyenoord.

The City boss was spotted with the scratch during Tuesday's 3-3 draw at the Etihad, in which they blew a 3-0 lead, and was asked about it during his post-match press conference.

Guardiola replied that he had caused it with a fingernail, adding apparently as a joke: "I want to harm myself."

The Spaniard took to social media to clarify his response yesterday, saying: "I was caught off guard with a question at the end of a press conference about a scratch which had appeared on my face and explained that a sharp fingernail had accidentally caused this.

"My answer was in no way intended to make light of the very serious issue of self harm.

"I know that many people struggle with mental health issues every day, and I would like to take this moment to highlight there are ways people can seek help."

#### Leeds roar back to top

**LEEDS** climbed back to the top of the English Championship with a comfortable 3-0 win over Luton at Elland Road yesterday.

Sam Byram gave the home side an early lead when he reacted quickest to volley into the far corner.

Joel Piroe made it 2-0 from close range in first-half injury time, with Dan James completing the scoring in the 81st minute by lobbing Thomas Kaminski.

The win takes Leeds above Yorkshire rivals Sheffield United in the table on goal difference.

"To show such a dominant performance, to create many chances, to score three goals and score more or less in the perfect moments, I'm pretty happy with our performance," Leeds manager Daniel Farke told the BBC.

"At the moment we're showing great consistency in performances and also results."

Blackburn climbed to within two points of opponents Middlesbrough in the playoff places with a 1-0 win at the Riverside, courtesy of a Dominic Hyam goal.

Queens Park Rangers moved off the bottom of the table after a 2-0 win at Cardiff, their first victory in 13 league games.

A thumping finish inside the first two minutes from Zan Vipotnik set Swansea on their way to a 2-1 win at Derby.

Portsmouth's game with Millwall was called off following a power failure shortly before kickoff at Fratton Park.

City have won the past four Premier League titles but are already eight points behind Arne Slot's Liverpool following three straight defeats in the English top flight.

Guardiola conceded City's title defence would realistically be over should they lose at Anfield after last week's 4-0 humbling by Tottenham.

Germany international Gundogan agreed with his manager's assessment following the Feyenoord defeat.

"To stay in the title race, probably yes, (it's a game City can't afford to lose), because 11 points

would be a huge gap," said the midfielder veteran.

"Anfield is always tough, no matter the situation. We've struggled in recent years going there and we know Liverpool are a great team full of confidence right now.

"It's going to be as tough as it is possible to be but that sums up the situation right now. It seems we have to go through this season the toughest way possible."

City appeared to be back on track when leading 3-0 against Feyenoord, thanks to two goals from Erling Haaland either side of a deflected Gundogan effort.

But two errors from Josko Gvardiol late in the game allowed Feyenoord back into the game before an Ederson blunder led to a last-gasp David Hancko equaliser.

Gundogan, the 2022-23 treble-winning captain who rejoined the club in August after a short spell at Barcelona, admitted the nature of the draw made it feel like a defeat.

The 34-year-old said: "The sensation right now is big disappointment but football is football and football sometimes creates incredible moments and difficult moments that you have to face." – AFP



## Disallowed goal would have counted in Premier League, says Emery after stalemate

BY JONATHAN VEAL

**A**STON VILLA boss Unai Emery described the decision to rule out his side's last-gasp goal in their Champions League draw with Juventus as "very soft" and has called for consistency from European referees.

Morgan Rogers looked to have given Emery's side another famous win when he slammed a loose ball home in stoppage time, but referee Jesus Gil Manzano ruled Diego Carlos to have fouled Juve goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio and the goal was chalked off.

Contact seemed minimal but VAR did not intervene and Villa had to settle for a point in a 0-0 draw.

"With the last action, it is the interpretation of the referee," the Spaniard said.

"In England, 80% of those is given a goal and it's not a foul. It's very soft. But in Europe, it could be a foul. We have to accept.

"Everybody will know, in England the interpretation is different. The England referees, when actions like that the interpretation is a clear

no foul but in Europe that interpretation is different.

"They have to be working to get the same decision when some action like that is coming. I don't know exactly why but we knew before in the Premier League that it is different.

"In Europe for example we are not doing a block like in England and we are not doing in front of the goalkeeper in offensive corners the same situations like in England.

"When the action happened, I was thinking here in Europe it's a foul. In England not, but in Europe I have to accept it.

"At first, I thought the referee gave us a goal. In cases like that, it's confusing because he has to wait for VAR. I don't know what happened but I think so (the referee changed his mind with VAR)."

It was a disappointment for Villa, who remain unbeaten at home in their debut Champions League campaign and are still in contention to qualify automatically for the last 16.

"We were playing a favourite to be in the top eight and usually a contender to win this competition," Emery added.

## Liverpool were more up for it: Bellingham

**JUDE BELLINGHAM** said Real Madrid were beaten by the best team in Europe right now after a 2-0 defeat to Liverpool and questioned the holders' attitude after a third loss in five Champions League games.

The 15-time winners are 24th in the 36-team table with three games of the league phase remaining and run the risk of failing to make the knockout stages.

Liverpool, by contrast, are flying at the top of the table with a maximum 15 points from their five games and are also eight points clear at the summit of the Premier League.

"From the first minute they just took control of the game," Bellingham told *TNT Sports* on a disappointing return to England.

"I just think they were more up for it than us, to be honest, which is really disappointing to say.

"It's a bad result against probably the best-performing team in Europe. It's no disgrace to come here and lose, but we are disappointed in

how we performed.

"The important thing is we use it the right way now. We've got three games left in the group and it's important that we go and try and win all of them to give ourselves the best possible chance in the standings."

Thibaut Courtois frustrated the Reds in a dominant first half from the hosts, just like he did in Madrid's 1-0 Champions League final win between the sides in 2022.

Alexis Mac Allister finally made Liverpool's pressure count early in the second period.

But Madrid had the chance to level when Kylian Mbappe's penalty was saved by Caoimhin Kelleher.

Mohamed Salah also fired wide from the penalty spot for Liverpool, before Cody Gakpo's header secured the three points.

"He's a wonderful player but the pressure that he holds, because of how good he is, is huge," added Bellingham on Mbappe, who has failed to shine since his much-anticipated move to the

"We are a team who for a long time didn't play in Europe and the Champions League and this year is very important.

"We wanted to play competitive and we are in the right way. Today to get one point is very good, we wanted to win but wanted to avoid some mistakes we made in previous games. We have 10 points and we're happy."

Before the game Emery called Juventus one of the "best teams in the world, historically and now", but this was an Italian side down to the bare bones.

Only 14 outfield players made the trip from Turin, with striker Dusan Vlahovic among those who stayed behind.

Juve boss Thiago Motta, whose side are 19th but still in contention to reach the top eight, said: "There's just three games left to qualify. The next home against Man City, then Brugge, then Benfica.

"One at a time, as we always did with the goal to qualify for the next round.

"In the end we will try and reach our goal which is to go to the next round." – The Independent

Spanish capital.

"The penalty is not the reason why we lost the game. As a collective, we weren't good enough on the night. They performed better than us and it's as simple as that.

"Kylian can keep his head high. I know for sure that he will produce many more moments that are huge for this club."

Kelleher's penalty heroics continued his fine form since stepping in to deputise for the injured Alisson Becker.

"In most situations you think it's probably gonna go in because they have such a great record but both (Mbappe and Salah) missed so they showed us today that they are human beings," said Liverpool boss Arne Slot, who has won 17 of his first 19 games since replacing Jurgen Klopp.

"In Mbappe's situation Kelleher saved it which made it even more special for us. I don't think there was a situation where he was not outstanding for us." – AFP

**RESULTS & STANDINGS**

**CHAMPIONS LEAGUE:** Red Star Belgrade 5 (Silas 12, Kronic 31, Ivanic 65, Radonjic 69, 88) Stuttgart 1 (Demirovic 5), Sturm Graz 1 (Biereth 59) Girona 0, Aston Villa 0 Juventus 0, Bologna 1 (Lucumi 63) Lille 2 (Mukau 44, 66), Celtic 1 (Maeda 60) Club Brugge 1 (Carter-Vickers 26-og), Dinamo Zagreb 0 Borussia Dortmund 3 (Gittens 41, Bensebaini 56, Guirassy 90), Liverpool 2 (Mac Allister 52, Gakpo 77) Real Madrid 0, Monaco 2 (Ben Seghir 13, Magassa 67) Benfica 3 (Pavlidis 48, Cabral 84, Amdouni 88), PSV Eindhoven 3 (Tillman 87, 90, Pepi 90+5) Shakhtar Donetsk 2 (Sikan 8, Zubkov 37).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	5	5	0	0	12	1	15
Inter Milan	5	4	1	0	7	0	13
Barcelona	5	4	0	1	18	5	12
B. Dortmund	5	4	0	1	16	6	12
Atalanta	5	3	2	0	11	1	11
B. Leverkusen	5	3	1	1	11	5	10
Arsenal	5	3	1	1	8	2	10
Monaco	5	3	1	1	12	7	10
Aston Villa	5	3	1	1	6	1	10
Sporting	5	3	1	1	10	7	10
Brest	5	3	1	1	9	6	10
Lille	5	3	1	1	7	5	10
Bayern	5	3	0	2	12	7	9
Benfica	5	3	0	2	10	7	9
Atletico	5	3	0	2	11	9	9
AC Milan	5	3	0	2	10	8	9
Man City	5	2	2	1	13	7	8
PSV Eindhoven	5	2	2	1	10	7	8
Juventus	5	2	2	1	7	5	8
Celtic	5	2	2	1	10	10	8
Feyenoord	5	2	1	2	10	13	7
Club Brugge	5	2	1	2	4	7	7
D. Zagreb	5	2	1	2	10	15	7
Real Madrid	5	2	0	3	9	9	6
Paris SG	5	1	1	3	3	6	4
S. Donetsk	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Stuttgart	5	1	1	3	4	11	4
Sparta Prague	5	1	1	3	5	14	4
Sturm Graz	5	1	0	4	2	6	3
Girona	5	1	0	4	4	9	3
Red Star	5	1	0	4	9	17	3
Salzburg	5	1	0	4	3	15	3
Bologna	5	0	1	4	1	7	1
RB Leipzig	5	0	0	5	4	10	0
S. Bratislava	5	0	0	5	4	18	0
Young Boys	5	0	0	5	2	17	0

**NOTE:** Top eight qualify directly for last 16; teams from ninth to 24th enter a play-off round to contest the remaining last-16 berths; bottom 12 teams will be eliminated.

**ENGLISH CHAMPIONSHIP:** Cardiff 0 QPR 2, Derby 1 Swansea 2, Leeds 3 Luton 0, Middlesbrough 0 Blackburn 1, **Portsmouth vs Millwall - postponed.**

Top 10	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leeds	17	10	5	2	31	12	35
Sheff Utd	17	11	4	2	24	9	35
Burnley	17	9	6	2	21	6	33
Sunderland	17	9	6	2	26	12	33
Watford	17	9	2	6	26	24	29
Middlesbrough	17	8	3	6	29	20	27
West Brom	17	6	9	2	18	11	27
Blackburn	16	7	4	5	20	17	25
Millwall	16	6	6	4	19	14	24
Norwich City	17	5	7	5	31	25	22

**BRIEFS**

**Coaches and referees development programme attracts 111 participants**

A total of 111 representatives from 19 National Olympic Committees (NOC) in Southeast Asia and East Asia will attend the third stage of the Olympic Council of Asia's (OCA) Development Programme for Coaches and Referees in Kuala Lumpur. OCA's Director of Development and NOC Relations Wissam Trkmani said the five-day camp that started on Monday, involves

# Adelia aiming high

*Kegler out to retain girls' open crown in Junior All-Stars Championships*

**N**ATIONAL Junior keglers, Adelia Nur Irwan Syazalee aims to retain her girls' open crown in the U-22 International Junior All-Stars Bowling Championships 2024 at the Sunway Mega Lanes in Sunway Pyramid, Petaling Jaya. The 17-year-old, who beat Singapore's Althea Dang 227-204, 264-207 in last year's final, is determined to repeat the feat when the 24th edition blazes the lanes from Dec 4-15. "There are so many good competitors returning from last year, so they know my game plan, while I also know theirs. "But I will use it as my advantage, added with my experience learned from my coaches and teammates to retain the title," she said

during a press conference here, today. Despite her busy schedule preparing for the upcoming Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) which starts next month and continues till early next year, Adelia is optimistic that the tournament would not deter her from achieving good results. "Both the competitions and SPM are difficult and very hard, but I can cope very well. I will go to school in the morning and continue with my training sessions in the evening. "SPM is a very important exam, but I think with the support from my parents, coaches and teammates, I can do it... I will try my best to succeed in both," she added.

Meanwhile, Sunway Megalanes general manager Tan Yoke Chiang said the event maintains its status as one of the most prestigious junior bowling championships in the region with over 800 participants from 16 countries confirmed for this year. "For this year, apart from the RM200,000 prize money, we also have prepared more than RM100,000 worth of bowling equipment for the participants," he said. Milo Malaysia assistant sports marketing manager Sheena Dinal Rizal said the Junior All-Stars Bowling Championships serves as a great platform for young Malaysian keglers to hone their skills and set the bar higher against participants from other countries. - Bernama



Sabah FC's Miguel Angel Garrido Cifuentes (centre) in action against PT Athletic FC's Abdul Latiff Suhaimi (right). - BERNAMAPIC

## Sabah FC cruise into quarterfinals

**SABAH FC** lived up to expectations by cruising into the quarterfinals of the 2024/2025 Malaysia Cup when they eliminated PT Athletic on a 7-0 aggregate score after winning 3-0 in the round of 16 second leg match in Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday.

In the clash at the Kuala Lumpur Football Stadium in Cheras, visiting side Sabah, who played without a head coach following the departure of Datuk Ong Kim Swee last Thursday, received stiff competition that saw the score tied without a goal in the first half.

However, the start of the second half saw Sabah breaking the deadlock after Abdul Latiff Suhaimi was adjudged to have brought down Muhammad Farhan Roslan inside the box through a Video Assist Referee (VAR) referral and striker Darren Lok stepped up to calmly complete the spotkick in the 67th minute.

Six minutes later, Sabah doubled their lead through midfielder Stuart Wilkin's volley after receiving a pass from Telmo Castanheira.

Brazilian import striker Joao Pedro completed Sabah's victory over the A1 semi-pro side after sealing in the team's third goal by heading in Daniel Ting's cross in the 81st minute.

Pedro however, missed a golden chance to score a second goal after being awarded a penalty when the ball hit the hands of an opposing player, but his attempt was denied by goalkeeper Muhammad Syakir Danial Ma'amal Hajri in the 83rd minute.

In the quarterfinals, Sabah, who are three-time runners-up, are scheduled to face either Penang FC or Kuching City FC. - Bernama

## International junior squash championship sets new record

**THE** Kuala Lumpur International Junior Championships set a new record this year, receiving 1,043 entries, an increase from 900 in 2023. Malaysia has the largest contingent, with 711 players from all states, including elite players from the Squash Racquet Association of Malaysia (SRAM) and Bukit Jalil Sports School, taking part in the biggest Asia Junior Squash event and the second largest in the world after the United States (US) Junior Open.

Squash Racquets Association of Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur (SRAFTKL) president Steven Kwan said that, besides Malaysia, 24 other countries, including Egypt, the US, Hong Kong, and Switzerland, will be competing, with Switzerland

participating for the first time. "I'm delighted that the tourney continued to be a Platinum event for the 6th year since 2018. We can expect a great week of squash with some thrilling matches from these players who are aspiring to be World or Olympic champions one day. "This tournament will be a perfect platform for them to achieve their dreams, he said during the press conference here today.

Meanwhile REDtone Digital Berhad Group chief executive officer Lau Bik Soon shared his pride in supporting the prestigious event as the title sponsor for the past 11 consecutive years. "It is inspiring to witness the remarkable growth

of young talent in our country. This tournament serves as an exceptional platform to nurture and showcase their potential," he said. The tournament will take place from Dec 3-8 at the four different venues such as

Jalan Duta Squash Courts in Kuala Lumpur, Sky Arena at Air Panas, Setapak, Kuala Lumpur, Astaka Squash Courts in Petaling Jaya and the Royal Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur.

There will be six categories, each to be contested in the boys and girls categories which is U-9, U-11, U-13, U-15, U-17, and U-19.

All finals and top four positions will be played at the Jalan Duta Squash Courts and the entrance is free. - Bernama

archery, badminton, table tennis and swimming. He explained that, OCA felt the development programme presents an ideal opportunity to brief the coaches and referees on some key issues in the Olympic movement. Wissam said the participants will be taught both practical and theoretical sessions in coaching and refereeing, that includes presentations from experts in a series of fields that are becoming increasingly important in the modern-day Olympic movement. It includes Olympic values, safeguarding, the prevention of competition manipulation and

anti-doping. **Johor wants to host SEA Games football** **THE** Johor government intends to co-host the 2027 SEA Games by offering several venues for football events. Johor Youth and Sports, Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Committee chairman Mohd Hairi Mad Shah said the offer was made because the state has world class football facilities with direct access not only to Kuala Lumpur but also to Singapore. "Penang

and Sarawak have already offered venues for several sporting events, so Johor is also interested in organising football by offering more than three venues. Among the venues are the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium here; as well as Tan Sri Hassan Yunus Stadium, Mount Austin Football Stadium and Pasir Gudang City Council Stadium in Johor Bahru," he said at a press conference outside the Johor State Legislative Assembly (DUN) sitting here today. He said the matter was pending the consent and advice of the Regent of Johor, Tunku Mahkota Ismail, including the cost of organising the sport.



# theSun Sports

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SCAN ME



Real Madrid's Thibaut Courtois (right) saves from Liverpool's Darwin Nunez (3rd right) during their Champions League match. - REUTERS/SPIC

## Sweet revenge

BY CARL MARKHAM

### Slot delighted as Liverpool finally beat Real 'pain' Madrid

**A**RNE SLOT was pleased to beat a Real Madrid team who have been a "pain in the a\*\*" for Liverpool for several years but played down the significance of the 2-0 victory.

After seven defeats and a draw - including losses in the 2018 and 2022 finals - the Reds gained their first success over their European nemesis since 2009 with goals from Alexis Mac Allister and Cody Gakpo.

Liverpool top the Champions League with five wins from five and are on the verge of securing a place in the last 16 but Slot said the win would mean much more if it came in the knockout stages.

"I wouldn't say it is the same as any other one because you know how special it is to play against a club that won this Champions League so many times and are the reigning champions

as well, dominated Europe for the last few years and were a pain in the ass for Liverpool many times as well," he told *TNT Sports*.

In his post-match press conference Slot added: "I think it is always good to win a game and especially a big game like this, you know you face so many quality players."

"This is such a strange and different setup in the Champions League it is difficult to judge how important these wins are.

"If we meet them in the last 16 and then we are able to beat them it would be a bigger statement."

Liverpool were well worth their long-awaited victory as they dominated throughout and kept generational talents Kylian Mbappe - who missed a penalty - and Jude

Bellingham quite for almost the entire game.

They could even afford for Mohamed Salah to miss a spot-kick of his own but it did not affect the outcome as Real were restricted to 37% possession and just three shots on target.

Asked whether his side were currently the best in Europe, Slot said: "The ones (players) here for a long time are almost used to playing a final, this team has always been there.

"The last two years have maybe been different but it was only a few adjustments and we are only five games in in a new format.

"We are happy where we are but not getting carried away by winning a group-stage game. This club wants more."

The only blemish on the night

were injuries to Ibrahima Konate and the excellent 21-year-old Conor Bradley, who kept Mbappe quiet and then provided the assist for Mac Allister's opener.

"I know where they have pain but how bad or good it is difficult to judge so close after the game but this happens," said Slot, who has just days to prepare his Premier League leaders for the visit of Manchester City.

"I am really hoping both are available but if not someone else has to step up."

On the performance of Bradley, deputising for Trent Alexander-Arnold who was on the bench after returning from a hamstring injury, the Liverpool boss added: "Conor did very well but I am totally not surprised, he showed it last season and this as well."

Real manager Carlo Ancelotti accepted they were beaten by the better team.

"I think that to be totally honest it is a fair result, Liverpool deserved to win," he said.

"I think Mbappe it is a difficult moment. We have to support him and give him our love, he will soon be fine.

"You don't need to blame him for missing penalties, people miss penalties, it happens a lot."

A third group-stage defeat for the first time in the club's history leaves them right on the cut line of 24th to progress to at least a playoff for the last 16 - but Ancelotti has no doubts.

"This game today wasn't a decisive game in terms of our league position," he said.

"It was always going to be tough to finish in the top eight, we have to make sure we are in the next 24 as high as we can and we will be there." - The Independent



'He has to want it'

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Disappointed Villans

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Adelia aiming high

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