

theSun

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Status of Malay language enshrined in Federal Constitution and use in official matters mandated, says expert.

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Call for syllabus review, clarification on new assessment plan

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WATER WOES ... A car is submerged in front of a house surrounded by floodwaters in Tumpat, Kelantan, yesterday following days of continuous rain. — AFP/IC

'No threat to Malay interests'

Govt policy on inclusivity will not jeopardise position of Rulers, Bumiputera privileges, Islam or status of Bahasa Melayu as official language of country, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

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Two flood-hit states to get extra RM50m

SETIU: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announced an additional immediate allocation yesterday for Kelantan and Terengganu, with RM25 million for each state, in the wake of the severe floods that have affected them.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said the funds, channelled through the Implementation Coordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department, would be used for repairing essential infrastructure such as roads and drainage systems, as well as raising road levels in Hulu Besut.

He also announced that the federal government has agreed to provide a special financial assistance of RM500 to over 14,000 civil servants in Terengganu, involving an allocation of RM7.4 million.

He made the announcements after visiting flood victims at a temporary evacuation centre at Sekolah Kebangsaan Kampung Telaga Papan in Setiu, which currently houses 269 evacuees.

Anwar had arrived at Sultan Mahmud International Airport in Kuala Terengganu at 10.25am yesterday to assess the flood situation in the state.

Earlier, the government allocated about RM50 million to assist those impacted by floods in Kelantan and Terengganu. — Bernama



Anwar meeting residents at an evacuation centre at Sekolah Kebangsaan Mangkok in Setiu yesterday. — BERNAMAPIIC

PM: Policy of **inclusivity** not at expense of Malay interests

➤ 'Constitutional guarantees in place, no compromise on Rulers position, Bumiputera rights, Islam or Bahasa Melayu'

KUALA LUMPUR: Concerns among Malays that government policies were becoming more inclusive and tolerant of others, potentially sacrificing their interests, are clearly misplaced, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"The government and I through our formidable coalition partners have made it very clear that constitutional guarantees are in place, that the position of the Malay rulers, Malay and Bumiputera privileges, Islam as the religion of the federation and Bahasa Melayu will never be compromised.

"In fact under this government, for the first time, when we took back Bandar Malaysia (project) from a foreign entity, we made it clear that there is a minimum portion of 20ha preserved as a Malay reserve, the first time since independence.

"This instils confidence in me because not

only Malays but also non-Malays, including my Cabinet, understand that this position and government policy make it very clear that we are here to be fair, to consider every single Malaysian as one great member of one great family," he said in his speech at the Malay College Old Boys Association annual dinner on Saturday.

He said while the government supports affirmative action, it does not believe in discrimination.

Anwar also said previous implementations of affirmative action policies, such as the Bumiputera policy, were marred by nepotism and the policy was abused to enrich families and party leaders at the expense of the Malay community as a whole.

He added that despite this, he supports a modernised version of affirmative action that is more transparent and inclusive, ensuring

that benefits are distributed more equitably to all Malays.

"That is why I believe we need to give this necessary message and exposure to the Malays, that even if we can preserve some elements of the economic policy, we cannot expect to succeed if we abandon the principle of inclusivity and transparency, and ensure that the policies benefit the vast majority of Malays, including the urban poor and those from rural areas."

Anwar highlighted the historical role of the Malay College as a provider of elite education, with ties to the colonial establishment and British values while maintaining its Malay identity, Bernama reported.

He said its tradition has not strayed from its roots, with its alumni making significant contributions to the nation's development while remaining true to Islam, Malay heritage and national values.

"This combination of tradition and modernity is critical as Malaysia faces 21st-century challenges such as digital transformation and energy transition."

India visit described as 'significant milestone'

NEW DELHI: India's External Affairs Ministry has described Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's recent official visit to India as a significant milestone in strengthening the partnership between the two nations.

Its spokesman Randhir Jaiswal said both countries are making substantial progress in areas such as the economy, defence, technology, investments, logistics and diaspora relations.

"This ongoing growth presents a strong foundation, and we are committed to further strengthening this partnership," he said at the 79th edition of the "Know India Programme" here for the Indian diaspora from Nov 25 to Dec 13.

Anwar's visit to India from Aug 19 to 21 was his first official trip to the country since assuming office as Malaysia's 10th prime minister in Nov 2022.

Randhir said recent editions of the programme has seen strong participation from Malaysians who have gained valuable experience from them.

"We have learnt a great deal from each other, sharing knowledge and best practices. Ultimately, it's about building a stronger, united family.

"We believe in the concept of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, that the world is one family, and we are all working towards that common goal."

A total of 27 Indian journalists from 11 countries, including Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, Indonesia, Fiji, Sri Lanka, Kenya and New Zealand, are participating in the 79th edition of the programme.

During his visit, Anwar highlighted that Malaysia secured potential trade deals worth RM8 billion in palm oil and palm oil based products, chemicals and chemical products, oil and gas as well as aircraft spare parts.

"Investment commitments, totalling RM4.5 billion were also secured from several sectors and companies in the South Asian nation," Anwar was quoted as saying.

In 2023, total trade between Malaysia and India amounted to RM72.31 billion. — Bernama

Timor-Leste premier here on official visit

KUALA LUMPUR: The Prime Minister of Timor-Leste Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao is on a three-day official visit to Malaysia, starting yesterday, marking his first visit since assuming office on July 1, 2023.

The Foreign Ministry said Xanana Gusmao would be accorded an official welcoming ceremony at the Perdana Putra Complex in Putrajaya, to be followed by a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"The two leaders are expected to take stock of the state of bilateral relations as well as discuss potential collaborations between the two countries," the ministry said in a statement.

It said trade and investment, the *halal* industry, education, capacity building and connectivity would be the main topics of discussion.

Both prime ministers will also exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual concern.

They will witness the signing of a land concession agreement pertaining to the gift of a parcel of land by the Timor-Leste government for the development of the Malaysian embassy's Chancery Complex in Dili.

The Foreign Ministry said Timor-Leste had decided to transfer the land outright to Malaysia as a sign of gratitude for Malaysia's continued assistance and contributions since the early days of Timor-Leste's independence.

It added that they would also witness the exchange of notes on a visa exemption arrangement, which will grant reciprocal visa exemptions to the citizens of both countries.

Anwar will host an official luncheon in honour of Xanana Gusmao and his delegation

at Seri Perdana in Putrajaya.

The Timor-Leste premier is also scheduled to have an audience with His Majesty the King of Malaysia Sultan Ibrahim.

In addition, he will deliver a public lecture titled "International Diplomacy in an Increasingly Fragmented and Fragile World" at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations.

"This official visit will further strengthen the relations enjoyed by both countries and demonstrate Malaysia's continued support for Timor-Leste's aspiration of becoming a full member of Asean."

In 2023, total bilateral trade between Malaysia and Timor-Leste was RM196.7 million, with total exports from Malaysia to Timor-Leste at RM195 million and total imports at RM1.7 million. — Bernama

Support for City Hall action on non-bilingual signboards

➤ Status of Malay language enshrined in Federal Constitution and use in official matters mandated, says expert

BY QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI
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PETALING JAYA: Bilingual signboards in Malaysia that prioritise the Malay language are in line with the Advertisement By-Laws (Federal Territories) 1982 and the Local Government Act 1976, and should not be questioned, said experts.

They were responding to Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, who disagreed with enforcement of bilingual signboard regulations by Kuala Lumpur City Hall, stating that it has caused dissatisfaction and created negative perceptions among tourists.

Tiong was reacting to a large-scale operation last Thursday in Segambut, Pudu and Jalan Silang in Kuala Lumpur targeting signboards that do not feature the Malay language or were not bilingual.

Linguistic expert Prof Emeritus Datuk Dr Nik Safiah Karim said efforts should focus on strengthening the role of the national

language rather than over-accommodating tourists as this is essential for preserving national identity and unity.

"Tourists generally understand and respect each country's rules and regulations regarding the use of their national language on signboards. As long as sufficient information is provided in English to aid navigation, there should be no issue," she said.

Nik Safiah added that the National Language Policy is clear and has been in place for a long time, yet it is still not being respected.

"I support signboards in the national language with some bilingual elements for the benefit of foreign tourists. I urge all parties to be aware of the policy and to respect it," she said.

UiTM Academy of Language Studies Centre for Malay Language Studies head Dr Rozaimah Rashidin said criticism by the minister regarding signboards does not need to be politicised.

She noted that every local authority has established laws and regulations, and such issues should be handled with care and tact.

"The status of the Malay language as the national and official language is enshrined in Article 152 of the Federal Constitution, which mandates its use in official matters, including public displays such as road signs, noticeboards and public information boards," she said.

Rozaimah explained that enforcement by City Hall aims to ensure business premises

adhere to the Advertisement By-Laws (Federal Territories) 1982 and the Local Government Act 1976.

"Are signboards emphasising the national language truly creating dissatisfaction and negative perceptions among tourists? Comprehensive surveys or studies considering tourist feedback are needed to substantiate such claims.

"The Malay language, along with local dialects, other languages and ethnic tongues, represents unique cultural elements that the ministry itself should highlight as part of Malaysia's tourism products, underscoring that 'language is the soul of the nation,'" she said.

She emphasised that the sovereignty of the Malay language must be upheld without sidelining other languages in the country.

"Current regulations do not negatively impact tourist perceptions of Malaysia's inclusiveness if enforced firmly. Prioritising the national language highlights the Malay language as a cultural symbol, offering tourists a meaningful and authentic experience that fosters deeper engagement with Malaysia's rich and diverse heritage."

Rozaimah said in cultural preservation, language is the most accessible asset to symbolise and sustain a community's heritage.

"Tourism industry players incorporating the Malay language and other local languages into their offerings adopt a smart strategy to preserve cultural heritage."



Rozaimah said the sovereignty of the Malay language must be upheld without sidelining other languages. — ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

Floods worsen, over 152,000 evacuees recorded

KUALA LUMPUR: Floods in several states have worsened, with Pahang becoming the latest to be affected.

The number of flood evacuees housed at temporary relief centres nationwide rose to 152,377 yesterday morning, up from 146,611 the previous night.

However, figures in Negeri Sembilan and Selangor have dropped slightly as of 8am.

In Kelantan, the number of flood evacuees at 284 centres increased to 96,743 individuals from 29,928 families, up from 93,158 on Saturday night.

According to the Social Welfare Department disaster info portal, Pasir Mas reported the highest number of evacuees at 29,370, followed by Tumpat with 17,680, Kota Bharu with 14,154, Pasir Puteh with 9,870 and Kuala Krai with 6,614.

Other affected areas include Bachok, with

6,952 evacuees, Machang with 6,098, Tanah Merah with 5,318, Jeli with 660 and Gua Musang with 36.

The Department of Irrigation and Drainage portal infobanjir.water.gov.my reported that five major rivers were above danger levels but were receding.

These include Sungai Kelantan at Kusial Baru (16.64m), Sungai Kelantan at Kusial (16.66m), Sungai Golok at Rantau Panjang (11.20m), Sungai Golok at Tumpat (4.22m) and Sungai Semerak in Pasir Puteh (3.65m).

In Terengganu, the number of evacuees rose to 43,281 yesterday morning, compared with 41,409 on Saturday night.

The figure includes 11,679 families sheltered at 305 centres in eight districts.

According to data from the State Disaster Management Committee, Besut had the highest number of evacuees at 16,084,

followed by Hulu Terengganu with 7,080, Dungun with 6,470, Setiu with 6,332, Kuala Terengganu with 2,940, Kuala Nerus with 2,307, Kemaman with 1,230 and Marang with 775.

A check on the InfoBanjir portal at 8.15am yesterday revealed that 12 river monitoring stations across four districts in Hulu Terengganu, three in Dungun, two in Kuala Nerus, and one each in Kemaman, Marang and Setiu had recorded danger levels.

Meanwhile, Pahang was the latest state to be hit by floods, with 15 centres opened in the Raub district to shelter 452 evacuees from 146 families.

The Raub District Disaster Management Committee Secretariat said in a statement the current number of evacuees in the centres is being updated as flood registration operations are ongoing. — Bernama

Retirement homes on wakaf land plan

JOHOR BAHRU: Kumpulan Wang Persaraan (Diperbadankan), or KWAP, is identifying potential wakaf (endowment) land for development to build independent retirement homes for low-income public sector pensioners.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the initiative would be carried out in collaboration with state Islamic Religious Councils, the Department of Wakaf, Zakat and Haji, and Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia.

"KWAP has been engaging with stakeholders to explore and identify land with the potential for independent home development. This effort helps the government optimise the use of existing wakaf land nationwide," he said during the MyPesara Carnival launch ceremony at Angsana Mall in Johor Bahru on Saturday.

His speech was read by Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan.

Also present were KWAP CEO Datuk Nik Amilzan Mohamed and chief investment officer Hazman Hilmi Sallahuiddin.

Anwar expressed confidence that the strategic cooperation of the agencies involved would ensure the successful implementation of the initiative, thereby supporting the social and economic security of senior citizens.

"KWAP's role extends beyond managing government pension payments. It also ensures that retirees, prospective retirees and stakeholders can enjoy a more sustainable and productive life after retirement," he said. — Bernama

CyberSecurity M'sia warns of scam calls

KUALA LUMPUR: CyberSecurity Malaysia (CSM) has warned the public to be vigilant against phone calls from individuals claiming to be its officials and requesting personal information.

In a statement yesterday, CSM said it does not make such calls and highlighted a rise in incidents involving irresponsible parties.

"The public is also advised to be cautious of calls claiming to be from the 'Security Control Unit' or 'Security'. These calls are not from our officers, and no such unit exists within CSM.

"We have never asked for personal or financial information from the public via phone calls. Therefore, we urge the public to remain vigilant," the statement said.

CSM further explained that callers often provide false reasons, such as alleging that the recipient's phone number has violated security laws, will be blocked for spreading false news, or is linked to scams, online gambling or unauthorised stock trading.

Individuals who receive such calls are encouraged to report them to cyber999@cybersecurity.my. — Bernama

TNB cuts power at several affected areas

KEMAMAN: Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) temporarily disconnected electricity supply at several areas around Marang and Kuala Terengganu yesterday to ensure public safety following heavy rain and flooding incidents.

In a Facebook post, TNB Careline said the affected areas included Kem Panji Alam in Marang, as well as Wisma TG Ramly and Tepoh in Kuala Terengganu.

"The public is reminded to avoid using electrical appliances and to ensure the main switch is turned off to prevent electric shocks. Your patience and cooperation are greatly appreciated," the statement read.

In Kedah, TNB shut down electricity supply at several areas around Alor Setar and Sik to ensure public safety. It announced that 11 areas in Alor Setar and one area in Sik have been without electricity since 1pm yesterday following the supply shutdown. — Bernama



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'Be transparent about new education assessment plan'

➤ Govt must play proactive role in providing clear explanation on move to shift from exam-focused learning to school-based evaluation, says expert

BY HARITH KAMAL
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PETALING JAYA: Reforming the education syllabus and providing clear and transparent explanations about the new assessment system must be the priority if the government shifts to school-based assessment instead of national exams, said Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia senior lecturer Dr Anuar Ahmad.

He was commenting on Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek's announcement in the Dewan Rakyat on Nov 26 that her ministry is moving away from exam-focused learning to reduce stress among students.

She said the ministry is shifting to enquiry, exploration, and holistic learning methods to support students' overall growth rather than focus solely on academic results.

The *Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah* was abolished in 2021, followed by the cancellation of the *Pentaksiran Tingkatan Tiga* in 2022. These reforms marked a shift away from

high-stakes exams and aimed to reduce the emphasis on tests.

Anuar said the current syllabus, which was drafted in 2012 and reviewed in 2017, remains exam-oriented. As a result, the existing assessment system does not fully align with the vision of a less exam-centric education system.

"Parents have not received a clear and reassuring explanation about how this new assessment will be implemented, making it difficult for them to trust and understand the change.

"They are not even clear about how the assessment will work. As long as this continues, they will question the changes. The ministry must play a proactive role in communicating the details to the public."

Anuar said while exams are still a necessary part of the education system, they should not be viewed solely as sources of stress. Instead, they should be balanced with other forms of assessments that support holistic development.

"Our education system still requires examinations, which may cause stress for children, but this stress is manageable."

Anuar advocated the concept of "eustress", which is a positive form of stress that helps students prepare, concentrate, and perform better.

"It is a short-term and manageable experience. After achieving their goals, students experience relief, happiness and enhanced self-esteem.

"However, stress becomes harmful when comparisons from parents, teachers, or schools, transform manageable stress into chronic stress, which leads to burnout, anxiety, and

diminished motivation. Effectively managing stress requires cooperation from all parties."

On April 25, a World Bank report titled "Bending Bamboo Shoots: Strengthening Foundation Skills" raised concerns about Malaysia's education system.

Despite significant government investment, Malaysian students are still performing poorly in comparison with their regional counterparts.

By the end of Year 5, only 58% of Malaysian pupils are proficient in reading, trailing behind neighbouring nations with similar economic standing.

This highlights the need for reforms that not only reduce stress but also improve academic outcomes.

In a related move, Sarawak recently announced that Year Six pupils will sit for the state's standardised assessments in Mathematics, Science and English starting next year.

This initiative aims to assess the progress of the dual-language programme and better prepare them for the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia.

Anuar praised Sarawak's move, signalling its effort to address gaps in the current education system while offering a more tailored, state-level approach to evaluating students.

He expressed hope that the education minister will address the issue effectively and emphasised the need for careful planning.

"Transitioning from an exam-oriented to a non-exam education system depends on the government's commitment and how well parents and educators collaborate for a more balanced and effective educational environment for students," he said.

Fully utilise govt assistance, Indian youths told

GEORGE TOWN: The Indian community, particularly its youth, should fully utilise the government assistance and funding available through the Malaysian Indian Transformation Unit (Mitra).

"Mitra, as a strategic partner, can serve as a bridge between the community and the government to ensure that every effort delivers maximum benefits," said Deputy Finance Minister Lim Hui Ying.

"I firmly believe that a brighter future for the Indian community can only be achieved through the cooperation of all parties," she said in her speech at the opening of the Malaysian Indian Youth Council (MIYC) annual general meeting yesterday.

She emphasised that MIYC plays a crucial role in implementing programmes that benefit Indian youth and the wider community.

She added that this is an opportunity to empower the younger generation with the skills, leadership, and confidence needed to become visionary leaders of the future.

Lim stressed that youths are a nation's most valuable asset, as they are the inheritors of leadership and drivers of innovation, social transformation, and economic development.

Meanwhile, Mitra has allocated RM95.48 million to implement 11 programmes aimed at improving the living standards of the Indian community.

"Mitra acts as a catalyst for the socio-economic advancement of the Indian community, with a particular focus on the B40 group.

"With support from Mitra, organisations like MIYC can conduct programmes designed to empower youths and uplift the community as a whole," she said. — Bernama

'Over 50% of Mara workforce are women'

KUCHING: Deputy Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Rubiah Wang said 51% of the entire Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara) workforce are women.

She added that the percentage showed that Mara was not lagging behind in answering to the call to empower women as contributors to the development of the country.

"Mara employment statistics as of Oct 10 this year show that there are 5,812 women from a total of 11,349 employees," she said during her speech at the Borneo zone Biznet Fiesta on Saturday.

She added that the federal government had announced several initiatives involving women, with RM650 million allocated under Budget 2025 to encourage women and youth in entrepreneurial fields to diversify in the business landscape. — Bernama



'LEGENDARY' ENCOUNTER ... A visitor admiring a display depicting the late Bruce Lee in action at the 6th Edition of Malaysia Hobby Expo at the Malaysia Agro Exposition Park in Serdang yesterday. — ADAM AMIR HAMZA/THESUN

Marine centre plan for Pulau Sembilan

LENGGONG: The Perak state government will set up a marine ecosystem research centre in Pulau Sembilan, Bagan Datuk here to strengthen conservation efforts against natural as well as man-made threats.

State Tourism, Industry, Investment and Corridor Development Committee chairman Loh Sze Yee said the proposal will be discussed with related agencies soon to ensure it is realised, after Raja di-Hilir Perak Raja Iskandar Dzurkarnain Sultan Idris Shah mooted the idea.

"The proposal will be fine-tuned to ensure it can play its role to help rehabilitate the island's ecosystem," he said after flagging off the 2024 "Rainforest Challenge" at Dataran Lenggong here on Saturday.

Loh said Pulau Sembilan was still closed to any tourism activity for the public as conservation work was still being conducted. — Bernama

Be vigilant for suicidal signs among schoolchildren: Social activist

KUALA LUMPUR: Parents, teachers and students must remain vigilant for warning signs of distress, and proactively offer empathetic support to those who may be contemplating suicide.

Befrienders KL patron Tan Sri Lee Lam Thee said they should encourage such individuals to seek help by speaking to a school counsellor or any adult they feel comfortable with, as it is crucial for them to have a safe space to express their emotional pain.

"The tragic deaths of teenagers, including school students, that have occurred in the past few weeks worry me. It is very painful to lose

these young lives. But we can't deny that in today's world, the level of stress is so high that it can be difficult to manage at times.

"Schoolchildren, especially, endure a tremendous level of stress regularly.

"These stressors include academic and peer pressure, relationship issues, bullying, and expectations from parents, teachers, and themselves.

"The burden of having to deal with such issues can adversely impact one's mental health and can even lead to suicide," he said in a statement.

Lee said it is important to notice some of the

warning signs, such as talking about or posting on social media about dying, experiencing unbearable emotional pain, showing feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, withdrawing and isolating from friends and family, and a sudden decline in academic performance.

Other signs include losing interest in things they enjoy, neglecting their appearance, significant changes in their eating and sleeping patterns, and saying goodbye or giving away prized possessions.

Lee stressed the importance of sharing helpline contacts, such as Befrienders KL and *Talian HEAL*, as they offer safe, judgment-

free spaces for individuals who need to seek support anonymously.

"Please keep an eye out for those who might be struggling mentally."

Lee urged individuals who are facing difficulties to reach out and talk to someone whom they trust, or contact a helpline.

"For free and confidential emotional support, contact Befrienders KL at 03-7627-2929 (24 hours) or via email at sam@befrienders.org.my.

Individuals can also contact the Health Ministry's *Talian HEAL* at 15555 (8am – midnight)," he added. — Bernama

Monsoon season turbulent time for street hawkers

➤ Vendors complain of downpours spoiling prepared food, storms damaging tents and delivering orders in heavy rain

BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
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KUALA LUMPUR: The monsoon season has brought persistent thunderstorms, heavy rains and strong winds to urban and rural areas, and the Meteorological Department's forecast predicts persistent rain and thunderstorms.

Street hawkers who depend on their roadside stalls for livelihood are greatly affected by the poor weather conditions.

Devi Bala Manugara, 42, who operates a food stall in Brickfields under a tent, said heavy rain often spoils the food she prepares for sale, leaving her with no choice but to discard it.

"Sometimes, we have to hold onto our tents to stop them from flying off in strong winds. It is tough but we have little choice," she said, expressing gratitude that despite the challenging weather, some customers still step out of their cars to buy her food.

Devi and her husband also deliver orders to their customers waiting in their vehicles, with one hand holding an umbrella and the other clutching the packed food.

"If a customer forgets something, we have to walk back in the rain to get it for them."

She said many customers do not realise how difficult it is for hawkers during the

monsoon season as, unlike restaurants with proper roofs, hawkers rely on temporary setups that can barely withstand the weather.

"It is not easy but we do our best to serve everyone, even in the rain, to earn an income."

Another stall owner, who operates in Shah Alam and asked to be known as Samsiah, 49, said one of her tents was seriously damaged during a recent rainstorm.

"When such things happen, I am unable to operate my stall, which means I have no income for a few days. I hope the government would give us a permanent place to operate from."

In Budget 2025, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said RM100 million would be allocated to build better facilities for hawkers and petty traders, aiming to enhance their working conditions by providing improved infrastructure and reducing rental costs.

It is also expected to provide them with much-needed relief by enabling the construction of sturdier stalls and creating safer, more weather-resistant trading spaces. For many, this could mean fewer disruptions to their businesses and a steadier income during challenging weather conditions.

Negeri Sembilan Night Market Hawkers Association president Datuk Lee Teong Chwee said if funds are available, they would be used to improve infrastructure, provide

financial aid or organise programmes to support hawkers during challenging periods.

"Associations traditionally do not provide direct financial aid or funding to hawkers. We might step in during emergencies, helping with financial assistance to help cover medical needs or education for the children of our members."

Hawkers operating in indoor markets managed by local councils have fixed rental rates that will not be reduced regardless of weather conditions whereas night market organisers sometimes offer reduced daily rental charges during bad weather as a small relief to help hawkers sustain operations.

Lee said hawkers must save money during good times to sustain themselves when times are bad.

"They work tirelessly, knowing that any day could bring challenges such as rain or wind. Personal savings are their backup."

He said one pressing issue for hawkers is the lack of proper shelter, and although covered stalls or waterproof canopies could provide much-needed protection, the association faces financial and logistical constraints in implementing such solutions.

"We need to collaborate with local councils to create sheltered spaces. However, progress has been slow due to limited interest from authorities."

"There are no programmes or efforts made to help hawkers promote their businesses through digital platforms. This is an area that holds great potential for future development as many hawkers could benefit from wider exposure and access to online customers."



Lee said a pressing issue for hawkers is the lack of proper shelter, and although covered stalls or waterproof canopies could provide much-needed protection, the association faces financial and logistical constraints in implementing such solutions. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN

Smuggled chicken, chillies seized at border

ALOR SETAR: The Quarantine and Inspection Service Department in Kedah foiled an attempt to bring in 23,000kg of frozen chicken worth RM245,640 at the Bukit Kayu Hitam cargo entrance here on Tuesday.

Its director Hisham Abu Bakar said a close inspection by an enforcement team revealed the dubious frozen chicken cuts that had an expiry date and certificate number that was different from the declared *halal* certificate.

"This is a serious violation according to Section 13 of the Malaysian Quarantine and Inspection Services Act 2011 (Act 728), which provides up to two years' jail, a maximum fine

of RM50,000, or both. All confiscated items have been detained for further action."

In a separate case, the department foiled an attempt to bring in 16,904kg of chillies without a 3P declaration as required by the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority at the entrance of Bukit Kayu Hitam on Saturday.

Hisham said this is a violation according to Act 728, and all goods have been seized for further investigation.

"The case is being probed under Section 11(1) of Act 728, which provides up to six years' jail, a maximum fine of RM100,000, or both."

He said strict action would be taken to ensure agricultural goods imported into the country, including plants, carcasses, fish and agricultural products, are free from the threat of harmful pests and diseases.

He said cooperation between enforcement agencies is key to ensuring compliance with the conditions and regulations set to protect the safety and health of the country's agricultural sector, Bernama reported.

"This continuous enforcement is a duty of the department to curb the illegal entry of agricultural goods that could threaten the ecosystem and health of the community."

Wheelchair-bound man, 83, evacuated from flood

PAKA: The worsening flood conditions and rapidly rising water levels in Kampung Pinang Merah here have forced families to take swift action to ensure the safety of their loved ones.

Anuar Ahmad, 48, had to wade through waist-deep water for about 100m in the rain with his family to carry his wheelchair-bound father-in-law Abdul Ghani, 83, to a car and evacuate him to a temporary relief centre at Sekolah Kebangsaan Kampung Nyior, located about 3km from their home.

"The water began rising at 9.30pm and kept increasing rapidly, which was unusual. We started packing our things at 7pm after receiving a warning about the high tide."

"My father-in-law suffers from gout and is paralysed. We requested to stay on the ground floor at the centre to make it easier for him."

He said they had remained vigilant as his father-in-law's house, where he lives with his wife Zaharah Jusoh, 75, had previously been flooded up to chest level.

A survey at the location last night revealed that villages near Sungai Paka were flooded waist-deep.

Resident Mohd Lafi Mohamad, 59, whose family made early preparations to evacuate, said the high tide this time was unusual as the water level began to rise rapidly after evening prayers. — Bernama

Clerk loses RM2.6m in investment scam

JOHOR BAHRU: A 49-year-old goldsmith shop clerk lost RM2.65 million after falling victim to an online investment scam in August that she came across on social media, said Johor police chief Datuk M. Kumar.

He said the victim was contacted by several individuals who provided information on the investment and promised returns of up to 9% of the invested amount.

"In mid-October, she made a trial investment of RM100,000 and received a profit of RM12,100, which convinced her that the investment was legitimate and profitable."

"Following this, she sought to earn more and, following instructions from the individuals, transferred RM2,656,600 from her and her spouse's bank accounts into multiple accounts between October and the end of last month."

He added that the victim did not receive further returns from the investment and was asked to make additional payments to receive the promised profits and initial capital. — Bernama

Farmer dies after falling from *petai* tree

SUNGAI PETANI: A farmer died after falling from a *petai* tree that he was climbing in a farm at Kampung Perlis in Tikam Batu near here on Saturday.

Kuala Muda police chief ACP Wan Azharuddin Wan Ismail said the victim, identified as Ahmad Yaakop, 60, was a farmer who sells *petai* for a living.

"The victim's brother (Abdul Rahman, 51) said while he was at home, villagers came to his house and informed him that they had found his brother lying unconscious under a *petai* tree."

"The victim's sister contacted an ambulance but the victim was confirmed dead by an officer from the Health Ministry at the scene."

He added that a check of the victim's health record found that the victim did not have any treatment records at the Sultan Abdul Halim Hospital.

"An examination found that the victim suffered various injuries to his head, wrists and legs." — Bernama

Campaign to promote local products

➤ Govt aims to boost support for plan, increase retail network partnerships and achieve world recognition

PUTRAJAYA: The Buy Malaysian Goods Campaign led by the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Ministry marks its 40th anniversary this year.

Its Business Development Division director Adiratno Che Ani, said the campaign, which began in 1984, will continue to be strengthened as a testament to the government's commitment to instilling patriotism among Malaysians, encouraging them to support and purchase local products.

He added that the ministry welcomes the initiatives of strategic partners in running the campaign at business premises to promote and market their products.

"We must strive to elevate local brands,

making them comparable to renowned international brands. This is not merely about purchasing products but also about reinforcing national identity and nurturing pride in locally produced goods."

Adiratno said with sustained support, local products could not only thrive locally but also gain recognition on the global stage.

"This initiative would also create significant opportunities for local entrepreneurs, enhance industry competitiveness and generate more employment opportunities."

"Only through collective efforts will Malaysian made products be able to compete with global brands, positioning our country as a hub of excellence in innovation, quality and competitiveness."

Adiratno also said the ministry aims to ensure the campaign is widely implemented and continues to resonate with Malaysians as it encourages them to prioritise and support local brands and services with every purchase, in line with the campaign's tagline, *#BarangBaikBarang Kita*.

He said the quality of Malaysian products is continually being improved to match international standards, allowing consumers to appreciate their uniqueness and quality while

stimulating the domestic economy and balancing global economic pressures.

He said the event this year introduces various strategic initiatives, such as strengthening local products in the retail industry through partnerships between the ministry and retail networks, *Bernama* reported.

Adiratno revealed that the ministry promotes the campaign through online marketplaces to ensure local products are continuously boosted and expanded via companies managing these platforms.

"We are also working to elevate the local fashion industry through themed sales initiatives involving local designers. For children, we have collaborated with digital animation media to promote the campaign among young consumers strategically," he said, adding that the ministry organised a carnival in four states this year, with Malacca being the next destination, in conjunction with Visit Malacca Year, to promote the campaign.

The South Zone Carnival at Dataran Sejarah in Ayer Keroh from Dec 6 to 8 will serve as a platform for local entrepreneurs nationwide to showcase their products.

Adiratno said the campaign has received

encouraging support from strategic partners and industry players, including hypermarkets, supermarkets and convenience stores, contributing to its success.

"This year, the ministry has collaborated with 18 strategic partners to implement the local product empowerment initiative under the local retail industry, which forms a key part of this campaign."

He said the initiative includes various strategies to raise awareness of Malaysian products in the local market and improve their accessibility at selected supermarket chains, such as featuring special display racks to highlight their exclusivity.

Malaysians will also enjoy vouchers or discounts for every purchase of local products.

Adiratno said the ministry is collaborating with major supermarket chains with overseas branches to promote Malaysian products abroad through the "Local to Global Retail" initiative.

"This year, the initiative was successfully implemented in Dubai, Japan and Thailand. We can see that it has helped expand the potential of local goods in international markets, boosted the national economy and introduced Malaysian products to a global audience."

Fancy dress theme at fun run

KUALA LUMPUR: Stylishly dressed in a flight attendant's uniform and pulling a suitcase, many would have assumed the woman was headed to the airport to report for duty.

However, Hanim Joufry, 43, had no flight to catch. Instead, she was participating in the "Railway to See Malaysia Fun Run 2024" held on Saturday, organised by Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd (KTMB).

"In line with the tourism-themed concept, I thought the flight attendant uniform could make for a unique and distinctive costume as a participant. Previously, I've worn superhero costumes for fun runs," she told *Bernama* after completing the event, which attracted over 2,000 participants.

Hanim, a fitness trainer, woke up at 5am to prepare for the run, aiming to liven up the atmosphere and create memories not only for herself but for other participants as well.

Another runner, who called himself "Bro Samurai", came dressed as a Japanese swordsman warrior. Looking all set to head into

battle, he completed the run with a wooden sword prop in hand.

"This fun run is a medium for me to wear costumes like this. My aim is more about having fun rather than focusing on a specific running pace," he said, adding that these activities also double as content for social media where he wants to create a unique identity for himself.

Jamy Johan, 52, who also participated in the run, wore a *batik kebaya*, saying her traditional costume symbolises a woman's strength and elegance as well as the struggles she endures.

"Through this attire, I want to call on everyone to stop violence against women. Every woman deserves to live peacefully and be respected, without feeling afraid or threatened."

There were also participants who came dressed in colourful beach holiday-inspired outfits and *batik sarong*.

KTMB's goal in organising the event was to promote a healthy lifestyle as well as boost the momentum for the next Visit Malaysia Year in 2026. — *Bernama*



Some of the participants at the event posing with Bro Samurai. — *BERNAMAPIC*

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Peace is priceless, says Taiwan president

➤ Hawaii red carpet welcome for Lai

HONOLULU: War has no winners and peace is priceless, Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said on Saturday in Hawaii after visiting a memorial to the attack on Pearl Harbor on a trip to the United States that has angered Beijing.

Lai is making a sensitive two-day trip to Hawaii that is officially only a stopover on the way to three Pacific island nations that maintain formal ties with Taiwan, which China claims as its territory.

Speaking to members of the overseas Taiwan community and Hawaiian politicians, including members of Congress Ed Case and Jill Tokuda, Lai referred to his visit to the *USS Arizona Memorial* earlier in the day and laid a wreath in memory of those who died in the 1941 Japanese attack.

"Our visit to the memorial in particular reminds us of the importance of ensuring peace. Peace is priceless and war has no winner. We have to fight - fight together - to prevent war," Lai said in English.

As Lai was attending the event, China said it had complained to Washington for arranging for his transit through US territory, while vowing "resolute countermeasures" against a potential arms sale to Taiwan that the US announced hours before Lai started his trip.

China's Foreign Ministry lodged "stern representations" over the transit, said China's Taiwan Affairs Office.

"We are firmly opposed to official exchanges between the United States and Taiwan, and we are firmly opposed to the 'transit' of leaders of the Taiwan region to the United



Lai with Bishop Museum director Dee Jay Mailer after presenting her with a souvenir in Honolulu. - AFP/IC

States under any name and for any reason," it said.

Earlier, he was given the "red carpet treatment" on the tarmac of Honolulu's international airport, according to his office, which said it was the first time a Taiwanese president had been given such a welcome.

He was met by Ingrid Larson, managing director in Washington of the American Institute in Taiwan, Hawaii Governor Josh Green and others.

At every turn, Lai was presented with garlands of bright coloured flowers or leaves known as *leis*, greetings of "aloha", and other Hawaiian gifts.

Security sources said China could launch a new round of war games

around Taiwan in response to his visit, his first overseas trip since assuming office in May.

In his speech, Lai switched to Taiwanese, also known as Hokkien, and said by uniting together, all difficulties could be overcome.

"Taiwan's democracy can become a model for the international community," he said.

Beijing opposes any international recognition of Taiwan and its claim to be a sovereign state and especially bristles at official contact between the island and the United States.

Like most countries, Washington does not recognise Taiwan diplomatically but is its most important backer and biggest supplier of arms.

Taiwanese government officials

have previously stopped over on US soil during visits to the Pacific or Latin America, angering China, which has sometimes responded with military drills around the island.

In a response to news of Lai's trip on Thursday, Wu Qian, a spokesperson for China's Defence Ministry said: "We firmly oppose official interaction with China's Taiwan region in any form" and vowed to "resolutely crush" any attempts for Taiwan independence.

Lai's trip follows the US approval on Friday of a proposed sale to Taiwan of spare parts for F-16s and radar systems, as well as communications equipment, in deals valued at US\$385 million (RM1.7 billion). - Reuters/AFP

Philippine eagle hatchling dies in conservation setback

MANILA: A Philippine eagle chick hatched via artificial insemination has died, an avian conservation foundation has announced, in a fresh setback for one of the world's largest and most critically endangered raptors.

Habitat loss and ruthless hunting have caused a rapid decline in the number of Philippine eagles, the national bird of the archipelago country.

The hatching of "Chick Number 30" last month briefly stirred hope that science and conservation could save the forest-dwelling raptor species, but expectations were soon dashed.

"This heartbreaking loss is a solemn reminder of how delicate chick-rearing can be and how critically endangered species are particularly vulnerable," the Philippine Eagle Foundation said on its website.

A product of artificial insemination, the 17-day-old male chick, which died on Friday, had been the first successful hatchling in the new facility.

Complications from a condition known as "yolk sac retention" were the possible cause of death, it said.

The condition, common in poultry farms, indicates the entry of bacteria through incubating eggshells, or chick exposure to bacteria after hatching.

Philippine eagles, known for their sumptuous head plumage and a 2m wingspan, are difficult to mate, with some even killing unwanted suitors.

There are only 392 pairs of the eagles remaining in the wild, with just 30 born in captivity.

The organisation's goal is to release the eagles back into the wild, but it has not once succeeded in its 37 years of operation.

Many Philippine eagles have died after being shot or electrocuted while perched on power lines.

Each pair needs at least 4,000ha of forest to hunt flying lemurs, palm civets, flying squirrels and monkeys.

While underweight, the latest chick had initially displayed normal behaviour and feeding patterns until Tuesday, when it began to exhibit laboured breathing and sneezing, the foundation said.

"Of all the chicks that they've successfully hatched and raised, this is the first time that the (foundation) breeding team had a case of yolk sac retention, which is usually linked to infection or other causes," Bayani Vandenbroeck, who conducted the necropsy, was quoted as saying.

"Strict hygiene and management protocols were followed, so we did not expect this at all, but we will probe where else we can improve." - AFP

Manila to get radar systems under Japan aid programme

TOKYO: Japan plans to send defence equipment to the Philippines, Indonesia, Mongolia and Djibouti under its Official Security Assistance (OSA) initiative, aimed at strengthening the defence capacities of partner countries, Kyodo news agency reported.

A source said the four countries have been selected as recipients of

OSA grant aid for fiscal 2024, with Japan allocating ¥5 billion (RM147 million) in its initial budget for the current fiscal year.

Launched in April 2023, the OSA programme seeks to enhance the security capabilities of recipient nations in line with Japan's vision for regional peace and stability.

The Philippines is expected to

receive radar systems. Indonesia and Djibouti will receive vessels to bolster maritime security, while Mongolia will be provided with air traffic control equipment to enhance its infrastructure, according to the source.

The Japanese government has previously supported the Philippines with coastal surveillance radar

systems, alongside assistance provided to Malaysia, Bangladesh and Fiji in fiscal 2023.

Japan's commitment to fostering security and cooperation underscores its efforts to address shared challenges and strengthen ties with nations across the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. - Bernama

Thailand protests Myanmar navy firing on fishing boats

BANGKOK: Thailand protested an incident involving Myanmar's navy firing on Thai fishing vessels, Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra said, after one fisherman drowned, two were injured and dozens detained.

Shinawatra questioned whether the fishing boats had intruded into Myanmar territorial waters when Myanmar's navy opened fire on Saturday.

The Thai Defence Ministry earlier said two of 15 Thai fishing vessels were fired on when they were 7.4km to 10.6km inside Myanmar's territorial waters near the southern Thai province of Ranong.

"It is inconclusive," Shinawatra said, when asked by reporters whether Thai fishing boats encroached on Myanmar's territorial waters.

"We don't support violence

whatever the circumstances," she said, adding Thailand was seeking more details on the incident and a quick release of four Thai nationals who were among the 31 detained.

Myanmar spokespersons did not immediately respond to a telephone request for comment.

Thai Defence Minister Phumtham Wechayachai said a letter protesting against the use of force was sent to

Myanmar through a local border mechanism, demanding clear details about what happened and a quick return of the seized Thai boat and detained crew.

Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa issued a letter of concern over the incident to the Myanmar government and summoned the Myanmar ambassador for a meeting, seeking

clarification about what happened and a quick release of the four Thai nationals.

Thai Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nikorndej Balankura said the ministry was evaluating whether any violations of international law had taken place.

Myanmar has been in crisis since 2021 when the military seized power. - Reuters



Oil-producing nations oppose plastic output caps

➤ Talks risk collapse as treaty deadline looms

BUSAN: Doubts rose on sealing a global treaty to curb plastic pollution on the last day of scheduled talks, as over 100 countries pushed to cap production while a handful of oil-producing countries wanted to focus only on plastic waste.

The fifth and final UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting to yield a legally binding global treaty was set to wrap up in Busan yesterday, but a final plenary session had not been held as of 4pm (3pm in Malaysia).

A treaty could be the most significant deal relating to environmental protection since the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Countries remained far apart yesterday on the basic scope of the treaty. An option proposed by Panama, backed by over 100 countries, would create a path for a global

plastic production reduction target, while another proposal did not include production caps.

The fault line was apparent in a revised document released yesterday by the chair of the meeting, Luis Vayas Valdivieso, which could form the basis of a treaty but remained riddled with many options on the most divisive issues: capping plastic production, managing plastic products and chemicals of concern, and financing to help developing countries implement the treaty.

Some negotiators and environmental groups observing the talks expressed profound disappointment.

"If you're calling for a high, ambitious treaty, it means that (it's) calling for obligations, commitments on the part of all parties," said Dr Sam Adu-Kumi, lead negotiator for Ghana.

"If there was no such ambitious treaty, 'it means that we have to go and come back another time, not Busan but maybe somewhere else,' Adu-Kumi said.

A smaller number of petrochemical-

producing nations such as Saudi Arabia have strongly opposed efforts to target plastic production and have tried to use procedural tactics to delay negotiations.

China, the United States, India, South Korea and Saudi Arabia were the top five primary polymer producing nations last year, according to data provider Eunomia.

"If you're not contributing constructively, and if you're not trying to join us in having an ambitious treaty ... then please get out," said Fiji's chief negotiator Sivendra Michael.

Plastic production is on track to triple by 2050, and microplastics have been found in air, fresh produce and human breast milk.

Chemicals of concern in plastics include more than 3,200 found according to a 2023 UN Environment Programme report, which said women and children were particularly susceptible to their toxicity.

"If it (the text) does not have the provisions of what we expect from an ambitious treaty, then we will ... go back to the same process pushing for an ambitious treaty," Sivendra said. - Reuters

Adani committed to 'regulatory compliance'

BENGALURU: Indian industrialist Gautam Adani said "attacks" on his company made it "stronger".

A Nov 20 bombshell indictment in New York accused Adani and his subordinates of misleading investors as part of a bribery scheme.

Addressing the allegations for the first time, the 62-year-old tycoon said his conglomerate was committed to "world-class regulatory compliance".

"What I can tell you is that every attack makes us stronger and every obstacle becomes a stepping stone for a more resilient Adani Group," he said at an awards ceremony in Jaipur.

Adani is suspected of having participated in a US\$250 million (RM1.1 billion) scheme to bribe Indian officials for lucrative solar energy supply contracts.

The billionaire, however, said nobody from his company had been charged with any violation of corruption laws or "any conspiracy to obstruct justice".

The US Justice Department said Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani, and one other official were charged "with conspiracies to commit securities and wire fraud and substantive securities fraud".

Five others were charged "with conspiracy to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act", the department said.

Adani's company said last week it had suffered a loss of nearly US\$55 billion in market capitalisation across its 11 listed companies.

With a business empire spanning coal, airports, cement and media, Adani Group has weathered previous corporate fraud allegations, suffering a similar stock rout last year.

The conglomerate saw US\$150 billion wiped from its market value in 2023 after a report by short-seller Hindenburg Research accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud.

Critics have accused Adani of improperly benefiting from his close relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. - AFP

HK grants trial runs of Baidu robo vehicles

BEIJING: Baidu has received a licence to test autonomous vehicles with its Apollo Go robotaxi service in Hong Kong as it expands its footprint outside the Chinese mainland.

Baidu Apollo International Ltd was approved to conduct trials for 10 autonomous vehicles in North Lantau, according to a statement released by Hong Kong Transport Department.

The licence will be valid from Dec 9, 2024 to Dec 8, 2029, with only one self-driving car operating on specified road sections at a time in its first phase, according to the statement.

During the trial, a backup operator stationed on board will take over control of the vehicle if necessary, it said.

The Hong Kong government has actively promoted autonomous vehicles since at least 2017, but has only recently allowed their wider trials, including on public roads, following the rollout of a new legislation in March.

This is the first pilot licence given out by the Hong Kong government since the introduction of the new regulatory regime.

It is also Baidu's first known permit for autonomous vehicle testing outside mainland China.

The company's robotaxi service Apollo Go operates in Chinese cities, with the largest fleet, of more than 400 vehicles, in Wuhan.

An Apollo Go spokesperson said: "Apollo Go looks forward to bringing the benefit of AI and autonomous driving technology to more countries and regions. This marks an important milestone in our journey towards globalisation."

As competition to commercialise autonomous vehicles heats up, Baidu plans to launch its robotaxi service outside mainland China, including in Hong Kong, Singapore and the Middle East, the *Wall Street Journal* reported last month. - Reuters



NATURE'S FURY ... Fishermen secure their boats at Marina Beach amid heavy winds and rainfall in Chennai on Saturday ahead of the landfall of cyclone Fengal in Tamil Nadu. Three people were electrocuted as a result of the storm in the city. - AFP/PPIC

Australia PM willing to meet Musk over social media ban

SYDNEY: Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday that criticism by Elon Musk of Australia's social media ban on children under 16 was the X owner pushing an agenda for the social platform, while indicating he was open to talk to the billionaire about the ban, legislated last week.

Australia approved the social media ban for children late on Thursday after an emotive debate that has gripped the nation, setting a benchmark for jurisdictions around the world with one of the toughest regulations targeting Big Tech.

The ban, which the centre-left government says is world-leading, could strain Australia's

relationship with key ally the United States, where Musk, a central figure in the administration of president-elect Donald Trump, said in a post this month it seemed a "backdoor way to control access to the Internet by all Australians".

"We'll talk to anyone," Albanese said, when asked yesterday if he was prepared to talk to Musk about the social media ban.

"With regard to Elon Musk, he has an agenda, he's entitled to push that as the owner of X," Albanese said in remarks on Australian Broadcasting Corp television.

The law forces tech giants from Instagram and Facebook owner Meta, to TikTok to stop

minors logging in or face fines of up to A\$49.5 million (RM143 million). A trial of enforcement methods starts in January with the ban to take effect in a year.

"We are determined to get this done, the parliament has overwhelmingly passed this legislation," Albanese told the broadcaster.

X did not reply to a request for comment outside of business hours.

Albanese's Labor party won crucial support from the opposition conservatives for the Bill that was fast-tracked through the country's parliament as part of 31 Bills pushed through in a chaotic final day of parliament for the year. - Reuters

Hamas releases video of US-Israeli hostage

TEL AVIV: Hamas released a video of an Israeli-American hostage on Saturday, in which he pleads for US president-elect Donald Trump to secure his release.

Yael Alexander, the mother of hostage Edan Alexander, said she was shaken by the video, which showed the 20-year-old captive looking pale, seated in a dark space against a wall. He identified himself and addressed his family, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Trump.

The video "gives us hope, but it also shows how difficult it is for Edan and for the other hostages, and how much they are crying out and praying for us to rescue them", his mother said at a Tel Aviv rally calling for their release.

"My dear, beloved Edan, we miss you painfully," she said before she called on Israel's leaders to end the war in Gaza and make a deal with Hamas to release the hostages.

Netanyahu said in a statement that the video was cruel psychological warfare and that he had told Alexander's family in a phone call that Israel was working tirelessly to bring the hostages home. Trump's transition team could not be immediately reached for comment. Alexander, a soldier at the time of his abduction, was taken to Gaza on Oct 7, 2023.

Around half of the 101 foreign and Israeli hostages still held incommunicado in Gaza are believed to be alive.

Hamas leaders were expected to arrive in Cairo on Saturday for ceasefire talks with Egyptian officials to explore ways to reach a deal that could secure the release of hostages in return for Palestinian prisoners. The fresh bid comes after Washington said this week it was reviving efforts toward that goal.

The Biden administration, in office until Trump's Jan 20 inauguration, said it is working "around the clock" to secure the release of US citizens held hostage.

"We have a critical opportunity to conclude the deal to release the hostages, stop the war and increase humanitarian assistance into Gaza. This deal is on the table now," said White House National Security Council spokesperson Sean Savett. — Reuters

BRIEFS PUTIN APPROVES MILITARY FOCUSED BUDGET

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has approved a military focused budget for 2025-2027, a document published on the official Legal Acts website showed yesterday. The state budget for next year includes a 25% hike in military spending but will be classified confidential, with almost a third of all spending closed to public scrutiny. The government has acknowledged that the needs of its special military operation in Ukraine and support for the military will remain the priority along with social needs and technological development. The government has presented the draft budget as "balanced", with the deficit falling to 0.5% against this year's projected deficit of 1.7% and state debt remaining below the 20% mark for the next three years. — Reuters

NEW EU CHIEFS VISIT KYIV ON FIRST DAY OF MANDATE

KYIV: The EU's new top diplomat Kaja Kallas and head of the European Council Antonio Costa arrived in Kyiv yesterday in a symbolic show of support for Ukraine on their first day in office. "We came to give a clear message that we stand with Ukraine, and we continue to give our full support," Costa said. The European Union's new leadership team is keen to demonstrate it remains firm on backing Kyiv at a perilous moment for Ukraine nearly three years into its fight against Russia's special military operation. As winter begins, Russia has unleashed barrages against Ukraine's power grid and on the frontline, Kyiv's fatigued forces are losing ground. Kallas said: "The situation in Ukraine is very, very grave. But it's clear that it comes at a very high cost for Russia as well." — AFP



Rescuers push a fire truck in the Shujaiyah neighbourhood in Gaza City on Saturday. — AFP/IC

Airstrikes kill two aid workers

➤ Military claims participant in Oct 7 attack among dead

CAIRO: Two aid workers were killed in Israeli airstrikes in Gaza on Saturday, with Israel saying it had killed a gunman who took part in the Oct 7, 2023 attacks on Israel and who it said was employed by a US-based charity.

The first was a World Central Kitchen member, who was hit in a vehicle in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. The Israeli military said that he had taken part in the attack on Kibbutz Nir Oz in southern Israel and was under surveillance but did not offer any evidence.

The family of the man, Ahed Azmi Qdeih, said the Israeli allegations were false and meant to justify his unlawful killing. They said he was an engineer who dedicated his life to charitable work.

World Central Kitchen confirmed the airstrike and said it had no knowledge about an employee involved in the Oct 7, 2023 attack.

"We are heartbroken to share that a vehicle carrying World Central Kitchen colleagues

was hit by an Israeli airstrike in Gaza. We have no knowledge that any individual in the vehicle had alleged ties to the Oct 7 attack," it said in a statement posted on X.

The charity group said it was pausing operations in Gaza, adding that it was working with incomplete information and was urgently seeking more details. The official Palestinian news agency WAFA reported that three employees of the charity were killed in the strike, with medics saying a total of five people were killed.

Later in the day, international aid agency Save the Children also said in a statement that a 39-year-old staffer, who it identified as Ahmad Faisal Isleem Al-Qadi, was killed in an airstrike in Khan Younis.

It was unclear if the two men were killed in the same strike. Israel has not immediately commented on Save the Children's statement.

"There are not strong enough words to express the grief and outrage we feel at the loss of Ahmad in an Israeli airstrike. He was a valued member of our team and loved by all who met him," said Inger Ashing, the Save the Children chief executive.

In another attack in Khan Younis, medics said at least nine Palestinians were killed

when an Israeli airstrike hit a car near a crowd receiving flour, a vehicle that was used by security personnel tasked with overseeing aid deliveries into Gaza.

The Israeli military says it does not target civilians and accuses Hamas of operating from civilian facilities and using Gaza's population as human shields, which the group denies.

At least 32 Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes across the enclave, Gaza medics said, including seven killed in a strike on a house in central Gaza City, according to Gaza officials.

Hamas leaders were expected to arrive in Cairo on Saturday for ceasefire talks with Egyptian officials, days after Israel and Hezbollah agreed to a ceasefire in Lebanon, two officials of the group told Reuters.

The visit is the first since the United States announced earlier this week it would revive efforts in collaboration with Qatar, Egypt and Turkiye to negotiate a ceasefire in Gaza.

The Hamas delegation is expected to meet Egyptian security officials to explore ways to reach a ceasefire deal with Israel that could secure the release of hostages.

Progress before now has been limited in a series of on-off talks over months. — Reuters

Russia conducts strikes in support of Syrian army

AMMAN: The Syrian army said on Saturday dozens of its soldiers had been killed in a major attack led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham rebels who swept into the city of Aleppo, forcing the army to redeploy in the biggest challenge to President Bashar al-Assad in years.

Russia's Defence Ministry said its air force had carried out strikes on the rebels. The strikes followed what was the boldest rebel assault for years in a civil war where front lines had largely been frozen since 2020.

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, or HTS, once known as the Nusra Front, is designated a terrorist group by the US, Russia, Turkiye and other countries.

In Washington, the White House National Security Council (NSC) said it was monitoring the situation and had been in contact with regional capitals over the last 48 hours.

NSC spokesperson Sean Savett said Syria's refusal to engage in a political process and its reliance on Russia and Iran had "created the

conditions now unfolding, including the collapse of government lines in northwest Syria".

Savett said the US had nothing to do with the offensive led by "a terrorist organisation" and "urged de-escalation ... and a serious and credible political process" under the 2015 UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which laid out steps for a ceasefire and political transition.

The war, which has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced many millions, has ground on since 2011 with no formal end, although most major fighting halted years ago after Iran and Russia helped Assad's government win control of most land and all major cities.

Aleppo had been firmly held by the government since a 2016 victory, one of the war's major turning points, when Russian-backed Syrian forces besieged and laid waste to rebel-held eastern areas of what had been the country's largest city.

Acknowledging the rebel advance, the Syrian army command said insurgents had entered much of Aleppo.

After the army said it was preparing a counterattack, airstrikes targeted rebel gatherings and convoys in the city, the pro-Damascus newspaper *al-Watan* reported. One strike caused casualties in Aleppo's Basel square, a resident said.

The state-run Russian Centre for the Reconciliation of the Enemy Parties in Syria said missile and bomb strikes against the rebels had targeted "militant concentrations, command posts, depots and artillery positions" in Aleppo and Idlib provinces.

It claimed about 300 rebel fighters had been killed.

Images filmed on Saturday showed people posing for photos on a toppled statue of Basil al-Assad, late brother of the president, while fighters zipped around the city in trucks and milled around in the streets. — Reuters



Shining light on violence against men

THE International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women has become a global platform to advocate for the protection and empowerment of women who face abuse.



These efforts are crucial as women continue to endure violence across various societies. However, while the focus on women's safety is vital, it is time to confront a parallel yet under-recognised issue: violence against men.

A close friend of mine in his sixties offers a stark illustration of this hidden problem. Living in a remote part of North India, he endures frequent physical abuse from his wife. For years, he avoided wearing short-sleeved shirts, fearing that the bruises on his arms would betray his desire for privacy.

Outwardly, his marriage appears ordinary but behind closed doors, he battles a silent torment, a story that reflects the plight of many men trapped in abusive relationships.

Violence against men spans physical, emotional and psychological abuse. Yet, societal norms often silence these victims. Men are conditioned to embody strength and stoicism, making it difficult for them to seek help. Admitting to being a victim of abuse is perceived as a threat to their masculinity, leaving them to suffer in isolation.

Statistics reveal the magnitude of this issue. The World Health Organisation estimates that one in three men globally experiences some form of abuse during their lifetime.

In the United Kingdom, the Crime Survey for England and Wales reported 700,000 male victims of domestic violence in 2022 - accounting for nearly one-third of all cases.

Across the Atlantic, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence in the United States notes that one in four men has experienced intimate partner violence.

Closer to home, Malaysia recorded nearly 1,500 cases of reported violence against men in 2023, according to a study by a local university. This figure is a result of numbers that had risen since 2015. And what about unreported cases?

Although these numbers are significantly

lower than those for women, they highlight the need to include men in discussions about abuse and violence.

Cultural norms and legal systems exacerbate the challenges male victims face. In countries like India, activists point to instances where laws intended to protect women have been misused, leaving men with few avenues for justice.

South Korea and Japan illustrate how cultural expectations demand that men remain stoic, compounding their silence.

Meanwhile, in Western nations, such as Canada and Australia, psychological abuse, including gaslighting, coercive control and financial manipulation, remains poorly documented despite its profound impact on mental health.

Psychological abuse is particularly insidious. While physical violence is often visible, psychological tactics such as emotional manipulation, threats and coercion can leave deep scars that go unnoticed.

Men subjected to such abuse frequently struggle with anxiety, depression and self-doubt, yet societal misconceptions about what constitutes abuse prevent them from receiving the support they need.

The traditional view of masculinity plays a significant role in perpetuating this silence. Men are socialised to be protectors and providers, roles that discourage them from admitting vulnerability.

Seeking help is often seen as a sign of weakness, reinforcing the stigma and isolating victims further. Even when men do speak out, they often encounter a lack of resources or support systems tailored to their needs.

Legal frameworks, though vital for safeguarding women, frequently fail to address male victimisation adequately, leaving them with limited options.

Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach. Firstly, public awareness campaigns must challenge outdated stereotypes about masculinity, encouraging men to come forward without fear of judgement. These campaigns should make it clear that vulnerability is a human

trait, not a weakness.

Secondly, legal systems need to evolve to ensure gender-neutral protections. Laws designed to combat domestic violence should consider the experiences of all victims, regardless of gender. This includes providing accessible reporting mechanisms, fair investigations and support structures for male victims.

Mental health services play a critical role in breaking the cycle of silence. Dedicated helplines and counselling services are essential. These resources can provide a safe space for men to share their experiences and receive the emotional support they need.

Education is another powerful tool. By incorporating discussions about abuse and gender-neutral support into school curricula, we can nurture a generation that recognises abuse as a human issue. Teaching young people to reject harmful stereotypes about gender roles can help create a more compassionate society.

Recognising violence against men does not detract from the critical work being done to address violence against women. Instead, it broadens our understanding of abuse as a universal problem. This perspective allows us to address the root causes of violence and create inclusive solutions.

As we honour the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we must also commit to recognising and addressing the silent struggles of male victims. Violence, whether physical, emotional or psychological, is a human issue.

By acknowledging the reality of male victimisation and taking concrete steps to address it, we can ensure that every individual's safety and dignity are prioritised.

Let us strive for a future where no one suffers in silence, and where every cry for help is met with compassion and action.

Dr Bhavani Krishna Iyer holds a doctorate in English literature. Her professional background encompasses teaching, journalism and public relations. She is currently pursuing a second master's degree in counselling. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

LETTERS letters@thesundaily.com

Call for safer and less stressful toll-paying experience

It is not uncommon to see drivers frantically switching lanes at the last minute on our toll roads, often resulting in dangerous manoeuvres and road rage incidents.

While there are various reasons for this behaviour, such as choosing shorter queues, a significant contributor is the inconsistent placement of RFID lanes and the current deficiencies in the system setup.

The inconsistent placement of RFID lanes forces drivers to make hasty decisions, often leading to dangerous lane changes and increased risk of accidents. It is disheartening to witness drivers honking and gesturing angrily as they navigate through a maze of lanes.

Furthermore, the current deficiencies in the RFID system setup, such as frequent signal dropouts and slow read times, exacerbate traffic congestion and contribute to unnecessary delays. This not only wastes valuable time but also adds to the frustration and stress experienced by road users.

To improve the situation, toll operators should prioritise the safety and convenience of road users by:

- **Standardising lane configurations:** Implementing a consistent and predictable lane layout can reduce confusion and minimise the need for dangerous lane changes.
- **Upgrading payment systems:** Investing in reliable and efficient payment systems, including multiple payment options per lane, can significantly reduce wait times and alleviate stress.
- **Improving RFID system setup:**
- **Multiple sensor placement:** To enhance reliability, consider installing multiple sensors per lane to improve signal detection and reduce the likelihood of signal dropouts.
- **Optimised sensor placement and signal strength:** Conduct thorough assessments to optimise sensor placement and signal strength, minimising interference and ensuring accurate and timely readings.
- **Prioritising customer service:** Well-trained staff can provide timely assistance and resolve issues promptly.

By taking these steps, toll operators can create a safer and more pleasant toll road experience for all. It is time for a better future on our roads.

**Chin Yew Sin
Shah Alam**

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Remembering Ananda Krishnan

COMMENT
By Azman Ujang

BILLIONAIRE tycoon T. Ananda Krishnan (pic), who died on Thursday (Nov 28) at the age of 86, rarely gave exclusive media interviews, earning him the reputation as a recluse among Malaysia's richest men.

He guarded his privacy closely, but from Google, the following is a famous quote from the enigmatic Ananda in explaining why he shunned publicity: "I have heard some people say I have a low profile. Why should somebody be high profile anyway? I am just doing my job. If you say I have a low profile, then by definition it means I should have a high profile. But why?"

However, I have some fond memories of AK, as he was popularly known, from several encounters over the years both at home and abroad in my long career as a journalist.

The first time I met him was some months before the construction of the iconic Petronas Twin Towers began in 1993.

It was Ananda who sold the idea of building the 88-storey Twin Towers to then prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, for which he was instructed to lead the construction of the project in Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) on the land which was previously a horse racing course run by the Selangor Turf Club.

I remember Ananda giving a briefing to

media on the massive and unprecedented project, showing us a chart with the design of the Twin Towers, long before they became a world famous landmark.

He invited us to pose questions, and for reporters attending, it must have been their first such experience with him.

I posed the first question by telling him that I was not impressed with the project if what is being planned and later constructed was to turn Kuala Lumpur into another New York.

He seemed startled by my provocative question but asked: "So, what is your suggestion?"

I told him that to avoid it being a massive concrete jungle, there ought to be large chunks of land reserved for a greenery park around the area to give it some breathing space.

Ananda responded by saying: "Point taken, we will consider," thanking for the idea - once again showing his humility.

I thought that was the end of the matter but some two months later, I received a call from a senior Ananda aide, who broke good news to someone like me, whose bread and butter is news.

The aide told me that Ananda had agreed to the idea I mentioned at the press conference and something would be planned accordingly.

It is not my intention in writing this tribute to Ananda to claim any credit but later a huge

park, which looks like a jungle within the KLCC enclave, was built near the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

My next encounter with Ananda was in 1996, at the launch of Measat's two satellite stations by Mahathir in Kourou in French Guiana, around seven hours flight from Paris.



Measat one and two were the precursor to pay TV Astro, which reached two-thirds of Malaysian households this year, according to its website.

After the launch, he met with a small group of Malaysian reporters covering the event. Before the reporters could ask questions, something unexpected happened.

He was attracted by the Nehru-collar white shirt that I was wearing as such a fashion style was his trademark attire.

"Very nice shirt you are wearing," he said, and I thanked him for the compliment. And I thought it was the end of the story, but it was not.

He further asked: "Where did you make that shirt and how much it cost?" Even by my standards of being "notorious" for asking provocative questions at press conferences, Ananda's question on such a petty matter as a shirt was completely unexpected of a billionaire.

"You have just had your satellite station costing close to a billion ringgit launched and you ask me how much my shirt cost?" I

responded, to the laughter of other reporters present.

"I am quite embarrassed to answer your question but since you asked, a tailor shop near Federal Hotel in Kuala Lumpur made this shirt. It cost about RM200," I said.

The next blast from AK was something most forgettable: "Very expensive. Mine only cost RM40, and I bought in Manila."

It was his way of displaying his most humble side. He genuinely walked the talk on humility. The last time his office got in touch with me was about two weeks before polling day in the 2004 general election.

"AK wants to meet you at his office at 2pm today. Can you make it?" said an aide.

"He wants you to share your opinion on the coming general election." But it was not my lucky day.

I was in Ipoh and the time he suggested would not be enough for me to get to his office, and I told his aide so.

There was no further contact from his office. I thought AK must have left Malaysia soon after as he mostly lived overseas.

I made some attempts to meet up with him over the past years but he was hardly in town.

Ananda was indeed one of a kind in more ways than one, and it is safe to say that there is unlikely to be another Malaysian quite like him.

Azman Ujang was Bernama chairman, general manager and editor-in-chief. Comments: letters@thesunday.com

Debunking global perceptions to unlock Malaysia's business potential

COMMENT
By Jacob J Puthenparambil

WHEN we think of global business powerhouses, countries like South Korea, Japan and China come to mind - nations whose companies and brands command worldwide recognition and respect.

They have built their reputations on innovation, reliability and quality. But what about Malaysia? Despite our country's rapid economic growth, technological advancements and expanding industries, we are often undervalued on the global stage. This is not because of a lack of capability but because of something I like to call the "prejudice premium".

The prejudice premium is the hidden cost we pay when international perceptions, shaped by media and outdated stereotypes, unfairly undervalue our companies and brand potential.

It is a reality that Malaysian businesses face as they try to compete globally, and it is stunting our ability to fully leverage our strengths in key industries like technology, manufacturing and services.

Let's face it - Malaysia has a perception problem. For years, we have been lumped into the same media narratives that focus on political instability, governance issues and isolated cases of corruption. These stories are undeniably part of our national discourse, but they do not represent the full picture.

The reality is that, despite these challenges, Malaysia has emerged as one of Southeast Asia's most dynamic economies. We have strong infrastructure, a thriving middle class and a rapidly growing technology sector.

Yet, when global investors and consumers hear the word "Malaysia",

many still think of a risky, unstable place.

This misperception costs us - both in terms of direct investment and in the value that global markets assign to our brands.

Malaysian companies often find themselves unfairly compared to competitors from countries with more favourable international reputations, even if those countries face similar or greater risks.

The irony is that many Malaysian firms are as competitive, innovative and capable as their counterparts in more developed nations, yet they struggle to attract the same level of foreign investment or market recognition.

Take our technology sector, for example. Malaysia has become a key player in the global electronics and semiconductor supply chain, and our startups are showing incredible promise in areas like fintech, e-commerce and green technology.

However, when was the last time we heard about a Malaysian technology company breaking into international markets? It is not that they are not trying or that they are not innovative. It is that global investors and consumers are too often blinded by the media's outdated narratives of political instability and governance problems, rather than focusing on the country's substantial economic progress and business opportunities.

This is the prejudice premium at work. It is a form of reputational tax that we pay simply because the world does not fully understand the real Malaysia.

Our companies face higher borrowing costs, steeper competition for partnerships and scepticism in markets that should be welcoming

"The prejudice premium is the hidden cost we pay when international perceptions, shaped by media and outdated stereotypes, unfairly undervalue our companies and brand potential."

our products. The world sees risk where there is opportunity, and that perception directly impacts how Malaysian brands are valued globally.

Consider this: if our companies were based in Singapore or South Korea, they would be valued far higher, with better access to international capital and consumer markets. The only real difference is the country's global image.

In an interconnected world where media shapes perceptions, countries like Malaysia find themselves disadvantaged simply because the world has not caught up to our reality.

The cost of this undervaluation goes beyond just dollars and cents. It means that our most promising companies may never reach their full potential, and Malaysian consumers miss out on the benefits of having stronger, more globally competitive businesses.

We also lose out on critical investments in sectors like green energy, technology and healthcare - areas where Malaysia could be a regional leader if given the chance to shine.

One may argue that part of this perception problem is of our own making. After all, political scandals and governance issues have made headlines, but it is important to remember that Malaysia is not unique in this regard.

Countries such as South Korea and Brazil also deal with corruption scandals and political instability, yet their companies are still able to thrive on the global stage. Why? Because their international media narratives are more balanced, and their successes in business, culture and innovation are given the spotlight.

This is where Malaysia needs to step up. We need to take control of our narrative, at home and abroad. Our government and business leaders must invest in better public relations

campaigns to showcase the progress and achievements that are happening here.

We need to tell our story - a story that highlights not only the challenges we face but the immense potential we hold. Our technology sector is booming, our infrastructure is robust and our companies are capable of competing with the best in the world, but if we do not communicate this to the rest of the world, we will continue to suffer under the weight of the prejudice premium.

It is time to change the conversation. The international media needs to stop viewing Malaysia through a narrow lens of political drama and governance issues.

There is so much more to this country than that, and it is high time the world took notice. For every sensational headline about Malaysian politics, there are dozens of untold stories about our thriving businesses, our innovative entrepreneurs and our role as a key player in the global economy.

By shifting this narrative, we can reduce the prejudice premium that has kept our companies undervalued for far too long.

We can unlock billions in potential investment and elevate Malaysian brands to their rightful place on the global stage. This is not just about fairness; it is about realising the full potential of Malaysia's economy and securing our future as a global business leader.

Let us stop paying the prejudice premium and start telling the world the real story of Malaysia. Our companies, our people and our brands deserve it.

Jacob J. Puthenparambil is founder and CEO of global communications agency Redhill. Comments: letters@thesunday.com

Maybank and IIF host forum to foster collaboration in sustainable finance

PETALING JAYA: In further efforts to drive sustainable finance and transition towards a more sustainable economy, Malaysian Banking Bhd (Maybank) hosted the second Institute of International Finance-Maybank Sustainable Finance Forum with the primary focus on fostering collaboration, exchange of ideas and innovative insights and encouraging responsible financial practices for organisations to achieve a low-carbon economy through sustainable financing.

More than 300 attendees consisting of prominent regional and local corporates, sovereign wealth funds, financial institutions and non-governmental organisations attended the forum which served as a capacity-building initiative on sustainable finance, enabling participants to decarbonise their businesses through a credible and orderly manner, aligning to international best practices and principles.

In his keynote address, Deputy Prime Minister and Energy Transition and Water Transformation Minister Datuk Fadillah Yusof said, "Meeting various climate resilience requirements of the nation calls for a fundamental transformation in business and finance. It is crucial that the finance industry, a key component of the economy as a whole, should take the lead in embracing sustainability through its operations and client offerings."

"I am very encouraged that Maybank, together with IIF, is bringing public, corporate and financiers together to support the development and scaling of climate solutions and the decarbonisation efforts."

Speaking at the event, Maybank president and group CEO Datuk Khairussaleh Ramli said the forum aimed to create conducive platforms for exchange of ideas and innovative insights, to identify actionable items to solidify organisations' transition plans and collectively work towards building a better tomorrow.

"We must continue to pursue our respective sustainability efforts towards a structured transition to net zero. Expanding the sustainable finance market is critical to achieving net zero goals."

"The triple bottom line approach of balancing environmental, economic and social sustainability imperatives guides us how to align the financial markets with corporate, sectoral and national decarbonisation efforts."

Boost, UOBAM team up to launch BoostMyMoney

➤ Syariah-compliant unit trust investment feature is available on fintech's e-wallet app

PETALING JAYA: Boost, a regional fintech leader, and UOB Asset Management (Malaysia), UOBAM Malaysia, have teamed up to launch Boost-MyMoney, a syariah-compliant unit trust investment feature available on the Boost eWallet app.

BoostMyMoney enables easy access to UOBAM Malaysia's host of funds under management, and is the first in the market to offer loyalty points for every ringgit invested, which can be redeemed for additional savings across the BoostUP Loyalty Programme.

The collaboration between Boost and UOBAM Malaysia strives to simplify investments for beginners, offering flexibility and affordability, through the convenience of the Boost eWallet app. The collaboration will also offer innovative investment products on the digital app to encourage the saving habit among Malaysians.

Boost will leverage UOBAM

Malaysia's fund management experience and expertise to encourage tech-savvy Malaysians, especially the young and the risk-averse, to grow their nest-eggs. BoostMyMoney offers a return of up to 3.82% per annum without any lock-in periods, and with a minimum deposit of just RM1. The current rate of return is based on historical data, as of September, and future rates may vary depending on monthly fluctuations and market conditions.

Boost Life CEO Ungku Norliza Syazwan Ungku Halmie said, "At Boost, we have the privilege of serving Malaysians from all walks of life, but it's particularly meaningful to see how the younger generation

has embraced our platform. We understand that for many, the barriers to investing – whether due to limited experience or resources – can seem overwhelming.

"That's why we created BoostMyMoney – to democratise investing by making it simple, accessible and rewarding for everyone. By starting small and building consistency, we're helping users lay the foundation for long-term financial security, embodying the essence of *sedikit-sedikit lama lama menjadi bukit*. Our partnership with UOBAM Malaysia underscores our commitment to helping Malaysians realise their financial aspirations."

She added that expanding the

offering within the Boost eWallet app is a key part of their vision to lead the charge in Embedded Banking in Malaysia.

"By integrating financial services directly into the app, we remove the friction of managing multiple platforms, making it effortless for our users to take control of their financial futures. This is how we continue to redefine the financial landscape, ensuring that innovation is not just about technology, but about bringing meaningful impact to all our customers," she said.

Meanwhile, UOBAM Malaysia CEO Lim Suet Ling said: "We are delighted to collaborate with Boost to encourage wealth building among the digitally-savvy by making investing more affordable, flexible and accessible."

"By combining UOBAM's extensive industry experience with Boost's proven tech capabilities, BoostMyMoney can be a viable investment solution for the average Malaysian, especially young adults with budget constraints and who are risk-averse, to potentially earn higher returns."

"Boost users can also tap on our regional research capabilities and investment processes to provide solutions that are integrated with syariah considerations."

To access the feature, users can tap on the BoostMyMoney button on the home page of the Boost eWallet app, then complete the activation process. It includes an e-KYC authentication, a detailed contract agreement and account profile set-up. Once completed, Boost users can then make their deposits into BoostMyMoney accordingly through the Boost eWallet app.

Upon confirmation of the deposits, users can track their earnings and transaction history on the BoostMyMoney page.

They will have the flexibility to withdraw their funds and earnings to either their Boost eWallet app or a verified online banking account.



Ungku Norliza (left) says Boost is committed to helping Malaysians realise financial aspirations. Lim (right) says BoostMyMoney can be a viable investment solution for the average Malaysian to potentially earn higher returns.

Wealth adviser certification scheme for RHB Islamic relationship managers

PETALING JAYA: RHB Islamic Bank Bhd recently announced a significant advancement in Islamic wealth management (IWM) with the launch of the RHB Islamic Specialists Wealth Adviser (Riswa) Certification Programme.

RHB Islamic has become the first Islamic bank to implement a customised IWM certification programme specifically designed for its relationship managers.

Developed in collaboration with the Islamic Banking and Finance Institute Malaysia (IBFIM), Riswa is a distinctive and comprehensive certification that equips relationship

managers with in-depth knowledge of Islamic wealth management principles, products and customer needs.

The programme's rigorous training modules cover essential aspects of wealth creation, accumulation, protection, purification and distribution. By mastering these fundamentals and honing customer engagement skills, relationship managers will be empowered to offer tailored, syariah-compliant solutions that align with customers' financial goals and spiritual values. The initiative positions the bank to deliver a holistic wealth management experience that

is both financially rewarding, ethically grounded, and socially responsible.

RHB Islamic managing director Datuk Adissadikin Ali said, "Islamic wealth management is not just about avoiding *riba*, or complying with syariah principles; it's about integrating ethical values into every aspect of wealth creation and management. The Riswa programme allows our relationship managers to go beyond product knowledge and truly understand our clients' financial aspirations and values. With this certification, we are empowering them to become trusted advisers who

guide clients towards a sustainable, ethically responsible financial future.

"Our commitment is to offer these values-driven solutions to everyone, regardless of their background and religious beliefs, through our comprehensive suite of syariah-compliant wealth management solutions."

IBFIM chief executive officer Yusry Yusoff said, "As a lifelong learning institution, IBFIM is pleased to collaborate with RHB Islamic in developing the Riswa programme. This unique and fit-for-purpose certification, crafted with RHB Islamic's input, will

produce a team of highly skilled relationship managers who can deliver exceptional service and knowledge to RHB Islamic's diverse clientele."

Aligned with the bank's strategy to be everyone's primary bank by prioritising customer experience and driving quality growth, Riswa is central to achieving RHB Islamic's IWM target of RM6 billion by 2026. The programme strengthens the bank's capacity to deliver personalised, high-quality wealth management solutions, supporting its ambitious IWM goals.



M'sian auto industry enters green lane

► iMotorbike encourages trade-ins, reusing parts wherever feasible and investing in eco-friendly refurbishing technologies as local sector embraces shift towards sustainability

■ BY JOHN GILBERT
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: The global automotive industry is accelerating its shift towards sustainability as the impacts of climate change become increasingly urgent, with transformation driven by stringent environmental regulations, evolving consumer expectations, and the overarching goal of achieving net-zero emissions.

Automakers worldwide are rethinking their production processes to reduce environmental impact, focusing on electric vehicles and adopting sustainable economic and operational principles.

In Malaysia, the automotive sector is embracing this global trend by investing in green technologies, including EV production and energy-efficient manufacturing practices.

However, beyond EVs, the motorcycle industry faces unique challenges in adapting to growing consumer demand for sustainability.

"There is a rising expectation for environmentally friendly practices, but at the same time, consumers also demand high-quality, reliable, and safe products," Gil Carmo, co-founder and CEO of iMotorbike, said in an interview with *SunBiz*.

"Balancing these priorities is no easy feat, particularly in a market where affordability often outweighs

sustainability."

Carmo believes the solution lies in adopting circular economy principles, which focus on reducing waste and extending product lifecycles. At iMotorbike, this means encouraging trade-ins, reusing parts wherever feasible, and investing in eco-friendly refurbishing technologies.

"Sustainability and quality are not opposing forces; they can work hand in hand when supported by the right processes and a genuine commitment to the environment," he said.

Carmo highlighted the potential of preowned motorcycles as part of this sustainable strategy.

Refurbishing and reselling secondhand bikes reduce waste, and affordable transport options are made accessible to more consumers.

"One of the key ways to leverage circular economy principles is by extending the lifecycle of vehicles," Carmo said.

"Older or damaged motorcycles can be salvaged for parts, which can then be refurbished and sold. This approach lowers production costs, reduces dependence on raw materials, and creates new revenue streams while minimising environmental impact."

Promoting circular economy practices also strengthens the local ecosystem. Carmo emphasised the importance of supporting local businesses and suppliers involved in



Carmo (left) and Sharmeen Looi, chief marketing officer and co-founder of iMotorbike.

parts recovery, repairs, and refurbishment. This community-driven approach can enhance the entire supply chain.

Collaboration within the industry is equally crucial.

Carmo underscored the need for partnerships with recycling facilities and green technology providers to ensure materials that cannot be reused are responsibly recycled. "This kind of cooperation helps close the loop and contributes to the long-term sustainability of the automotive sector."

Looking ahead, Carmo is optimistic about the future of

Malaysia's transport industry. "We are already seeing early signs of change, and these trends will only accelerate."

As eco-conscious practices gain traction, Carmo anticipates growing consumer demand for motorcycles that align with green standards through electric models, reduced emissions, or greater fuel efficiency.

He also sees increased trust in preowned vehicles, particularly through platforms such as iMotorbike, which offer a safe and transparent buying experience.

"Consumers are realising that buying secondhand is not just a

smart financial decision but also a sustainable one," Carmo said. "Preowned motorcycles offer an affordable entry point for those who want to contribute to a greener future without the higher costs of new vehicles or EVs."

By embracing these principles, Malaysia's automotive sector is poised to lead the way in sustainability, balancing economic viability with environmental responsibility.

"Additionally, with green infrastructure becoming a focus, such as more charging stations for electric vehicles and better urban planning, it is likely that the consumer mindset will shift towards embracing alternative transportation options that support environmental goals—where there might be a rise in motorcycle-sharing schemes or increased interest in short-term rentals," Carmo said.

He said iMotorbike is keen to explore ways to scale sustainability-focused initiatives, including expanding the availability of preowned motorcycles. "We recognise that operational efficiency is crucial, and we are open to optimising inventory management, streamlining the refurbishment process as well as collaborating with trusted suppliers who align with our sustainability objectives."

The motorcycling industry can work closely with government bodies in a few key areas to support Malaysia's green economic agenda and Budget 2025, Carmo said.

"One important step is to get involved in advocacy – this is specifically where we can work together to create policies that encourage the use of preowned motorcycles as a more environmentally friendly option."

EasyParcel gears up for global expansion, harnesses AI to support MSMEs

■ BY AIMIE SHAZRIE
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PETALING JAYA: Logistics technology platform EasyParcel is preparing for global expansion while harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance operational efficiency and support for micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, said founder and CEO Clarence Leong (*pic*).

He said the company, already active in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand, plans to extend its services beyond Southeast Asia over the next decade.

"Our mission remains the same – to make delivery easy – but we are now focused on scaling this to a global level. We want to ensure that anyone, anywhere in the world, can book a delivery from one location to another," he said in an exclusive interview with *SunBiz*.

He remarked that the logistics sector's rapid digital transformation, rather than posing a challenge, presents an opportunity for the company. As the space becomes digitised, EasyParcel is poised to

benefit from improved partnerships and more efficient operations.

"Having partners who are already digitalised opens up new possibilities for us. It allows us to offer more tailored solutions and improve our service for both senders and receivers," he said.

Leong highlighted the platform's ability to adapt as key to its competitive advantage.

"With more logistics partners transitioning to digital operations, EasyParcel plans to leverage its technological edge to streamline processes, enhance the accuracy of delivery quotes and improve customer experiences.

"Imagine when every courier ser-

vice is fully digitalised – the potential to share data and offer more customised solutions is huge. We see it as a positive development rather than a threat."

Leong said the company's financial standing is robust, having raised more than US\$10.6 million (RM46.7 million) in funding. The company counts Axiata Digital, angel investors and venture capital firms such as Gobi Partners and Teleport (by AirAsia) among its backers. This funding has been instrumental in driving the company's regional expansion, which began in 2019.

"We have grown significantly over the past decade and are financially strong. We are looking at a potential initial public offering (IPO) within the next three to five years, depending on market conditions," said Leong. While continuing its

mission to simplify logistics for businesses, he said, EasyParcel has plans to expand its footprint across the globe. The platform's growth strategy aligns with the rising demand for logistics services from MSMEs worldwide.

"There are MSMEs everywhere, and we're seeing increasing interest from international markets. Over the next ten years, we aim to connect the world and make deliveries easy for everyone, anywhere," said Leong.

He noted that EasyParcel's forward-looking strategy includes a focus on AI and automation to further enhance its services. The company aims to use AI to reduce human errors, improve operational efficiency, and provide 24/7 customer support.

"We are not early adopters of AI, but our team is actively learning and exploring how to integrate AI into our platform. It is all about convenience for customers and our logistics partners," he remarked.

Leong said AI is expected to play a significant role in optimising courier matching, improving delivery quote accuracy, and reducing the workload

for MSME owners. "The more accurate the quotes, the more savings our customers can achieve.

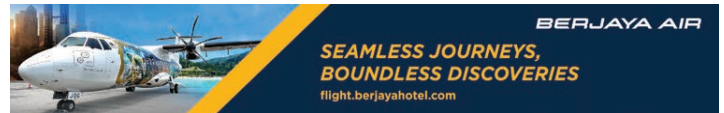
"By enhancing our technology, we also help MSMEs reduce their manpower needs and increase efficiency."

EasyParcel's commitment to MSMEs extends beyond just logistics, he stressed. The company has been a long-term partner in several government initiatives aimed at strengthening the local MSME ecosystem, including the MyCyberSales programme and various e-commerce campaigns.

"We have always been active in supporting government initiatives and are keen to explore more collaborations to help grow the MSME sector. As a Malaysian MSME ourselves, we are eager to contribute to the backbone of the economy," Leong said.

With a strong foundation in place and a clear vision for the future, he said, EasyParcel is set to take its logistics platform to new heights, delivering value to MSMEs and expanding its global presence.





Justice for taxpayers – a costly endeavour

IN Malaysia, taxpayers who disagree with positions taken by the Inland Revenue Board (IRB) or Royal Malaysian Customs Department (RMCD) have the right to appeal to the Special Commissioners of Income Tax (SCIT) or the Customs Tribunal, and thereafter can appeal further to the High Court and the Court of Appeal.

In theory, the taxpayer has the right to appeal but, in reality, the system is stacked against smaller taxpayers. The main impediment is the procedures that are legalistic in nature, which will be alien to the ordinary taxpayer, together with the costs involved.

What is the challenge faced by taxpayers?

In the Malaysian system, when an assessment or bill or demand is issued, the tax has to be paid within 30 days of the issuance despite an appeal being initiated by the taxpayer. The taxpayer has an opportunity to take the matter to the Dispute Resolution Panel (DRP) or the Customs Review Panel (CRP) which can be done by the taxpayer without the help of any professional, provided the taxpayer has the necessary evidence and understanding of the law.

It must be understood that although the DRP is independent of the officers who raised the assessments, the members of the DRP are entirely from the IRB. In the case of the CRP, it is entirely made up of officers from RMCD.

The independence of both DRP/CRP is questionable since there are no outsiders in both panels. The mindset of the officers in these panels will naturally be influenced by their past training which would have been one-sided – to enforce the law from their perspective. This is the first hurdle the taxpayer must pass.

If the taxpayer is not successful in the DRP/CRP, the case will proceed to the SCIT or Customs Tribunal. At this stage, the ordinary taxpayer or small taxpayer in most cases will have difficulties in handling the cases themselves because the preparation for the proceedings and the actual proceedings are conducted in a manner that is similar to a court of law. The preparation of the papers such as witness statements, filing of necessary documents, etc, and attending hearings before and during the proceedings are very legalistic and tend to follow court procedures.

Unless one is familiar with court procedures and rules, there is a possibility that the case may not be entertained properly because the layman will not understand these procedures, and the chances of the taxpayer losing the case will be high.

In most cases, matters referred to SCIT or Customs Tribunals are handled by tax professionals or lawyers, and there is a cost to be incurred. If the matter involves a small tax liability, the cost of employing professionals

will far exceed the benefit, and therefore in most cases taxpayers are forced to concede to the IRB or RMCD.

If the taxpayer loses the matter at the above level, the taxpayer can then proceed to the High Court and thereafter the Court of Appeal, where he or she has no right to handle the matter by himself. This is a domain entirely dominated by lawyers and taking such matters to the High Court/Court of Appeal is expensive. Taxpayers who cannot afford the cost of paying for lawyers will be forced to concede to the tax authorities without having the opportunity to debate the issue in front of the judiciary.

Tax justice is not available to the ordinary person

In conclusion, it appears that the ordinary person will never get justice when the person has a dispute with the tax authorities unless he or she can afford to pay the professionals to fight the case up to the bitter end. It is timely for the system to be overhauled so that the process of appealing all the way to the highest court is available to the ordinary person, whether rich or poor. At the moment, the system is biased to those who can afford to buy justice and to the authorities whose costs are borne by taxpayers.

This article is contributed by Thannees Tax Consulting Services Sdn Bhd managing director SM Thanneermalai (www.thannees.com).



TAX MATTERS
BY S. M. THANNEERMALAI

Expanding affluent segment driving growth of wellness, health products sector: Alliance Islamic CEO

BY HAYATUN RAZAK
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KUALA LUMPUR: A growing affluent segment in Malaysia is driving demand for wellness and health-focused products, said Alliance Islamic Bank Bhd CEO Rizal IL-Ehzan Fadil Azim.

He noted that in Malaysia and Asia, there has always been greater openness towards both medical and alternative medicine products complementing each other.

"In Malaysia, I think there is greater openness, perhaps even more. I think just generally across the world, when communities become much more affluent, they start thinking much more in terms of wellness and health," he told *SunBiz* after the listing of OB Holdings on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia.

He said Malaysia has reached the level where there is a generally growing affluent segment that is looking for the products which OB Holdings is offering.

"We also see this trend globally, particularly in European and North American markets. This is why we feel OB Holdings has huge potential to grow because the demand for the product is already there."

Rizal said OB Holdings' IPO was well-timed. "Number one, because there is growing demand for what they are offering," he said.

Additionally, he noted, "We have a very vibrant stock market at this point in time, driven by global economic situations and global interest rates. So, I think it's just the right time for OB Holdings to go public with their shares."

Alliance Islamic Bank was the principal adviser, sponsor, sole underwriter, and placement agent for the fortified food and dietary supplement manufacturing company's IPO in conjunction with its listing.

At the time of OB Holdings' listing, it was the only health and wellness-related IPO this year. Other health and wellness companies listed on Bursa Malaysia include Nova Wellness Group Sdn Bhd and DXN Holdings Bhd.

OB Holdings shares gained 4.17% on the company's market debut on Oct 29, closing at 25 sen compared with its IPO price of 24 sen. By the close of trading last Friday, the company was valued at RM83.64 million.

Pharmaniaga receives Bursa's approval for regularisation plan

PETALING JAYA: Pharmaniaga Bhd announced on Friday that Bursa Malaysia Securities has approved the group's regularisation plan (RP), marking a significant milestone in its journey towards financial recovery and long-term business sustainability.

"With this latest development, we are now fully focused on executing the RP and achieving a swift exit from PN17," Pharmaniaga managing director Zulkifli Jafar said.

The RP outlines strategic initiatives aimed at financial restructuring, business optimisation and strengthening Pharmaniaga's core operations. It represents a proactive approach that will initiate rights issuance to provide the group's shareholders with an opportunity to reinforce their investments; private placement exercise aimed at drawing potential strategic investors to contribute to the group's value enhancement and growth in the healthcare sector; and a capital reduction process.

Damansara Specialist Hospital 2 boosts services to meet demand for high-quality heart care from SE Asia

BY JOHN GILBERT
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KUALA LUMPUR: Damansara Specialist Hospital 2 (DSH2) is seeing increasing demand for high-quality heart care from Southeast Asia, particularly from Indonesia.

CEO Tan Sok Kheng (*pic*) said there has been a noticeable rise in demand for Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery (MICS) from both local and international patients.

"To meet this growing demand, we have been actively expanding our surgical team and investing in modern equipment. Additionally, we offer extensive training opportunities for our doctors and nurses to stay updated on the latest MICS techniques. This enables us to manage increased patient volumes while maintaining the high standards of care they expect," she told *SunBiz*.

MICS is a specialised surgical technique that uses small incisions instead of a traditional open approach to treat heart conditions. It reduces trauma, shortens recovery time, and lowers the risk of complications while ensuring effective outcomes.

Tan said to meet demand for DSH2's MICS, the company is enhancing services that include teleconsultation for pre-surgery assessment, ambassador services for logistics and transport, and cardiac coordinators – from admission to post-surgery recovery.

"Our MICS innovative approach is a game-changer for many patients, offering faster recovery times, less pain and smaller scars. Coupled with our experienced doctors and personalised approach to care, this has strengthened our local and international reputation," Tan said, adding that DSH2 recently launched a rehabilitation portal, which enables its healthcare team to remotely monitor patients'



recovery and ensure continuous support until full recovery.

DSH2's strategic collaboration with the Mayo Clinic Care Network further enhances its capabilities, Tan said.

The collaboration grants exclusive access to the Mayo Clinic's well-established cardiac surgical approaches and techniques, which DSH2 has integrated into its care model.

"By doing so, we are bringing international standards of care to Malaysia, right to the doorstep of DSH2," Tan said.

When asked about steps DSH2 is taking to manage rising medical supply costs, Tan said the company closely monitors pricing and has implemented strategies to manage the fluctuations effectively. These include working with trusted suppliers to secure competitive pricing, streamlining internal processes to reduce waste, and leveraging a central procurement strategy to achieve economies of scale.

"While focusing on cost management, we remain committed to maintaining the quality of care, ensuring our services remain affordable and effective without compromising patient outcomes," Tan said.

She explained that DSH2 balances competitive pricing with rising medical supplies and operations costs by regularly reviewing rates through a dedicated pricing committee. This, she added, ensures fair pricing while maintaining quality care.

"To enhance market competitiveness, we offer bundled value-added services like escort and logistics arrangements and collaborate with vendor partners and payors to create valuable packages for patients.

"Our pricing is transparent, with options for payment plans and financing to ease patient burdens. We offer customisable services to cater to diverse needs, including room options ranging from four-bedded to executive suites," Tan said.

AME Elite H1 sales surge on demand for industrial space

► Q2'25 net profit rises to RM22.4m, company declares 3 sen dividend

PETALING JAYA: Integrated industrial space solutions provider AME Elite Consortium Bhd achieved strong sales of RM359.1 million in the first half ended Sept 30, 2024 (H1'25), up 166.8% from RM134.6 million in the previous corresponding period last year, driven by robust demand for industrial properties at the group's i-TechValley at SILC industrial park.

i-TechValley at SILC continues to attract major investments from both domestic and international companies, drawn by its strategic location and green design elements. AME Elite's all-in-one solutions, including design, construction, and property management, make the park more attractive to businesses expanding in Malaysia.

With the strong sales momentum, AME Elite raises its sales target for the financial year ending March 31, 2025 (FY25) to RM550 million, up from its previous target of RM400 million, reflecting its confidence in the growth of the industrial property sector. The optimistic outlook is supported by increasing investment inflows, a robust project pipeline, and Malaysia's emergence as a key player in the global supply chain and attractive investment destination in Southeast Asia.

Executive director and group CEO Dylan Tan Teck Eng said: "We are seeing accelerated momentum in FY25 driven by robust demand for our industrial space solutions. Our strong track record demonstrates Malaysia's attractiveness as a prime destination for businesses seeking strategically located

industrial facilities. Our integrated solutions encompassing design, construction, and property management continue to attract leading domestic and international companies to our developments. We are well-poised for sustainable growth. Our expansion into Penang with Northern TechValley @ BKE, along with future projects in Selangor and the JS-SEZ, further strengthen our leadership in providing industrial space solutions."

In addition to its strong sales performance, AME Elite is expanding its industrial park footprint across Malaysia. The group recently launched its latest development of 175.6-acre Northern TechValley @ BKE in Penang with a GDV of RM1.3 billion. Construction of infrastructure works for the park commenced in August 2024, supported by strong interest from businesses seeking prime industrial space in Penang.

AME Elite also has plans to develop industrial parks in Ijok, Selangor, a strategic location within the Greater Klang Valley, after entering a shareholders' agreement with KIK Land Sdn Bhd in October 2024 to jointly develop a 151.2-acre industrial park.

Additionally, the group entered into an MoU with SD Guthrie Bhd to jointly develop a green industrial park in the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ).

In its results for the second quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (Q2'25), AME Elite reported increased net profit of RM22.4 million compared to RM21.8 million in the previous year. Revenue amounted to RM187.2 million compared to RM233.3 million, with the shift attributed to the timing of revenue recognition on property development projects, as some projects were in earlier stages of completion. The lower property development contribution was partially offset by revenue growth in the construction, engineering services, as well as

property investment and management segments.

The property development segment contributed revenue of RM73.4 million in Q2'25 versus RM138.8 million, mainly due to the lower stages of work completed and the timing of income recognition compared to the previous corresponding quarter.

Meanwhile the construction segment recorded an 18.7% increase to RM63.2 million in Q2'25 from RM53.3 million. Similarly, the engineering services segment achieved a 27.3% revenue growth to RM32.1 million from RM25.2 million. These increases were primarily attributed to the progression in the stage of completion of the on-going construction and engineering projects.

Furthermore, the property investment and management services segment delivered 4.4% revenue growth to RM18.4 million from RM16.1 million, driven by additional units of factory leased by tenants and higher rental income generated from workers' dormitories.

In line with the positive results, AME Elite declared an interim dividend of 3 sen per share amounting to a payout of RM19.2 million in respect of FY25, with ex-date on Dec 12, 2024 and payable on Dec 30, 2024.

To date, AME Elite has launched five industrial parks in Johor and one in Penang, including notable developments such as the 205.2-acre i-Park @ Indahpura, the 195.0-acre i-Park @ Senai Airport City, the 169.8-acre i-TechValley at SILC and the latest 175.6-acre Northern TechValley @ BKE. These projects have garnered substantial investments from multinational and local corporations across various sectors including precision engineering, pharmaceutical manufacturing, logistics, warehouse and storage, electrical and electronics manufacturing, research and development, and assembly operation.

Globetronics posts revenue of RM29.3m in Q3

PENANG: Globetronics Technology Bhd (GTB), a player in the Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) and semiconductor industry, posted revenue of RM29.3 million for the current quarter ended Sept 30, 2024, reflecting an increase of 5.4% compared to RM27.8 million in the immediate preceding quarter ended June 30, 2024.

In a statement, the group said the revenue growth in the current quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 demonstrated resilience amidst a challenging macroeconomic and geopolitical environment. The improvement is attributed to better volume loadings from certain key customers, reflecting early signs of recovery in demand.

Despite the uptick in revenue, the group faced a loss before tax of RM4.1 million for the current quarter ended Sept 30, 2024, as opposed to a profit before tax of RM6.5 million in the immediate preceding quarter ended June 30, 2024.

This was largely due to a foreign exchange loss of RM8.1 million recorded in the current quarter, compared to a marginal gain of RM0.1 million in the immediate preceding quarter ended June 30, 2024. The foreign exchange challenges have impacted profitability, highlighting the continued headwinds faced by the industry.

The management said, "While we have seen improvements in revenue, the overall operating environment remains challenging, particularly with the impact of foreign exchange losses. We are focused on driving operational excellence and strategic capital investments to strengthen our position in the semiconductor supply chain.

"Our key priorities include delivering value to our shareholders, pitching new products, and conducting qualification processes to further enhance the group's financial performance in the coming year."

Looking forward, GTB remains cautiously optimistic about the remainder of 2024. The group's strong cash position and prudent financial management provide a solid foundation to navigate ongoing industry challenges while exploring new growth opportunities. The group is prepared to capitalise on emerging trends within the semiconductor industry, supported by strategic investments in technology and human capital.

AirAsia X third-quarter earnings soar to RM121.63m

KUALA LUMPUR: AirAsia X (AAX) Bhd's net profit for the third quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 surged to RM121.63 million, up from RM55.6 million in the same quarter last year.

Revenue increased by 23% to RM795.02 million, compared to RM648.35 million previously, driven primarily by higher ticket sales and ancillary revenue, the low-cost carrier said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia.

The group's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation for the quarter

under review declined to RM76.1 million from RM132.14 million in Q3'23, AAX said.

For the nine months ended Sept 30, 2024, AirAsia X's net profit dropped to RM206.57 million against RM339.1 million, while its revenue rose to RM2.37 billion from RM1.71 billion previously.

The low-cost airline said the group's full reactivation of its 18-strong aircraft fleet is nearing completion with only one plane remaining for reactivation work, with the final reactivation now expected by the first quarter of

the financial year 2025.

On prospects, the group expects its trajectory to sustain its momentum, ensuring the viability of its earnings for the rest of the financial year ended 2024, transitioning into the final and busiest quarter for the international travel industry.

"Furthermore, the recent strengthening of the ringgit has been particularly encouraging, and the group remains focused on maintaining discipline in its cost structure," AAX added. — Bernama

YTL Power, TNB take centre stage as reporting season comes to a close

WARRANTS WATCH

OVERALL warrants turnover for the week saw a decrease of 22.1% week-on-week (w-o-w) to RM440.9 million, which was weighed by a 30.7% w-o-w decrease in Hang Seng Index (HSI) warrants turnover. Trading in HSI warrants comprised approximately 70% of the turnover for the week, at RM308 million, compared to the previous week's 79%. Meanwhile, turnover in Malaysian stock warrants rose 27% to RM118 million last week.

The decrease in trading activity in HSI warrants last week came on the back of a relatively quiet week for the HSI, with the December futures inching higher by 1.2% w-o-w after trading rangebound within the 19,750 and 19,015 level for the week. Further, Hong Kong markets

posted their second consecutive monthly loss as of the end of November, as disappointment in China's fiscal stimulus plans and the prospect of fresh tariffs from Trump administration weighed on investor sentiment (*South China Morning Post*, Nov 29). HSI call warrants which garnered investor interest include HSI-CWAM and HSI-CY8, which were the top traded call warrants by value, while put warrants which notched in greatest value traded include HSI-PWBB and HSI-PWBA.

On other regional indices, warrants over the Nikkei 225 Index (NIKKEI) saw active trading as well, with the SGX Nikkei 225 December futures trading within highs and lows of 39,075 and 37,645 respectively. For the week, the futures closed 0.4% lower as Japanese stock markets were not spared by investor sentiment following Trump's

Top NIKKEI warrants by volume traded

Warrant name	Volume ('000)	Issuer	Exercise price	Expiry date
NIKKEI-HF	964.8	Macquarie	38,000	13 Dec 2024
NIKKEI-HH	612.8	Macquarie	34,000	14 Mar 2025
NIKKEI-CK	572.2	Macquarie	41,000	14 Mar 2025
NIKKEI-CI	587.4	Macquarie	39,000	13 Dec 2024
NIKKEI-HI	115.0	Macquarie	38,000	14 Mar 2025

announcement of additional China tariffs and new tariffs on Mexico and Canada goods. Put warrant NIKKEI-HF took the spotlight among NIKKEI warrants, clocking in the greatest volume and value traded, followed by NIKKEI-HH and NIKKEI-CK.

In the local scene, most Malaysian corporations wrapped up their third quarter earnings releases last week,

with YTL Power (YTLPOWER) and Tenaga Nasional (TNB) taking centre stage. Shares of YTLPOWER closed off the week with a 17% gain, its greatest one-week surge since the first week of the year. Investors took positions accordingly, to which call warrants YTLPOWER-C64 and YTLPOWER-C72 saw value traded of over RM2 million each. Investors also traded TNB call warrants, with TENAGA-C2M

and TENAGA-C2E logging in top value traded, as shares of TNB fell to a morning low of RM13.02 on Friday, before rebounding to close at RM13.66.

Other warrant underlyings that were popular with investors last week include 99 Speed Mart, Genetec Technology, MY E.G. Services and Johor Plantations Group.

To view the full list of structured warrants available on Bursa Malaysia, kindly visit malaysiawarrants.com.my.

This commentary has not been reviewed by the Securities Commission Malaysia. It is not an offer or recommendation to trade and is not research material. Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

The warrants will not be offered to any US persons.



Advancing nuclear power at COP29

➤ Countries and industries present plans to deploy carbon-free energy technology

COP29 in Baku Azerbaijan in 2024 had continued to sustain the momentum gained by nuclear power at COP28 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in 2023.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had reported that Nuclear power is in the spotlight at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Azerbaijan, where both countries and industries presented plans to deploy the carbon-free energy technology, building on the historic consensus to accelerate its use that emerged from last year's climate summit.

As COP29 draws to a close, this article highlights selected nuclear events at COP29.

Financing had taken centre stage at COP29. Two key financing events organised included Financing Low Carbon Technology, Including Nuclear Energy and Financing the Tripling of Nuclear Energy.

Financing low carbon technology

The IAEA highlighted that this high-level event featured speakers including IAEA director-general Rafael Grossi and Azerbaijan Minister of Energy Parviz Shabazov, Ghana Deputy Minister of Energy Herbert Krapa, International Energy Agency executive secretary Fatih Birol, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) director-general Francesco La Camera, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) executive secretary Tatiana Molcean,



Financing had taken centre stage at COP29. – IAEA/IC

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) vice-president for policy and partnerships Mark Bowman; World Nuclear Association (WNA) director-general Sama Bilbao y Leon, and Ghana Ministry of Energy director of renewable energy Seth Agbeve.

Reaching global decarbonisation targets by 2050 will require a significant expansion of nuclear power.

This was acknowledged at the first Nuclear Energy Summit in March 2024 as well as in the Global Stocktake at COP28 and the pledge by more than 20 countries to seek to triple nuclear capacity.

But to get there, capital is urgently needed, said Grossi.

"Finance institutions need to evolve with the changing demands of the market – and there's a clear demand for and growing interest in nuclear," Grossi said at a high-level event co-hosted by the COP29 Presidency and the IAEA that focused on financing low-carbon

energy projects including nuclear power.

Financing the tripling of nuclear energy

Presently 31 countries have joined the pledge launched last year at COP28 to work towards tripling their nuclear energy capacity by 2050.

A new IAEA report spotlighted that achieving this ambitious goal will require significant financing, to the tune of about US\$150 billion (RM667 billion) annually, representing a threefold increase from the US\$50 billion invested in the industry annually from 2017 through 2023.

Getting there will require innovative thinking and new financing approaches.

This event explored recent progress in nuclear financing and how to foster greater investment.

Accelerating Early Deployment of Small Modular Reactors co-organised by IAEA and the US at COP29 An SMR event was organised which focussed on challenges and opportunities for the deployment of SMR.

IAEA director-general's message to COP29

For the second year, IAEA DG has been provided a key platform to deliver his remarks at COP. For 2024, Grossi had stated "At COP29 in Baku, the world must discuss concrete steps to get nuclear from consensus to construction – and financing is central to making that happen."

"Over the past five COP meetings, nuclear has gone from the sidelines to being part of the solution. At COP29, it's time to shift from agreeing what's needed to finding ways of getting it done."

Asean members announce nuclear plans

Hashim Djojohadikusumo, special envoy to the Indonesian President on energy and environment to COP29, appointed by and brother of President Prabowo Subianto had announced that in the next 15 years, Indonesia's renewable energy generation capacity is targeted to grow by 75% from total electricity capacity additions of 100 gigawatts (GW), comprising solar, hydro, geothermal, and nuclear energy, with projections that at least, by 2040, of 5 gigawatts (GW) of nuclear power plants will be built.

This announcement, followed by the president's announcement on Indonesia's Nuclear Power Plans in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil during G-20 Summit marks Asean's second Member Country to announce its Nuclear Power Ambition at a Key Global event, after Philippines which had unveiled its Nuclear Energy Roadmap at the 68th IAEA General Conference held from Sept 16 to 20, 2024 in Vienna, Austria.

This article is contributed by Sheriffah Noor Khamseh Al-Idid Dato Syed Ahmad Idid, innovation & nuclear advocate, alumna Imperial College London, United Kingdom.

Mah Sing's Q3'24 profit before tax jumps 11.6% to RM84.9 million

KUALA LUMPUR: Mah Sing Group Bhd continues its momentum in 2024, achieving stable financial performance.

For the first nine months of the year, the Group recorded a profit before tax (PBT) of RM249 million, a 9.8% increase compared to the same period last year, with revenue amounting to RM1.78 billion.

The group's third-quarter results were particularly strong, reporting a PBT of RM84.9 million on revenue of RM639.3 million.

Mah Sing recorded property sales of RM1.85 billion in the first nine months of 2024, staying on track to meet its RM2.5 billion sales target for the year. The robust performance emphasises the success of Mah Sing's strategic focus on its M Series properties, which target the first-time home buyers.

The group's healthy net gearing of 0.22x provides a solid foundation for future expansion.

Mah Sing acquired four key parcels of land in 2024, with a cumulative potential Gross

Development Value (GDV) of RM5.12 billion.

This includes notable acquisitions such as M Aurora in Old Klang Road, with potential GDV of RM660 million, and MSS Business Park in Sepang.

These acquisitions align with the Group's strategy to expand in high-growth areas, including Klang Valley, Johor Bahru, and Penang.

Mah Sing founder and group managing director, Tan Sri Leong Hoy Kum said: "Our commitment to enhancing the value of our developments and improving the quality of life for communities is driven by carefully selecting landbank and implementing stringent planning."

"One good example is M Aspira, where we achieved an impressive quick turnaround by officially opening the sales gallery in Taman Desa just four months after acquiring the land in July 2024."

"M Aspira offers homebuyers a strategic location with established infrastructures and excellent accessibility.

"Mah Sing is proposing to improve the accessibility by building a new ingress from the Kuala Lumpur-Seremban Highway to Jalan Desa and an egress from Jalan Desa to the East-West Link towards Petaling Jaya."

"Looking ahead, he added they remain dedicated to the success of their M Series, focusing on affordable residential properties.

With the recent launch of the M Azura and M Aspira sales galleries, he said the group anticipates strong contributions from these projects.

At the same time, he remarked they are strategically positioning themselves to venture into the mid to high-end segment when the timing is right to capitalise on opportunities in that market.

"We will also continue exploring new landbank acquisitions for residential and industrial developments, while actively pursuing diversification opportunities to create recurring income," added Leong.

Mah Sing's core focus in offering products at

strategic locations with attractive price, practical layouts and well-designed features has proven to be effective in driving the strong performance of the group.

In addition, the recent venture into data centre business has seen good progress with a second JV deal signed.

This enables Mah Sing to diversify its revenue streams beyond property development and establish recurring income to solidify the financial strength of the group.

The Group's balance sheet remains healthy with a net gearing of 0.22x as at Sept 30, 2024.

Mah Sing acquired four lands this year with a cumulative potential Gross Development Value (GDV) of RM5.12 billion, including the latest M Aurora in Old Klang Road.

Other acquisitions include MSS Business Park in Sepang, M Tiara 2 in Johor Bahru and M Aspira and Residensi Suria Madani in Taman Desa, Kuala Lumpur.

Resintech reports strong results, fuelled by robust demand and Sarawak expansion

KUALA LUMPUR: Resintech Bhd, a Main Market listed company and a player in the manufacturing of plastic pipes, water tanks, and fittings, continues its growth trajectory with a solid performance for the second quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 (2QFY2025).

Driven by increased demand for its pipe systems and enhanced operational efficiencies, Resintech recorded a 21.17% year-on-year (YoY) increase in revenue, reaching RM33.43 million compared to RM27.58 million in the same quarter last year. Profit after taxation also rose by 27.45% YoY to RM1.98 million.

On a half-year basis, the group's revenue

increased by 17.61% YoY to RM62.03 million, compared to RM52.74 million in 6MFY2024. Correspondingly, profit after taxation grew to RM4.06 million, a 33.33% increase YoY from RM2.97 million during the same period last year.

The group navigated challenges posed by fluctuating local currency and higher operating costs during the quarter, including an unrealised foreign exchange loss of RM1.36 million.

Despite these factors, Resintech recorded profit growth, reflecting the group's ongoing efforts to enhance operational efficiencies and adapt to market conditions.

Managing director Datuk Dr Teh Kim Poo said:

"Our strong performance in 2QFY2025 underscores the effectiveness of our growth strategies and operational agility. We remain focused on solidifying our position as Malaysia's largest plastic pipe manufacturer while capitalising on new opportunities in Sarawak and beyond."

Resintech continues to make progress in its collaboration with SEDC Energy, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Sarawak Economic Development Corp (SEDC), dedicated to driving Sarawak's renewable energy initiatives.

This partnership aligns with Sarawak's ambitious green energy goals, including groundbreaking projects such as the production

of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) from algae cultivation.

"Our partnership with SEDC Energy represents a meaningful step in advancing Sarawak's sustainability agenda.

"Through this joint venture, we are contributing to the industrial plastics sector and transformative renewable energy projects like algae-based SAF production. We are optimistic about commencing operations in 2025," said Teh.

While challenges such as fluctuating currency and rising costs persist, Resintech continues to focus on enhancing operational efficiencies and scaling its economies of scale.

Trump threatens 100% tariff on BRICS countries

➤ US president-elect demands commitment that grouping will not undercut American dollar

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump yesterday threatened to impose a 100% tariff on the BRICS group nations if they undercut the US dollar.

"We require a commitment ... that they will neither create a new BRICS Currency, nor back any other Currency to replace the mighty US Dollar or, they will face 100 percent Tariffs," Trump wrote on his Truth Social website, referring to the grouping that includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.

The statement comes after a BRICS summit held last month in Kazan, Russia, where the countries discussed boosting non-dollar transactions and strengthening local currencies.

The BRICS group has expanded significantly since its inception in 2009, and now includes countries such as Iran, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Altogether the BRICS coalition accounts for a significant minority of the world's economic output.

At the Kazan summit in October, Moscow secured a joint declaration encouraging the "strengthening of correspondent banking networks within BRICS and enabling settlements in local currencies in line with BRICS Cross-Border Payments Initiative".

But at the end of the summit Putin indicated that little progress had been made on launching a possible competitor to the Belgium-based SWIFT financial messaging system.

"As for SWIFT and any alternatives, we have not created and are not creating any alternatives," Putin told reporters at the end of the summit.

"As for a unified BRICS currency, we are not considering that question at the moment."

Trump has vowed to pursue a protectionist agenda, threatening hefty tariffs on neighbours and rivals.

If BRICS countries continue with their plans, Trump warned, they "should expect to say goodbye to selling into the wonderful US Economy," he wrote.

"They can go find another 'sucker!' There is no chance that the BRICS will replace the US Dollar in International Trade, and any Country that tries should wave goodbye to America."

Earlier on Saturday, Trump said a surprise

meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Florida was "very productive", days after the incoming US leader rattled Ottawa with a vow to impose tariffs on Canadian imports.

Trudeau, on an unannounced visit, had been seen smiling on Friday as he exited a hotel in West Palm Beach to head to a dinner at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate.

Afterward, Trump posted on Truth Social that he had had "a very productive meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau".

He said the two men had discussed issues including "the Fentanyl and Drug Crisis that has decimated so many lives as a result of Illegal Immigration".

He added: "Prime Minister Trudeau has made a commitment to work with us to end this terrible devastation of U.S. Families."

Trudeau told journalists that he had had an "excellent conversation" with Trump, but did not elaborate.

Trump has blamed Canada and Mexico for not stemming an influx of undocumented migrants and he blames them, and China, for drug problems in the United States.

Trudeau's trip came after Trump sent shockwaves through the region Monday when he announced 25% import tariffs against Canada and Mexico and 10% against China if they failed to address the drug and migration problems. - AFP

Australia central bank says inflation too high for rate cut

SYDNEY: Australia's top central banker said last week that core inflation was too high to allow for rate cuts in the near term, all but ruling out relief for borrowers at its next policy meeting in December.

Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) Governor Michele Bullock told an economic conference that core inflation of 3.5% in the third quarter was above the RBA's goal of 2% to 3%, and policy needed to stay restrictive until it was confident the target band could be reached.

"As it currently stands, underlying inflation is still too high to be considering lowering the cash rate target in the near term."

"There is still some way to go to return inflation sustainably within our 2% to 3% target range."

"Our forecasts published in the November Statement on Monetary Policy suggest that a sustainable return to target will occur in 2026."

Demand and supply in the economy were coming back to better balance as higher borrowing costs weighed on consumer spending, Bullock noted, but it would take time.

The central bank has kept its cash rate at 4.35% for an entire year, and markets had already seen only a 10% chance of a quarter-point cut at its next board meeting on Dec 10.

The probability of a move in February is put at only 23%, and a drop to 4.10% is not fully priced until May.

That outlook is markedly different from most of the other developed economies which have already embarked on easing cycles.

New Zealand slashed its rates by 50 basis points to 4.25% this week, taking them below Australia's rates. - Reuters

Coal consumption in China expected to hit peak in 2025

BEIJING: China's coal consumption could peak by 2025 as the world's top consumer of the fossil fuel ramps up its push for clean energy, a report published last week said.

The world's largest greenhouse gas emitter remains heavily reliant on coal despite installing renewable energy capacity at record speed.

But while coal remains king in China's energy mix, there are signs the world's second-biggest economy may be weaning itself off the fossil fuel.

Coal power permits fell 83% in the first half of this year, and no new coal-based steelmaking projects were approved in the same period.

And 52% of experts surveyed for a report by think tanks Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), based in Finland, and the International Society for Energy Transition Studies (ISETS), based in Australia, expect China's coal consumption to peak next year.

The percentage of experts surveyed this year who believe that China's coal consumption has already hit its maximum have also more than doubled this year from last year.

"Achieving carbon neutrality in a rapidly growing economy like China is no easy feat, but the country's substantial efforts are starting to bear fruit," ISETS' president Xunpeng Shi said.

More experts also think that carbon dioxide emissions in the country have already peaked or will top out by 2025, according to the study. - AFP



A general view of the skyline buildings in Hong Kong. - REUTERS/SPIC

HK to offer crypto tax exemption to hedge funds, family offices

HONG KONG: Hong Kong plans to waive tax on investment gains from cryptocurrencies and other alternative assets for hedge funds, private equity funds and certain family offices as the city strives to enhance its appeal as a wealth management hub.

In a consultation paper circulated last week, seen by Reuters, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau proposes expanding the capital gains tax exemptions to cover overseas properties, carbon credits, private credit, virtual

assets, among other assets, applicable to privately-offered funds and eligible single family offices' investment vehicles.

"Taxation is one of the key considerations for the wealth asset management sector to decide where to base their operations," said the proposal, adding that the government was committed to creating an environment conducive to the wealth management industry.

The *Financial Times* first reported the proposal. Hong Kong has been stepping up efforts to

promote itself as a leading global digital asset hub, aiming to attract new sources of capital amid ongoing economic and other tensions between China and the West.

The proposal comes as bitcoin surged to record highs and sets its sights on the psychologically key US\$100,000 level, bolstered by hopes that US President-elect Donald Trump's administration will create a friendly regulatory environment for cryptocurrencies.

Hong Kong is Asia's largest hedge fund hub

and ranked second in terms of capital under management in private equity funds, official data shows.

There are more than 2,700 single-family offices operating in the city, over half of which have assets of more than 50 million US dollars, according to Hong Kong government estimates, citing market data.

The proposal also suggested expanding the tax exemption to cover pension funds and endowment funds. - Reuters

UN agency slams 'stubborn digital divides'

➤ Global internet use slowly increasing but a third of world's population remain offline

GENEVA: The United Nations said last week that global internet use was slowly increasing, but warned that glaring disparities in poorer regions especially meant a third of the world's population remained offline.

An estimated 5.5 billion people are currently online, the UN's telecoms agency found in a fresh study.

That marks an increase of 227 million people compared with last year, according to revised estimates for 2023, the International Telecommunication Union said.

That shows "that one-third of humanity still does not use the internet", Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava, head of ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau, told reporters in Geneva.

He voiced concern about deep disparities between urban and remote rural areas, and

cautioned that "universal connectivity remains a distant prospect" in many poorer countries.

In all, 68% of the global population is now online, the ITU said, but lamented in a statement that "stubborn digital divides persist".

The report "is a tale of two digital realities between high-income and low-income countries", ITU chief Doreen Bogdan-Martin said in the statement.

"Stark gaps in critical connectivity indicators are cutting off the most vulnerable people from online access to information, education and employment opportunities."

Indeed, the data presented in the ITU report shone a light on stark differences between regions and groups.

While 93% of people in high-income countries were estimated to be using the

internet this year, only 27% of people in low-income countries were online, the report showed.

"The gap has almost been bridged in high income countries, while the divide remains deep in low-income countries," Zavazava said.

"The world is inching towards universal access at a time that it should be sprinting."

On the positive side, the ITU highlighted that the gender gap in internet access was shrinking, with an estimated 70% of men online, compared to 65% for women.

"Although there are 189 million more men than women using the internet, the report found that the world has been moving towards gender parity, except in the least developed countries," Zavazava said.

Less progress has been made on bridging the urban-rural divide, with 1.8 billion of the 2.6 billion people offline living in rural areas, the report showed.

"Our call for action is that we must intensify our efforts to connect to the world and not to leave anyone behind," Zavazava said. – AFP

German consumer confidence set to worsen

BERLIN: German consumers are feeling more pessimistic heading into the year-end due to growing uncertainty in Europe's struggling top economy and concerns about employment, a key survey showed last week.

Morale has fallen sharply in the latest edition of the poll of around 2,000 people, after rising for the two previous months, said pollsters GfK and the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions.

The forward-looking indicator slipped 4.9 points to minus 23.3 points, a level last seen in late 2023, they said in a statement.

Analysts surveyed by financial data firm FactSet had predicted a more modest fall.

The poll was conducted from late October to Nov 11 – and wrapped up just days after Germany's government collapsed, paving the way for early polls in February, and Donald Trump won a thumping victory in the US presidential election.

"The last few weeks of the year will end with a significant setback in consumer sentiment," said NIM consumer expert Rolf Buerkl.

"Concerns about (jobs) in Germany are growing.

"Reasons for this are certainly the job cuts reported by industry and the relocation of production abroad."

A string of big industrial firms have announced job cuts, from auto supplier Bosch to steelmaker ThyssenKrupp.

Meanwhile, car titan Volkswagen has warned it might close factories in Germany for the first time in its history.

The survey showed a significant decline in consumers' income expectations over the next 12 months and a slight fall in their likelihood to make purchases.

When it came to expectations for the German economy over the next 12 months, pessimism deepened for the fourth month in a row.

Battling a manufacturing slowdown, weak demand and a host of other deep-rooted challenges, Germany was the only major advanced economy to shrink in 2023. – AFP

UK budget shows govt does not understand business, says retail veteran

LONDON: Britain's tax raising budget shows the government does not understand business and it will drive prices higher, restrict pay and curtail investment, one of the country's most experienced retail veterans said last week.

Criticism of Chancellor of the Exchequer Rachel Reeves' Oct 30 budget has been intense, particularly from business after she tapped companies for an additional £25 billion (RM142 billion) of taxes a year to rebuild public services.

Multiple surveys have shown corporate confidence taking a hit.

Stuart Rose, one of Britain's best known

business figures and the former chairman of retailers Asda, Ocado and Marks & Spencer, added his voice, telling LBC radio: "I don't think government understands business is the real truth."

He said Reeves had engaged with business prior to July's national election but was "listening with tin ears".

"Across the nation now, people will be looking and saying 'ouch,'" said Rose, who stepped down as Asda chairman last Saturday.

As well as predicting price rises and restricted pay increases for workers, he is worried about the impact of the budget on investment.

"People will not invest or they'll be very circumspect about investing.

"We must invest, if we don't invest we don't grow, if we don't grow, we die."

Rose added that while he understood why the government had imposed inheritance tax on agricultural land, to prevent people from buying it to protect their wealth, he joined smaller farmers in warning that it could disrupt the food supply.

"We're constantly saying 'oh we must mean ourselves off importing foodstuffs from abroad' and yet at the same time we're trying to shoot ourselves in the foot with a policy that may not be very helpful." – Reuters

Emirates Airline says 'wings clipped' by Boeing delays

DUBAI: Emirates Airline is a "frustrated entity" because of a lack of planes, the carrier's president said, adding that it would now have an 85-strong fleet of Boeing 777-9X jets if the planemaker had been able to deliver them on time.

"We are expansionists, as you know. And we've had our wings clipped," Tim Clark told reporters at an event to mark delivery of Emirates' first Airbus A350 aircraft.

Emirates, the Middle East's biggest airline, has increasingly voiced its displeasure over delays and uncertainty plaguing delivery of the 777-9X jets, which were exacerbated by a weeks-long strike by Boeing factory workers.

Asked if there were any plans to review the orders in light of the delays, Clark said

the company would just wait and see.

"I'm hoping that with the US\$21 billion (RM93 billion) they've just had injected into the company and the end of the strike, they're now working over the next few months to sort out what they're going to do.

"We watch that very closely."

Boeing's new CEO Kelly Ortberg said in October that the planemaker had told customers it expects first delivery of its 777X in 2026, owing to challenges in development, a flight-test pause and the work stoppage.

Clark also said that the new Airbus A350 aircraft would drive the next phase of Emirates' growth, enabling it to consider new destinations.

– Reuters



Clark talking to reporters in Dubai. – REUTERS/SPIC

MARKET ROUND-UP: NOVEMBER 29

BURSA MALAYSIA

Trade Statistic 29 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

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Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	12,131.13 -14.10
FBMVKLCI	1,594.29 -3.20
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	544.61 +1.09
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCT	170.29 -0.31
CONSTRUCTION	294.84 -0.18
FINANCIAL SERVICES	19,190.03 +82.70
ENERGY	812.29 -3.59
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	529.60 -5.07
HEALTH CARE	2,169.49 -8.51
TRANSPORTATION & L	1,047.78 -0.56
PROPERTY	1,065.66 +5.75
PLANTATION	7,531.82 +42.62
FBMSHA	12,034.69 -52.88
FBMACE	5,131.65 -17.49
TECHNOLOGY	58.48 -0.25

TURNOVER: 3.430 bil **VALUE: RM3,185 bil**

FBM KLCI ends lower, weighed down by utilities

BURSA Malaysia's main index failed to sustain the brief gains observed in the mid-afternoon session to end the day in the red last Friday, as selling in selected heavyweights mainly in utility and logistics counters intensified in the final hour of trading.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI slid 3.20 points or 0.2% to 1,594.29 from Thursday's close of 1,597.49.

The index opened 1.13 points lower at 1,596.36 and moved between 1,586.39 and 1,603.59 on Friday.

Decliners beat gainers 539 to 515 while 461 counters were unchanged, 945 untraded, and 56 suspended.

Turnover expanded to 3.43 billion units valued at RM3.19 billion versus 2.79 billion units valued at RM2.90 billion on Thursday.

Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd equity research vice-president Thong Pak Leng said some sectors staged a rebound, with banking, plantation, construction, telco and consumer stocks driving gains. "In contrast, utilities and some healthcare counters faced pressure as foreign selling weighed on," he said.

Back home, heavyweight Tenaga Nasional led the decliners, losing 32 sen to RM13.66. MISC was 15 sen weaker at RM7.25. YTL Power ticked down five sen to RM3.40, and YTL Corp eased three sen to RM2.08.

Public Bank and SD Guthrie both gained six sen to RM4.47 and RM4.81 respectively, helping to mitigate further losses in the FBM KLCI.

Among the active stocks, Velesto Energy dropped 2.5 sen to 16 sen, while Supreme Consolidated, which has transferred from the LEAP to the ACE Market on Friday, put on 5.5 sen to 30.5 sen.

Aimflex and MYEG lost 1.5 sen to 16 sen and 86.5 sen respectively, while Capital A shed nine sen to RM1. - Bernama

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
VELESTO	0.160	-0.025	-13.51	2,365,146
ZENTECH	0.005	-0.005	-50.00	1,369,295
HSI-PWBB	0.065	-0.010	-13.33	1,164,314
SUPREME	0.305	0.055	22.00	1,156,639
AIMFLEX	0.160	-0.015	-8.57	683,939
HSI-HZX	0.060	-0.005	-7.69	618,725
SAPNRG	0.040	-	-	599,585
TENAGA-C2M	0.030	-0.015	-33.33	467,932
MYEG	0.865	-0.015	-1.70	439,785
HSI-PWB4	0.155	-0.005	-3.13	432,782
HSI-CWAM	0.135	-	-	423,808
CAPITALA	1.000	-0.090	-8.26	387,200
PBBANK	4.470	0.060	1.36	373,489
JCY	0.440	-	-	332,919
HXIND	0.505	0.025	5.21	312,284
GENETEC	1.200	0.010	0.84	298,970
CIMB	8.250	-	-	288,849
PUC	0.035	-0.005	-12.50	286,674
HSI-CY8	0.170	0.010	6.25	279,249
HSI-CWAO	0.105	0.005	5.00	270,204

FBMVKLCI Last Price



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	96.700	0.700	714
HLIND	15.220	0.420	1,575
UTDPLT	30.300	0.300	6,666
KLUANG	5.840	0.270	2
MPI	23.860	0.240	3,427
CHINTEK	8.300	0.190	120
RVIEW	3.200	0.150	1,115
GCB	3.350	0.140	40,504
PETDAG	19.600	0.140	3,227
KGB	3.490	0.130	20,827
SEM	2.000	0.120	4,557
HLBANK	20.680	0.120	12,670
KOBAY	1.440	0.120	38,127
WARISAN	1.600	0.120	4,369
VSTECs	3.880	0.110	6,683
SKBSHUT	0.900	0.105	68,854
ALIBABA-C38	0.100	0.095	241
GENP	5.700	0.090	4,246
RHBANK	6.760	0.090	170,104
PRASCO	0.310	0.085	208,618

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
ALIBABA-C38	0.100	1900.00	241
DIGISTA-WD	0.020	100.00	700
GTRONIC-C34	0.010	100.00	500
INARI-C2Q	0.010	100.00	10
JCY-C15	0.010	100.00	13,706
TRIVE-WD	0.010	100.00	1,232
YTLPOWER-C53	0.010	100.00	1,310
JTIASA-C1	0.065	62.50	5,215
EGO-C17	0.030	50.00	5,500
HONGSENG	0.015	50.00	49,736
JCY-C16	0.015	50.00	17,053
SCOMNET-CC	0.030	50.00	200
ASOCHIN-CG	0.120	41.18	1,760
PBBANK-C1J	0.035	40.00	7,310
PRASCO	0.310	37.78	208,618
FFB-C8	0.095	35.71	12,520
GCB-C11	0.040	33.33	14,639
GENETEC-CD	0.020	33.33	17,175
JTIASA-CW	0.040	33.33	109,351
MTRONIC	0.020	33.33	820

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	44,910.65	188.59	0.42
S&P 500 (US)	6,032.38	33.64	0.56
NASDAQ (US)	19,218.17	157.69	0.83
NYSE (US)	20,272.04	62.22	0.31
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	4,804.40	45.75	0.96
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,287.30	6.08	0.07
DAX (GER)	19,626.45	200.72	1.03
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	38,208.03	-141.03	-0.37
TOPIX (JPN)	2,680.71	-6.57	-0.24
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	19,423.61	+56.65	+0.29
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,916.58	+44.03	+1.14
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,326.46	+30.76	+0.93
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,455.91	-48.76	-1.95
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	183.13	-0.32	-0.17
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,436.23	-8.11	-0.10
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,699.09	-0.90	-0.01
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	79,741.06	+697.32	+0.88
FBM KLCI	1,597.89	+0.40	+0.03
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,733.63	-3.62	-0.10
WTI (US\$/BBL)	68	-0.72	-1.05
BRENT (US\$/BBL)	71.84	-0.94	-1.29
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,681.00	16.2	0.61
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	31.11	0.55	1.81
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	949.9	14.88	1.59
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	414	0.1	0.02
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,010.50	8.5	0.09
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	433	5	1.17
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	548	-0.5	-0.09
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	41.74	0.82	2
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	9,425.00	357	3.94
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	199.8	3.5	1.78

As at 5pm, Nov 29

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
TENAGA	13.660	-0.320	253,862
FBN	27.620	-0.280	429
PPB	13.120	-0.160	6,580
MISC	7.250	-0.150	12,336
PARAGON	2.750	-0.150	380
KLK	20.860	-0.140	7,217
MSC	2.270	-0.140	6,589
GENM-C2X	0.015	-0.135	1,200
GAMUDA	8.900	-0.130	63,414
AAX	1.920	-0.120	125,961
HARISON	8.250	-0.120	622
LPI	13.240	-0.120	345
TSH-C12	0.045	-0.105	15
AHEALTH	2.480	-0.100	4,498
PANAMY	18.200	-0.100	33
PERSTIM	2.060	-0.100	226
FFB-C10	0.055	-0.095	380
CAPITALA	1.000	-0.090	387,200
CITAGLB-WB	0.405	-0.090	96
INARI	2.760	-0.090	160,806

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
GENM-C2X	0.015	-90.00	1,200
GENM-C2V	0.005	-75.00	3,000
TSH-C12	0.045	-70.00	15
GENTINGC3E	0.005	-66.67	2,200
FFB-C10	0.055	-63.33	380
JFTECH-CD	0.015	-57.14	1
UM-C84	0.020	-55.56	850
INARI-C2W	0.020	-55.56	2,780
SCOMNET-CD	0.020	-55.56	300
BURSA-C83	0.010	-50.00	31,000
D&O-C11	0.010	-50.00	1,060
DNEX-C34	0.005	-50.00	20
INARI-C2M	0.005	-50.00	2,000
KANGER-WB	0.005	-50.00	5,100
KGROUP	0.005	-50.00	14,115
MSM-C3	0.075	-50.00	500
MYEG-C7L	0.030	-50.00	250
ZENTECH	0.005	-50.00	1,369,295
DNEX-C31	0.015	-40.00	1,376
MISC-C52	0.015	-40.00	3,750

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

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LBS Bina posts higher Q3 net profit of RM167m

KUALA LUMPUR: LBS Bina Group Bhd's net profit for the third quarter ended Sept 30, 2024 jumped to RM167.061 million compared to RM40.214 million recorded in the same period last year.

Revenue, however, fell to RM377.393 million from RM466.859 million previously, the company said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia.

The higher net profit was mainly due to a one-off gain after tax of approximately RM137 million derived from the disposal of investment in Lamdeal Investments Ltd.

For the nine months ended Sept 30, 2024, the group achieved a net profit of RM232.229 million as compared to RM103.72 million recorded in the same period last year, while revenue slipped to RM1.15 billion from RM1.22 billion previously.

LBS Bina said that for the period to date, the property development segment recorded a revenue of RM1.11 billion and a net profit of RM140.3 million compared to a revenue of RM1.18 billion and a RM106.96 million net profit in the same period last year.

Meanwhile, LBS Bina said the construction and trading division recorded lower revenue of RM405.84 million and a net loss of RM171,000 for the period under review compared to a revenue of RM615.21 million and a net profit of RM31 million in 9M'23.

"The decrease in revenue and net profit were mainly due to project completion, of which certain projects were near their completion stage with minimal progress and increase in administrative expenses," it added.

In a separate filing, LBS Bina announced a special single-tier dividend of 2.6 sen per ordinary share, payable on Dec 30, 2024. – Bernama

Ringgit ends higher, mirroring regional trend

THE ringgit closed marginally higher last Friday against the greenback in the month's final trading day, reflecting broader strength in some regional currencies.

At 6pm, the local currency edged up to 4.4425/4495 against the US dollar, compared to Thursday's close of 4.4440/4490.

SPI Asset Management managing director Stephen Innes said the ringgit strengthened heading into the weekend, reflecting favourable movements in other Asian currencies.

"This (Asian forex) movement was driven by the US Federal Reserve's decision not to challenge market expectations of an impending rate cut, which cast a slightly bearish tone over the dollar.

"Additional support came from a stabilised US Treasury market, marked by lower volatility, following President-elect Donald Trump's nomination of market-savvy Scott Bessent as Treasury Secretary and his recent cordial negotiations with the Mexican president over border issues," he told Bernama.

The rise in Asian currencies on Friday was led by the Japanese yen, which jumped more than 1% against the US dollar to a six-week high on Friday after faster-than-expected inflation in Tokyo supported bets for a Bank of Japan interest rate hike next month.

The ringgit traded lower against a basket of major currencies. It weakened versus the British pound to 5.6384/6473 from 5.6217/6280, slipped against the euro to 4.6899/6973 from 4.6800/6852 and eased against the Japanese yen to 2.9589/9638 from 2.9258/9293, at Thursday's close.

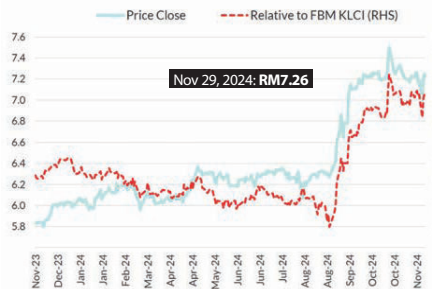
The local unit also traded lower against Asean currencies. It dropped against the Singapore dollar to 3.3146/3200 versus 3.3056/3095, and fell against the Indonesian rupiah to 280.2/280.8 from 279.9/280.5.

Exchange Rates			
FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5070	4.3710	4.3610
1 Australian Dollar	2.9500	2.8300	2.8140
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3580	3.2600	3.2520
1 Canadian Dollar	3.2140	3.1270	3.1150
1 Euro	4.7670	4.6110	4.5910
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.6700	2.5710	2.5550
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3580	3.2600	3.2520
1 Sterling Pound	5.7300	5.5460	5.5260
1 Swiss Franc	5.1450	4.9240	4.9090
100 UAE Dirham	124.1300	117.6700	117.4700
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.8500	3.5830	3.3830
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.6300	59.9600	N/A
100 Danish Krone	65.5200	60.2700	60.0700
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.5200	55.5900	55.3900
100 Indian Rupee	5.4200	5.0900	4.8900
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0294	0.0266	0.0216
100 Japanese Yen	2.9920	2.8950	2.8850
100 New Taiwan Dollar	N/A	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.9500	38.5400	38.3400
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6500	1.5500	1.3500
100 Philippine Peso	7.7900	7.3400	7.1400
100 Qatar Riyal	124.9900	118.6500	118.4500
100 Saudi Riyal	121.2800	115.1300	114.9300
100 South African Rand	25.8200	23.3100	23.1100
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5900	1.4600	1.2600
100 Swedish Krona	42.5800	38.7600	38.5600
100 Thai Baht	13.7000	12.1400	11.7400

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

IHH Healthcare Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM9.10



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

REVENUE from the hospital and healthcare (H&H) division rose 11% YoY to RM5.8 billion, driven by organic patient growth across all the countries it has presence in (with all four countries' hospitals reporting YoY growth in operating metrics). On a sequential basis, the H&H segment grew 1% QoQ on the back of higher patients admission volume (except for Turkey due to summer break). Operational beds number was largely flattish YoY and QoQ, at 12,222. Its bed occupancy rate (BOR) improved 3ppt QoQ to 73%.

All key geographic regions posted a robust YoY growth in revenue intensity and inpatient admission. Singapore saw 4ppt QoQ decline in BOR given IHH Singapore's ongoing initiative to decant less-acute patients to its ambulatory care unit while at the same time advocating preventive care service. Malaysia saw higher revenue intensity (+6.5% YoY) driven by a better-patient care mix. IHH Laboratories reported 15% YoY growth in EBITDA (margin expanded 2ppt YoY) on the back of higher test volumes.

We remain upbeat on IHH's strategic plan for both organic and inorganic growth over the mid-to-long terms. The group's bed expansion target of 4,000 beds by 2028 primarily in the developing market (ie Malaysia and India) provides an opportunity to tap into regions where quality healthcare is scarce. We maintain our positive view on IHH's long-term prospects as we like the group's solid execution strategy, reputable regional footprint across key regions driven by its strong brand awareness, inelastic demand nature towards healthcare services, and focus on affluent clientele which should provide earnings resiliency.

BUY with RM9.10 TP. – RHB Research, Nov 29

Hong Leong Bank Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM26.60



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

HLB'S Q1'25 net profit of RM1.09 billion (+6% YoY, +5% QoQ) was in line, forming 25% and 24% of our and Street's full-year estimates. YoY growth was driven by both NII (+10%) and non-II (+32%), with opex up by a softer 12%. PIOP was up 16%, but was met with impairment allowances of RM7 million (vs net write-back of RM51 million in Q1'24). Similar trends were observed on a QoQ basis, with NII (+3%), non-II (+31%) and opex (flat) bringing PIOP up 15%. Pre-associates PBT was up 9% YoY (QoQ: +10%), and BOCQ contributions added a further RM375 million (+6% YoY, -7% QoQ) to the bottomline. Q1'25 ROE of 11.8% (Q1'24: 12.1%, Q4'24: 11.2%) was largely in line with the guidance of 12% for FY25.

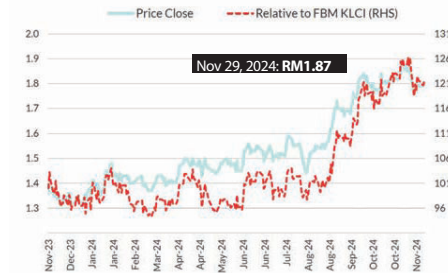
Non-II was a key driver of Q1'25 profits, up 32% YoY to RM354 million. While the bulk of the gains came from the more volatile treasury and markets income, franchise sales of RM105 million was a 60% YoY increase, which adds to the sustainability of the non-II base, in our view. Wealth management income – another of management's areas of focus – was up 32% YoY.

Loans growth continued its strong momentum, adding 7% YoY (QoQ: flat) – key drivers were residential mortgages (+6% YoY, +1% QoQ), hire purchase loans (+12% YoY, +1% QoQ), and SMEs (+11% YoY, -1% QoQ). Regionally, YoY growth in Singapore and Vietnam was also strong at 10% and 15% on a local currency basis. Deposits growth was slightly more muted at 5% YoY (QoQ: flat), but encouragingly, CASA growth was a robust 14% YoY (QoQ: -2%). While it sees some NIM pressure arising from the year-end deposit competition, management thinks it should still end the financial year within the guided range of 1.85-1.95% (Q1'25: 1.92%).

BUY with RM26.60 TP. – RHB Research, Nov 29

Farm Fresh Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM2.11



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

FARM Fresh's 1H'25 results met expectations on robust sales growth and margin expansion. Core net profit of RM53 million (+169% YoY) accounted for 47-48% of our and consensus full-year forecasts.

YoY, 1H'25 revenue surged 28% to RM491 million, thanks to the solid sales growth of the hotel, restaurant and catering markets and commercial ultra-high temperature (UHT) products, further aided by new product launches including Farm Fresh Choco Malt and consumer packaged goods (CPG) ice cream. 1H'25 GPM expanded by 9.8ppts to 31.9%, in line with the lower input costs and contributions from the new ice cream business subsidiaries which command higher margins. This more than offset the 50% jump in opex to support business expansion and propelled 1H'25 PBT to almost triple YoY to RM58 million. QoQ, Q2'25 revenue and core net profit rose 3% and 7% to reflect the relentless sales growth momentum and more favourable input costs.

We expect GPM to remain elevated in the upcoming quarters, in light of the progressive liquidation of lower-cost (by 11%) farmgate raw milk whilst favourable whole milk powder prices have been locked in until May 2025. In addition, the rising contribution from ice cream, chocolate malt, and growing-up milk products should lend support to GPM and drive sales growth ahead. Apart from expanding the portfolio of ice cream and chocolate malt products, other key new product launches in the pipeline include butter to further strengthen the HORECA offerings, and cultured milk to build on the brand equity in the children's products market.

BUY with RM2.11 TP. – RHB Research, Nov 29



the Sun **LYFE**

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Shopping online safely

Staying secure during Cyber Monday
- P22

WEEKLY FOCUS

MONDAY

Technology and social media

TUESDAY

Travel and leisure

WEDNESDAY

Fashion and beauty

THURSDAY

Home and living

FRIDAY

Food and beverage

INSIDE **p23** Latest phones to release **p24** Endless scrolling causes boredom **p25** *The Trunk's* good mystery tale **p26** Earth Symphony promotes ecology

WITH year-end sales such as Cyber Monday today and 12.12 around the corner, we are entering a high-risk period for cybersecurity.

A recent report highlighted that malicious emails were the second most common root cause of ransomware attacks in critical sectors, responsible for 25% of cases. During peak shopping days, this threat intensifies.

Here is why – as Malaysians eagerly hunt for online bargains, more people are shopping using their own devices. This increases the risk of them clicking more freely and potentially exposing the organisation to malicious links or phishing attacks. To keep your organisation safe, encourage your team to follow these simple tips:

➔ **Use an ad blocker**

Advertisements are not only tracking your every movement and collecting information on your habits to make the FBI blush but they are also a major source of malicious links and deceptive content on the internet. Not only is your browsing safer, but also faster and uses less bandwidth. Two of recommended ad blockers are uBlock Origin and Ghostery.

➔ **Use private browsing or incognito mode**

To prevent your shopping habits and interests from following you around from site to site (and potentially revealing what gifts you might be purchasing to others using your device – a bonus!), you should enable private browsing or incognito mode. This will block tracking cookies and help the internet forget your travels as the waves wash away your footprints in the sand.

➔ **Make your browser “privacy smart”**

The Electronic Frontier Foundation provides a browser extension called Privacy Badger designed to automatically make all the right choices around browsing while maintaining your privacy and blocking invisible trackers.

Keep your spending **safe** during year-end sales

➔ **Top 10 tips to protect your privacy, safety during online shopping season**

➔ **Avoid using one account on multiple services**

When logging into an e-commerce site it is often tempting to use the “Sign in with Facebook” or “Sign in with Google” button. While it takes a few more minutes to create a new login, it will provide more privacy as you are not sharing all of the sites you shop at with these tech giants.

➔ **Use guest login when available**

In addition to letting you use an account from other websites, many have an option to use a guest login instead of creating a new account. This is an ideal option if you do not need technical support or to do business on a recurring basis. Fewer



Avoid falling prey to scammers during sales.

passwords, fewer personal details and fewer problems if they get hacked.

➔ **Do not save card details**

Many e-commerce sites will default to storing your credit card information in your profile for your “convenience” (in hopes you will shop there again). They cannot lose what they do not have, so tell them not to store your credit card unless it is absolutely necessary.

➔ **Use temporary card numbers**

Many financial institutions now offer temporary or one-time use credit card numbers. You can open the app on your phone or in your browser and get a single-use

disposable credit card number preventing card fraud and tracking when merchants share card processors. Sometimes you are even able to specify a card limit per temporary number to further protect your account.

➔ **Use credit, not debit**

All of us need to be wary of overspending during the holidays but it is best to leave the debit card at home. Credit cards offer significantly more protection against online fraud and you are in the power position in a dispute. You can simply not pay your bill while disputing the charge, rather than having criminals directly drain your bank account of your hard-earned cash.

➔ **Beware of direct messages via social media/chat apps**

With modern generative artificial intelligence technology it is almost trivial to create an entire fake online store and lure people to share their personal information and payment data with you. It is safest to shop at established sites or those personally recommended to you by friends and family. Many unsolicited messages lead to data collection or theft.

➔ **Do not click deals in email that look too good to be true or are from businesses you do not have accounts from**

These could be phishing emails hoping to bait you into clicking links to bogus, malicious web sites.

This season, small steps can make a big difference in protecting against cyber threats.

This article is contributed by Sophos.



Choose credit over debit card when shopping online.
 – ALL PICS BY 123RF

BY YASMIN ZULRAEZ

AS the smartphone market continues to evolve, brands are competing to deliver devices that cater to various needs: power-packed performance, long-lasting durability or affordability. This compilation highlights the latest offerings from Realme, Oppo and Vivo, showcasing devices that stand out in design, innovation and value for money.

Whether you are a tech enthusiast, a photography lover or someone who needs a reliable companion for everyday life, there is something here for you.

Pushing boundaries with Realme GT 7 Pro

The Realme GT 7 Pro delivers flagship-level performance and innovation, marking itself as one of Malaysia's most exciting releases. Featuring the Snapdragon 8 Elite chipset, it promises 45% better performance and 44% energy efficiency than its predecessor. Its dual vapour chamber ensures sustained performance, making it ideal for power users and gamers.

Imaging takes centre stage with its 3x optical zoom telephoto lens, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered Snap Mode and Underwater Mode backed by an IP69 rating for durability. The Eco2 Oled Plus display, co-developed with Samsung, offers stunning visuals with a 120% DCI-P3 colour gamut and 6,000 nits peak brightness.

Battery life is another standout feature. The Titan Battery supports 120W fast charging, retaining 80% battery health for up to four years. Priced at RM3,699, the 12GB + 512GB variant is available in Mars Orange and Galaxy Grey at Realme Brand outlets, Shopee, Lazada and TikTok shops. Early buyers may receive gifts worth RM698, including Realme Buds Air 5 and an extended warranty.

Oppo Reno12 F's Venom-inspired versatility

Collaborating with the blockbuster movie *Venom: The Last Dance*, Oppo introduced the Reno12 F, a mid-range smartphone packed with unique features. Priced at RM1,299 (256GB) and RM1,599 (512GB), the Reno12 F embodies Venom's essence with a durable IP64-rated frame, AI Eraser 2.0 for smooth photo editing and LinkBoost for optimised connectivity in weak signal areas.

The 45W Supervooc Flash Charge powers its battery from 1% to 100% in 75 minutes while Splash Touch technology keeps the display responsive in wet conditions. Users can "venomise" their selfies through an exclusive *Venom: The Last Dance* template available in Oppo's AI Studio. This device is a compelling choice for fans of style, performance and creativity.

Vivo V40 Lite 5G's long-lasting durability

Designed for longevity, the Vivo V40 Lite 5G promises a four-year smooth experience, reinforced by its 5,000mAh battery and 80W FlashCharge for quick power-ups. Priced at RM1,399, it comes with IP64 dust and water resistance, ensuring reliability in wet or dusty conditions.

The AI Aura Light enhances portraits by providing softer, evenly distributed lighting for a studio-like finish. Its camera system, featuring a 50MP main lens and 120° ultra-wide-angle lens, ensures sharp, high-quality photography. Users can enjoy a 6.67-inch FHD+ AMOLED display with a 120Hz refresh rate for smooth visuals, making it an excellent device for entertainment and multitasking.

Flagship excellence of Oppo Find X8 Series

The Oppo Find X8 Series sets a new standard for premium smartphones, combining sleek design, advanced cameras and next-gen performance. The Find X8 features a 7.85mm slim profile with a 6.59-inch display while the Find X8 Pro boasts a 6.78-inch Infinite View Display with quad-curved glass. Both models are IP68/IP69 water and dust-resistant, ensuring reliability in any environment. Powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 9400 chipset, the series delivers 35% faster CPU and 41% better GPU performance, with 40% improved efficiency.

Its Hasselblad Master Camera System, equipped with all-50MP sensors, includes a

Featuring the Snapdragon 8 Elite chipset, GT 7 Pro promises better performance.



Five new models redefine standards

» Futuristic smartphones that take innovation to another level



The Reno12 F embodies Venom's essence with a durable IP64-rated frame. — PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @OPPOMALAYSIA

The Y19s combines practicality with durability.



dual periscope camera system on the Find X8 Pro, offering smoother zoom capabilities. With 5,630mAh (X8) and 5,910mAh (X8 Pro) batteries supporting 80W Supervooc and 50W Airvooc wireless charging, users can experience unmatched power and fast recharging.

The devices also debut ColorOS 15, featuring AI-powered tools such as AI Eraser and AI LinkBoost for enhanced functionality. Launched two days ago, the Find X8 is priced at RM3,699 and the Find X8 Pro at RM4,999.

Power and affordability of Vivo Y19s

For budget-conscious consumers, the Vivo Y19s is an affordable powerhouse. Starting at just RM499 for the 128GB variant, it features a 5500mAh battery designed to maintain health for up to four years, offering unmatched longevity in its price range.

With SGS Five-Star Drop Resistance and IP64 dust and water resistance, the Y19s is built to last. Its dual stereo speakers amplify sound by 300%, delivering an impressive multimedia experience.

The Y19s combines practicality with durability, making it ideal for families or active users.

From flagship innovations such as the Realme GT 7 Pro and Oppo Find X8 Series to affordable options such as the Vivo Y19s, this smartphone lineup offers something for every consumer. Whether prioritising power, camera performance or durability, these latest releases redefine the possibilities of modern smartphones.



Powered by the MediaTek Dimensity 9400 chipset, the Find X8 series delivers faster CPU.

Vivo V40 Lite promises a four-year smooth experience.





Chronic boredom can impair well-being. – ALL PICS BY PEXELS

Beware of crypto scams on Bluesky

NOW that the Bluesky social network has surpassed 20 million users, new cryptocurrency scams are appearing on the platform. Scammers are taking advantage of the massive influx of new users, mostly disenfranchised X users, to spread cryptocurrency-related scams.

The Bleeping Computer website has warned of the emergence of cryptocurrency scams on the platform. Recently, messages featuring artificial intelligence (AI)-generated images of Mark Zuckerberg promoting the MetaChain platform and its MetaCoin currency have appeared on the network.

Unfortunately, these messages link to a fake site impersonating Meta's graphic style and branding to try to trick users. Other messages told users they have won free Bitcoins and were given a link to a malicious site.

This example is reminiscent of many similar scams on X and other social networks. So, users should be vigilant on Bluesky too. Cybersecurity experts recommended checking the authenticity of profiles and websites before engaging in any financial transaction or sharing personal information.

Users of the network are naturally invited to report suspicious messages. On Nov 15, Bluesky announced it had received a record 42,000 such reports in 24 hours. The network claimed to receive up to 3,000 reports per hour. By way of comparison, Bluesky received 360,000 reports in 2023. – ETX Studio



As well as attracting new users, Bluesky has also attracted more scammers.



Digital media induces boredom

➤ Scrolling on devices interrupts focus, making everyday tasks feel mundane

IN a world where access to information and entertainment is easier than ever, it seems paradoxical that boredom is on the rise. Yet a study by researchers at the University of Toronto reveals a disturbing trend: the more time we spend on our digital devices, the more bored we become.

Young people are more bored than their predecessors – a fact recognised in numerous studies and supported by a paper titled *People Are Increasingly Bored in Our Digital Age*. This is a worrying trend, since chronic boredom can impair well-being, learning and behaviour. And one of the main culprits is too much use of digital devices, particularly smartphones.

The study, published in the journal *Communications Psychology*, is based on data from two major surveys. The first analysed the responses of 106,784 high school students in the US between 2008 and 2017. The results showed a significant increase in boredom, with a rise of 1.14% per year from 2010.

The second study examined data from 28,269 Chinese students between 2009 and 2020. The results also show an increase in boredom, with the average score rising from 104.49 in 2009 to 118.75 in 2020, according to the Boredom Proneness Scale.

The researchers put forward several hypotheses to explain this increase in boredom. Firstly, digital devices divert our attention. Constant notifications and the temptation to

check our phones disrupt our concentration, making everyday tasks less engaging.

Furthermore, the overabundance of information online, often fragmented and incoherent, can reduce our sense of coherence and meaning, thus increasing boredom.

Another factor is the increase in the desired level of stimulation. Constant exposure to highly stimulating content on social networks and streaming platforms can make other activities seem less exciting and less appealing.

"Accumulating evidence shows digital media use, rather than reducing boredom, causally increases it. In sum, digital media makes it harder for people to maintain focus on daily activities and reduces their intention to stay focused, thus increasing boredom," read the study.

This may seem paradoxical, given that internet users often turn to their smartphones to avoid boredom.

To combat this trend, the researchers suggest several avenues. Firstly, it is crucial to develop strategies to maintain attention and motivation, not only at work or school, but also during leisure time.

Secondly, it is important to find alternatives to digital devices to manage boredom more effectively. Finally, it is essential to understand and adapt our desire for stimulation to avoid making everyday activities feel unbearably boring. – ETX Studio

OpenAI could launch its own AI-powered web browser

THE ChatGPT publisher could soon be developing a web browser with advanced artificial intelligence (AI) functions. So, after its search engine, OpenAI could be set to compete with Google's Chrome browser.

Times have probably been better for Google. While the US Justice Department could sanction the company as part of an antitrust trial by forcing it to sell Chrome, ChatGPT publisher OpenAI is reportedly thinking of launching its own web browser.

Media reports revealed OpenAI could be considering developing a web browser, codenamed NLWeb (for Natural Language Web). It would, of course, integrate ChatGPT and be able to respond to natural language queries to access dedicated websites. Even though OpenAI has already hired former Chrome staff, the launch of a home-grown web browser is not likely to come soon, unless it happens to be the company that buys Chrome.

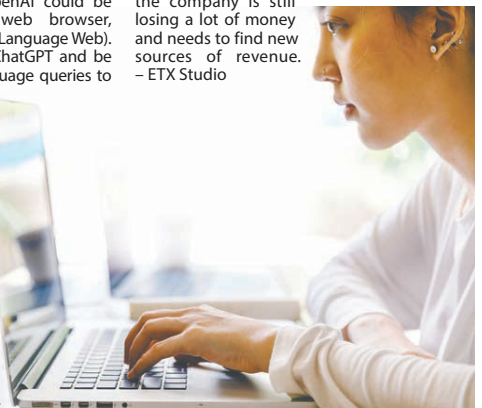
OpenAI has already taken on Google head-on by launching an intelligent web search function via ChatGPT. Premium subscribers (ChatGPT Plus, Edu and Enterprise) can even take advantage of this directly in their browser, by making ChatGPT the default search engine, thanks to an extension available for Chrome.

This should soon be possible for all users.

The American start-up has also reportedly approached various e-commerce sites in the travel, real estate and food sectors, offering to integrate an intelligent search tool directly based on ChatGPT into their platforms.

A next step could also be to collaborate with smartphone manufacturers to integrate its technology directly into their devices.

For the moment, none of this information has been confirmed by OpenAI. Nevertheless, the company is still losing a lot of money and needs to find new sources of revenue. – ETX Studio



The ChatGPT publisher could soon be developing a web browser with advanced AI functions.

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

Emotional unravelling

▶ Exploring love, mystery in slow-burn melodrama *The Trunk*

BLENDING high-class melodrama with a mysterious edge, *The Trunk*, directed by Kim Kyu-tae and written by Park Eun-young, is a haunting exploration of relationships, emotions and self-discovery. Starring Seo Hyun-jin and Gong Yoo, the series adapts Kim Ryeo-ryeong's acclaimed novel of the same name. At its core is a secretive marriage service and an enigmatic trunk that ties the characters' fates together.

Main plot and characters

Seo plays Noh In-ji, an employee at NM (New Marriage), a company that orchestrates contract marriages. Ironically, In-ji's own life is marked by deep solitude even as she lives with a "contract husband" each year. Gong Yoo takes on the role of Han Jeong-won, a man who enters into one of these artificial unions in a desperate attempt to reconcile with his past. As the series progresses, their relationship evolves, revealing an emotional depth that draws viewers into their complicated journey of love, compassion, loneliness and redemption.

Quality storytelling

The show's pacing is deliberate, giving ample time to introduce each character and their unique perspectives. This measured storytelling invites the audience to truly understand and empathise with the complexities of their motivations. Each episode exudes a dark, moody atmosphere that mirrors the characters' inner turmoil. Interestingly, as the series approaches its conclusion and the characters find love and hope, the tone shifts to lighter colour gradients and brighter visuals reflect their emotional growth.

Strength and weakness

However, the storytelling is not without flaws. Certain episodes feel sluggish, with moments that may test the patience of viewers. Some scenes drag but perseverance is rewarded as the central love story unfolds. Watching Jeong-won gradually fall for In-ji is captivating, especially as he begins to stand by her during her

The story unfolds with a series of unexpected events and secrets after a mysterious trunk is discovered in a lake.

– PICS BY NETFLIX



Cast:
Seo Hyun-jin,
Gong Yoo,
Jung Yun-ha,
Kim Dong-won,
Uhm Ji-won

Director:
Kim Kyu-tae

E-VALUE
6

ACTING
8

PLOT
6



Gong Yoo effortlessly shines as the lead character.



Seo plays In-ji, an employee at a mysterious matchmaking organisation.

Manga adaptation *Drops of God* nets International Emmy Award

FRENCH-JAPANESE mini-series *Drops of God* won the International Emmy Award for best drama series last week. The show, an adaption of a hit Japanese manga of the same name, follows the estranged daughter of a French wine critic as she battles his protegee to try and claim her inheritance.

The first season of the show streamed on Apple TV+ in 2023, with the forthcoming second season also acquired by the American streaming service.

"It is a series about family, bonds and the search for identity in the world of wine, which is a world of its own," said the show's star Fleur Geffrier at the awards ceremony in New York.

The International Emmy Awards honour television produced outside the US, recognising global audience numbers.

The international version is held separately from the Emmy awards given to American productions. – AFP



struggles. This tender transformation is arguably the highlight of the series, showcasing the beauty of their evolving relationship.

The supporting cast also shines, particularly Jung Yun-ha as Seo-yeon. Her nuanced portrayal of emotions adds depth to the narrative. One standout moment is an intense fight scene between Seo-yeon and In-ji. Though messy and chaotic, the scene is a satisfying watch as both actress gave bold performances.

Creative insights

During a recent roundtable interview, the cast and director of *The Trunk* discussed the creative process and themes explored in the drama. Director Kyu-tae emphasised the story is not about delivering a specific message but rather about sparking thought and introspection on universal themes.

"I do not think I had a specific message I wanted to convey. Rather, when I first came across this script, it was very intriguing and interesting to see the somewhat odd relationships and psychology behind it," Kyu-tae explained.

He elaborated the drama focuses into universal values such as relationships, love, communication

and human connection.

"I think it is a drama that really poses a question about these universal values and it comes through the lines as well."

Kyu-tae also reflected on the emotional depth of the story and expressed his hopes for the audience's takeaway from the drama.

"I would also like this drama to bring out to our viewers how we can naturally accept solitude, loneliness and love for other people. I hope that message comes through in this drama."

Overall, *The Trunk* is a mixed bag. While the pacing might deter some, fans of slow-burn mysteries and deeply emotional narratives will find it rewarding.

For those less drawn to the genre, Gong Yoo's performance alone makes it worth a watch. He seamlessly inhabits his character, delivering yet another memorable portrayal.

If you are looking for a series that dives into the complexities of human emotions, all wrapped in an enigmatic and visually striking package, *The Trunk* might just be your cup of tea.

The Trunk is available to watch on Netflix.

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Asefa has performed with Cirque Du Soleil and *America's Got Talent*.



Japan's UniCircle Flow are semi-finalists of season 16 *America's Got Talent*.

Showcasing sustainability through **cirque arts**

THE Earth Symphony - Green Cirque Fest 2024 brought together a dazzling array of performances, pioneering sustainable practices.

Held at the Sunway Lagoon Amphitheatre on Nov 23 and 24, the two-day festival showcased the artistry of internationally acclaimed performers, from former Cirque du Soleil stars to a finalist of *Asia's Got Talent* who exemplify the pinnacle of cirque arts.

The festival's highlights included the choreography of UniCircle Flow from Japan, a troupe known for its precision and innovative performances. Audiences were left in awe by the contortionist feats of Senayt Asefa from the UK, a performer renowned for her

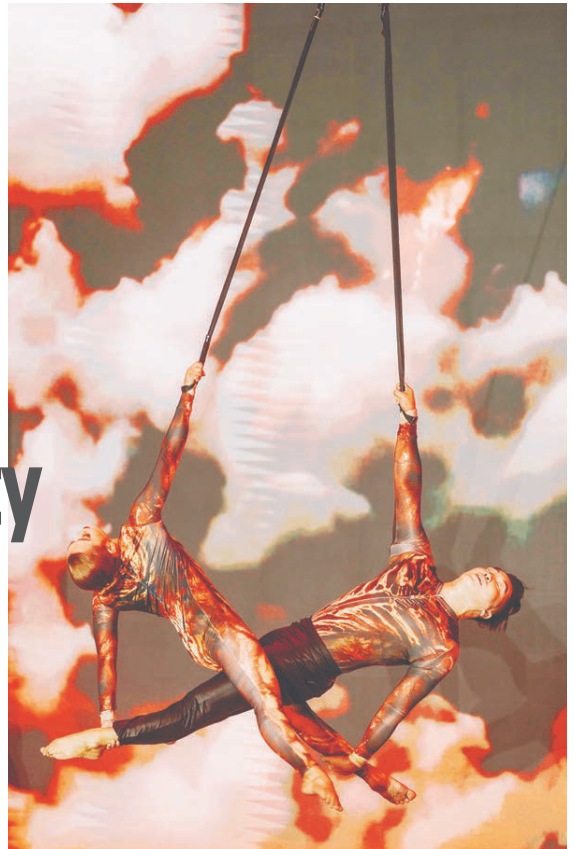
▶ Performances merge acrobatics with narratives that emphasise environmental conservation

extraordinary flexibility and grace as well as the emotionally charged aerial artistry of the Power Duo from the Philippines, whose performances combine strength, elegance and storytelling.

Adding to the spectacle was Malaysia's very own Viva Circus, a modern physical arts performance troupe celebrated for its approach to contemporary cirque arts. Together, these talents showcased a dazzling display of skill, passion and creativity.

Beyond entertainment, the festival taught audiences about sustainability. Energy-efficient LED lighting illuminated the stage, complemented by multimedia graphics as a dynamic and visually stunning backdrop, reducing the reliance on printed materials.

The organisers prioritised natural ventilation over air conditioning, lowering energy usage while providing a comfortable and eco-friendly environment for attendees.



Power Duo from the Philippines are finalists of *Asia's Got Talent* and *America's Got Talent All Stars 2023*.

The event's message resonated with attendees, especially children, who were inspired by the storyline of loving and protecting the earth. For many, the experience ignited a passion for sustainability and performing arts, combining

entertainment with education in a meaningful way. Milestone Production's The Earth Symphony - Green Cirque Fest 2024 was a blend of art, advocacy and action, celebrating the beauty of our planet while committing to its protection.

Celebrating Band Aid's *Do They Know It's Christmas* 40th anniversary

BY **R.BALA**

IT was a call to arms, or as chief instigator Bob Geldof said at the time, when looking back at this epic human tragedy, he would like to say "not guilty".

He was referring to the famine that had engulfed Ethiopia causing its populace to starve in 1980s while the world looked on. Aghast at the TV images of swollen-bellied children dying while covered in flies, Geldof was spurred into action.

Picking up the phone, the Boomtown Rats singer called a few of his pop star pals and the thing snowballed. Within days, a whose who of pop music had agreed to convene at Sam West Studio in Notting Hill, London on Nov 25, 1984 to record an anti-famine single, titled *Do They Know It's Christmas*. Written by Geldof and Midge Ure of Ultravox, the song featured vocal contributions from Bono (U2), Simon Le Bon (Duran Duran), Paul Young, Paul Weller and many more pop stars of the day.

Released on Dec 7, 1984, it entered the UK Singles Chart at number one and outselling all the other records in the chart put together. It became the fastest-selling single of all time in the UK, selling a million copies in the first week alone. It stayed at number one for five weeks, selling over three million copies and becoming easily the biggest-selling single of all time in the UK, thus beating the seven-year record held by *Mull of Kintyre* by Wings. (That record has now been eclipsed by Elton John's *Candle in the Wind*).

The success of *Do They Know It's Christmas* spurred US counterparts to put together USA for Africa, which recorded *We Are the World*. Featuring Michael Jackson, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Lionel Richie (to name just a few) and produced by the late Quincy Jones, the all-star line-up matched Band Aid's success by topping the US singles chart.

However, Geldof was not done yet. Having seen the positive public reaction, he mooted the idea of two live concerts to be held spontaneously at Wembley Stadium in London and John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia, US. It was the largest media event of the day with the concerts broadcast live to over 180



Band Aid featured the biggest names in pop music in 1984.

— PIC FROM FACEBOOK @LIVEAID

countries. Please bear in mind this was in the pre-internet age and live events were mainly restricted to sporting spectacles.

The concert was an all-day event featuring a bonanza cast including David Bowie, Status Quo, Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin. As a PR stunt, some artistes were ferried cross Atlantic to perform at both venues via Concorde. The UK show will forever be remembered for Queen's iconic performance that had the massive Wembley crowd clapping in unison for *Radio Ga Ga*.

Band Aid and Live Aid combined raised about USD\$150 million

(RM666 million) for the famine relief effort in Ethiopia. The song and Band Aid has recently been criticised for over-simplifying the issue and that more needs to be done than just a merry sing-a-long. But as Geldof says, *Do They Know It's Christmas* saved millions of lives. He was spurred to do something is hugely commendable and started a wave of emergency aid to the stricken African nation.

Clips of Queen's iconic performance are abundant on YouTube while *Do They Know It's Christmas* and *We Are the World* can be heard on all major streaming platforms.



Geldof was the prime mover behind Band Aid and the subsequent mammoth Live Aid concerts. — PIC FROM FACEBOOK @INSIDETHEWORLDROCK

Convincing win for England

ENGLAND romped to an eight-wicket victory over New Zealand in the first Test in Christchurch yesterday to take a 1-0 lead in the three-match series and bring the Black Caps thudding back to earth after their recent triumph in India.

Big batting, notably Harry Brook's 171, and a fine display of seam-bowling from Brydon Carse, who was named Player of the Match for his 10-wicket haul, laid the platform for a comfortable victory inside four days.

Carse took six for 42 as the tourists dismissed New Zealand for 254 despite a defiant 84 from Daryl Mitchell yesterday, and a team that prides itself on its ability to score quickly was never going to be too bothered by a victory target of 104 runs.

Jacob Bethell, who was making his Test debut, scored the winning run to reach his maiden half century while Joe Root, who was playing his 150th, chipped in with an unbeaten 23 to help get England safely across the line before tea.

Brook, whose monster innings turned the match decisively in England's favour, was left padded up in the grandstand, his services not required.

Brook, Carse shine as Black Caps brought back to earth

"Yeah, very good," said England captain Ben Stokes. "Very happy with the way we fought, particularly when we were put under pressure on day two.

"I thought our bowlers were relentless the whole time. So yeah, a very good start."

There was one concerning moment for England when Stokes pulled up while bowling and handed the ball over to Atkinson to complete the over, although he later confirmed that he would be ready to go for the second test in Wellington on Friday.

New Zealand were right in the fight for two days of the match but captain Tom Latham conceded that a flurry of dropped catches had not helped their cause.

"No one means to drop catches," he said. "But I guess when you give opportunities to some quality players... sometimes that can hurt you.

"We weren't quite at our best in this game, but we know how fickle this game

can be, and we'll head to Wellington and stay reasonably level."

New Zealand's stunning 3-0 sweep of India in late October and early November ensured big crowds on all four days at Hagley Oval but the Black Caps were unable to sustain their initial momentum.

Stokes won the toss and elected to bowl on a wicket with a distinct tinge of green but the seamers were unable to make the inroads he would have hoped for on day one.

The visitors never let the Black Caps pull away, however, with Kane Williamson dismissed seven runs short of a hundred and spinner Shoaib Bashir benefiting from some poor shot choices to take 4-69.

New Zealand were finally bounced out for 348 early on day two and while they quickly had England on the ropes at 71-4, that only brought Brook to the crease for his brilliant match-turning knock. - Reuters

Shin holds on for second Aussie title

SOUTH KOREA'S Shin Jiyai overcame late nerves and a brave charge from double defending champion Ashleigh Buhai to seal her second Australian Open title yesterday with a two-stroke victory at a wet and wild Kingston Heath.

Former world No. 1 Shin led by seven shots with eight holes to play but stumbled with late bogeys as South African Buhai cut the lead to two shots by the 18th with five birdies on the back nine.

Buhai's last hope of forcing a playoff slid by the cup with a long, missed birdie putt, allowing Shin two putts for victory from six feet.

Shin drained it on the first attempt to finish with a final round 70 for a 17-under total of 274, claiming her 65th professional win across various circuits.

"It wasn't easy but now I can breathe," Shin said greenside before being doused in water by fellow South Korean golfers.

The stocky 36-year-old, also the 2013 champion, is South Korea's most prolific winner and showed why as she shrugged off a double-bogey on the second hole by going birdie-eagle-birdie on the next three.

That opened a six-stroke lead over home hope Hannah Green, her closest overnight challenger, who promptly crashed with a triple-bogey on the seventh to all but end her chances.

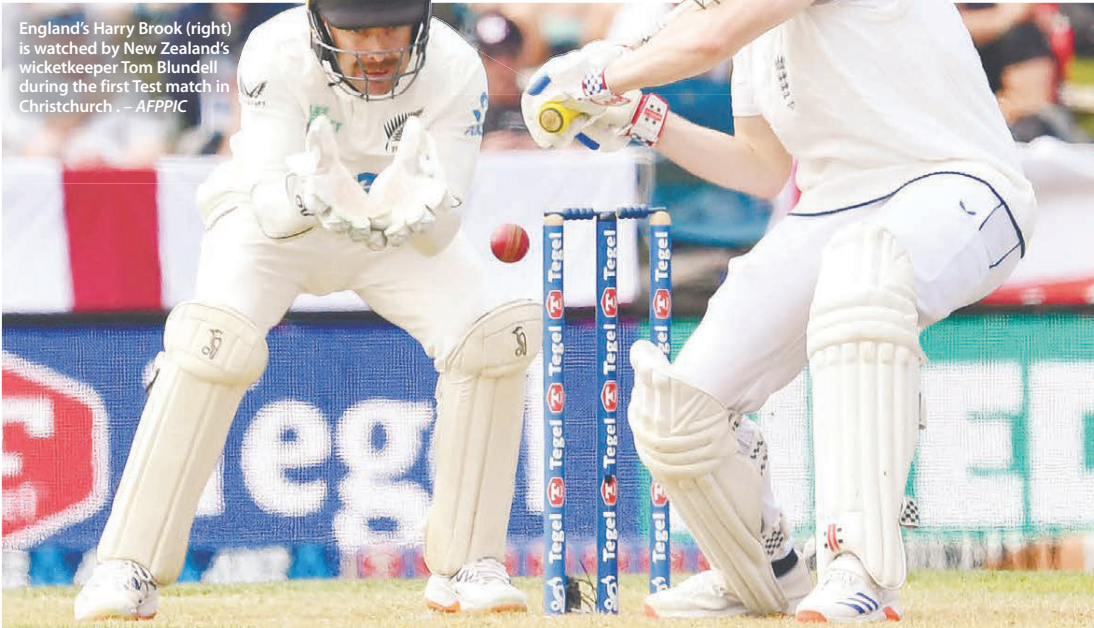
Shin notched another eagle on the 10th to stretch her lead to seven shots over Buhai.

Buhai charged hard as Shin wobbled with bogeys on the 15th and 17th, but the South Africa's bid for a third successive trophy fell just short.

South Korean amateur Yang Hyeonjin finished third on 7-under after carding a 72 in a hugely impressive display from the 17-year-old, who never had a practice round at Kingston Heath.

Major winner Green finished equal fourth with compatriot Grace Kim a shot further back as Australia's hopes of a first home winner in the national women's Open since 2014 were crushed for another year. - Reuters

England's Harry Brook (right) is watched by New Zealand's wicketkeeper Tom Blundell during the first Test match in Christchurch. - AFP/IC



Proteas feeding off confidence after fourth win

SOUTH AFRICA are feeding off the confidence built over the last few months of success but still need to improve aspects of their play in their next matches, said coach Shukri Conrad after Saturday's first Test success over Sri Lanka.

The 233-run victory at Kingsmead came on the back of not only an 11-wicket haul for lanky speedster Marco Jansen but centuries for captain Temba Bavuma and the hard-hitting Tristan Stubbs that have added to the belief in the ranks.

"There's a lot to be said for confidence and feeding off each other. Obviously, there's a lot of talk amongst the players around the know-how and how to go about processes," Conrad said.

"There's a lot of sharing of knowledge, not from us as coaches necessarily but amongst the peers. I think a lot's got to be said for knowing that when conditions are really good, that we have the ability to get hundreds."

South Africa have now won four Tests in a row and remain on course for a place in the World Test Championship final.

They must win at least two of their three remaining Tests in the 2024-25 cycle against Sri Lanka this week in Gqeberha and Pakistan shortly afterwards in Pretoria and Cape Town.

"We played really good cricket on what was a tough wicket to bat on first up," Conrad said of their Durban triumph.

"But we still need to get better when it's really tough. And that doesn't necessarily mean getting loads of runs but I think we can minimise the loss of clusters of wickets and apply what we set out to do in terms of playing the conditions.

"We toiled really hard today, which was great. And because the last couple of wins have, and I say this with the utmost respect, probably been relatively easy, I think we needed a good, hard toil." - Reuters

Lamp's Coventry rescue draw against Cardiff

FRANK LAMPARD'S first game as Coventry manager ended in a 2-2 draw as Victor Torp's late penalty rescued the former England star from a debut defeat against Cardiff on Saturday.

Back in the Championship after starting his managerial career with a season in charge of Derby in 2018-19, Lampard watched as Coventry made a nightmare start when Yakou Meite headed a fourth-minute opener for Cardiff.

Both teams were looking to end a run of four games without a win and Ephron Mason-Clark hit a quick equaliser for Coventry.

Alex Robertson's superb strike just after the break looked set to seal the three points for Cardiff until Torp converted from the spot in the 89th minute.

"There are some basics in football that have to be there, particularly in this Championship and the nature of it, which is first balls, second

balls, fight, sprints and reactions," Lampard said.

"I think being tougher is something as a group we can be. In terms of our performance at the minute it's slightly off, I felt today, so there's lots to take on and work on.

"But I don't want to be bordering on the side of negative because I'm pleased that we've got our point. I know what this league's like."

Reflecting on the match, Cardiff interim boss Omer Riza said: "I think we showed good resilience in the first half.

"Coventry caused us a lot of problems in the first 25, 30 minutes and we have to make some tweaks, tactically to stop that and that worked.

"We got the goal first and then let in a sloppy goal, which we have to try and correct. "We then took the lead and probably did enough to win the game. It's just unfortunate we conceded the second goal." - Agencies

Flat PSG drop points against Nantes

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN followed up their midweek Champions League loss to Bayern Munich by dropping points in a 1-1 draw with Nantes in Ligue 1 yesterday.

PSG did look to be on course for a comfortable win against struggling opponents when Achraf Hakimi gave them a second-minute lead on a perishing evening at the Parc des Princes.

However, Matthis Abline equalised before halftime and the visitors then held on for a share of the points.

While Luis Enrique's PSG side toil in the Champions League and are in serious danger of a shock early exit from European competition, they remain undefeated this season in Ligue 1 and are now seven points clear at the top from Monaco.

However, the principality side will have the chance to close that gap when they play overnight away at third-placed Marseille.

Nantes, meanwhile, have now gone 10 matches without winning but they will see this as a precious point in their fight to avoid relegation.

"I think we put in a complete performance in that we dominated and created chances to score, in how we defended, but football rewards teams who score, not those who create chances," said Luis Enrique.

He said his team were "lacking a bit of confidence, clarity, precision and faith".

"It is frustrating, but all we can do is keep on insisting," he added, claiming it was "inexplicable" that his team failed to win a game in which they had so many more chances than their opponents. – AFP

Griezmann stars as Atletico hammer Valladolid

ATLETICO MADRID romped to a 5-0 victory at bottom side Real Valladolid yesterday to climb provisionally second in La Liga, with Antoine Griezmann scoring one of the goals of the season.

Diego Simeone's side have won seven consecutive games across all competitions and moved two points clear of champions Real Madrid, third, who host Getafe on Sunday.

Atletico trail league leaders Barcelona by two points after the Catalans fell to a shock 2-1 defeat at home against Las Palmas.

Clement Lenglet opened the scoring after 25 minutes and Julian Alvarez added the second.

Rodrigo de Paul swept home the third before halftime and Griezmann produced a wonderful turn and finish soon after the break to add the fourth on a memorable night for the Rojiblancos, which even some home fans applauded.

Alexander Sorloth wrapped up Atletico's thumping victory in stoppage time.

"I have to thank (the Valladolid fans), in the end it's what all players want, we want people to enjoy it with us, whether it's opposition or our own fans," Griezmann told DAZN.

"In the end I have to be grateful for this love, I'm doing really well and I hope to give more."

Atletico beat Sparta Prague 6-0 in the Champions League on Tuesday, meaning Simeone's side scored 11 goals this week without reply.

"There are always things to improve, the team is always looking to do better," Simeone told DAZN.

"We have to keep our humility, the nobility of keeping on looking for more... in the second half we could have done more... but I'll stick with what the team's giving me, with humility you can do anything." – AFP

AC Milan cruise past Empoli to eye Euro spots

AC MILAN swept past Empoli 3-0 yesterday to cut the gap separating them from Serie A's European places to three points.

Alvaro Morata's first league goal in over two months and fine strikes in each half from Tijjani Reijnders were enough for Milan to claim a straight-forward win at a foggy San Siro.

Milan stay seventh on 22 points, three behind Juventus who sit in the Conference League position and are at struggling Lecce overnight.

Paulo Fonseca's side have a game in hand but are six points off

the top four and a further point behind league leaders Napoli ahead of their trip north to Torino today.

However Reijnders insists that Milan are still aiming for a title challenge, with a short trip to high-flying Atalanta coming up this weekend.

"Of course we're thinking about it, because we want to fight for titles and the position where we are now is not what we want," he told DAZN.

Empoli, who began the match with the

league's fourth best defence, stay 10th after failing to score against Milan at the San Siro for the fifth straight match.

Yesterday's win brightened the mood of the 68,000 Milan fans who braved the chilly conditions and poor visibility due to fog which at times, particularly in the first half, blanketed the pitch and stands.

Milan were loudly booed off the field after their drab goalless draw with Juve the previous weekend but the hosts were quickly into Empoli and never looked back once Morata lashed in his fourth goal of the season in the 19th minute.

Reijnders crashed in a first-time effort of his own on the stroke of halftime and then made sure of the points with a driving run and finish which took his goal tally for the season to six.

"We were very good both going forward and in defence... We won 3-0 but we had enough chances to win the game by six or seven," said Fonseca.

Bologna are a point behind Milan after thumping rock-bottom Venezia 3-0, while Como and Monza also stay in the relegation zone after playing out a 1-1 draw in the day's afternoon fixture. – AFP



Barcelona's Gavi (left) is challenged by Las Palmas' Viti during their La Liga match. – AFP/IC

Las Palmas stun Barca

La Liga leaders drop points on 125th anniversary party

LAS PALMAS claimed a surprise 2-1 victory at La Liga leaders Barcelona yesterday, spoiling the hosts' 125th anniversary celebrations.

Sandro Ramirez sent Las Palmas ahead early in the second half and although Raphinha hammered home an equaliser, Fabio Silva struck to claim three points and take his team up to 14th.

Barcelona still lead champions Real Madrid by four points but third-place Los Blancos, who host Getafe overnight, have played two fewer games than the Catalans and Atletico.

Barca have now gone three league games without a victory, after a run of 11 wins in 12 prior in the top flight.

"We had a bad game, we have to look at what we're doing badly to try and improve and win games," Raphinha told Movistar.

"I don't care about my goal, I care about winning, we didn't win and I'm not satisfied with the game."

Barcelona wore white shorts as part of their anniversary celebrations, as they used to back at the start of their history.

They held a gala in the city on Friday night to mark the occasion, having been founded on Nov 29, 1899, but came undone yesterday.

"We have to (play) like we did at the beginning of the season... it's a big disappointment today," coach Hansi Flick told reporters.

"Today we have more than 70% ball possession but we're not able to score the goals – maybe we have to change one or two things.

"We made some mistakes, but it was not the back four, it starts (with the players) in front, we have to speak about that."

The Catalans were able to name teenage starlet Lamine Yamal on the bench after recovering from an ankle problem.

Raphinha came closest to breaking the deadlock in the first half, scoring from an offside position and hitting the crossbar after

being played through by Gavi.

Flick threw on Yamal at the break, hoping the winger would give Barca the advantage after an even first half.

Las Palmas took a surprise lead early in the second half when Kirian Rodriguez played in Ramirez, who drilled home from the edge of the box.

Raphinha hit back quickly for Barcelona with a thumping long-range effort, but Las Palmas were soon ahead again.

Silva ran onto Munoz's probing long ball and fired past Inaki Pena to restore the Canary Islanders' advantage with his fifth goal in eight league matches.

Former Barca goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen made several good saves and Las Palmas survived eight minutes of stoppage time.

"It was a very important win, we worked hard for it, Barca put you under a lot of pressure," midfielder Moleiro told Movistar after Las Palmas sealed their first away win at Barcelona since 1971. – AFP

Kane limps off as Bayern rescue Klassiker draw

HARRY KANE limped off but Jamal Musiala's 85th-minute header salvaged a 1-1 draw for Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich at the home of rivals Borussia Dortmund yesterday.

England captain Kane pulled up with a left thigh issue after 33 minutes, shortly after compatriot Jamie Gittens had opened the scoring for Dortmund.

However, Bayern coach Vincent Kompany said he was optimistic Kane's injury was "not too bad" with Wednesday's German Cup last-16 match against holders Leverkusen looming.

"He (Kane) says it's not too serious. Let's hope so," said Kompany with the 31-year-old set to undergo scans.

Bayern's seven-point lead can be cut to four when second-placed Eintracht Frankfurt play Heidenheim overnight.

Dortmund went back above Freiburg, who beat Borussia Moenchengladbach 3-1 on Saturday, into fifth place but remain 10 points behind the leaders.

This *Klassiker* was a meeting between the teams with the best home and away records in the Bundesliga, and always promised to be an entertaining contest.

Bayern started the game on top but Dortmund steadied the ship and took the lead in the 27th minute through Gittens' superb individual goal.

Bayern's problems were compounded five minutes later with the loss of Kane but Manuel Neuer kept the Bavarians in the game keeping out a Marcel Sabitzer shot with his right leg just after the hour mark.

Bayern controlled much of the second half but could not convert their ball superiority into goals, until Bayern's best player on the night Musiala secured a point.

Leroy Sane's freekick struck the Dortmund wall, Sane found Michael Olise, whose pinpoint cross was nodded in by Musiala.

"We're happy to have come back, I think we deserved it," said Thomas Muller, Kane's replacement from the bench. – AFP

BY MARK WALKER

Wood can break all records, says Forest boss Nuno

NUNO ESPIRITO SANTO said Nottingham Forest striker Chris Wood has plenty left in the tank after his winning penalty against Ipswich saw him become the club's joint-top Premier League scorer.

Wood, 32, provided the game's decisive moment when emphatically converting from the spot early in the second half for his ninth top-flight goal this season. Only Erling Haaland and Mohamed Salah have scored more.

The New Zealander moved level on 24 top-flight goals in total for Forest, alongside former Netherlands winger Bryan Roy, who spent three years at the City Ground until 1997.

Nuno said after the 1-0 win: "We are

delighted. Not only here, but in New Zealand he's going to break all the records. They are there to be broken, so we're delighted he keeps delivering."

When asked if Wood can continue in the Premier League for a few more seasons, Nuno added: "I believe so."

"As long as Chris does it. Nowadays players really take care of themselves, with nutrition, the rest - it's so important and Chris has this ambition to keep playing."

"He has to keep taking care of his body and his mind. He's perfect now and as long as he continues."

Forest returned to winning ways after back-to-back defeats, in which they conceded six goals, and climbed one place up to sixth in the table.

Nuno was delighted with his side's clean sheet, adding: "We say this over and over again, but I truly believe this should be our mindset, not only as a team or squad, as a club. We have to be very hard to beat."

"We speak with the players about that during the week. We need to go back to basics. Let's be solid. Solid is being aggressive. Sticking to your task, helping your teammates."

Ipswich boss Kieran McKenna had no complaints with referee Tony Harrington's penalty decision.

McKenna said: "Of course it was a big moment in the game. I've not (seen) the angles of the decision back."

"But I think we have to own it and look at it and say you can't lunge in from behind in the penalty area."

"We had the box well covered, we had plenty of people in the frame of goal, it's not a particularly threatening situation."

"We shouldn't give the referee the chance to make a decision there. It was the decisive moment in the game."

"The game didn't have a lot of flow to it. Neither team created an awful lot from open play and we've given away a soft goal." - The Independent

Daniel Munoz (centre) scores Crystal Palace's first goal against Newcastle United. - REUTERS/SPIC



Howe gutted

NEWCASTLE boss Eddie Howe described Crystal Palace's added-time equaliser at Selhurst Park as an "absolutely devastating blow".

Daniel Munoz struck in the 93rd minute to secure a 1-1 draw that lifts Palace out of the relegation zone after a Marc Guehi own-goal had given the visitors the lead against the run of play.

Newcastle appeared to have claimed all three points despite failing to register a single attempt on target and only one shot all afternoon - compared to Palace's 16. Munoz's header ruined their celebrations, however.

"Killer blow at the end. We defended really well for the majority of the game and Nick Pope had important saves to make," Howe said.

"When you come here you know you're going to be examined in lots of different ways. We stood up to that really well until the end. It's an absolutely devastating blow for us because we thought we were there."

"There was a lot of good from us in the first two thirds but nothing in the final third. We look a little bit low on confidence and we were lacking a cutting edge up front."

Newcastle suffered the setback of losing Alexander Isak to a hip problem in the 22nd minute but Howe played down fears he is facing another spell in the treatment room.

"It was a contact injury and not a muscle pull, which is good news for us.

Magpies boss 'devastated' by Palace's late equaliser

We hope he will recover quickly but at this moment I don't know," Howe said.

Palace boss Oliver Glasner viewed the draw as a wasted opportunity to secure only the club's second Premier League win of the season given the number of chances they created.

"The result is not a good result when we see the performance. The performance was very, very positive. The stats show 16 to one shots," Glasner said.

"We deserved more because of the way the players played and the chances we created. When you score an equaliser in the 95th minute you have to be happy with that and we are."

"But the feeling is not that it was a lucky point, more that we lost two points. We feel that we deserved three."

"It shows our character that we kept going and believing we could score a goal because it was mentally a very tough game."

Glasner ran from the dugout to the corner flag to celebrate with his players when the equaliser was scored.

"It's this feeling you just get in football. It was like a release. I didn't know that I'm still so quick! The players deserve everything because they left their hearts on the pitch," he said. - The Independent

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1st Prize	2758
2nd Prize	2664
3rd Prize	7655

Special	4909	8910
	6289	1850
	3789	7239
	6260	0578
	0643	7153
Consolation	7387	9203
	9440	0022
	1588	2445
	5715	7447
	8067	1990

4D JACKPOT

Jackpot 1 **RM 17,810,905.04**

2758	2664	2664	2758
2758	7655	7655	2758
2664	7655	7655	2664

Jackpot 2 **RM 235,497.57**
Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

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1st Prize	2758	+	HORSE
2nd Prize	2664	+	
3rd Prize	7655	+	
4th Prize	Special Prize	+	
5th Prize	Consolation Prize	+	
6th Prize	Any 4D drawn number	+	

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2ND	8 3 9 8 7	4TH	6 6 1 0
3RD	4 0 1 8 1	5TH	6 1 1 0
		6TH	1 0 1 0

6D 1ST **4 0 7 3 7 3**

2ND	4 0 7 3 7	or	0 7 3 7 3
3RD	4 0 7 3	or	7 3 7 3
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1+3D SUPER1+3D

1st Prize	9149
2nd Prize	3561
3rd Prize	7704

Starters	6190	5061	1433	7849
	5754	5284	4144	3377
	9028	5205	8571	9747
	0494	1306	6993	2078
	4796	3479	5212	6348
Consolation				

1-3D Jackpot

Jackpot 1	RM14,086,243.30
9149 + 3561	3561 + 9149
9149 + 7704	7704 + 9149
3561 + 7704	7704 + 3561

Jackpot 2 **RM138,214.50**
Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

3-3D Bonus

1st Prize	Bonus	1st Prize Bonus
089 149 +	OX	RM1,040,342.00
2nd Prize	Bonus	2nd Prize Bonus
913 561 +	RABBIT	RM1,015,532.30
3rd Prize	Bonus	3rd Prize Bonus
797 704 +	MONKEY	RM1,556,188.40

Starters	066 190	095 061	151 433	307 849
	685 754	035 284	044 144	023 377
	749 028	615 205	518 571	099 747
	320 494	731 306	176 993	762 078
	854 796	603 479	415 212	406 348
Consolation				

3D

1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
149	561	704

3D Jackpot

Jackpot	RM744,239.10
149 + 561 + 704	561 + 704 + 149
149 + 704 + 561	704 + 149 + 561
561 + 149 + 704	704 + 561 + 149

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RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Brentford 4 (Wissa 25, Schade 29, 45+8, 59) Leicester 1 (Buonanotte 21), Crystal Palace 1 (Munoz 90+4) Newcastle 1 (Guehi 53-og), Nottingham Forest 1 (Wood 49-pen) Ipswich 0, West Ham 2 (Wan-Bissaka 38, Emerson 40) Arsenal 5 (Gabriel 10, Trossard 27, Odegaard 34-pen, Havertz 36, Saka 45+5-pen), Wolves 2 (Strand Larsen 5, 69) Bournemouth 4 (Kluivert 3-pen, 18-pen, 74-pen, Kerkez 8),

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	12	10	1	1	24	8	31
Arsenal	13	7	4	2	26	14	25
Brighton	13	6	5	2	22	17	23
Man City	12	7	2	3	22	17	23
Chelsea	12	6	4	2	23	14	22
Nottm Forest	13	6	4	3	16	13	22
Brentford	13	6	2	5	26	23	20
Tottenham	12	6	1	5	27	13	19
Aston Villa	12	5	4	3	19	19	19
Newcastle	13	5	4	4	14	14	19
Bournemouth	13	5	3	5	20	19	18
Fulham	12	5	3	4	17	17	18
Man Utd	12	4	4	4	13	13	16
West Ham	13	4	3	6	17	24	15
Everton	12	2	5	5	10	17	11
Leicester	13	2	4	7	16	27	10
Crystal Palace	13	1	6	6	11	18	9
Wolves	13	2	3	8	22	32	9
Ipswich	13	1	6	6	13	24	9
Southampton	13	1	2	10	10	25	5

CHAMPIONSHIP: Blackburn 1 Leeds 0, Bristol City 4 Plymouth 0, Coventry 2 Cardiff 2, Middlesbrough 3 Hull 1, Norwich 4 Luton 2, Oxford 1 Millwall 1, Preston 1 West Brom 1, Swansea 2, Portsmouth 2, Stoke 0 Burnley 2, Watford 0 QPR 0.

TOP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheff Utd	18	12	4	2	25	9	38
Burnley	18	10	6	2	23	6	36
Leeds	18	10	5	3	31	13	35
Sunderland	18	9	6	3	26	13	33
Middlesboro	18	9	3	6	32	21	30

LA LIGA: Barcelona 1 (Raphinha 61) Las Palmas 2 (Ramirez 49, Silva 67), Alaves 1 (Vicente 87) Leganes 1 (Rodriguez 67), Espanyol 3 (Cardona 40, Cabrera 53, Chedira 87) Celta Vigo 1 (Aspas 83-pen), Real Valladolid 0 Atletico Madrid 5 (Lenglet 26, Alvarez 35, De Paul 37, Griezmann 52, Sorloth 90+2).

TOP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	15	11	1	3	43	16	34
Atletico	15	9	5	1	26	8	32
Real Madrid	13	9	3	1	28	11	30
Villarreal	13	7	4	2	25	21	25
Mallorca	15	7	3	5	15	13	24

SERIE A: Bologna 3 Venezia 0, Como 1 Monza 1, AC Milan 3 Empoli 0.

TOP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli	13	9	2	2	20	9	29
Atalanta	13	9	1	3	34	16	28
Inter Milan	13	8	4	1	31	14	28
Fiorentina	13	8	4	1	27	10	28
Lazio	13	9	1	3	28	14	28

BUNDESLIGA: RB Leipzig 1 Wolfsburg 5, Werder Bremen 2 Stuttgart 2, Augsburg 1 Bochum 0, Union Berlin 1 Bayer Leverkusen 2, Freiburg 3 Borussia Monchengladbach 1, Borussia Dortmund 1 Bayern Munich 1.

TOP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	12	9	3	0	37	8	30
E. Frankfurt	11	7	2	2	27	16	23
B. Leverkusen	12	6	5	1	28	19	23
RB Leipzig	12	6	3	3	19	14	21
B. Dortmund	12	6	2	4	23	19	20

FRENCH LIGUE 1: Rennes 5 Saint-Etienne 0, Brest 3 Strasbourg 1, Paris Saint-Germain 1 Nantes 1.

TOP 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	13	10	3	0	37	11	33
Monaco	12	8	2	2	21	10	26
Marseille	12	7	2	3	27	16	23
Lille	12	6	4	2	19	11	22
Nice	12	5	5	2	23	12	20

Yusri wants *Bos Gaurus* to up the ante

PERAK FC head coach Yusri Che Lah has urged his players to enhance their gameplay if the team aim to progress further and contend for the Malaysia Cup title this season.

While relieved by their 3-1 victory over Kelantan Darul Naim (KDN) FC at the Manjung Municipal Council Stadium (MPM) on Saturday night, Yusri acknowledged that there is still room for improvement to ensure Perak's

continued success.

"The players need to be smarter in controlling the game and capitalising on every opportunity. Even though we won, I feel the performance was not quite up to the mark as the home team.

"Nevertheless, I commend the players for advancing past the Round of 16 and into the quarterfinals, but we must remain alert as

December's schedule is quite packed," he told the post-match press conference.

Following their dominant 3-0 win in the first leg at the Petaling Jaya City Council Stadium (MBPJ) last week, the "Bos Gaurus" secured their spot in the 2024/25 Malaysia Cup quarterfinals with a 6-1 aggregate victory.

Meanwhile, KDN FC assistant head coach Rezal Zambery Yahya admitted that a lack of confidence among his players contributed to their 1-3 defeat against Perak.

"In the first half, the lack of confidence was evident, but in the second half, there were improvements, and we managed to score one goal.

"Confidence and belief need to be built, and from tonight's performance, the players need to work harder and look ahead to rectify mistakes," he added. - Bernama

Bullish Bidoglio

Coach wants *Southern Tigers* to win all matches



JDT head coach Hector Bidoglio. - BERNAMAPIC

JOHOR DARUL TA'ZIM (JDT) head coach Hector Bidoglio wants his players to remain focused to ensure victory in all Malaysia Cup matches.

He said the Malaysia Cup is an important competition for the Southern Tigers as they aim to defend their title.

"We need to stay focused and continue to grow, as well as improve skills.

"We also need to play better in terms of high-intensity gameplay to win every match in this tournament," he told a press conference after their match against Kuala Lumpur Rovers (KL Rovers) in the second leg of the Round of 16 at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium, in Iskandar Puteri on Saturday.

At the same time, he expressed satisfaction with his team's performance, who crushed KL Rovers with a 9-0 aggregate win to advance to the quarterfinals.

The Southern Tigers recorded a big victory after sinking the A1 Semi Pro League team 6-0 in the round of 16 second leg match.

JDT, who beat KL Rovers 3-0 in the first leg match on Nov 20, followed the goal-spree as early as the 13th minute through an own goal by KL Rovers defender, Mohammad Raffi Nagoorgani before left-back La Vere Corbin-Ong put JDT in a comfortable position, scoring in the 33rd minute, before former Real Madrid player Jese Rodriguez extended control with a first-half injury-time goal.

JDT continued their onslaught in the second half when imported striker from Brazil, Bergson da Silva scored two goals, in the 74th and 82nd minutes respectively and JDT, under the management of Hector Bidoglio, then completed the stylish victory through Mohamadou Sumareh's goal, which easily finished off Muhammad Nazmi Faiz Mansori's push in the 88th minute.

KL Rovers assistant head coach Iqbal Hanafi Masduki said his players gave their best despite being tired.

"The players have given 100 percent, we are very grateful because they performed well and this is an experience to go through the A1 Semi Pro League where we will meet the Bukit Tambun team, next week.

"We hope this performance can be maintained because it is a valuable experience especially for young players who have the opportunity to play this time," he said. - Bernama

Young Tigers held by Bangladesh

THE Young Tigers missed the chance to snatch an early ticket to the Men's Hockey Junior Asia Cup semifinals, and the 2025 Junior World Cup qualification after they were held 2-2 against Bangladesh on Saturday.

The national men's junior squad got off on the right foot at the Oman Hockey Stadium in Muscat, as Muhammad Danial Danial Abdul Wahab slotted a field goal in the second minute.

However, Bangladesh took the lead via Amirul Islam's 27th-minute penalty corner and Md Hasan's 36th-minute field goal.

Muhammad Khairul Norizam then converted a penalty corner in the 40th minute to help the Young Tigers share the spoils.

A draw against Pakistan in the last group

stage match will ensure the Young Tigers get into the semifinals, regardless of the outcome of the Bangladesh versus China match.

I. Vikneswaran's charges, who beat China 5-2 and Oman 9-1, currently top the group with seven points, followed by Pakistan with six points after two matches, Bangladesh (4 points), China (3) and Oman (0).

The top two teams from the group will advance to the semifinals, while the top six finishers in the tournament will qualify for the Junior World Cup.

Malaysia's best-ever performance in the Junior Asia Cup was winning the title in the 2012 edition hosted in Melaka, while in the last edition held in Salalah, Oman, the Young Tigers finished fourth. - Bernama

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5006 + 8197	5006 + 8488
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GROUP 3	9706	OR	0688
GROUP 4	970	OR	688
GROUP 5	97	OR	88
OR			
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SCAN ME



Arsenal's William Saliba (2nd left) in action with West Ham United's Jean-Clair Todibo and Lukasz Fabianski (centre). - REUTERS/SPIC

Arsenal have momentum back after victory at West Ham: Arteta

MIKEL ARTETA admitted Arsenal's 5-2 win at West Ham was "crazy", but he believes his side have got their momentum back in the Premier League title race.

The Gunners have proved reports of their demise have been exaggerated after three thumping wins in the space of a week.

Having gone five Premier League matches without a win until they beat Nottingham Forest 3-0 the previous weekend, Arsenal then thrashed Sporting Lisbon 5-1 in the Champions League on Tuesday.

They then put in another five-star display in a breathless encounter - or first half at least - at the London Stadium.

Just as they had in Lisbon, Arsenal had five different scorers, with Gabriel, Leandro Trossard, Martin Odegaard, Kai Havertz and Bukayo Saka finding the net.

West Ham waited until they were

4-0 down before showing a modicum of fight, with goals from Aaron Wan-Bissaka and Emerson Palmieri briefly making things interesting.

But Saka rolled in a penalty to put Arsenal back in charge and ensure the second half was a non-event.

It was a record-equalling score-line, only the fourth time seven goals have been scored in the first half of a Premier League match.

"That tells you how crazy it was," said Arteta. "A spectacular 30 minutes, straight away showed how much the team wanted it, to score three great goals in different ways and then the fourth."

"But then after that we had a period with the quality of them, at 4-2 and it's game on, the energy changed. And what's next?"

"So it was great to score the fifth one and we could play a very different game in the second half."

"We've got some momentum, some flow back, three consecutive

wins is great. We are in a great moment. But in football, be on your toes. It's so competitive. We'll analyse today and go again tomorrow."

Arsenal have not lost a Premier League game Odegaard has played in since April - but it is notable from some key stats that while Saka has played double the minutes of Odegaard, he has much more than double the Norwegian's number in several key metrics.

Odegaard, in 499 Premier League minutes this season, has scored one goal, provided two assists, had three shots and created a further four chances.

Saka, in 981 league minutes, has scored five goals, provided 10 assists, taken 40 shots and created another 36 chances for teammates.

Based on these stats one might claim Saka, somehow, remains underrated. But the stats reflect the Arsenal pipeline.

Odegaard feeds Saka, Saka feeds

the team - and Saka gets the glamorous stats.

"Bukayo Saka and Martin Odegaard linked up beautifully at times and they looked like the side we've seen over the last couple of years," Jamie Redknapp told *Sky Sports*.

"It just shows everybody what Odegaard does for this team - he knits it together. He is the glue in the team."

"He is an absolute joy to watch and you see how much better they are with him."

"He frees Saka up and gives him that time in one-on-one situations that you can't really have unless Odegaard is playing."

Hammers boss Julen Lopetegui felt Arsenal's first goal, another inventive corner routine which saw Jurrien Timber barge Lucas Paqueta out of the way before Gabriel headed home, should not have counted.

He had no complaints about Trossard's tap-in from Saka's cross, or

the foul on Saka by a combination of Emerson and Paqueta which allowed Odegaard to add the third from the spot.

Arsenal's fourth came from a mistake from Max Kilman which allowed Havertz to race through.

But Lopetegui also felt Lukasz Fabianski's inadvertent punch on Gabriel, rather than the ball, was not sufficient to give the Gunners a second penalty.

"It was a very strange first half - we didn't deserve two goals and they didn't deserve five," he said.

"Some very strange things happened. The first goal was a set-piece that we prepared for and it's a clear foul. We have to do better with the second and third goals."

"We scored two goals with positive energy and then the fifth goal, the penalty, in my opinion is not a penalty. The fifth goal killed the match." - The Independent/Agencies

