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Although not perfect substitute for beef, option serves as reliable and affordable source of protein for lower income groups.

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Shinawatra inspects a guard of honour during a welcoming ceremony prior to her meeting with Anwar in Putrajaya yesterday. - REUTERS/SPIC

US\$30b trade target by 2027

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and Thai counterpart Paetongtarn Shinawatra reaffirm Malaysia-Thailand commitment to enhance investment and bilateral businesses.

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M'sia, Thailand target RM113b trade by 2027

➤ Both parties must work towards ambitious goal due to significant economic potential: Anwar

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia and Thailand have reaffirmed their commitment to enhance investment and bilateral trade through the Joint Task Force on Trade and Investment, with a target of US\$30 billion (RM133.73 billion) by 2027.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said while the target may seem ambitious, the significant economic potential in Thailand and Malaysia makes it an objective that both countries must work towards.

During a joint press conference with Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra yesterday, Anwar said the northern provinces in Malaysia need additional focus and investment, similar to the needs of the southern provinces in Thailand.

Paetongtarn is here for the 7th Annual Consultation in conjunction with her first official visit since assuming office in August.

During her visit, she saw the exchange of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on

rubber between Malaysian Rubber Board director-general Datuk Dr Zairossani Mohd Nor and Thailand Rubber Authority acting governor Sukatus Tarnwiriyakul.

Paetongtarn said in terms of economic cooperation, both countries would focus on efforts to trade and invest in border connectivity, the digital economy and tourism.

She highlighted the potential for cooperation in the rubber and *halal* industries, which could benefit both nations.

"For the border areas, we discussed the need to address the flood problems faced by both countries, and will continue to work closely to improve border road and rail connectivity to facilitate more trade and people-to-people interactions.

"After the meetings, we witnessed the signing of two MoUs on rubber and cultural cooperation. I am confident this would strengthen our economic and people-to-people relations."

Paetongtarn yesterday expressed support for Malaysia's role as Asean chair in 2025, adding that she hoped Malaysia and Thailand could work together for the good of both countries and Asean as a whole.

"I am committed to maintaining the dynamics of our relationship, and our efforts towards common peace and prosperity," she said during the joint press conference, following her visit to Malaysia at the invitation of Anwar.

Both countries share a similar position on the inclusion of Timor-Leste in Asean, committing to support its accession as a full member.

"I thank Prime Minister Paetongtarn for her unwavering support of Malaysia's Asean chairmanship," said Anwar.

He said both leaders are working together to ensure some of the conditions imposed on Timor-Leste are met before the initial meeting of Asean at the end of May.

He also shared both country's commitments to bolster intra-Asean trade, Bernama reported.

Anwar said Malaysia and Thailand aim to facilitate efficient, seamless movement of goods within the region.

Premier hosts luncheon in honour of Thai PM

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday hosted an official luncheon in honour of Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra at the Seri Perdana complex here.

Paetongtarn and her delegation, who arrived in Malaysia on Sunday for a two-day official visit, were welcomed by Anwar at his official residence at 11.45am.

Both premiers were accompanied by their respective spouses, Pidok Sooksawas and Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan, and Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Abdul Aziz.

Earlier, Anwar and Paetongtarn held a meeting to strengthen bilateral relations under the 7th Malaysia-Thailand Annual Consultation framework.

Paetongtarn's visit underscores the long-standing friendship between Malaysia and Thailand as close neighbours and partners in Asean. - Bernama

Financing for 9,400 Indian entrepreneurs

KUALA LUMPUR: The Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Ministry through Tekun Nasional has approved RM204.5 million in financing to 9,412 entrepreneurs under the Indian Community Entrepreneur Development Scheme from 2019 to November.

Its deputy minister Datuk Seri R. Ramanan said 1,877 entrepreneurs or 20% have been listed with credit reporting agencies due to repayment failures.

He said to address the issue, Tekun Nasional has implemented measures such as collaborating with the Credit Counselling and Debt Management Agency to provide financial education programmes and monitoring entrepreneurs closely to ensure repayment compliance.

"The third (measure) is to strengthen communication in the debt collection process by sending automatic reminders via SMS and email to help borrowers manage payment schedules.

"The final measure is offering restructuring options, such as extended payment periods or reduced monthly instalments, for those facing financial difficulties," he said during a question-and-answer session in Dewan Negara yesterday.

He was responding to Senator Datuk Sivaraj Chandran's query about the percentage of borrowers blacklisted for repeatedly failing to repay the scheme's financing and the measures taken to address the issue.

Ramanan said the ministry offers additional loans to borrowers who make consistent payments for six consecutive months, helping to support business recovery.

"Payments can be as low as RM30 per month for those opting for restructuring. However, loan write-offs are not an option as they would limit opportunities for other entrepreneurs to expand their businesses." - Bernama



VIP VISITOR ... Education Minister Fadhliana Sidek taking a picture with students during a visit to SMK Kuala Jengal in Dungun, Terengganu yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

No decision yet on joining PKR, says Zafrul

KUALA LUMPUR: Umno supreme council member Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz stressed that he has not yet made a decision regarding the rumours of him joining Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR).

Tengku Zafrul, who is also investment, trade and industry minister, said he adheres to the principle of making a decision with full courtesy and officially informing his party leadership.

"I have not made a decision regarding membership in any party, although as the prime minister mentioned, there have been discussions on the matter with relevant parties.

"I am surprised by the development of the leadership's statement on the matter. Since this issue was first raised, I have not received any calls from the Umno leadership to enquire about the real issue."

He said in carrying out his responsibilities and commitments as a member of the government administration, his political struggle is focused on the need to carry out his duties well for the benefit of the people.

Commenting on initial discussions with PKR, he said there was no discussion regarding the offer of positions at the state level or the

possibility of a by-election, focusing instead on choosing a suitable platform for political struggle for the development of the people and the country.

"I believe an individual's right to choose the path of struggle is a fundamental and absolute right because without compatibility it is impossible for an individual to provide the best service.

"I left the corporate world to become a member of the government administration because I was confident that it is a career path that could provide space and opportunities for

me to serve the people and also contribute to the national development agenda directly."

He had previously announced that he would clarify regarding the rumours of his joining PKR and the speculation to replace PKR vice-president Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari as Selangor *menteri besar*.

PKR president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim confirmed on Sunday that there were initial discussions regarding Tengku Zafrul's participation in the party, which is open to accepting any individual who can contribute to the party. - Bernama

Ministry disburses RM13m in aid to farmers

KUALA LUMPUR: The Agriculture and Food Security Ministry has disbursed RM13.23 million in aid to 6,747 padi farmers affected by floods this year, the Dewan Negara was told yesterday.

Deputy Minister Datuk Arthur Joseph Kurup said the assistance addresses damage and losses at padi fields covering 12,800ha, based on data compiled as of October.

"Kelantan, Kedah and Perlis were among the most severely affected by the disaster.

"The 2023 Padi Crops Disaster Funds previously allocated RM8.38 million to assist 4,946 farmers in the three affected states, covering devastated areas of 7,400ha," he said during the question-and-answer session.

He was responding to a supplementary question from Senator Abdul Nasir Idris on the value of aid provided and the number of farmers benefitting from the fund.

Arthur added that the ministry will hold a meeting to evaluate the damage incurred by farmers due to the floods that occurred from June to October. – Bernama

Selangor to contribute RM500,000 for Kelantan flood relief operations

SHAH ALAM: The Selangor government will donate RM500,000 to Kelantan as support aid to assist with recovery efforts following floods last month.

Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari said the allocation will be tabled at the state executive council meeting tomorrow for final approval.

"This support aid will be used to repair damaged infrastructure and other affected facilities. Through the Selangor Prihatin Fund, we provide assistance to disaster-affected areas, including Kelantan," he said after officiating at the Disaster Aid Mission, Ihsan Madani Squad: Selangor-Kelantan Post-Flood Assistance at the Selangor State Secretariat Building yesterday.

He added that the state government has mobilised the Ihsan Madani squad, comprising local authority staff and volunteers, to assist with post-flood recovery efforts in Kelantan.

The team also includes Selangor's waste management company, KDEB Waste Management, which will handle the cleanup of public infrastructure and homes affected by the disaster. – Bernama

Health insurance hike could trigger inflation spike: MEF

■ BY JOSHUA PURUSHOTMAN
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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF) has warned that a significant increase in health insurance premiums could compel businesses to raise the prices of their products and services.

Its president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said such price adjustments would erode the competitive edge of micro, small and medium enterprises, drive customers away and reduce their market share.

"Businesses will be forced to pass on the increased costs to consumers, contributing to broader economic inflation. This will affect general price levels within the economy and decrease consumers' purchasing power," he said.

Syed Hussain was commenting on recent media reports of insurance providers seeking to increase premiums by 40% to 78%.

He said to mitigate these costs, some employers may reduce health insurance coverage levels, resulting in less comprehensive benefits for employees.

He urged Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM) and the government to urgently address issues related to the proposed premium increases.

Syed Hussain said many employers already provide resources

and support systems to enhance employee well-being as part of a strategic approach to improving overall health.

► 'Businesses may raise prices or cut coverage, affecting competitiveness and employee benefits'

Based on the MEF Survey on Flexible Working Arrangement: Assessing Practices and Perspectives of Private Sector Employers in Malaysia (2024), the most widely offered resource, by 46.6% of respondent companies, includes educational workshops, seminars or webinars on stress management.

Flexible working arrangements are provided by 44.5% of companies to give employees greater control over their schedules and improve work-life balance.

Additionally, 30.9% of companies offer an Employee Assistance Programme, which provides confidential support for personal and work-related challenges.

"A total of 26.7% of companies also provide management training to identify signs of stress or mental health concerns, enabling supervisors to proactively support employee well-being.

"With all of these initiatives, which cost significant amounts, employers cannot afford to absorb the cost of higher insurance premiums as well," he said.

Comprehensive health insurance plans that include mental health coverage are available in 19.4% of companies, while 18.3% provide therapy sessions with licensed therapists or psychologists, offering professional support either on-site or off-site.

Syed Hussain added that 39.5% of companies have analysed employee health insurance claims to customise health programmes and insurance plans to address prevalent health trends and risks.

"This targeted strategy enhances employee well-being and helps control insurance costs by addressing specific health issues proactively," he said.

MEF supports the launch of the Rakan KKM programme, which allows patients to access additional health facilities at minimal costs through a collaboration between

government-linked investment companies and the Health Ministry.

Syed Hussain also commended the government's revisions to Schedule 13 of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act, particularly regarding consultant fees, and lauded BNM's directive for insurance and *takaful* operators to reassess their pricing strategies for medical and health insurance products.

"In 2019, household health expenditure in Malaysia accounted for about 34% in out-of-pocket payments, higher than Singapore (30.1%) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (13.9%).

"This reflects the demand for private healthcare, as the public health sector is heavily congested, motivating the drive for private healthcare insurance ownership," he said.

Despite this demand, private health insurance coverage in Malaysia remains low, with data from the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2019 indicating that only 14.3% of Malaysians have private health insurance.

"Higher insurance premium costs will force some existing policyholders to review their policies, and some may even drop out as they can no longer afford the higher premiums."



WAVE RIDER ...

A participant showcasing his skills during the finals of the Kemasin Surf Competition Volume 1 at Pantai Impian Kemasin in Kelantan yesterday. – BERNAMAPIC

'Resignation aimed at strengthening PN'

KUALA TERENGGANU: Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Samsuri Mokhtar has denied claims that his resignation as Perikatan Nasional (PN) treasurer-general was due to a rift within the coalition.

Ahmad Samsuri, who is also PAS vice-president, clarified that the move was intended to strengthen PN as a political alliance in preparation for the 16th general election.

"There is no rift at all. We are simply exploring ways to reinforce the coalition.

"I suggest reading my Facebook post, in which I quoted Kareem Abdul-Jabbar – interpret it from there," he said after attending Kolej Al-Quran Terengganu's 5th *Imaratul Ilmi* ceremony at Taman Tamadun Islam on Sunday.

Also present was State Education, Higher Education, Science, Technology and Human Development Committee chairman Datuk Saiful Bahari Mamat.

When asked if his resignation was linked to personal issues, Ahmad Samsuri declined to elaborate, leaving the matter for PN's top leadership to address.

He also said his decision was unrelated to the Sabah Progressive Party withdrawal from PN.

On Wednesday, Ahmad Samsuri announced his resignation as PN treasurer-general in a brief statement to the PAS Central leadership. – Bernama

Malacca allocates RM30,000 to help retired police families

ALOR GAJAH: The Malacca government has allocated RM30,000 to three district police headquarters in the state to support retired police officers and the families of serving personnel.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Ab Rauf Yusoh said each headquarters – in Central Malacca, Alor Gajah and Jasin – will receive RM10,000 to assist those facing difficulties.

"The funds are intended to help retired police officers in need and

to provide aid to the children of serving personnel," he said during a community luncheon held in conjunction with a joint programme between the state government and police at Villa D'Acqua in Masjid Tanah on Sunday.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Razarudin Husain and Malacca deputy police chief Datuk Md Nazri Nawawi were also present.

Earlier, Razarudin and Ab Rauf

spent over an hour visiting three families and police retirees in Masjid Tanah, delivering aid and offering moral support.

One recipient, Siti Hafidah Bache, 58, the widow of the late Sgt-Major (Rtd) Ibrahim Jaafar, expressed thanks and surprise at receiving a visit from Razarudin and Ab Rauf.

She shared that her late husband had long wished to meet Razarudin but tragically passed

away on Dec 4 before fulfilling that hope.

"My husband had expressed his wish to meet the IGP after learning about Razarudin's planned visit to Masjid Tanah for this programme.

"Sadly, his wish was unfulfilled as he succumbed to lymphoma after three weeks of illness earlier this month. I am truly touched by Tan Sri's thoughtfulness in visiting my family, even in my husband's absence," she said. – Bernama



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M'sians turn to eggs as affordable protein source

➤ Not direct substitute for meat but serves as reliable alternative for low-income households: Committee chairman

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

GEORGE TOWN: As meat prices continue to rise in Penang, eggs have become a more affordable and accessible protein source, especially for lower-income groups.

State Agrotechnology, Food Security and Cooperative Development Committee chairman Fahmi Zainol said while eggs are not a direct substitute for meat, they serve as a good alternative for low-income households.

"Eggs provide a reliable and affordable source of protein for families on tight budgets as compared with more expensive meats, such as beef and pork.

"They provide a nutritious source of protein at a fraction of the cost of traditional meat products," he told *theSun*.

He said farming of poultry, whether for meat or eggs, is more land-efficient than livestock, such as cattle and pigs, which require larger spaces.

"In areas with limited land, poultry farming allows for better utilisation of available space while providing a steady, sustainable and affordable source of protein."

He said although the government has implemented price controls to address the rising cost of chicken, eggs remain a more affordable and reliable option.

From 2021 to 2023, the rising price of chicken led to prolonged price controls, contributing to the growing popularity of eggs as a more affordable protein source.

Fahmi said unlike fish, which are dependent on natural conditions,



Fahmi said unlike fish, which are dependent on natural conditions, poultry farming offers a more predictable protein source. – SYED AZAHAR SYED OSMAN/THESUN

poultry farming offers a more predictable protein source option.

He also pointed out the broader factors influencing protein demand.

"Demand is driven by population size and per capita consumption. If the population grows and per capita consumption rises, demand would naturally increase."

He referred to a decrease in per capita consumption of pork, chicken and mutton in 2021 compared with the previous year, according to the Statistics Department.

He said in Penang, demand for beef, mutton and fresh milk fell in 2023 largely due to a reduction in per capita consumption, which was attributed to statewide per capita alignment that adjusted the figures used for 2023 compared with 2022.

Fahmi highlighted the outbreak of African Swine Fever in Penang as exacerbating the situation, causing a sharp decline in pork production.

"Although production levels remained

sufficient, the price of pork rose, prompting an increase in demand for alternative proteins, such as chicken, duck and eggs."

He said the decrease in demand in 2022, compared with 2021, was partly due to a slowdown in Penang's population growth rate by 0.1%, influenced by the number of non-citizen residents and restrictions on international travel due to Covid-19.

The rising cost of food, including meat, has been identified as a key issue in Unicef's recent report "Families on the Edge, Penang", published in August.

The report stated that households in the state have increasingly turned to more affordable protein sources, such as eggs, to maintain nutrition as financial pressures increase.

It also mentioned that there was a 47% decline in meat consumption in 2022 compared with pre-pandemic levels, while many families struggled with food insecurity and rising costs.

Convention calls for preservation of racial unity

SEREMBAN: The Nunji Convention (Gathering of Islamic Scholars for the New Awakening) has called for the aspect of racial unity in the country to be preserved by addressing extremist and radical ideologies.

Nunji Academy chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa said the call was among six resolutions reached at the convention, which also decided that moderation should be the core principle for Muslims and citizens in the country to prevent extremism and radical attitudes.

"Do not easily label others as infidels. Islam also forbids extremism. We must spread the Madani agenda and promote Islam as the religion of mercy to the entire world."

The convention, held on Saturday in Port Dickson with the theme "The Threat of Extremism, Ghuluw and Terrorism in the Madani Era", was officiated by Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs) Dr Zulkifli Hassan and attended by 400 individuals.

Mujahid said the convention agreed that, in addressing these threats, society must work together to assist authorities, government departments and social movements.

He emphasised that stakeholders in the education sector must address the issue of ignorance at its roots.

"Efforts must continue from all parties to eradicate the seeds of extremism at the grassroots level so that a peaceful and harmonious religious and cultural life could be achieved." – Bernama

Japan takes cues from Sarawak transport system

KUCHING: News reports of a plan by Japan's Yamanashi prefecture to use a hydrogen-powered trackless tram to shuttle tourists to Mount Fuji came as another indication of greater global attention towards Sarawak's adoption of the autonomous rapid transit (ART).

Sarawak Metro Sdn Bhd CEO Mazli Mustaffa said a team from the Yamanashi prefecture visited Kuching several months ago to learn more about the Kuching Urban Transportation System (KUTS).

"Our KUTS project team were able to provide insights to the team from Yamanashi prefecture and I believe this has inspired their decision to look into adopting the ART system."

"We are humbled to hear about this latest development as it is a recognition of the work that our team is doing here in Kuching to transform the public transport system."

Mazli said Sarawak Metro is looking forward to further assisting the Yamanashi prefecture team. – Bernama

International mobility event platform for innovation

KUALA LUMPUR: The 10th edition of the Kuala Lumpur International Mobility Show (KLIMS), held from Dec 5 to 11, was a pivotal platform for the latest in automotive and mobility innovations.

With nearly 70 leading automotive and mobility brands on display, the event emphasised sustainability and electrification to

the forefront of innovation.

The event featured notable participants such as Toyota, Perodua, Proton, Honda, Mitsubishi and Nissan, and attracted 183,221 visitors, Bernama reported.

Malaysian Automotive Association president Mohd Shamsor Mohd Zain said the event highlighted Malaysia's expanding

influence in the global mobility landscape.

"KLIMS exemplified Malaysia's commitment to shaping the future of transport and this reaffirms our position as a key player in the global mobility ecosystem, inspiring collaboration and innovation across industries."

"We are excited to build on this momentum, driving progress and setting new benchmarks."

Community choking in stench from polluted river

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
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PENANG: Students and teachers of SJKT Ramathasar and residents living near Sungai Pinang have complained of having to endure a worsening stench from the river, raising serious concerns about public health and the environment.

Penang Hindu Association president P. Murugiah said a recent visit to the school and surrounding areas found large amounts of waste, including plastics, organic and chemical debris, and even animal carcasses, contaminating the river and its banks.

Parent-Teacher Association chairman Anil Subramanian said the stench is unbearable.

"We are forced to keep the school windows and doors shut to reduce the stench, and keep flies and mosquitoes out of the classrooms."

Murugiah said the odour pollution could lead to asthma and other health problems related to respiratory infections and neurodevelopment, especially in children.

"There were piles of plastic bottles, Styrofoam boxes and other waste had accumulated behind the school, creating a breeding ground for mosquitoes."

"A dead monitor lizard was seen floating in the polluted waters. Much of this waste was dumped near a city council signage warning the public of a RM500 fine for throwing rubbish."

He said it was shocking that cleaning contractors assigned by the state government

were seen discarding rubbish under the same sign.

"If those responsible for cleaning are contributing to the problem, how can they be role models for the community?"

He called on authorities to implement countermeasures, including installing CCTV cameras to monitor illegal dumping, and increasing the frequency of clean-ups and inspections.

Murugiah said a proactive approach is required since warning signs are inadequate, and urged the Penang Island City Council to prioritise waste management.

"Investing in efficient waste management strategies is critical. This includes better systems for disposal, reduction and recycling as well as

scheduled rubbish collection."

He said people need to be educated on the long-term damage caused by single-use plastics and styrofoam.

He added that collaboration between the federal and state governments to address pollution in Sungai Pinang could ensure the affected residents and students enjoy their fundamental right to a clean environment.

"There is a real danger of Penang regaining its unfortunate nickname *Darul Sampah* (Land of Waste) if this situation remains unchecked."

Residents and school officials expressed hope that their appeals would lead to immediate action before their health and well-being deteriorate further.

■ BY QIRANA NABILLA
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Federation condemns holding infant's body over unpaid bills

► Calls for ethical practices and compassion in handling financial disputes

PETALING JAYA: The Federation of Private Medical Practitioners Associations Malaysia has condemned the withholding of a deceased infant's body over unpaid medical bills, calling the practice unethical.

Its president Dr Shanmuganathan Ganeson said such actions violate fundamental principles of human dignity and compassion, which are core to medical ethics.

"Respect for the deceased and grieving family must always take precedence over financial disputes. The practice of linking the release of remains to financial disagreements must be avoided," he said.

Shanmuganathan was commenting on a recent case involving the remains of a baby boy allegedly kept in a freezer for two weeks by a private hospital in Klang due to unpaid medical bills amounting to RM3,600.

According to a Facebook post by Wan Cai Official, the founder of *Unit Khas Van Jenazah*, the mother was also detained by the hospital for the same reason.

"The hospital's actions in withholding the baby's body from

proper funeral arrangements are cruel and unjustified. The mother was already being detained as collateral for the unpaid bills. Why was the baby's body kept in the morgue for two weeks?"

Shanmuganathan emphasised that guidelines such as the Malaysian Medical Council Code of Professional Conduct stress the importance of patient care and dignity, which extends posthumously.

"Hospitals are required to adhere to legal and ethical standards by promptly releasing the remains of deceased patients to their families and ensuring respectful and

compassionate handling of remains.

"Officers handling such cases must act with sensitivity, avoid bias, and ensure dignity and humane treatment for all families, irrespective of financial status," he said.

He added that when patients are unable to pay medical bills, hospitals should adopt more compassionate billing practices that prioritise empathy and support.

"Ethical considerations include offering flexible payment plans to ease the financial burden on families and referring them to financial aid organisations or welfare agencies for assistance.

"Hospitals can also use legal debt recovery measures without disrupting the grieving process. Such practices foster trust and goodwill, aligning medical services with a commitment to humane treatment beyond financial constraints."

While acknowledging that private hospitals operate on business principles, Shanmuganathan said profitability must be balanced with ethical obligations to patients and the community.

theSun contacted the Selangor State Mufti Department for comments on the Islamic perspective regarding the withholding of deceased patients' bodies.

However, the department declined to provide specific comments.

"After discussions with the Selangor Mufti, we have decided not to offer any opinions or comments on this issue for

now. This is due to concerns about appearing biased towards any party and the lack of verified information regarding the matter," its spokesman said.

On Saturday, the Health Ministry said it is awaiting the outcome of an investigation by the Private Medical Practice Control Section (CKAPS) into the case.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said he expects to receive the report from CKAPS soon and will present it at the next post-Cabinet meeting.

"Firstly, we extend our sympathies to the family involved. I am currently awaiting the outcome of an investigation by CKAPS," he said.

Dzulkefly added that the monitoring of private health facilities falls under the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998.

Six nabbed, drugs worth RM3m seized in Penang

GEORGE TOWN: Police have busted a local drug syndicate in Penang with the arrest of six individuals, including two women, and seized drugs worth RM3 million in a series of raids conducted on Dec 6 and 13.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, Penang deputy police chief Datuk Mohd Alwi Zainal Abidin said the initial raids on Dec 6 were carried out at five houses in George Town and Butterworth, resulting in the arrest of six individuals aged between 26 and 42.

Drugs seized during the raids included 9,822g of ketamine, 17,050 Eramin 5 pills, 1,503g of ecstasy, 250.64g of methylenedioxy-methamphetamine and 3.2g of cannabis valued at RM1.34 million.

Further investigations led to another raid on Dec 13 at a luxury condominium unit in Sungai Nibong, which was found to be used by the syndicate to store their drug supplies.

"No arrests were made during this raid, but police seized 55,250 Eramin 5 pills, 382g of ketamine, and 50 ecstasy pills, valued at RM1.639 million," Mohd Alwi said.

Investigations revealed that the syndicate has been active since early this year and received supplies from an international drug ring for distribution in local markets, particularly at entertainment outlets in the state.

In addition to the arrests, police seized nine vehicles worth RM755,500, cash totalling RM26,085, four bank accounts with RM64,703 and jewellery valued at RM800.

All six suspects have been remanded until Dec 20 for further investigations under Section 39B of the Dangerous Drugs Act 1952. — Bernama



Supporters demanding justice for *Kopi* at the Kuala Lumpur Court Complex yesterday. — ADAM AMIR HAMZAH/THESUN

Civil suit filed over killing of stray dog *Kopi*

KUALA LUMPUR: A civil suit has been filed in the Terengganu High Court seeking a declaration that the killing of a stray dog, *Kopi*, was illegal and violated the Animal Welfare Act 2015, lawyer Rajesh Nagarajan said.

At a press conference yesterday, he said the lawsuit aims to hold the Besut District Council accountable for what animal rights groups have described as a brutal and unlawful act, sparking national outrage and calls for stricter enforcement of animal welfare laws.

Among the plaintiffs are animal rescuers Kartini Farah Abd Rahim, Mukunnar Sugumaran, Hong Hai San and Selangor Furry Future Association president Shashi Kumar Shanmugam.

The lawsuit names the Besut District Council and the Terengganu state government as the defendants.

"Nowhere in the Animal Welfare

Act does it allow for any cat, dog, or other animals to be shot.

"The death of *Kopi* is a case of premeditated murder.

"We are deeply saddened that not only was *Kopi* murdered, but many dogs are being brutally killed daily in Malaysia.

"These barbaric acts must be halted and we will not tolerate this anymore," Rajesh said.

The hearing for the case has been scheduled for Jan 15.

However, Rajesh noted that if the court requires replies and submissions to be filed, the process could take three to six months, depending on its directives.

Shashi Kumar, one of the plaintiffs, said a memorandum was submitted to Parliament on Nov 12 calling for reforms to address the treatment and welfare of stray animals.

"During a recent parliamentary session, a minister defended the Animal Welfare Act 2015, asserting that it is sufficient and does not require amendments, while criticising the effectiveness of humane strategies like trap-neuter-release programmes.

"If the government has a good strategy for controlling the dog population, why are their numbers growing?" he questioned.

Kopi became a viral topic after a 52-second video showed the dog dying from severe injuries.

A resident reported hearing a loud gunshot before discovering the incident on Oct 6.

The Besut District Council previously said its action against the stray dog adhered to field procedures. — by QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI

Former accountant charged with CBT

KUALA LUMPUR: A former accountant of a clothing company pleaded not guilty in the Sessions Court yesterday to committing criminal breach of trust (CBT) involving more than RM200,000 of the company's funds last year.

Siti Nur Aisyah Ismail, 33, was accused of transferring RM206,222.24 from the company's sales into her bank account for personal use at a premises in Jalan Chempenuai, Bukit Damansara, between Jan 19, 2023 and March 12, 2024.

She was charged under Section 408 of the Penal Code, which provides imprisonment of up to 14 years, whipping and a fine upon conviction.

Judge Mohd Kafil Che Ali allowed bail of RM15,000 with one surety and ordered the accused to report to a nearby police station once a month and surrender her passport to the court. — Bernama

Over 56,000 fraudulent online posts removed

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 56,294 fraudulent online contents have been removed or taken down with the cooperation of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission from January to Dec 1 this year as part of the government's efforts to combat online crime.

Deputy Communications Minister Teo Nie Ching said the number of removed contents this year showed quite a significant increase from 6,297 posts in 2023 and 242 in 2022.

Furthermore, she mentioned that Malaysia recorded a loss of RM1.224 billion from January to October this year due to online fraud.

"It's not that the ministry hasn't made efforts to remove fraudulent content, but we just don't see this approach as effective." — Bernama

Patching lives with sewing skills

➤ Social enterprise helps B40 women achieve social, financial independence with tailoring training

KUALA LUMPUR: In a suburb in Ampang, Selangor, a social enterprise known as Komuniti Tukang Jahit (KTJ) is transforming the lives of B40 women, including single mothers and housewives. Stitch by stitch, these women are putting their tailoring skills to good use, sewing their way to a sustainable income and financial independence – all from the comfort of their homes.

The initiative allows the women to supplement their household income while balancing family responsibilities. Their products, which range from simple items such as lanyards, name card holders and pouches to laptop covers and corporate merchandise, have penetrated the global market, said KTJ founder and CEO Yap Sue Yui, 32.

Yap drew inspiration to set up KTJ from her mother, Ng Yin Mei, 65, a housewife whose hands-on nature and dedication to charity work left an impression on her.

"My mom is very hands-on and loves do-it-yourself projects. When I was young, she

always took me along when she did her charity work," Yap said during an event to celebrate KTJ's fifth anniversary.

Inspired by her mother's efforts to help other women boost their income, Yap saw the potential to create opportunities for those she affectionately calls "katak-katak" (sisters).

At its core, KTJ's mission is simple. It aims to empower women by giving them a way to contribute financially to their families, Bernama reported.

"When KTJ started, we did not know exactly what we wanted to do, but we knew we wanted to empower the B40 community.

"We realised that many of them had sewing skills, so we decided to secure corporate orders and upskill them with the right training," Yap said.

The training is conducted in-house, where the team assesses each tailor's abilities and craftsmanship.

If a tailor is proficient in sewing name card holders, she might be trained to make more complex items like pouches or laptop covers, which offer higher earning potential.

From a small group of five women when it first started in 2018, its members have since increased to over 340, with about 60 tailors actively involved at any given time. Many have achieved significant financial gains, with some earning up to RM35,000 over several years with KTJ, Yap said.

KTJ's success is largely due to its strong



Yap showing some of the products made by KTJ participants. – BERNAMAPIC

partnerships with corporations, that account for 80% of its sales. Yap said customers typically request unisex, lightweight products such as lanyards, cardholders and laptop covers, that are ideal for events and as corporate gifts.

The enterprise has also expanded to international markets, receiving orders from countries such as Singapore, Japan and Dubai.

"Our customers love that these items are easy for international delegates to take home. We work hard to stay competitive. If prices are too high, they cannot support us for the long term. But if they are too low, we cannot sustain the community."

The social enterprise aims to achieve RM1 million in sales by the end of the year, said Yap, who is optimistic about reaching the target,

emphasising that KTJ is ambitious and wants to grow and gain recognition.

She added that KTJ has also set its sights on expanding to more international markets by the third quarter of next year. In line with the growing demand for sustainable products, KTJ is exploring upcycling to align with environmental, social and corporate governance goals.

"For many of the women, it's not just about the money. It's about being able to say: 'I did this. I earned this.' It changes how they see themselves and how their families see them."

With a clear focus on empowering women and building a sustainable business model, KTJ is paving the way for more women to achieve financial independence – one stitch at a time.

Taking pride in creating honourable products

KUALA KANGSAR: Putri Rafidah Megat Noh beams with pride each time she sees the honorary medals bestowed during investitures.

She has every reason to feel that way as the decorations are produced by her company Mariwasa Kraftangan Sdn Bhd, designed and crafted by her team of dedicated artisans.

Their skilled workmanship is evident in the smallest detail etched into each medal.

This is why the company CEO feels frustrated whenever she comes across reports of individuals receiving fake titles or awards through improper channels.

"The honorary medals are not easy to produce and are not meant for just any person.

"They are symbols of an individual's contributions and services to the nation and their community, and awarded only to those deemed worthy."

Putri Rafidah said Mariwasa was set up in 1975 and was taken over by current owner Megat Mohamad Abdul Wahab Megat Abu Bakar 10 years later when it ran into financial problems.

Megat Mohamad turned the company around after receiving orders for honorary

medals and decorations from the federal and state governments.

Now a leading manufacturer of awards and decorations for the federal government and nearly all state governments, the company is also a subcontractor for a prominent brand in England, producing decorations for the governments of Oman, Kuwait and the Maldives.

From its humble beginnings when it operated out of a shoplot, Mariwasa now has two well-equipped factories, both located in Kuala Kangsar.

"Over the years, we have diversified our

offerings to include uniform accessories, handicrafts, silverware, jewellery and various products made from gold and silver.

"We are also collaborating with companies in England, Germany, Austria and Italy to supply premium banqueting items and interior decorations, catering to customers such as royal palaces and dignitaries," said Putri Rafidah.

She added that there are plans to transform Mariwasa into an innovative company that utilises advanced technology while preserving traditional craftsmanship values and safeguarding the nation's heritage. – Bernama

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Yoon impeachment trial begins

➤ Ruling party head resigns, condemns extremists

SEOUL: South Korea's Constitutional Court kicked off proceedings yesterday over the impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol, who has been suspended from office over his failed bid to impose martial law.

Yoon was removed by South Korea's parliament on Saturday over his short-lived attempt to suspend civilian rule, which plunged the country into its worst political turmoil in years.

The Constitutional Court has around six months to decide whether to uphold the impeachment.

Fresh elections must be held within two months if he is removed. Prime Minister Han Duck-soo is serving as interim leader in Yoon's stead.

The court formally began proceedings yesterday, a spokesman said.

A separate investigation into Yoon and his inner circle over the Dec 3 martial law

declaration has rumbled on as the turmoil deepened.

Yoon remains under a travel ban while the investigation is underway.

The prosecution said in a news release on Sunday they had summoned Yoon for questioning over the insurrection and abuse of power allegations "but he refused to comply".

They said they would issue a "second summons".

The concurrent investigation by a joint police, anti-corruption office and Defence Ministry team is also asking Yoon to appear for questioning, Yonhap news agency said.

They have accused Yoon of being the "ringleader" of the martial law bid.

Huge protests against Yoon, with smaller rallies supporting him, have rocked the South Korean capital since his martial law decree.

Demonstrators in both camps have vowed to keep up the pressure as the Constitutional Court deliberates on Yoon's fate.

Police arrested both the current and former heads of the Defence Intelligence Command on Sunday in connection to the insurrection allegations, Yonhap reported.

Prosecutors said they were also seeking an

arrest warrant for the head of the Army Special Warfare Command, Kwak Jong-keun.

Kwak is accused of sending special forces troops to parliament during the martial law bid, sparking a dramatic confrontation between soldiers and parliamentary staff.

The head of Yoon's ruling People Power Party (PPP), who has not been linked to the martial law move and expressed support for impeachment, resigned yesterday.

"I sincerely apologise to all the people who have suffered due to the emergency martial law incident," Han Dong-hoon told a news conference in Seoul.

In declaring martial law, Yoon vowed to "eliminate anti-state elements" and suggested the country's electoral system was vulnerable to outside interference.

Han Dong-hoon condemned yesterday "extremists such as election fraud conspiracy theorists" and warned "there will be no future for conservatism" if the party entertained those views.

"I wish for the well-being of our country," he said.

The South Korean government has sought to project an air of business as usual.

Acting president Han Duck-soo held a call on Sunday with US President Joe Biden, who underscored the strength of bilateral ties.

He also ordered the military to "enhance vigilance" against North Korea, with which the South technically remains at war.

North Korean state media decried Yoon as a "ringleader of rebellion" yesterday.

The state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Yoon had attempted to shift responsibility for the "foolish emergency martial law declaration" onto opposition parties.

"The investigation into puppet Yoon Suk Yeol, the ringleader of the rebellion, and his accomplices is under way," KCNA said.

"The puppet Constitutional Court will finally decide" on whether to remove Yoon, it said.

North Korean state media often refers to the South's leaders and institutions as being a "puppet" of Seoul's treaty ally, the United States.

KCNA has described the South as being "in chaos" over the martial law order.

Relations between the two Koreas have been at one of their lowest points in years, with the North launching a flurry of ballistic missile tests in violation of UN sanctions. - AFP

New species of viper and bat found in Mekong

HANOI: A viper with scales that look like eyelashes and a leaf-nosed bat are among dozens of new species identified in the Mekong region last year, WWF said yesterday.

The environmental group regularly publishes a list of newly discovered plants and animals in the region to highlight the area's biodiversity but also the risks it faces.

"The region is still a fertile ground for scientific exploration," WWF said, warning that "many species are likely to go extinct before they are even discovered" because of mostly human linked pressures, including deforestation and the wildlife trade.

The Greater Mekong, which comprises Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, is a well-known biodiversity hotspot, home to tigers, elephants and dolphins.

In all, 234 new species of vertebrates and vascular plants - a category that excludes mosses, algae and fungus - were identified in the region in 2023.

Some were located in remote natural habitats, while others were identified from specimens preserved in natural history museums and botanical gardens across the world.

Among them is an Asian pit viper, whose chocolate-brown and mint-green scales give it the appearance of eyelashes around its eyes, WWF said.

Found in limestone formations in a Thai national park, it has been named the limestone eyelash pit viper as a result of its distinctive habitat and markings.

Similarly striking is a bat that weighs in at between 5g and 7g and features a distinctive leaf-shaped nose, used for echolocation. It was documented in Thailand, but is also found in Malaysia, WWF said.

Around half of all the new species were found in Vietnam, with 106 endemic to the country, the highest number of any nation in the Greater Mekong region.

Among them is a new species of gymnure - furry members of the hedgehog family - and a snake found at 2,600m on Mount Fansipan in northern Vietnam by two porters from the Hmong ethnic minority.

Scientists are concerned that the forest where the snake was found is being degraded by the tourism industry and livestock grazing. - AFP



THEN AND NOW ... Photos showing an aerial view of a mosque affected by the 2004 tsunami in Kuala Bujur, Aceh province and the same structure on Nov 17 this year. On Dec 26, 2004, a magnitude 9.1 earthquake struck off the coast of Sumatra and triggered a huge tsunami across the Indian Ocean that killed more than 220,000 people in a dozen countries. - AFP/IC

BRIEFS

YUNUS TIES REFORM TO ELECTION DATES

DHAKA: Bangladesh interim leader Muhammad Yunus said yesterday that general elections would be held late next year or in early 2026. Yunus has launched commissions to oversee a raft of reforms and setting an election date depends on what political parties agree. "I have emphasised that reforms should take place first," he said. Key among the reforms needed is an updated voter list. Bangladesh last held general elections in January when Sheikh Hasina emerged victorious. The deposed premier has taken refuge in India. - AFP

TAIWAN RECEIVES 38 NEW ABRAMS TANKS

TAIPEI: Taiwan has received 38 advanced Abrams battle tanks from the United States, the Defence Ministry said yesterday. The M1A2 tanks - the first batch of 108 ordered in 2019 - arrived in Taiwan on Sunday and were transferred to an army training base in Hsinchu, south of Taipei. Abrams tanks, which are among the heaviest in the world, are a mainstay of the US military. The M1A2s are the first new tanks to be delivered to Taiwan in 30 years. Taiwan's tank force consists of around 1,000 Taiwan-made CM 11 Brave Tiger and US-made M60A3 tanks. - AFP

Filipina on Indonesia death row moved

JAKARTA: A Filipina inmate on death row in Indonesia was moved to Jakarta before she is expected to fly home later this week, after the government signed an agreement with Manila this month to repatriate her.

Mother of two Mary Jane Veloso, 39, was arrested and sentenced to death in 2010 after a suitcase she was carrying was found to be lined with 2.6kg of heroin.

Officers picked her up from a women's prison in Yogyakarta province in eastern Java before transporting her on Sunday to another prison in Jakarta 418km away.

From there, she will eventually be flown back to the Philippines.

Officials say her transfer to the Philippines could take place as early as today.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Roy Soemirat said they did not have any formal information on the details of her transfer.

Both she and her supporters said she was duped by an international drug syndicate, and in 2015, she narrowly escaped execution after her suspected recruiter was arrested. - AFP

Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain dies

MUMBAI: Zakir Hussain (pic), whose "dancing fingers" made him one of the greatest players of the *tabla* or Indian drums and who became a major force in contemporary world music, has died.

Hussain, 73, died in a San Francisco hospital from complications of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a chronic lung disease.

A child prodigy, he was known for his dazzling solo performances and a raft of collaborative work with famous musicians such as George Harrison of the *Beatles*.

"He will be remembered as a true genius who revolutionised the world of Indian classical music. He brought the *tabla* to the global stage, captivating millions with his unparalleled rhythm," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

He was nominated for seven Grammy awards, winning four including three this year. He was also the recipient of India's highest honour for performing artistes, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award.

"What do I bring to the *tabla*? I think it is openness and clarity. Your musical statement must be created with as much clarity as possible," Hussain said in a biography.

The eldest son of legendary *tabla* player Ustad Alla Rakha, Hussain began his professional career at the age of 12. — Reuters



Chinese officials arrive in Taiwan for rare visit

Taipei mayor favours close ties

TAIPEI: A delegation of Chinese officials led by a deputy Shanghai mayor arrived in Taipei yesterday for an annual city-to-city forum, a rare visit happening at a time of heightened Taiwan-China military and political tension.

China, which claims the democratically governed island as its territory, last week carried out large-scale military activities near Taiwan, and regularly sends fighter jets and warships into the skies and

waters around the island.

Shanghai Vice-Mayor Hua Yuan arrived at Taipei's downtown Songshan airport to attend today's Taipei-Shanghai City Forum, which was first held in 2010, and did not answer questions shouted at him by reporters.

A small group from the pro-independence Taiwan Republic Office shouted "Taiwan and China, separate countries" as he left the airport.

"There is no goodwill. The communist bandits continue to hold military drills," said Chilly Chen, head of the group.

Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an, from the main opposition

Kuomintang party that traditionally favours close ties across the strait although it denies being pro-Beijing, has said visits like this are needed more than ever at times of tension.

Chiang, who visited Shanghai last year for the same city forum, will host Hua at a banquet in the evening.

Taiwan's government last week blocked some members of the Shanghai delegation from attending, saying given China's stepped up military threats it had to take into account "the overall situation" when granting permission for the visit.

Adding to the drama, Taiwan's

government on Friday demanded China release three members of a Taiwanese religious group arrested while in the country.

China says they are suspected of organising an underground cult.

Taiwan's China-policy making Mainland Affairs Council said yesterday the government was showing goodwill by allowing the forum to take place even in the face of the "still serious situation across the Taiwan Strait."

Taiwan's government has called for new talks with China but Beijing refuses to engage with President Lai Ching-te, calling him a "separatist".

Lai says only Taiwan's people can decide their future. — Reuters

Five 'Bali Nine' members happy to be home

SYDNEY: The five remaining members of the Australian "Bali Nine" drug ring say they are "relieved and happy" over their return home after 19 years in an Indonesian jail.

The men — the last behind bars among nine Australian smugglers

who were jailed in Indonesia in 2005 — flew into Darwin on Sunday under a secretive deal between the two countries.

"The five men are relieved and happy to be back in Australia," said a statement released on behalf of the

men, their families and their lawyers.

"They look forward to reintegrating back into and contributing to society," said the statement received yesterday.

Indonesian police arrested the nine Australians in 2005, convicting

them of attempting to smuggle more than 8kg of heroin from Bali.

The case drew global attention to Indonesia's unforgiving drug laws, with two of the gang executed by firing squad, while the others served hefty prison sentences.

The released men — Matthew Norman, Scott Rush, Martin Stephens, Si Yi Chen and Michael Czujaj — said they were "immensely grateful" to Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto for allowing them to return home.

Support from friends, family, lawyers and government officials had been "essential and invaluable", they said.

The men now need "time and support" for their welfare, the statement said, asking media and the community to make allowance for this.

Australia has not released details of the agreement with Indonesia that allowed their release.

Australian public broadcaster ABC said the men did not have to serve further prison time but had agreed voluntarily to continue their rehabilitation.

Accused ringleaders Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran were executed by firing squad in 2015 despite repeated pleas from the Australian government, which recalled its ambassador at the time.

Tan Duc Thanh Nguyen died of cancer in 2018, months before Renae Lawrence was released after her sentence was commuted. — AFP



(From left) Stephens, Czujaj, Rush, Norman and Chen look on as Director of Prisoner Development Erwedi Supriyatno and Australian Home Affairs Minister-Counsellor Lauren Richardson sign a transfer agreement in Bali. — AFP/PPIC

Seven tourists hospitalised in Fiji

WELLINGTON: Seven tourists were hospitalised in a suspected case of alcohol poisoning in Fiji.

The tourists became ill after drinking a cocktail at the Warwick Fiji resort on the south coast of Viti Levu island, Fiji's government said in a statement.

"This is an isolated incident, affecting only these seven guests at a specific bar within the resort," the Fiji government said.

Management at the resort said it had not substituted ingredients or altered the quality of drinks served to guests.

"While we understand the concern, we want to emphasise that the tourism experience in Fiji is typically very safe, and we have acted immediately to try and discover the cause of what made these guests, at this resort, fall ill," Fiji's government said.

Mereisi Makutu, the front office manager at the resort, told Fiji's state broadcaster it was investigating the incident.

"Our priority is to look after those guests that are in hospital at the moment," she told the Fijian Broadcasting Corporation. — Reuters

'Turn knife inwards' to end corruption, Xi tells party

BEIJING: China's Communist Party must "turn the knife inwards" to eliminate problems of discipline, including corruption, President Xi Jinping said, a new call to hunt down corrupt officials and those who corrupt them.

Since coming to power over a decade ago, Xi has cracked down on corruption involving party members, whether they were corrupt high-ranking "tigers" or lowly "flies" who

failed to implement government policies.

But despite the sweeping crackdown, the party continues to be plagued by graft, particularly within the armed forces. Two former defence ministers have been purged from the party in the past two years for "serious violations of discipline," a euphemism for corruption.

The party must take countermeasures against any interest group,

organisation of power, or privileged class from preying on or corrupting party members, Xi warned in a speech published yesterday by *Qiushi Journal*, a flagship party magazine.

"As the situation and tasks facing the party change, there will inevitably be all kinds of conflicts and problems within the party," he said.

"We must have the courage to turn the knife inwards and eliminate their negative impact in a timely manner to

ensure that the party is always full of vigour and vitality."

Xi's call to "turn the knife inwards" was part of a speech he gave at a major meeting with the party's anti-graft watchdog on Jan 8, but had not been disclosed previously.

The excerpts published yesterday suggest a renewed and wider push to instil discipline and hunt down officials seeking personal gain and those who lead them astray.

Last month, the Defence Ministry disclosed that an admiral who had served on the Central Military Commission, the country's highest-military command body, was under investigation for "serious violations of discipline".

Last year, about 610,000 party officials were punished for violating party discipline, of which 49 were officials above the vice-minister or governor level. — Reuters



Rescuers search the rubble for casualties following a strike on a municipality building in Deir el-Balah. – AFPIC



Al Jazeera journalist, rescue workers killed

► Civil emergency HQ in Nuseirat hit

CAIRO: Israeli strikes in Gaza killed at least 53 Palestinians, including a journalist and rescue workers, medics said, and the Israeli military said its air and ground forces in the north of the enclave killed dozens of gunmen and captured others.

An airstrike hit the civil emergency centre in the Nuseirat market area in the central Gaza Strip, killing Ahmed Al-Louh, a video journalist for Al Jazeera TV, and five other people, medics and fellow journalists said. Another strike on a house in Nuseirat camp killed five people, including children, according to medics.

The TV network said Al-Louh was working when he was killed and

condemned Israel.

The Israeli military said the strike had targeted gunmen operating from Gaza Civil Defence's Nuseirat office. It named Al-Louh as a member of Islamic Jihad, without providing evidence.

Al Jazeera did not immediately comment on the allegation but has condemned previous claims by Israel naming some of the Qatari-owned network's journalists killed in the Gaza war as members of groups.

Hamas media said the head of the civil emergency service in Nuseirat, Nedal Abu Hjayyer, was also killed.

"The civil emergency headquarters in Nuseirat camp was hit during the crews' presence, they work around the clock to serve the people," said Zaki Emadelddeen from the civil emergency service to reporters at the hospital.

Another airstrike hit a group of Hamas-linked men tasked with

protecting aid trucks west of Gaza City, and medics said several were hurt but exact figures were unavailable.

At least 11 people were killed in three Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City houses, nine were killed in the towns of Beit Lahiya, Beit Hanoun and Jabalia camp when clusters of houses were bombed or set ablaze, and two were killed in Rafah, medics and residents said.

The Israeli military said the three Gaza City houses belonged to gunmen planning imminent attacks. It said steps were taken to reduce risk to civilians, including the use of precise munitions and aerial surveillance.

The military issued a photo showing the weapons it seized in Beit Lahiya that included explosives and dozens of grenades.

In southern Gaza's Khan Younis, medics said that at least 20 people,

including women and children, were killed when an airstrike hit a shelter housing displaced families.

In Beit Hanoun, residents said Israeli forces besieged families sheltering in Khalil Aweida school before storming it and ordering them to head towards Gaza City.

Medics said several people were killed and wounded during the raid while the army detained many men.

The military said it struck dozens of gunmen from the air and on the ground and captured others in Beit Hanoun.

Reuters was unable to confirm whether any of the people killed were fighters.

Separately, Israel said aircraft struck a command and control centre in a compound in the Abu Shabak clinic in northern Gaza used by Hamas to store weapons and plan attacks. The Gaza Health Ministry said the medical centre was destroyed.

Palestinians accuse Israel of carrying out ethnic cleansing to depopulate Gaza's northern edge to create a buffer zone. Israel denies this and says the campaign targets gunmen. The military says it has instructed civilians to evacuate battle zones for their own safety.

Israel's military offensive has killed almost 45,000 people and left much of Gaza in ruins. – Reuters

BRIEFS

DIPLOMATIC STAFF EVACUATED

MOSCOW: Russia's Foreign Ministry said it has evacuated some of its diplomatic staff from Syria on Sunday. "The withdrawal was carried out by a special flight of the Russian Air Force from the Hmeimim airbase" in Syria, it said. The flight also carried members from the diplomatic missions of Belarus, North Korea and Abkhazia, a Moscow-backed separatist region of Georgia. The Russian embassy in Damascus continues to function. The fate of Russia's two military bases in Syria – the Tartus naval base and the Hmeimim military airfield – is uncertain. – AFP

KYRGYZ PRESIDENT DISMISSES PREMIER

ALMATY: Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov has dismissed the prime minister, Akylbek Japarov, the presidential administration said yesterday. Japarov has been "dismissed from his post due to a transfer to another position", it said. Japarov had been prime minister since 2021. The president assigned the prime ministerial duties to First Deputy Prime Minister Adylbek Kasymaliyev. Kyrgyzstan, a mountainous country in Central Asia and a former Soviet Republic, has gone through significant political and social instability since its independence in 1991. – Reuters

Lula discharged following head surgery

SAO PAULO: Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was discharged on Sunday from a Sao Paulo hospital following emergency surgery to treat an intracranial haemorrhage.

"I am here in one piece ... returning home calmly", the 79-year-old leftist leader said as he made a surprise appearance at a news conference by his medical team at Hospital Sirio-Libanês.

He later smiled and waved to reporters as he left the hospital.

Lula had successful surgery last Tuesday in which doctors drilled through his skull to relieve pressure that built up after a blow to the head in October, when he fell in a bathroom in his presidential residence in the capital Brasilia.

He underwent a follow-up operation on Thursday to minimise the risk of further bleeding in the affected area of the protective intracranial membranes.

The president can resume activities but will need to take it easy for 15 days, cardiologist Roberto Kalil said at the news conference.

"There was a risk of the worst happening," Kalil said.

Lula will remain in Sao Paulo until Thursday, when he will undergo follow-up tests. Once cleared, he will be able to return to Brasilia and his normal routine.

"The only restriction is physical exercise." – AFP

Israel aims to 'double population' in Golan

TEL AVIV: The Israeli government approved on Sunday a plan to increase the population of the annexed Golan Heights, while insisting it had no intention of confronting Syria after seizing a UN-monitored buffer zone.

As rebel forces swept Syrian president Bashar al-Assad out of power last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had ordered troops to seize the demilitarised zone between the two countries' forces.

On Sunday, his office said the government approved a plan to double the population on the Israeli-held Golan Heights.

The government "unanimously approved" the 40 million shekel (RM49 million) "plan for the demographic development of the Golan ... in light of the war and the desire to double the population", Netanyahu's office said.

Israel has occupied most of the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau, since 1967 and annexed that area in 1981, a move recognised only by the United States.

Netanyahu said that "the strengthening of the Golan is that of the State of Israel, and it is particularly important at this time. We will continue to establish ourselves there,

develop it and settle there".

The occupied Golan is home to around 30,000 Israelis and about 23,000 Druze Arabs, whose presence predates the occupation and most of whom retain Syrian citizenship.

Saudi Arabia and Qatar swiftly denounced the Israeli move.

Riyadh's Foreign Ministry expressed "condemnation and denunciation" of the plan in a statement, calling it part of the "continued sabotage of opportunities to restore security and stability in Syria".

Doha said the Israeli declaration was a "new episode in a series of Israeli aggressions on Syrian

territories and a blatant violation of international law".

Last week, Netanyahu declared that the annexed Golan would be Israeli "for eternity".

That followed an order he gave for troops to cross into the UN-patrolled buffer zone separating Israeli and Syrian forces since 1974. Troops have also operated in some areas outside the buffer zone "to maintain stability", according to the military.

Israel portrayed the move, which drew international condemnation, as a temporary and defensive measure after what Netanyahu's office called a "vacuum on Israel's border and in the buffer zone". – AFP



COMMENT by Dr Rais Hussin

Unlocking Asean partnership opportunities

THE Russia-Asean International Business Forum in Kuala Lumpur stands as a significant milestone in strengthening economic, technological and cultural bonds between Russia and Asean nations.

Under the banner of "World of Opportunities", this forum transcends mere diplomatic formalities to become a strategic platform for navigating an increasingly multipolar world. It underscored the shared ambition to bolster regional resilience and drive mutual prosperity.

Malaysia's role as the host underscores Asean's stature as a dynamic and forward-thinking economic partner on the global stage. In current techno-social realities, cultivating meaningful international partnerships has never been more critical.

The Russia-Asean collaboration, rooted in shared aspirations and mutual interests, offers a rare chance to redefine the region's economic, technological and educational trajectories.

With both sides demonstrating a clear commitment to strengthening ties, the potential for innovation, sustainability and long-term prosperity is boundless.

Foundation for economic sovereignty

In today's volatile geopolitical climate, reliance on a single currency like the US dollar exposes nations to external risks and economic instability.

Recognising this shared challenge, Russia and Asean have expressed a mutual interest in reducing their dependence on the dollar.

Asean has already taken meaningful steps through the adoption of local currency settlement mechanisms while Russia is advancing innovative blockchain-based solutions to streamline cross-border transactions.

A concerted effort between these partners to diversify currency usage could significantly bolster economic sovereignty, safeguard trade relationships, and pave the way for a more resilient and stable financial ecosystem.

A potential initiative could involve piloting blockchain-based trade systems or forming a joint study group between Asean central banks and Russia to explore innovative financial frameworks, including unconventional solutions highlighted by Emir Research in "BRICS' Currency Dilemma: A Necessary Quality Leap Beyond the Dollar". Such measures would strengthen economic ties and position the region as a global leader in financial innovation and resilience.

Smart city development

Russia's expertise in smart city technologies – spanning IoT (internet of things) for urban management, scalable AI (artificial intelligence) platforms for city services and advanced infrastructure engineering – offers significant opportunities for collaboration.

Notably, the smart city initiatives in Thailand, championed by the Russia-Asean Business Council, demonstrate the potential of such partnerships. Building on this success, Russia and Asean can co-develop scalable, technology-driven solutions to address urban challenges and enhance the quality of life across the region.

Renewable energy and sustainability

Nuclear energy presents a compelling opportunity for collaboration, particularly given Russia's extensive expertise in nuclear physics.

Incorporating nuclear power into Malaysia's energy mix holds a potential for transformative impact, offering a safe, sustainable and reliable energy source.

Small modular reactors (SMR) represent a particularly promising avenue. While still an emerging technology attracting global investment, operational SMR currently exist only in China and Russia.

Russia is advancing its first land-based SMR, the RITM-200N, with a 55 MW capacity, with commissioning slated for 2028, following the success of its earlier SMR, the KLT-40S, used in a floating nuclear station.

Collaboration with Russia and China would enable Malaysia to tap into their advanced technologies and extensive expertise, accelerating progress in nuclear energy development and securing long-term energy resilience.

Shaping our digital future

Partnering with Russian institutions to train local specialists in fields critical to Malaysia's digital future, such as nuclear and quantum physics, presents a significant opportunity.

Russia's globally renowned universities, which

lead cutting-edge research in these areas, offer a pathway to transform Malaysia's educational and workforce landscape.

For example, the Moscow Engineering Physics Institute is already engaging in initiatives to support international collaboration, and working with such institutions could greatly enhance Malaysia's expertise in nuclear science and technology.

Quantum computing represents another vital area where Malaysia must accelerate its efforts, as a skilled talent pool is indispensable for success.

Russia, a global leader with a robust national quantum strategy, brings invaluable expertise to this domain. Collaborating with

Russian experts could bolster Malaysia's capabilities, propelling advancements in quantum technologies and positioning the nation at the forefront of this transformative field.

Agrotech

Food security remains a top priority for Asean, and leveraging Russia's advancements in agricultural technology, such as precision farming and biotechnology, could significantly enhance productivity while fostering sustainable food systems across the region.

For Malaysia, empowering smallholder farmers is a central focus. Russia's expertise and readily deployable solutions in this domain represent a valuable resource that Malaysia and Asean must actively engage to address food security challenges effectively.

Expanding beyond traditional markets

Our partnership should expand beyond traditional sectors to include high-growth industries such as aerospace, pharmaceuticals and logistics.

Exploring these untapped opportunities will not only inspire businesses to move beyond conventional trade but also drive innovation in emerging markets.

For instance, collaborating with Russia on infrastructure projects offers immense potential, particularly in transportation and urban planning.

Russia's expertise in railway technology could significantly enhance Malaysia's development of

railways, ports and airports, bolstering connectivity and economic growth.

Space technology presents an exciting frontier for collaboration. By partnering with Russia in satellite development, launch services and satellite-based communication systems, Malaysia can leverage advanced space technologies to enhance telecommunications, weather forecasting and disaster management capabilities.

Joint ventures in space research could further open new scientific and technological horizons. With Russia's unparalleled expertise in aerospace engineering, space exploration will become a particularly promising avenue.

Entrepreneurs and governments are already eyeing the moon, asteroids and other celestial bodies as untapped resources for sustaining humanity, offering materials such as water, gold, cobalt and iron. This collaboration could position both nations at the forefront of a new era in space exploration.

In the pharmaceutical sector, partnering with Russia offers the chance to produce affordable generic medicines, improving healthcare accessibility for Malaysia and the region and controlling medical inflation.

Joint efforts in drug development and clinical trials could address pressing regional health challenges, fostering innovation and strengthening public health systems.

Overall, expanding our trade portfolio lays a robust foundation for sustained economic growth. Diversification not only ensures long-term stability but also unlocks avenues for innovation across industries, fostering an agile and resilient economy.

The opportunities before us are vast and ripe for exploration. When partners collaborate with a spirit of diplomacy and mutual respect – rejecting the use of trade, financing, investment, knowledge sharing and technology transfer as instruments of coercion – such alliances inevitably yield profound and measurable outcomes and impacts for many.

Together, we hold the power to realise a shared vision of resilient, innovative and inclusive economies. By aligning our efforts, we can transform collective aspirations into tangible progress, forging a future defined by shared success and enduring prosperity.

Dr Rais Hussin is the founder of Emir Research, a think-tank focused on strategic policy recommendations based on rigorous research. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

"The Russia-Asean collaboration, rooted in shared aspirations and mutual interests, offers a rare chance to redefine the region's economic, technological and educational trajectories."

EDUCATION

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Joy of working at head office

AT Wisma Sime Darby in Kuala Lumpur, Dr Ho Chai Yee, the development director, was leaving on promotion to lead the research department.

He had worked in rubber research for many years before joining Sime Darby. He was a scientist – tall, white-haired, soft-spoken, deeply thoughtful – who had a serious outlook, and wrote a lot of notes.

I did not know what to expect when I met him on the 11th floor for the handing-over: “We have a target each year. We make our profits through consultancy services for owners of plantations and mills. The main work is in Indonesia.”

In 1990, most of the plantations were owned by the government, and it was vital to keep up with changes in the plantations and mills. To fund these changes, loans were secured, which came mainly from the World Bank, as independent consultants were needed to guide the staff.

In the private sector, the timber industry's peak days were over and loggers were looking to plant oil palm. Most had no experience, and there was no better way than to call the planters and consultants from Malaysia.

“We fly to Medan, and start with the government-owned plantations in North Sumatra, and have discussions with our mill consultant there.”

The journey was going to take up most of the month because Dr Ho had managed to get many projects.

I hid my excitement as I had always wanted to travel in Indonesia. It turned out to be as pleasant as I had thought.

The only problem was the disagreement I had with Dr Ho after we got back.

During the trip, Dr Ho and I got along well, and it was just luck that the chemistry was right. For many long days, we had an easy way of working. We travelled in a van and because of the distance, I had plenty of time to watch the scenery of rice fields and green mountains, just as I had imagined.

I listened to Indonesian melodies on the cassette tape, and the van had bottles of Aqua mineral water.

Dr Ho had made the arrangements with precision, including on timing, for we would stop at places he knew would serve delicious *nasi padang*, and he would have his beef *rendang*, and tendons or *kikir* cooked in coconut milk.

The government-owned plantation near Permatang Siantar, PTP Seven was big. The main buildings were grand structures, built by the Dutch.

When we called on the head of the plantation, Dr Ho took a lot of notes while I looked around at the teak furniture and the paintings on the wall. A staff stooped low as he served coffee.

Later, we met with our consultant Eric Cruickshank, whom I had worked with in Pamol, Kluang. I recalled he was an efficient engineer, and the mills in the group ran smoothly. The extraction rates were high. At five, he would stop work and go golfing at the Kluang Golf Club.

Now here he was, out of retirement in Scotland, and living on the estate with his wife Edith. He showed us what he had done to train the team and kept



I hid my excitement as I had always wanted to travel in Indonesia. It turned out to be as pleasant as I had thought. The only problem was the disagreement I had with Dr Ho after we got back.

records to follow the new standardised system.

In the laboratory, after Dr Ho saw all the figures he was looking for, we stopped promptly at five. Dr Ho and Eric headed for the golf course that had a wide fairway, with freshly cut grass.

It turned out that Dr Ho was also mad about golf, and he too knew how to relax. I stayed back in the big guest house, reading a book. The job suited me well.

In Jakarta, I again saw Dr Ho's passion for organising. The Hotel Sari Pacific on Jalan MH Thamrin was among the best, and I admired the intricate wood carvings of fishermen placed by the lifts. The rooms were perfect.

In the morning, we were in the restaurant early for a big breakfast of *rijstafel*, which was rice with a selection of delicacies, such as satay and spiced curry.

Then, we were out again, allowing plenty of time for traffic jams, to meet with government officials. They coordinated the development of plantations and mills. Only one or two meetings could be held each day because big teams would be assembled to discuss the work progress.

I jotted down one or two points while Dr Ho made a lot of notes. Sometimes, packets of *nasi padang* would arrive for lunch while discussions went on. The last part was a meeting with the World Bank to report on our work and see if there were new projects.

In the private sector, the clients were in transition from logging to

plantations. One elderly owner worked in an old part of Jakarta, where I found the office past clusters of small red-roofed huts.

The tycoon said the address had brought him luck. Another client had moved into a spanking new high structure, with windows of blue glass. The skyline of Jakarta was changing.

The routine was the same except the meetings would be with the owner and his sons and their accountant, all taking notes nearly as much as Dr Ho. Then we would be invited to dinner at expensive restaurants with Sundanese cuisine while the sons would pump us with questions about managing plantations.

We also travelled to meet clients in Bandung, Surabaya and Kalimantan.

When we got back to Kuala Lumpur, Dr Ho had just enough time for me to thank him for the organised visit. I had enjoyed the trip.

He was going to his new job. “It's all yours now. By the way, you need to write a full report to give to our boss, in the usual manner.”

He caught me by surprise. “I cannot recall the details or the names of most of the officials we met. You were taking notes. I didn't write them down.”

“I noticed,” he said. “I thought you had kept it all in your head.”

As he walked away hiding a smile, I panicked. How could he be so cruel?

To this day, I haven't forgiven him.

The writer has extensive experience in the management of oil palm plantations. Comments: letters@thesundaily.com

Gukesh, rise of chess's youngest star

LETTERS
letters@thesundaily.com

WHEN the FIDE World Championship 2024 in Singapore ended, a new era in chess history was created.

India's Gukesh Dommaraju made history with a stunning victory over China's reigning champion, Ding Liren, setting two new records: becoming the youngest chess world champion at 18 years and 166 days, and tying India's title wins with Russia at 6-6, second only to the USSR with 17 wins.

Gukesh is four years younger than Grand Master (GM) Garry Kasparov, when he won the title in 1985, and a few months younger than GM Magnus Carlsen, who claimed the title from India's first world champion, Viswanathan Anand – Gukesh's hero and role model. “I am living my dream,” he affirmed.

To fully appreciate the newly crowned champion's rise to the top, we need to go back to seven year-old Gukesh and his fascination with chess.

In his home city of Chennai, he watched Carlsen win the title from Anand in 2013; and he thought to himself, “I want to be the one to bring the title back to India.”

As his skill in the game grew, his mother, Padma Kumari, a microbiologist, noticed his ability to attack strategically at a remarkably fast rate.

To support his talent and pursuit of his dreams, his parents agreed that he could leave academics after Class IV to devote himself full-time to chess.

The Chennai prodigy has been a chess superstar since achieving the title of grandmaster at the age of 12.

At that time, his parents made some bold sacrifices. With no sponsors, his father,

Rajinikanth, left his respected job as an ENT surgeon in 2017 to travel the world with Gukesh on a shoestring budget, competing for the final GM norm.

This left his mother, Padma, to assume the mantle of breadwinner for the family. These decisions were the beginning of years of hard work, unparalleled sacrifice and unmatched determination for all of them.

The financial struggles were real, with money running so low that family friends even donated to sponsor him.

At times, the father-son duo slept on floors and in chairs in airports to save money for accommodations at competition venues. On one occasion, without transportation, his father borrowed a bike from the hotel and pedalled four miles in freezing temperatures to take Gukesh to his competition.

During this period, still without a sponsor, they managed Gukesh's expenses with his prize money and some crowd-funding initiatives. This level of sacrifice was not lost on Gukesh, as he acknowledged that without their commitment and sacrifice, he would never have made it to the FIDE World Chess Championship.

To prepare Gukesh for this ultimate test of ability, his mental coach, Paddy Upton, trained him once a week for six months, to have him so prepared that no contact would be needed during the match.

“He is not only a chess world champion, he is a world-class human being, first,” Upton said.

From the beginning, his mother impressed on him how crucial it was for him to always be humble in spirit. The first four things Gukesh did after winning the world title, define him as a true champion.

First, he reset the chess board and paid respect to it; next, he gave thanks to the Almighty; then he hugged his parents and trainer; and lastly, he praised Ding Liren as a great opponent and a true champion.



Gukesh, at 18, is the youngest ever chess world champion. – REUTERS/SPIC

We can look at other champions too, to see how rugged the road to the top can be. Before they have sponsors to ease the stressors, times can be challenging.

Only the strongest survive. Whether it is Datuk Nicol David, Malaysia's eight-time Women's Squash World Champion, whose parents sacrificed to support her. Fortunately, some bank sponsors and the National Sports Council made her journey to success much easier.

Serena Williams, Women's Tennis Champion, won 23 Grand Slam Singles titles. Along with her sister Venus, they were the only women tennis players to win Olympic Gold in both singles and doubles categories. Both were coached by their father, to save money. All of them realised the sacrifices and struggles that those who loved them had endured.

Culminating Gukesh's accolades and

congratulatory messages was most probably the praise and personal message from Garry Kasparov on X, where he wrote, “Congratulations on your victory today. You have submitted the highest peak of all, making your mother happy.”

While his parents are happy, it is no stretch to say that all of India, and Indians everywhere, are overjoyed and filled with pride.

Finally, at long last, their financial burdens are eased, with his winnings of US\$600,000 (RM2.67 million). He was also given a Mercedes.

Years of struggle, sacrifice and self-belief have finally paid off.

This success story can be an inspiration to youths. With the will and passion to succeed, a clear vision combined with action can lead to the desired results, just like Gukesh Dommaraju.

C. Sathasivam Sitheravellu
Seremban

BY DHARSHINI GANESON

TAYLOR'S College being awarded the prestigious ACCA Platinum Approved Learning Partner status represents the highest level of recognition from ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) Global and marks a significant milestone in its journey to deliver world-class accounting education through the programme.

In addition to positioning Taylor's College as a leader in quality education within the ACCA community, the Platinum status grants students expanded access to ACCA's professional development resources and global networks that drive career growth and empower them with critical skills and insights for the industry.

Campus Director of Taylor's College, Josephine Tan said: "This milestone is testament to our perseverance, passion, and commitment over the years. It affirms the excellence of our ACCA programme and the commitment of our faculty, students and partners who worked tirelessly to uphold and elevate our standards."

"With our unwavering commitment to excellence in education, real-world experience, and professional integrity, we will continue to nurture future accounting leaders in Malaysia, equipping them with vital skills to excel in a rapidly evolving industry," she added.

While attributing Taylor's success to invaluable support from industry partners, Josephine added that insights from their Industry Advisory Panel ensure that accounting programmes remain attuned to the evolving demands of the profession.

"We are deeply grateful to our panel members for their dedication and impactful contributions, which have enriched the professional development of our ACCA students. With their continued support, we are building a thriving ecosystem that strengthens both our students and the profession."

Portfolio Head of ACCA Maritime Southeast Asia, Andrew Lim said: "Attaining Platinum status is a significant achievement and this accolade highlights Taylor's College's dedication to excellence in delivering ACCA education and supporting student success, in line with global best practices."

"It reflects their commitment to nurturing future-ready professionals who are not only technically proficient but also uphold the ethical and professional standards central to ACCA's purpose of building a better, more sustainable world. Together, we aim to empower students to thrive in an ever-evolving financial landscape," he said.

During the celebration with its students, alumni, and partners, Taylor's College signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ACCA, in the presence of Datuk Loy Teik Ngan, Chairman of Taylor's Education Group, and Ang Wen How, Education Relationships Lead, ACCA Maritime Southeast Asia.

The partnership, aimed at boosting student success, establishes a dual-award pathway



From left: Ang, Tan, Lim, and Loy as signatories and witnesses to the MOU signing between Taylor's College and ACCA.

Awarded ACCA platinum status

► Taylor's leads the way in shaping future leaders and professionals

for the Diploma in Business students, aligned with evolving industry standards and new developments such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Tan said: "This partnership allows us to introduce tailored programmes aimed at enhancing employability. For example, students in the Diploma in Business programme will gain essential knowledge in accounting, better preparing those who wish to pursue ACCA after graduation. Together, Taylor's College and ACCA are dedicated to initiatives that meet industry standards and prepare our students for impactful careers."

In 2020, a Taylor's ACCA student won first prize winner in 'Foundations in Audit', achieving the highest score in Malaysia and third worldwide.

In 2021, this success was repeated with the highest score in both Malaysia and the world for the same subject.

In 2022, Taylor's students achieved top scores in Malaysia for 'Audit and Assurance' and 'Maintaining Financial Records', with global rankings of fifth and second, respectively.

In 2023, Taylor's College saw the highest score in Malaysia and second worldwide in 'Recording in Financial Transactions'. In 2024, the



Outstanding alumnus and scholars of Taylor's College ACCA programme sharing insights about their journey to success.

institution continued the tradition of excellence with the highest score in Malaysia and second worldwide in 'Management Information'.

Beyond academics, students have excelled in prestigious competitions, emerging victorious in the 'Accounting Competency

Challenge' in 2022 against 17 universities from across ASEAN, earning the title of "Most Determined Team".



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Socso pledges to ensure employer compliance on contributions

BY JOHN GILBERT
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KUALA LUMPUR: The Social Security Organisation (Socso) is committed to strengthening its role in ensuring all employers fulfil their obligations under the Socso Act.

Further, the agency will focus on its twofold goals of enhancing employer compliance and protecting employees' long-term interests by ensuring continued contributions to Socso and the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), as mandated under the respective acts.

Socso and the Malaysian Aviation Commission (Mavcom) entered into a partnership yesterday to protect aviation workers on Socso contributions and to match those in the industry with job opportunities.

Mavcom executive chairman Datuk Seri Saripuddin Kasim said the partnership is part of the aviation industry regulator's efforts to ensure employers comply with the laws to make the Socso contributions and to protect employees' welfare.

"This effort is carried out in close cooperation with Socso, and we are fortunate to have their partnership as we take this first step.

"We are pleased to collaborate with the Employees Provident Fund as part of our broader effort to ensure industry compliance. This collaboration aims to enforce employers' adherence to the relevant acts – particularly the Socso Act – and safeguard employees' interests.

"The lessons we learned during the Covid-19 pandemic have underscored the importance of these contributions. The crisis highlighted critical gaps, making it clear that employees must have consistent and reliable access to EPF and Socso protection," he told reporters at the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Mavcom and Socso.

Socso group CEO Datuk Seri Mohammed Azman Aziz Mohammed said the MoU focuses on two key priorities.

First, it strengthens compliance within the aviation sector.

"Through this collaboration, Socso and Mavcom will facilitate the exchange of data to ensure employers adhere to the relevant regulations. This is critical to guaranteeing social protection for aviation employees, ensuring their welfare is safeguarded."

Second, the partnership aims to boost job placement and career opportunities within the aviation industry.

Mohammed Azman said the Covid-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the sector, affecting everyone from ground staff to technical crews and resulting in widespread job losses.

To address this, he said, Socso will work closely with Mavcom and industry stakeholders to organise targeted job fairs and career programmes for aviation workers. "Our collaboration with Mavcom introduces innovative solutions to tackle current industry challenges and prioritising the placement of skilled Malaysian workers in critical roles."

Bland signs hotel management deal with IHG, brings ANA Crowne Plaza brand to Okinawa

PETALING JAYA: Berjaya Land Bhd (Bland) yesterday announced the signing of a hotel management agreement, through subsidiary BHR Okinawa Management GK, with IHG ANA Hotels Group Japan (IHG) to bring the renowned ANA Crowne Plaza brand to Okinawa, Japan.

The collaboration is a significant milestone in Bland's expansion efforts in Japan, adding value and delivering world-class hospitality

experience in the region.

The 123-room ANA Crowne Plaza Resort Okinawa Uruma Hills will officially join the IHG system in early 2025. The property will undergo a renovation to incorporate the hallmarks of the Crowne Plaza brand.

The rebrand from ANSA Okinawa Resort marks the next chapter in the long-term partnership between Berjaya and IHG, following their successful collaboration in Vietnam.

This is also the first joint project between the two companies in Japan.

Bland group CEO Syed Ali Shahul Hameed said, "We are thrilled to deepen our collaboration with the globally renowned IHG brand through this partnership in Japan. The rebranding of ANSA Okinawa Resort to ANA Crowne Plaza Resort Okinawa Uruma Hills marks an exciting milestone, aligning with IHG's exceptional standards and

international network. This strategic move is poised to unlock new opportunities, elevate guest experiences, and deliver substantial benefits as the property integrates into the IHG system. With our extensive expansion plans in Japan, we are committed to strengthening our footprint across the country and further solidifying our successful partnership with IHG."

Abhijay Sandilya, CEO of IHG ANA Hotels Group Japan and managing director of IHG Hotels & Resorts Japan & Micronesia, said: "With plans to double our portfolio in Japan, this signing with Berjaya Land is another important milestone for IHG in realising our ambition. It's wonderful to reignite our relationship with the Berjaya team through our first hotel agreement in Japan. As part of the portfolio of one of the world's largest premium hotel brands and the largest international premium brand in Japan, ANA Crowne Plaza Resort Okinawa Uruma Hills will benefit from IHG's powerful global presence, enabling it to attract new guests and deliver stronger returns."

Located on the main island of Okinawa, ANA Crowne Plaza Resort Okinawa Uruma Hills will offer guests panoramic views of the East China Sea and Pacific Ocean, as well as easy access to a nearby golf course and cultural sites, including Zakimi Gusuku Castle and the Onnason Community Centre.



An aerial view of ANSA Okinawa Resort, which will be rebranded as ANA Crowne Plaza Resort Okinawa Uruma Hills.

DIF5 attracts RM213.95b investments as of Q3 2024

KUALA LUMPUR: The Digital Investments Future5 (DIF5) Strategy, a five-year initiative (2021-2025) implemented by Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), has attracted investments totalling RM213.95 billion as of the third quarter of 2024.

Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo said it has drawn interest from 710 new companies to invest in Malaysia and created 76,429 new job opportunities up to the quarter.

"The achievement reflects investors' confidence in Malaysia as an investment destination for digital technology companies," he said during the question-and-answer session in the Dewan Negara yesterday.

He was replying to Senator Rita Sarimah Anak Patrick Insol, who wanted to know the ministry's achievement to date through the DIF5 Strategy aimed at creating 50,000 high-value jobs as well as the challenges faced in implementing this strategy.

➤ Strategy draws 710 new companies to invest in Malaysia's digital industry, with 76,429 new job opportunities created

Gobind said the Digital Ministry, through MDEC, provides several programmes to tackle the digitalisation challenges.

He said that as of November 2024, the Malaysia Digital (MD) Workforce Training Directory offered 219 well-received courses and certification programmes which were specially created and recognised by digital industry experts, including on artificial intelligence (AI), data science, cyber security, animation and cloud computing.

"The MD Workforce Training initiative, which has attracted a total of 4,644 participants as of November, is aimed at encouraging local workers to enhance their skills as well as providing retraining programmes or certification pro-

grammes related to technology such as AI, cloud storage, data science and animation.

"(Meanwhile,) the MD Workforce Place & Train programme has seen 2,481 participants up to November this year. It is aimed at empowering unemployed individuals with advanced digital skills such as digital marketing, cyber security and data centre aspects in collaboration with selected industry partners," he added.

Separately, Deputy Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Liew Chin Tong told the Dewan Negara that the government has approved total investments of RM1.1 trillion in the manufacturing, services and primary sectors in the 2020-2023 period.

This involved 18,945 projects that are expected to create 487,648 new job opportunities, he said.

Liew disclosed that of the approved investments, foreign investments amounted to RM624.6 billion (58.1%) while domestic investments totalled RM449.5 billion (41.9%).

"The five states that attracted the highest investments during 2020-2023 were Penang (RM187.8 billion or 17.5%), Selangor (RM183.7 billion or 17.1%), the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur (RM138.1 billion or 12.9%), Johor (RM137.9 billion or 12.8%) and Kedah (RM115.2 billion or 10.7%).

"They (collectively) accounted for 71% of the overall approved investments for the period," he said in response to a query from Senator Manolan Mohamad who wanted to know the total foreign direct investment and domestic direct investment from 2020 to 2023 as well as investments for each state. – Bernama



Representatives from five export credit agencies and Islamic Development Bank after ratifying the terms of financing agreements with PEC in Kuala Lumpur.

US\$3.5b project financing for Pengerang Energy Complex

➤ Leading international export credit agencies and Islamic Development Bank ratify terms of agreements

PETALING JAYA: Pengerang Energy Complex (PEC) has secured US\$3.5 billion (RM15.5 billion) project financing from leading export credit agencies (ECA) across North America, Western and Southern Europe, and Asia, as well as Islamic financing from entities of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB).

Representatives of each of the five ECA – Export-Import Bank of the United States, Euler Hermes AG, Italian Export Credit Agency, Compañía Española de Seguros de Crédito a la Exportación, Export-Import Bank of Malaysia (Exim Bank Malaysia) and IsDB were in Kuala Lumpur yesterday to ratify the terms of the financing agreements with representatives from PEC, which is being developed by Singapore-based petrochemicals, green energy and natural resources conglomerate, ChemOne Group.

The event was attended by leading European and international banks that have confirmed participation in the ECA-guaranteed tranches as well as the Islamic financing tranches.

The capital secured will be channelled towards implementation of the US\$5.3 billion latest generation, low carbon petrochemicals facility designed to produce 2.6 million metric tonnes per annum (mmtpa) of aromatic products and 3 mmtpa of associated energy products.

Construction will start in mid-2025 and the project will go on stream in the fourth quarter of 2028.

Pengerang Energy Complex Sdn Bhd CEO Alwyn Bowden said: “We are pleased to have secured this significant round of project financing from these five leading global export credit agencies and Islamic Development Bank entities, which will help further bolster the financial stability of PEC and accelerate progress for the project which is already well under way in terms of planning and engineering.”

He added that they are grateful for the confidence their partners have shown in this project, and the discussions held yesterday will enable them to fully conclude the debt

financing for the project within the coming few months and move to commencement of construction for the global benchmark-setting project by the middle of next year.

“As the petrochemicals industry is set to grow exponentially, alongside rapid economic development across East Asia and Southeast Asia, the PEC project is poised to form a key driver of demand for quality aromatics in the medium to long term. PEC is strategically located to serve the regional Asian markets and satisfy forecasted demand,” he said.

Exim Bank Malaysia director Raymond Fam said they are proud to play a pivotal role in the financing of the Pengerang Energy Complex’s new facility, a landmark project that underscores Malaysia’s commitment to advancing low-carbon industrial innovation.

This initiative, he added, aligns with their sustainability commitment and is instrumental in showcasing how global collaboration can drive transformative change in high-growth sectors such as petrochemicals.

“Together with our international partners, we are enabling a state-of-the-art facility that not only enhances Malaysia’s economic resilience but also sets a benchmark for sustainable industrial practices in the region,” said Fam.

DRB-Hicom inks pacts to promote investment, explore R&D and talent development in AHTV

KUALA LUMPUR: DRB-Hicom Bhd signed two memorandums of understanding to promote investments, explore areas of research and development (R&D) and talent development in the Automotive High-Tech Valley (AHTV) in Tanjung Malim, Perak.

It said in a filing with Bursa Malaysia yesterday that the group has entered into an MoU with Malaysian Investment Development Authority and Zhejiang Geely Holding Group Co Ltd (Geely) to explore potential areas of cooperation and collaboration to promote investments in the development of AHTV.

The objective is also to foster growth, capabilities and competitiveness of the Malaysia automotive industry and the MoU will be effective for two years from the date it is signed.

The parties intend to promote the transformation of Malaysia’s automotive

industry, to propel Malaysia to become a leading country for energy efficient vehicles in Asean. It also plans to transform Tanjung Malim through the AHTV development, into a global automotive hub, focusing on the production of next generation vehicles and high-tech automotive components, it said.

DRB-Hicom said the transformation of AHTV as a smart manufacturing and export base for the global supply chain system of complete vehicles and parts will include the enhancement of the capabilities of local suppliers to participate in the localisation of key components. This encompasses the transformation and upgrade of the local supply chain through continuous improvements in technical and cost competitiveness of local suppliers.

The MoU is not expected to have any material effect on the earnings per share, net

assets per share or gearing of DRB-Hicom for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2024, it said.

At the same time, DRB-Hicom entered into a MoU with the Malaysia Automotive Robotics and IoT Institute and Geely to explore areas of cooperation and collaboration in R&D and talent development in AHTV.

The MoU will contribute to the enhancement and transformation of Malaysia’s automotive industry and will come into effect on the date of signing for a period of three years.

The parties will discuss and cooperate in areas relating to development of an R&D testing centre for energy efficient vehicles and automotive driving, as well as support the development of AHTV testing facilities as a national level best in class vehicle testing centre. – Bernama

TopVision celebrates ‘leap’ to ACE Market with 18% premium

PETALING JAYA: TopVision Eye Specialist Bhd, a player in medical eye care services in Malaysia, marked its official transfer of listing yesterday on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia Securities.

TopVision shares debuted at 39 sen, reflecting a 18.18% premium over its issue price of 33 sen.

As one of the pioneer in accessible and advanced eye care services that was listed on the LEAP Market in 2018, TopVision operates 11 ambulatory care centres (ACC) nationwide, offering a wide range of services from general eye care to subspecialty treatments, catering to both local and international patients.

The public offering raised RM17.9 million, which will be used to support the company’s expansion and operational goals. Specifically, RM7.9 million will be used to fund the development of TopVision International, a multidisciplinary specialist tertiary eye ACC with an additional RM5 million to be allocated for the establishment of TopVision Kuala Terengganu and TopVision Tawau, while RM500,000 is set aside for enhancing existing facilities via purchase of medical machines. The remaining RM4.5 million has been allocated for listing expenses.

TopVision executive vice-chairman Datuk Kenny Liew Hock Nean said this transfer of listing marks a significant milestone in their journey, reflecting their unwavering commitment to delivering quality and accessible eye care services across Malaysia.

“With this transition, we aim to strengthen our presence in Malaysia’s eye healthcare sector, expand our service network, and elevate the standards of patient care to new heights.”

Hong Leong Investment Bank Bhd is the principal adviser, sponsor, sole underwriter and sole bookrunner for TopVision’s ACE Market IPO.

Perdana Petroleum unit wins vessel charter contract

KUALA LUMPUR: Perdana Petroleum Bhd’s wholly owned subsidiary, Perdana Nautika Sdn Bhd, has accepted a work order from IPC Malaysia BV for the charter of one unit of anchor handling tug and supply (AHTS) vessel.

The vessel will be used for the charterer’s provision of production operations vessels contract with Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd.

In a Bursa Malaysia filing yesterday, the oil and gas company said the contract, which will commence on the vessel’s on-hire certificate date, is for three years with an option to extend for another three years from the commencement date.

The contract value cannot be determined yet as it will vary based on the location to which the vessel is assigned throughout the contract period.

Perdana Nautika will provide an AHTS vessel with crew and equipment to perform 24-hour service in assisting and servicing drilling rigs, offshore installations, derrick barges, and towing and anchor job, it said.

Perdana Petroleum said the contract is expected to contribute positively to earnings and group net assets for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2025, to 2028. It will not have an effect on the share capital and shareholding structure of Perdana Petroleum. – Bernama

Gamuda to deliver RM1.8b Goulburn river solar farm in Australia

PETALING JAYA: Regional engineering and construction group Gamuda Bhd through its wholly owned subsidiary in Australia DT Infrastructure has been awarded the A\$625 million (RM1.8 billion) contract by Lightsource bp Renewable Energy Investments Ltd (Lightsource bp) to deliver Goulburn River Solar Farm project in the Upper Hunter region of New South Wales (NSW), Australia.

Goulburn River's 585 MWp capacity is the first solar farm project to be delivered by Gamuda under the DT Infrastructure brand in Australia.

The scope of works for this engineering, procurement and construction project includes civil, structural and electrical infrastructure required for the solar farm.

In a statement yesterday, Gamuda said: "The Goulburn River project is a fantastic example of New South Wales continuing its significant investment in renewable energy, aligning with the Australian government's target of achieving 82% renewable energy in the nation's electricity grids by 2030. We are delighted to be partnering with Lightsource bp on the Goulburn River solar

farm. We look forward to contributing our expertise to delivering best-in-class renewable energy solutions and driving positive outcomes for the local community, the energy sector, and Australia's carbon reduction targets."

Once operational, the solar farm will generate enough renewable energy to power approximately 225,000 homes. It is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 910,000 tonnes each year, significantly supporting Australia's sustainability goals.

Site access date for Goulburn River Solar Farm project is expected to commence by January 2025.

Gamuda has been making strong strides in Australia's renewable energy market. In September 2024, the group was awarded the A\$243 million Boulder Creek Wind Farm project in Queensland under DT Infrastructure. While its Gamuda Engineering Australia arm, in a joint venture with Ferrovial Construction signed an Early Contractor Involvement agreement in November 2024 with Alinta Energy for the multi-billion-dollar Oven Mountain Pumped Hydro Storage project in NSW.



The Goulburn River Solar Farm will provide huge benefits in terms of renewable energy supply and economic outcomes for New South Wales.

Sime Darby Property sukuk's 'AA+IS' rating reaffirmed

➤ MARC Ratings maintains stable outlook on RM4.5b IMTN, cites group's strong sales, solid balance sheet, low debt

ARA DAMANSARA: Sime Darby Property Bhd (SDP) has maintained the AA+IS rating with a stable outlook for its RM4.5 billion Islamic Medium-Term Notes (IMTN) Programme (Sukuk Musharakah).

This investment-grade rating was reaffirmed by MARC Ratings Bhd for the fourth consecutive year.

The outstanding under the rated programme stood at RM1.4 billion as of Nov 30, 2024.

In a statement yesterday, it said that this rating reflects Sime Darby Property's robust sales performance across its well established townships and its strong balance sheet, supported by low leverage.

MARC Ratings noted the group's RM2.8 billion in GDV launches for the first nine months of FY24 (9M'24), with a strong overall take-up rate of 76% for its diversified product mix of residential high-rise, residential landed, and industrial offerings located within populous townships with well-established connectivity.

Unbilled sales of RM3.7 billion provide the group with earnings visibility over the next three years. Completed inventory remained modest relative to the size of the group's projects, stood at RM185.5 million as of September 2024, reflecting efficient management of project rollouts.

The rating agency highlighted the group's ongoing diversification into industrial and logistics property development, including built-to-lease projects aimed at generating recurring income.

Sime Darby Property's developable landbank of approximately 12,900 acres (excluding noncore lands), continues to provide development opportunities for industrial and township projects.

MARC Ratings also assessed the progress on the Battersea Power Station development, in which Sime Darby Property holds a 40% stake. By September 2024, Phase 3B's residential component reached a 61% sales rate, while the commercial building 50 Electric Boulevard achieved 45% occupancy, with

negotiations for additional leases ongoing.

The group's 9M'24 revenue grew by 35% year-on-year to RM3.3 billion, driven by higher sales and progress across projects primarily in its Klang Valley townships. The period's pretax profit stood at RM636.8 million, supported by higher revenue and non-core land parcel sales, offsetting provisions for rental guarantees related to Battersea Power Station's 50 Electric Boulevard Grade A office building.

Gearing level remained low, with borrowings reduced slightly to RM2.8 billion as compared to the previous year (end-2023: RM2.9 billion), and a gross debt-to-equity ratio of 0.27x. Cash balances of RM790.7 million reflect a healthy liquidity position.

Sime Darby Property group managing director, Datuk Seri Azmir Merican, said, "The reaffirmation of our AA+IS rating reflects our commitment to financial stability, which is key to delivering consistent results. This stability, indicating a strategic balance between managing debt effectively and leveraging it for future growth opportunities, enables us to responsibly advance our growth plans and diversify our income streams. As we continue to evolve as a sustainable real estate player, the Sukuk Musharakah Programme remains a key enabler of our strategic growth initiatives."

Advancecon wins Elmina West works contract worth RM44.6m

SHAH ALAM: Advancecon Holdings Bhd (Advcon) wholly owned subsidiary Advancecon Infra Sdn Bhd has been awarded a RM44.6 million contract by Sime Darby Property Sdn Bhd for the construction of main infrastructure works for Phase 3 - Parcels 2 and 3 of the proposed development at Elmina West, a key component of the City of Elmina.

The scope of the contract encompasses comprehensive main infrastructure works including roads, drainage systems, water reticulation, sewerage, telecommunication, and other essential infrastructure designed to support the long-term growth and sustainability of the Elmina West community.

The project is expected to be completed over 18 months, on July 1, 2026.

Commenting on the award, Advcon group CEO Datuk Phum Ang Kia said, "We value the trust that Sime Darby Property has placed in us as a returning client. This contract further underscores the strength of our partnership and our ability to deliver infrastructure solutions that meet their requirements."

"Having worked on multiple projects with Sime Darby Property, we are committed to upholding the quality and efficiency that they have come to expect from Advancecon."

He added that this project is another opportunity for them to contribute to the development of Elmina West, a key township in Selangor, by ensuring the timely delivery of high-quality infrastructure works.

As a company, he said they remain dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of quality, safety, and efficiency, which form the foundation of their enduring partnerships.

As of Sept 30, 2024, Advancecon's unbilled order book value has increased to RM321.6 million, strengthening its position as a major player in Malaysia's infrastructure sector.

TM One to drive digitalisation in PR1MA housing projects

KUALA LUMPUR: TM via its enterprise and government sector digital solutions arm TM One, has partnered with PR1MA Corporation Malaysia (PR1MA) to drive high-speed internet infrastructure, digital services, and Internet of Things (IoT)-based solutions within PR1MA's housing projects.

Over the next three years, TM One plans to establish a centralised monitoring system for PR1MA's project tracking and workflows, improving operations and resource management, and enabling data-driven decision-making.

Additionally, TM One's IoT-based solutions for energy and environmental monitoring will help PR1MA lower operational costs and adopt sustainable best practices.

TM One executive vice-president

Shazurawati Abd Karim stated, "We are pleased to collaborate with PR1MA to strengthen digital infrastructure and smart home services across their residential projects. This partnership supports the creation of connected and eco-friendly living spaces, aligning with PR1MA's community-centric vision and Malaysia's Smart City aspirations. By fostering future-ready ecosystems and sustainable urbanisation, we will jointly integrate digital innovation into affordable, high-quality housing. This initiative not only empowers digital communities and lifestyles; it represents another milestone in TM's journey as a digital powerhouse to drive industry growth and new opportunities for organisations and the nation."

PR1MA Corporation Malaysia group CEO and member of corporation Datuk Seri Mohd

Nazri Md Shariff said, "We are excited to work with TM in our mission to deliver high-quality, affordable homes to Malaysians. PR1MA remains dedicated to building modern, comfortable homes that elevate the standard of living for our residents. Our collaboration with TM will bring high-speed internet access to PR1MA communities, making it easier for residents to work, learn, and enjoy entertainment from the comfort of their homes."

This partnership, he added will also allow them to enhance their property management services through advanced digital technology.

"Through this partnership, PR1MA aims to integrate smart solutions from planning to construction, ensuring efficient project management," he said.

Japan firm claims no money for Ecuador 'slavery' compensation

QUITO: A Japanese textile company, ordered by Ecuadoran courts to pay US\$41 million (RM182 million) to compensate its workers for keeping them in slave-like conditions, claimed it lacks the money to pay up.

Ecuador's Constitutional Court last week ordered Furukawa, to pay US\$120,000 to each of the 342 victims – a total of around US\$41 million.

It will also have to make a public apology to them.

But Furukawa's director Adrian Herrera told AFP that his company does not have that much money.

"Even if we sold all the properties, all the vehicles, all the assets of the company, we would not be able to pay these US\$41 million."

He added that the firm had US\$6 million in assets and providing all the compensations in full would "mean the closure of the company".

Ex-employees had complained of dire living and working conditions.

In testimonials, some said they had to give birth to children in unsanitary and overcrowded camps, while others were denied proper medical attention after work-related injuries.

Furukawa has contested the court's decision, arguing that there were inconsistencies.

It has asked for the compensation amount to be reduced, saying the livelihoods of hundreds of workers currently employed at the plant depend on these jobs.

As of 2021, Furukawa's plantations for abaca – a fine plant fiber – covered almost 23,000ha spread over three provinces on the Pacific coast. – AFP

Allianz withdraws US\$1.63b offer for Income Insurance

SINGAPORE: Allianz has withdrawn its offer to acquire at least 51% of Singapore's Income Insurance for US\$1.63 billion (RM7.26 billion), the German company said in a statement yesterday.

Reuters reported on Dec 13 that the German insurer has scrapped the proposed acquisition.

Allianz said in yesterday's statement that the decision came in light of the Singapore government's announcement during a Parliament sitting on Oct 14 and subsequent changes to the Insurance Act.

The acquisition would have lifted Allianz to fourth largest composite insurer in Asia, from ninth, but sparked criticism in Singapore because of concerns that it would detract from a mission to provide affordable insurance for lower-income workers.

Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong said in October that the city-state would block Allianz's bid, but remained open to a new deal if its concerns could be addressed, which Allianz said at the time it would attempt to do.

The government subsequently amended the insurance law giving it more power to scrutinise buyouts of cooperative-linked insurers. – Reuters

Indonesia presses ahead with VAT increase

➤ Measures to be introduced to soften blow on lower-income earners

JAKARTA: Indonesia yesterday decided to go ahead with a wide-ranging increase in the value-added tax rate to 12% next year, reversing a plan to only apply the hike to luxury goods, but will introduce measures to soften the blow on lower-income earners.

By law, the value-added tax (VAT) rate is scheduled to increase by one percentage point to 12% starting Jan 1, but there has been growing public pressure to delay it, prompting lawmakers to propose a selective VAT hike.

Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati said as part of the increase, VAT will be charged for the first time on premium-quality food and services, including international schools and high-end hospitals.

"In line with the principles of justice, the 12% VAT is also imposed on luxury goods and services consumed by people who can afford those," she said in a press conference with other economic ministers.

Staple foods will remain exempt from VAT, while cooking oil sold under a government programme,

sugar for industry and wheat flour will continue to be taxed at 11%.

Senior Economic Minister Airlangga Hartarto said the government would offer up to 40 trillion rupiah (RM11.13 billion) of support measures to soften the impact of VAT hike.

For middle-income households, the government would reduce electricity tariffs by 50% for two months, Airlangga said, while employees in labour-intensive industries earning up to 10 million rupiah a month would not pay income tax.

The VAT exemption on property purchases worth up to five billion rupiah was extended in full to the end of June 2025, and then there will be a 50% exemption until the end of 2025.

The government also extended existing tax incentives for battery-based electronic vehicles, and for hybrid EVs announced a new three percentage-point cut in the luxury sales tax, which ranges from 6% to 12%.

Industry Minister Agus Gumiwang Kartasasmita said Citroen, China's BYD and GAC Aion, who have committed to building EV plants in Indonesia, would be exempt from import duty and get luxury tax sales and VAT cuts on their vehicles.

President Prabowo Subianto has said he wants to boost tax revenue to 18% of gross domestic product from around 10% currently, adding about US\$100 billion (RM445 billion) in additional tax revenue. – Reuters



People crossing a road outside a shopping mall in Jakarta. – REUTERS/PIC

Asian markets struggle after more weak China data

HONG KONG: Asian markets mostly fell yesterday after an unexpected slowdown in retail sales reinforced worries about China's economy, with the latest batch of weak data compounding the disappointment of Beijing's latest stimulus pledges.

The tepid start came on the year's last full week of trading, with the focus on key monetary policy decisions by the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of Japan.

Observers are also tracking developments in Seoul after South Korean lawmakers impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol at the weekend in the wake of his short-lived declaration of martial law.

Hong Kong and Shanghai slipped after figures showed that

Chinese retail sales grew 3% last month, much slower than October and well off the 5% forecast.

The figures highlighted the work leaders had in store as they try to kickstart consumption and reignite the world's number two economy.

Officials unveiled new promises at the weekend to boost the battered property sector and tweak monitoring of equity markets.

That came after investors were left unimpressed last week with Beijing's pledge to introduce measures aimed at "lifting consumption vigorously" as part of a stimulus drive.

President Xi Jinping and other key players said at the annual

Central Economic Work Conference that they would implement a "moderately loose" monetary policy, increase social financing and reduce interest rates "at the right time".

Elsewhere in Asia, there were also losses in Sydney, Wellington, Manila and Jakarta, though Tokyo, Singapore and Taipei rose.

Seoul fluctuated after Saturday's impeachment of Yoon, with South Korea's Constitutional Court starting proceedings yesterday to determine whether to uphold the vote.

While the martial law crisis shocked markets, observers said the economic impact would likely be limited, with some suggesting a stimulus package could be implemented in the new year.

The Fed is widely expected to cut interest rates again tomorrow but there are fears it will have to slow its pace of easing next year owing to sticky inflation and bets that president-elect Donald Trump's tax cuts and tariffs will reignite prices.

The gathering comes after figures last week showed the consumer price index ticked up and wholesale prices accelerated.

Investors are now pricing a 75% chance the Fed holds rates steady in January, according to the CME FedWatch tool.

The Bank of Japan is due to deliver its own policy decision after that, with debate swirling on whether officials will announce a third hike of the year. – AFP

American foreign investment panel split on proposed Nippon-US Steel deal

WASHINGTON: The US Treasury has informed Japan's Nippon Steel that the panel reviewing its proposed US\$14.9 billion (RM66 billion) purchase of US Steel has not yet come to an agreement on how to address security concerns, the *Financial Times* reported on Sunday.

Treasury, which leads the Committee on Foreign Investment in the US (CFIUS), wrote to both companies on Saturday saying the nine agencies on the panel were struggling to reach a consensus ahead of the deadline to submit a recommendation to President Joe Biden, the report added, citing several sources familiar with the talks.

CFIUS, a powerful committee charged with reviewing foreign investments in US firms for national security risks, has until Dec 22 to make a decision on whether to approve, block or extend the timeline for the deal's review, Reuters has reported.

US Steel and CFIUS did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comments on the *Financial Times* report, while Nippon Steel declined to comment.

The acquisition has faced opposition within the US since it was announced last year, with both Biden and his incoming successor Donald Trump publicly indicating their intentions to block the purchase.

CFIUS told the two companies in September that the deal would create national security risks because it could hurt the supply of steel needed for critical transportation, construction and agriculture projects, according to a letter seen by Reuters. — Reuters

Apple integrates ChatGPT into its devices in latest software update

SAN FRANCISCO: Tech giant Apple rolled out major updates to its artificial intelligence offerings that integrate OpenAI's ChatGPT into its native applications, including Siri, on the iPhone.

In a shift for the privacy-focused company, Apple has partnered with OpenAI to integrate ChatGPT into its Writing Tools and Siri virtual assistant, allowing users of the latest iPhone or iPad to access the AI chatbot without leaving Apple's ecosystem.

The move, first announced in June, marks Apple's most significant push into generative artificial intelligence, as the company aims to compete with rivals Google and Samsung, who have already integrated similar AI features into their Android-operated devices.

Since OpenAI launched ChatGPT in 2022, Apple has been seeking to persuade doubters on its AI strategy, after Microsoft and Google rolled out products in rapid-fire succession.

The ChatGPT features fall under the iPhone maker's "Apple Intelligence" system, which also includes an AI-powered image editing tool called Image Playground and an emoji generator dubbed Genmoji.

Apple is initially rolling out the new AI functions to six English-speaking countries including the United States, Australia, Canada, and Britain.

It plans to add support for 11 more languages throughout the year. — AFP

MicroStrategy and Palantir added to Nasdaq 100

➤ Inclusion in index typically boosts stock prices

NEW YORK: MicroStrategy will be added to the Nasdaq-100 Index, the exchange operator said, following a meteoric surge in the shares of the bitcoin buyer.

The change comes into effect before the market opens on Dec 23, Nasdaq said.

Inclusion in the index typically boosts the stock's price, as exchange-traded funds looking to replicate the index's performance

buy shares of the newly included firm.

Data analytics firm Palantir Technologies and Taser maker Axon Enterprise were also added to the tech-heavy Nasdaq-100 Index along with MicroStrategy.

Gene-sequencing equipment maker Illumina, AI server maker Super Micro Computer and vaccine maker Moderna were removed, Nasdaq said.

MicroStrategy, an aggressive investor in the world's largest crypto asset, has seen its shares soar more than six-fold this year, taking its market value to almost US\$94 billion (RM418 billion).

The company began buying and holding bitcoin in 2020 as revenue

from its software business waned.

It is now the largest corporate holder of the cryptocurrency.

Analysts have said MicroStrategy's decision to purchase bitcoin to protect the value of its reserve assets has enhanced the appeal of its stock, which tends to align with the performance of the cryptocurrency.

Bernstein analysts expect the market will likely set its sights on S&P 500 inclusion for MicroStrategy in 2025 following the Nasdaq-100 inclusion.

The brokerage also sees the company's prospects continuing to improve next year, adding it expects "more visibility and recognition beyond fresh ETF inflows," as a result of the Nasdaq-100 inclusion.

Bitcoin has rallied in recent weeks as US President-elect Donald Trump's victory heightened the crypto sector's hopes for easing regulatory roadblocks. Earlier this month, the digital asset catapulted above US\$100,000 for the first time.

"Management has shown no signs of slowing this (bitcoin-buying) down and are comfortable buying bitcoin in the \$95K-\$100K range," Bernstein analysts said.

The company held roughly 423,650 bitcoins bought for about US\$25.6 billion based on the average purchase price as of Dec 8.

The investment is worth around US\$42.43 billion, based on bitcoin's previous close, according to Reuters calculations. — Reuters



A US Postal Service mailbox is dry wrapped during hurricane season in Sarasota, Florida. — REUTERS/SPIC

Trump mulls privatising US Postal Service

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump has expressed a keen interest in privatising the US Postal Service (USPS) in recent weeks, the *Washington Post* reported, citing three people with knowledge of the matter.

The US Post Office, which has lost more than US\$100 billion (RM445 billion) since 2007, reported a net loss of US\$9.5 billion for its fiscal year ending Sept 30, a US\$3 billion bigger loss than last year, largely due to a year-over-year increase in non-cash workers' compensation expense.

When told of the agency's annual losses, Trump said the government should not subsidise the organisation, according to the *Post*.

Trump, who takes office on Jan 20, has discussed his desire to privatise the Postal Service with Howard Lutnick, his pick for commerce secretary, at Mar-a-Lago, the report said.

People who will work at the Department of Government Efficiency, led by Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, have also had preliminary conversations about major changes to USPS, the report said, citing two other people familiar with the matter.

A USPS spokesman said that over the last three years, the agency has reduced its operations by 45 million work hours, and cut transportation spending by US\$2 billion.

The agency is also seeking regulatory approval to modernise its mail processing and transportation network to align with modern practices, which will save between US\$3.6 and US\$3.7 billion annually, the spokesman added.

Any attempt at privatising the Postal Service could disrupt the e-commerce industry in America, the *Washington Post* said, including Amazon, which uses the agency for "last-mile" delivery between the tech giant's fulfillment centres and customers.

It could also hurt small businesses and rural consumers who use the Postal Service, as it is the only carrier that will deliver to

remote corners of the country.

Amazon recently said it was donating US\$1 million to Trump's inaugural fund and will air his inauguration on its Prime Video service.

Trump has had a tense relationship with the Postal Service. Sources told Reuters his transition team is considering canceling the service's contracts to electrify its delivery fleet.

According to sources, the team is reviewing how it can unwind the Postal Service's multibillion-dollar contracts, including with Oshkosh and Ford, for tens of thousands of battery-driven delivery trucks and charging stations. — Reuters



Containers being loaded onto barges on the Rhone at the Edouard Herriot Port in Lyon, eastern France. – AFPIC

Moody's hands France surprise **downgrade**

➤ Credit rating revised to 'Aa3' over deteriorating finances, political turmoil

PARIS: Credit ratings agency Moody's unexpectedly downgraded France's rating, adding pressure on the country's new prime minister to corral divided lawmakers into backing his efforts to rein in the strained public finances.

The downgrade, which came outside of Moody's regular review schedule for France, brings its rating to "Aa3" from "Aa2" with a stable outlook for future moves and puts it in line with those from rival agencies Standard & Poor's and Fitch.

The revision came soon after President Emmanuel Macron named veteran centrist politician and early ally Francois Bayrou

as his fourth prime minister this year.

His predecessor Michel Barnier failed to pass a 2025 budget and was toppled earlier this month by left-wing and far-right lawmakers opposed to his €60 billion (RM280 billion) belt-tightening push that he had hoped would rein in France's spiraling fiscal deficit.

The political crisis forced the outgoing government to propose emergency legislation this week to temporarily roll over 2024 spending limits and tax thresholds into next year until a more permanent 2025 budget can be passed.

"Looking ahead, there is now very low probability that the next government will sustainably reduce the size of fiscal deficits beyond next year," Moody's said in a statement.

"As a result, we forecast that France's public finances will be materially weaker over the next three years compared to our October 2024 baseline scenario."

Barnier had intended to cut the budget deficit next year to 5% of economic output from 6.1% this year with a €60 billion package of spending cuts and tax hikes.

But left-wing and far-right lawmakers were opposed to much of the belt-tightening drive and voted a no confidence measure against Barnier's government, bringing it down.

Bayrou, who has long warned about France's weak public finances, said shortly after taking office that he faced a "Himalaya" of a challenge reining in the deficit.

Outgoing Finance Minister Antoine Armand said he took note of Moody's decision, adding there was a will to reduce the deficit as indicated by the nomination of Bayrou.

The political crisis put French stocks and debt under pressure, pushing the risk premium on French government bonds at one point to their highest level over 12 years. – Reuters

SPD unveils plan to boost investment with 'Made in Germany' premium

BERLIN: Germany's Social Democrats plan to introduce a "Made in Germany" premium in the next government to boost investment in Europe's largest economy, the party's election manifesto showed on Sunday ahead of a likely early election next year.

The plan includes a direct tax refund of 10% on equipment investments by businesses, according to the document seen by Reuters.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, an SPD member, sent a request to Parliament last week to hold a vote of confidence, setting a path to an early federal election next year after the collapse of his coalition.

The SPD currently polls at 17%, an INSA poll showed on Saturday, trailing the conservative CDU and far-right AfD at 31% and 20% respectively.

The SPD, which governs Germany in a minority government with the Greens, said in its manifesto it plans to incentivise purchases of German-made electric cars with a temporary tax deduction offered to buyers.

It also proposed establishing a so-called Germany Fund, initially endowed with €100 billion (RM467 billion), to support key areas such as electricity, heating networks, hydrogen infrastructure, e-charging stations and housing.

The fund would operate under debt brake regulations, through financial transactions where the federal government will invest in companies with start-up capital or loan offers. – Reuters

Italy must be key part of Stellantis strategy: Minister

ROME: Italy expects to be a central part of Stellantis' future strategy and wants the Fiat automaker to safeguard the factories on its territory, Industry Minister Adolfo Urso said.

"There must be an assertive Italy plan within Stellantis' industrial plan that protects national factories," Urso told an event in Rome ahead of a key meeting on the Italian automotive industry today, also involving trade unions.

After the abrupt resignation of Carlos Tavares as CEO earlier this month, Rome hopes to fix its strained relations with the carmaker, whose brands also include Alfa Romeo.

Italian politicians repeatedly accused Tavares of neglecting historic manufacturing sites and moving production abroad.

"There's no more Tavares, he didn't understand the reality," Urso told an event of his Brothers of Italy party.

He said they understood that things had changed when Stellantis chairman John Elkann called Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to inform her of the CEO's departure.

Urso said the government wanted Stellantis to pledge "significant financial resources" to ensure Italy kept a competitive auto industry. – Reuters

Swiss central bank announces big rate cut to stimulate economy

GENEVA: The Swiss central bank announced a surprisingly large interest-rate cut as it cited rising "uncertainty" about the economic outlook due to future US policies and political turmoil in Europe.

The Swiss National Bank lowered its main rate by a half-percentage-point to 0.5% as inflation has slowed in the country.

Economic growth was "only moderate" in the third quarter and is forecast to reach 1% in 2024

and 1.5% next year, the central bank said in a statement.

"Growth should pick up somewhat next year, albeit only slightly due to the moderate global economic activity," the Swiss National Bank said in a statement.

"Uncertainty about the economic outlook has increased in recent months."

"In particular, the future course of economic policy in the US is still uncertain, and political

uncertainty has also risen in Europe," it said.

"In addition, geopolitical tensions could result in weaker development of global economic activity."

"Equally, it cannot be ruled out that inflation could remain higher than expected in some countries."

Donald Trump takes office in January after vowing to slap tariffs on imports to the US during the election campaign, a move that

raises concern about its effect on the global economy.

In Europe, Germany and France are mired in political troubles.

Early elections are due to take place in Germany in February following the collapse of the coalition government led by Olaf Scholz.

In France, President Emmanuel Macron named a new prime minister after MPs toppled the government early this month. – AFP

MARKET ROUND-UP: DECEMBER 16

BURSA MALAYSIA

Trade Statistic 16 Dec 2024



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

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

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

Bursa Indices

INDEX	CHANGE
FBMEMAS	12,328.18 -27.89
FBM KLCI	1,606.85 -1.90
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	546.39 -2.11
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCT	175.10 -0.67
CONSTRUCTION	304.05 -3.01
FINANCIAL SERVICES	19,052.56 -64.87
ENERGY	819.03 -0.97
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	540.56 +0.57
HEALTH CARE	2,310.09 -23.57
TRANSPORTATION & L	1,040.37 -1.94
PROPERTY	1,096.49 -0.13
PLANTATION	7,653.74 +18.69
FBMSHA	12,354.14 -18.05
FBMACE	5,308.32 -1.84
TECHNOLOGY	64.33 +0.63

TURNOVER: 3.160 bil VALUE: RM2,454 bil

Bursa pares earlier losses to close almost flat

BURSA Malaysia pared earlier losses to end marginally lower yesterday on late buying, mirroring the global sell-off that weighed on key regional markets, said an analyst.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI dipped 0.11% or 1.90 points to 1,606.85 from last Friday's close of 1,608.75.

The index opened 0.13 of-a-point higher at 1,608.88 and moved between 1,603.92 and 1,609.43 throughout the day.

Market breadth was also negative as losers overwhelmed gainers 624 to 335, while 472 counters were unchanged, 1,044 untraded and 16 suspended.

Turnover increased to 3.16 billion units worth RM2.45 billion versus 2.79 billion units valued at RM2.40 billion last Friday.

Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd equity research vice-president Thong Pak Leng said investors were cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) expected 25-basis-point interest rate cut on Wednesday, as concerns over persistent inflation clouded the Fed's long-term rate outlook.

Meanwhile, November data revealed that China's industrial production expanded as expected, supported by recent stimulus measures to boost business activity. Weaker-than-expected retail sales pointed to ongoing struggles in consumer spending.

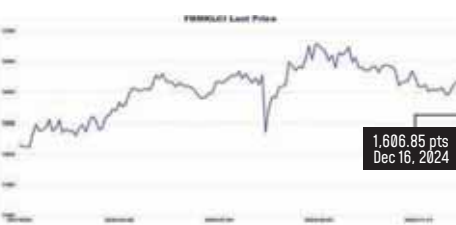
Among other heavyweights, Public Bank fell 3 sen to RM4.54, PPB Group slipped 34 sen to RM12.24, CIMB dipped 3 sen to RM8.10, while Maybank and YTL Corporation shed 2 sen each to RM10.12 and RM2.15 respectively.

As for the most active stocks, MYEG bagged 1.5 sen to 96 sen, JCY added 3 to 51.5 sen, Top Glove declined 6 sen to RM1.35, and Supermax increased 1 sen to RM1.11.

ACE Market debutant TopVision Eye Specialist rose 1 sen to 34 sen. - Bernama

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
HSI-CWAM	0.095	-0.020	-17.39	1,472,770
HSI-PWB3	0.260	0.005	1.96	1,375,772
HSI-PWB1	0.175	0.005	2.94	745,269
MYEG	0.960	0.015	1.59	672,412
JCY	0.515	0.030	6.19	658,216
HSI-CWAO	0.070	-0.010	-12.50	638,446
OMESTI-WC	0.025	0.020	400.00	563,842
TOPVISN	0.340	0.010	3.03	534,346
BYD-C32	0.140	-0.015	-9.68	491,518
HSI-CY8	0.090	-0.050	-35.71	447,302
TOPGLOV	1.350	-0.060	-4.26	434,339
ANEKA-WA	0.020	0.015	300.00	432,344
SUPERMX	1.110	0.010	0.91	411,203
MBSB	0.730	-0.010	-1.35	314,856
TALAMT	0.025	-0.005	-16.67	308,765
GTRONIC	0.610	0.025	4.27	288,720
HUBLINE	0.060	-0.005	-7.69	288,388
JFTECH-WA	0.175	0.005	2.94	268,659
DNEX	0.395	0.005	-	265,810
CAREPLS	0.260	-0.005	-1.89	246,490



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
UTDPLT	32.000	0.640	10,624
KLK	21.660	0.260	1,749
DLADY	30.560	0.240	70
VITROX	4.000	0.190	52,453
SAM	4.330	0.180	10,796
PENTA	4.250	0.170	18,026
PANAMY	17.800	0.160	128
HSI-PWBO	1.310	0.150	90
FRONTKN	4.360	0.120	45,209
MPI	26.060	0.120	3,555
WPRTS	4.500	0.110	25,545
AZAMJAYA	1.210	0.090	127,097
GASMSIA	4.230	0.080	10,340
MANULFE	2.300	0.080	3,030
OSK	1.820	0.080	33,672
HSI-PWBX	0.920	0.075	7,500
APOLLO	7.010	0.070	464
SKYGATE	1.010	0.065	35,348
AXIATA	2.430	0.060	71,386
BKAWAN	20.100	0.060	60

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
OMESTI-WC	0.025	400.00	563,842
ANEKA-WA	0.020	300.00	432,344
VITROX-C5	0.020	300.00	15,648
MNC-WC	0.050	233.33	10,412
GCB-C12	0.030	200.00	200
VITROX-C6	0.065	160.00	6,105
DRBHCOC3G	0.010	100.00	2,000
DSOINIC-C63	0.010	100.00	500
FOCUS-PA	0.010	100.00	1,001
HM-WC	0.020	100.00	6,440
HIBISCS-C65	0.010	100.00	10
JIANKUN-WB	0.020	100.00	13,255
KGROUP	0.010	100.00	5,764
OCR-WE	0.010	100.00	400
PENTA-C44	0.010	100.00	12,131
PERMAJU-PA	0.010	100.00	10
ZENTECH	0.010	100.00	190,261
HSI-CWAO	0.080	77.78	1,170
PENTA-C45	0.055	57.14	4,250
DNEX-C33	0.015	50.00	7,000

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	43,828.06	-86.06	-0.20
S&P 500 (US)	6,051.09	-0.16	0.00
NASDAQ (US)	19,926.72	+23.88	+0.12
NYSE (US)	19,729.37	-39.72	-0.20
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	4,954.01	-13.94	-0.28
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,289.39	-10.94	-0.13
DAX (GER)	20,357.67	-48.25	-0.24
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	39,457.49	-12.95	-0.03
TOPIX (JPN)	2,738.33	-8.23	-0.30
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	19,795.49	-175.75	-0.88
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,911.84	-21.34	-0.54
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,386.33	-5.55	-0.16
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,488.97	-5.49	-0.22
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	185.55	-1.98	-1.06
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,249.48	-46.47	-0.56
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,493.99	-56.34	-0.66
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	81,715.31	-417.81	-0.51
FBM KLCI	1,606.85	-1.90	-0.12
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,815.53	+5.18	+0.14
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	70.70	-0.59	-0.83
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	74	-0.49	-0.66
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,676.60	+0.80	+0.03
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	31.12	+0.09	+0.30
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	927.20	+0.29	+0.03
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	419.45	-0.25	-0.06
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,052.50	-39.00	-0.43
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	443.00	+1.00	+0.23
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	553.75	+1.50	+0.27
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	42.47	-0.52	-1.21
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	11,300.00	+479.00	+4.43
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	203.80	+0.10	+0.05

As at 5pm, Dec 16

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
NESTLE	99.220	-0.780	380
BLDPLNT	10.880	-0.600	10
PPB	12.240	-0.340	10,213
ATECH	3.320	-0.210	3,705
HLIND	14.480	-0.180	378
GAMUDA	9.600	-0.170	83,288
MBMR	6.300	-0.150	3,806
PETDAG	20.500	-0.140	2,019
HSI-CYQ	0.100	-0.135	8,740
HLFG	18.240	-0.120	139
HSTECH-C14	0.480	-0.120	500
MEITUAN-C30	0.285	-0.115	100
GENP	5.690	-0.090	494
SUNCON	4.410	-0.090	5,772
UMCCA	5.040	-0.090	20
AJI	15.360	-0.080	373
F&N	27.760	-0.080	1,177
GENM-C3D	0.070	-0.080	5,121
HAPSENG	3.570	-0.080	10,650
HSI-CYR	0.220	-0.080	2,520

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
SP500-H49	0.005	-91.67	1,198
NDX-HI	0.005	-85.71	533
HSI-CYC	0.005	-66.67	42,493
DSOINIC-C62	0.010	-60.00	10
HSI-CYQ	0.100	-57.45	8,740
GENM-C3D	0.070	-53.33	5,121
CFM-WA	0.005	-50.00	1,000
DPS-WB	0.005	-50.00	11,800
INARI-C2M	0.005	-50.00	4,007
MPI-C6	0.010	-50.00	500
MRCB-C1J	0.010	-50.00	21,890
SUNCON-C23	0.005	-50.00	500
YTLPOWER-C53	0.005	-50.00	11,001
YINSON-C39	0.030	-45.45	56,400
EDGENTA-CR	0.015	-40.00	25,791
HSI-CWAP	0.070	-39.13	300
HSI-CYK	0.050	-37.50	10,290
HSI-CY8	0.090	-35.71	447,302
YINSON-C37	0.075	-34.78	30,981
CME-WA	0.010	-33.33	150

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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Hydropipes opens at 26 sen in debut on LEAP Market

KUALA LUMPUR: Hydropipes Bhd made its debut yesterday on the LEAP Market of Bursa Malaysia Securities Bhd.

Hydropipes is principally involved in the manufacturing of mild steel pipes and trading of mild steel pipes and related accessories as well as hot-rolled coils.

These products are used for the distribution of treated water nationally, catering to the government and the private sector.

The listing, officiated by Bursa Malaysia chairman Tan Sri Abdul Wahid Omar, marks an exciting milestone for Hydropipes which has been operating successfully for more than 30 years since its establishment in 1991.

Hydropipes' share price opened at RM0.26 representing a 4% premium to its initial public offering price of RM0.25. The proceeds raised of RM4 million through this listing exercise will be used to fund purchase of raw materials, working capital, and listing expenses.

Hydropipes group executive director Datuk Ang Chin Tat said, "The decision behind the LEAP Market listing is to provide Hydropipes with a platform for growth. We believe that this will allow us to be in position to capitalise on various drivers for the increase in demand for water pipes which include government initiatives for non-revenue water and pipe replacement initiatives as well as new continuous development which will increase demand for water distribution."

Through the listing, he added they will raise RM4 million in proceeds, half or RM2 million will be utilised for the purchase of additional hot-rolled coils, which is their main raw material input.

With this, he said they will be able to purchase more raw materials which will translate to an increase in throughput, improving the utilisation of their capacity at their manufacturing facility.

Ringgit marginally down ahead of Fed meeting

THE ringgit ended marginally lower against the US dollar yesterday, extending its loss for a sixth consecutive session on cautious market sentiment ahead of the US Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting scheduled for Dec 17-18.

At 6pm, the local currency dipped to 4.4500/4550 against the greenback, compared to Friday's close of 4.4475/4525.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes said the spotlight this week will be on the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) forward guidance, with a cautious outlook for 2025 seen strengthening the US dollar while exerting downward pressure on other currencies, including the ringgit.

"This week is pivotal for global markets, with several key central bank meetings on the agenda, most notably the Fed, which is widely expected to cut interest rates by 25 basis points," he added.

Meanwhile, Innes noted that China's retail sector has shown signs of weakness, with November's year-over-year sales growth slumping to 3%, the lowest in three months and a steep drop from October's 4.8%.

The ringgit traded mostly lower against other major currencies. It depreciated versus the British pound to 5.6301/6365 from 5.6203/6266 and fell against the euro to 4.6743/6795 from 4.6632/6684 at Friday's close. However, it increased against the Japanese yen to 2.8930/8964 from 2.8987/9022 previously.

The ringgit also traded mostly lower against Asean currencies. It dropped marginally against the Singapore dollar to 3.2992/3032 versus 3.2971/3011, went down versus the Thai baht to 13.0575/0795 from 13.0261/0472 and dipped against the Indonesian rupiah to 278.0/278.5 from 277.7/278.2 on Friday. - Bernama

Exchange Rates			
FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5285	4.3945	4.3845
1 Australian Dollar	2.8940	2.7760	2.7600
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3510	3.2500	3.2420
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1730	3.0860	3.0740
1 Euro	4.4750	4.5990	4.5790
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.6170	2.5180	2.5020
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3510	3.2500	3.2420
1 Sterling Pound	5.7270	5.5460	5.5260
1 Swiss Franc	5.1140	4.8990	4.8840
100 UAE Dirham	124.4700	117.9400	117.7400
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.8600	3.5910	3.3910
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.5300	59.8400	N/A
100 Danish Krone	65.3900	60.1200	59.9200
100 Hongkong Dollar	58.7400	55.7700	55.5700
100 Indian Rupee	5.4200	5.0800	4.8800
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0292	0.0264	0.0214
100 Japanese Yen	2.9470	2.8500	2.8400
100 New Taiwan Dollar	15.0000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.6400	38.2800	38.0800
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6600	1.5500	1.3500
100 Philippine Peso	7.8200	7.3600	7.1600
100 Qatar Riyal	125.2800	118.9300	118.7300
100 Saudi Riyal	121.5500	115.3900	115.1900
100 South Africa Rand	26.2600	23.6900	23.4900
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.6000	1.4700	1.2700
100 Swedish Krona	42.5100	38.6600	38.4600
100 Thai Baht	13.8400	12.2600	11.8600

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

Paramount Corporation Bhd

Buy. Target price: RM1.68



Source: TA Research, Bloomberg

PARAMOUNT Corporation Bhd (PCB), through its wholly-owned subsidiary Tanah Bayumas Sdn Bhd, has entered into a Sale and Purchase Agreement (SPA) with Prismaworld Embassyview Sdn Bhd (Receivers and Managers Appointed) for the acquisition of leasehold land measuring 18,317 sq m for RM145 million. The property includes an existing residential development, Brunsfield Residence, comprising 93 units of low-rise luxury condominium villas.

Situated in the prestigious U-Thant enclave of Kuala Lumpur, the property at Lot 18, Jalan U-Thant, Taman U-Thant, is just 700m from PCB's successful high-end developments, The Atrium and The Ashwood at Jalan Ampang Hilir. Surrounded by embassies and luxury residences, this exclusive location offers dual frontage to Jalan U-Thant and Persiaran Madge, making it highly desirable for affluent buyers and expatriates seeking premium residential addresses.

PCB plans to redevelop the site into a high-end residential project featuring strata-titled luxury units. Building on the success of nearby projects, The Atrium (100% sold, excluding show units) and The Ashwood (72% sold), PCB expects the redevelopment to generate a GDV of at least RM300 million.

The latest acquisition aligns with PCB's strategy of replenishing land near its existing projects and leveraging their success and popularity to achieve faster turnaround times while capitalising on the group's familiarity with the area. We are mildly positive about this acquisition due to its strategic alignment with PCB's land banking strategy and its location in the prestigious U-Thant enclave, which appeals to affluent buyers.

Buy with RM1.68 TP. - TA Research, Dec 16

Top Glove Corp Bhd

Hold. Target price: RM1.44



Source: Phillip Securities Research, Bloomberg

TOP GLOVE has proposed to undertake a bonus issue of warrants on the basis of 1 bonus warrant for every 20 existing shares. Upon exercised, up to 405.8 million of new shares will be issued, increasing Top Glove's total share base to 8.5 billion shares under a maximum scenario. This bonus issue of warrants represents 5% of the company's total enlarged shares, and the exercise price is fixed at RM1.27. The proposed bonus issue exercise is expected to be completed in Q1'25, subject to shareholder approval at an AGM.

We view the proposed bonus warrants positively as it rewards existing shareholders while also providing funding for Top Glove's working capital needs as the warrants are exercised, without resorting to any additional bank borrowings. The proceeds will be utilised for the funding of new factories, refurbishment of the existing factories, and for working capital use, totalling up to RM515 million, assuming all warrants being exercised. Our FY25-27 EPS dilution from the full exercise of warrants are 4%, based on our calculation.

Top Glove's revised P/B valuation of 2.0x is still lower compared to peers (Harta: 3.2x P/B, Kossan: 2.1x P/B) as believe that Top Glove is relatively less efficient as compared to peers, weighed by lower utilisation rate at 60-65% given the larger asset base, taking a longer time to achieve optimal production level post-Covid19. Despite that, we expect Top Glove to return to profitability in the upcoming quarters amidst the ongoing improved sales volume and ASP.

Upside/downside risks: stronger/weaker sales momentum and ASP, rise in raw material costs, and China glove makers ramping up capacity.

HOLD with RM1.44 TP. - Phillip Securities Research, Dec 16

Yinson Holdings Bhd

Outperform. Target price: RM3.87



Source: Kenanga Research

THE group reported a 9M'25 core profit of RM384 million, excluding exceptional items (RM145 million gain on disposal of PPE, RM33 million EPICIC cumulative profit, and RM39 million deferred tax gain), slightly surpassing our expectations at 82% of our full-year forecast. Consensus estimates are not comparable due to differing treatment of EPICIC profits. The outperformance was primarily driven by rate escalation from FPSO Abigail Joseph. The group also announced a single interim dividend of RM0.01/share.

Revenue fell 31% YoY due to lower EPICIC contributions, primarily from the completion of FPSO Maria Quiteria and FPSO Atlanta nearing the end of conversion by Q4'25. This was partially offset by lease income from FPSO Maria Quiteria (which achieved first oil on Oct 15), and additional lease income from FPSO Abigail Joseph following additional EPC works. Core profit jumped 40% YoY despite higher finance and administrative costs.

Top line declined further in Q3'25, mainly from lower EPICIC revenue following FPSO Maria Quiteria's maiden contribution. Nevertheless, core earnings surged 46% YoY, reflecting the offsetting impact of stronger lease income contributions.

We continue to favour YINSON due to: (i) a strong FPSO order book pipeline with multiple major FPSO jobs under the conversion stage which provides significant earnings growth in coming years, (ii) its strong project execution track record which positions the company to benefit from strong structural demand for FPSO contractors anticipated in the coming years, and (iii) it being one of the first local oil & gas company invest in green technology companies (solar, e-mobility, etc) which in our view would help with the company's long-term energy transition agenda.

OUTPERFORM with RM3.87 TP. - Kenanga Research, Dec 16



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Running free

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TUESDAY

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Fashion and beauty

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BSB's Nick Carter to perform live



A forested retreat with scenic inclines for an invigorating workout awaits at Bukit Kiara Park. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @4KWALKING**



Jog through lush greenery at the Shah Alam National Botanical Park. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @SELANGOR TRAVEL**



Run along golden sands with spectacular coastal views at sunrise or sunset at Tanjung Aru Beach. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @AMAZINGSABAH**

BY **THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN**

MALAYSIA is home to diverse landscapes that offer picturesque jogging trails, ideal for those seeking a workout immersed in nature. Here are nine scenic jogging trails in Malaysia to inspire your next outdoor adventure.

Perdana Botanical Gardens, Kuala Lumpur

Nestled in the heart of the city, Perdana Botanical Gardens (formerly Lake Gardens) is a serene escape from the bustling urban environment. The lush greenery, scenic lake views and well-paved paths make it ideal for joggers of all levels. Early morning runs offer a peaceful atmosphere, complemented by the chirping of birds and the occasional sight of monitor lizards. With a distance of 4km around the main areas, it is ideal for a quick and rejuvenating jog.



Perdana Botanical Gardens is a serene oasis in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, ideal for peaceful morning jogs. – **PINTERESTPIC**

Bukit Kiara Park, Kuala Lumpur

For those looking for a more challenging trail, Bukit Kiara Park offers forest paths with gentle inclines and declines. Located near Taman Tun Dr Ismail, the park provides a mix of paved and dirt trails that stretch for over 10km. It is popular among nature enthusiasts for its refreshing greenery and cool shade. The uphill sections reward joggers with breathtaking panoramic views, making the effort worthwhile.



Penang Hill Heritage Trail combines fitness and history on this challenging path. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @WAICHINGSOH**



Putrajaya Wetland Park offers tranquil route surrounded by wetlands and wildlife. – **PIC FROM YOUTUBE @VISITSELANGOR**

Scenic sprints

➤ Explore breathtaking views while keeping fit

Taman Botani Negara, Shah Alam

Taman Botani Negara, also known as the Shah Alam National Botanical Park, is a sprawling area with trails that wind through tropical rainforests, orchards and a man-made lake. Spanning 1,295ha, the park's jogging routes vary in difficulty, catering to beginners and experienced runners. Highlights include the lush Canopy Walkway and the Skytrex Adventure course, which offer unique experiences post-jog.

Tanjung Aru Beach, Kota Kinabalu

Jogging along Tanjung Aru Beach in Sabah is a feast for the senses. The golden sandy shoreline, swaying palm trees and the soothing sound of waves create a beautiful backdrop for an energising run. Stretching for about 2km, this flat path is ideal for leisurely jogs while soaking in stunning sunset views. Finish your workout with a refreshing coconut drink from one of the nearby stalls.

Penang Hill Heritage Trail, Penang

This trail combines fitness with a dash of history and adventure. Starting at the Penang Hill Lower Station, joggers can follow the Heritage Trail that ascends the hill. The trail is moderately challenging,

with steep sections offering a good cardio workout. Along the way, you will encounter colonial-era bungalows, a variety of flora and sweeping views of Georgetown and the Malacca Strait. If the climb feels too demanding, you can always opt for the funicular train back down.

Putrajaya Wetlands Park, Putrajaya

For a tranquil jogging experience, head to Putrajaya Wetlands Park, one of the largest constructed wetlands in Malaysia. Its 4.5km jogging trail meanders through serene landscapes filled with lush greenery, birdwatching spots and small lakes. The trail's relatively flat terrain makes it beginner-friendly while the calming environment provides a meditative backdrop for runners.

Desa Park City, Kuala Lumpur

Desa Park City's Central Park is a favourite among urban joggers. The 9-foot-wide jogging track encircles a man-made lake, surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens. Its pet-friendly environment attracts dog owners while the well-lit paths make it a safe choice for evening jogs. The vibrant community vibe and convenient amenities, such as

nearby cafes, make this spot a standout for city dwellers.

Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), Kepong

For nature enthusiasts, FRIM in Kepong offers an immersive jogging experience amidst one of Malaysia's best preserved rainforests. The trails, such as the popular Rover Track, take you through towering trees, dense foliage and occasional clearings that let in sunlight. With paths of varying difficulty, from paved walkways to dirt trails, FRIM caters to casual joggers and seasoned runners looking for a challenge. Highlights include the serene waterfalls and a canopy walk that offers breathtaking treetop views after your run.

Kepong Metropolitan Park, Kuala Lumpur

Kepong Metropolitan Park is a favourite for city joggers who enjoy a mix of open skies and green spaces. The park's 3.5km jogging trail loops around a sprawling lake, offering scenic views and a refreshing breeze throughout the route. The flat and well-maintained path makes it accessible for beginners and families



Jog in a vibrant community park with picturesque lake view at Desa Park City. – **PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @DESAPARKCITY**



FRIM in Kepong is a beautiful place with nature trails, a canopy walk and lots of plants and trees. – **PIC FROM INSTAGRAM @FRIMKEPONG**



Kepong Metropolitan Park is a large, well-loved urban park in bustling Kepong. – **PIC FROM FACEBOOK @ASIA TRAVELGATE**

while advanced runners can extend their workout with multiple laps. On weekends, the park comes alive with

colourful kites soaring in the sky, adding a touch of vibrancy to your jogging session.

Five **hospitality** trends for 2025

➤ Transformative shifts shaping future of travel, tourism

FIVE major trends that will define hospitality in 2025 include artificial intelligence (AI), branding, new working models, rejuvenating and transformative experiences as well as sustainability, according to Switzerland's EHL Hospitality Business School that offered insights on ways to adapt to technological advancement for human-centric needs.

Fostering human connection with AI

AI continues to maintain its prominent role in fostering human connection. Its value lies in augmenting the human experience rather than replacing it.

AI can aid in automating routine tasks, allowing staff to focus on creating personalised and meaningful connections with guests.

This trend is significant in addressing the rising loneliness epidemic and fulfilling the human need for genuine connections.

Revolutionising hospitality branding

In a competitive hospitality landscape, personalisation through AI and cross-industry partnerships can help hotels stand out.

This is done by enhancing guest experiences, strengthening brand identity, and building lasting customer relationships.

Inspired by luxury brands, this cross-fertilisation between hospitality and other sectors creates unique, mutually beneficial experiences, transforming the industry and expanding brand portfolios.

Implementing new working models

Embracing new working models and modernising management systems are essential for overcoming labour shortages and fostering professional well-being.

AI-driven talent management solutions and flexible job structures enhance employee satisfaction. They are key to attracting and retaining new talents in the industry too.

On the managerial front, clear job progression and cross-dimensional, network-based models are essential, along with continuous training programmes.



Spa vacations are gaining popularity.

Rise of well-being journeys

In response to increased stress, globally worsening mental health and desire for meaningful experiences, well-being and transformative travel are becoming a key hospitality niche.

Digital detox retreats, forest bathing and spa vacations are gaining popularity as people seek ways to nourish their body, mind and soul.

Evidently, this reflects a broader trend of using hospitality to reconnect with oneself.

Sustainability is core differentiator

Sustainability in hospitality now encompasses environmental, employee and community well-being.

With shifting guest values, particularly among Gen Z, sustainable practices are increasingly becoming a core differentiator, encompassing everything from eco-friendly amenities to active community engagement.

AI can help people make meaningful connections.
— PICS BY FREEPIK



Comfort and durability is key in choosing the correct footwear for hiking. — PEXELS/PIC

■ BY R.BALA

THERE has been a pronounced boost in outdoor activities post-pandemic. Denizens of all ages, genders and income groups seem to be more appreciative of nature after being cooped up indoors for prolonged periods. That trend continues as many seek to escape the daily grind of being stuck behind cubicles throughout the working week.

Hiking is a pastime that has attracted a lot of new aficionados and a recent article outlined the necessary factors that newbies need to adhere to. One of them being having the correct footwear.

Do not be simply swayed by popular brands and their marketing campaigns. It is important to consider these essential factors when choosing the correct footwear:

👉 **Feet protection**
The shoes or boots must, first and foremost,

Choosing right footwear for hiking

provide protection from the many hazards on hiking trails. They should be robust enough to withstand some rough terrain.

👉 Comfort factor

Bear in mind you will be wearing these shoes or boots for several hours at the very least with each hike. Thus, it is imperative they are comfortable and not cause blisters.

👉 Lightweight

Hiking involves thousands of steps per trail. It is better if the footwear is made of lightweight materials that allow you to conserve energy.

Next is to decide on the type of shoes required. Generally, these can be categorised as trail runners, hiking shoes and hiking boots.

👉 Trail runners

These shoes are built for comfort. They have breathable uppers allowing for better ventilation and usually have springier step. However, these trail runners are not built to last and will probably start falling apart after 800km

or so. If you intend to tackle tough and heavy terrain, these are not recommended. However, if a gentle hike is your weekly thing, then go for it.

👉 Hiking shoes

Hiking shoes are designed to last longer than a trail runner but are usually heavier because of the extra protection. They are also a bit stiffer than a trail runner. Overall the durability, lighter weight and protection offer the best balance for hikers.

👉 Hiking boots

Designed for rough terrain, these boots offer maximum protection and will also last much longer. But, that also means they are heavier as they are meant for the hardcore hiker who is looking to conquer some challenging trails.

Whichever you choose, bear in mind your budget, frequency of use and type of trails you are looking to hit. Happy hiking!



BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

FOR travellers seeking more than just festive lights and holiday markets, Europe's centuries-old Christmas traditions offer a journey through time.

From mediaeval town squares to ancient cathedrals, these destinations have managed to preserve an authentic spirit of Christmas from decades and even centuries past, allowing visitors to experience the holiday season as it was celebrated generations ago.

Mediaeval Christmas preserved in time

Walking into Rothenburg ob der Tauber during Christmas is like being flung into a living history book. The preserved German mediaeval town, with its timber-framed buildings and cobblestone streets, hosts one of the most authentic historical Christmas experiences in Europe. The tradition of the *Reiterlesmarkt* (Christmas market) here dates back to the 15th century, making it one of Germany's oldest.

Rothenburg also has a Christmas Museum that is open year-round and it houses a collection of historical decorations, with some pieces dating back to the 1600s. In the museum, visitors can learn about the evolution of local Christmas traditions, including the origin of glass ornaments and the development of the Santa Claus imagery from his folklore roots.

Dickensian Christmas experience

Few cities embody the Victorian Christmas spirit better than York in England. The city's mediaeval streets, particularly the Shambles, transform into a scene straight out of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*.

York's connection to Christmas history runs deep – it was here that many Victorian Christmas traditions were popularised, including the sending of Christmas cards and the hanging of mistletoe, a practice dating back to the city's Viking era.

The York Castle Museum offers an immersive Victorian Christmas experience, recreating a 19th-century street complete with shops and houses decorated for the season. Visitors can participate in traditional Victorian games, listen to carollers and learn about authentic period cooking methods from historical interpreters.

Original Christkindlesmarkt experience

The Nuremberg *Christkindlesmarkt* stands as one of Europe's oldest Christmas markets. As seen with records dating back to 1628, the market's tradition of handcrafted ornaments and decorations remains virtually unchanged since the 17th century. The market's iconic symbol, the *Christkind* (Christ child), traditionally portrayed by a young woman with golden hair and wings, has been a central figure of the celebration in this German town since 1969, continuing a tradition that reaches back to Protestant reforms of the 16th century.

What sets Nuremberg apart is its strict adherence to historical authenticity. The market allows only traditional handcrafted items to be sold – no mass-produced goods are permitted.

The famous Nuremberg *Lebkuchen* (gingerbread), protected as "geographical indication" by European law, has been baked in the city since 1395 by the Lebkuchen-Schmidt family bakery. Visitors can tour the Mediaeval Dungeons and the Craftsmen's Courtyard to understand how Christmas goods were traditionally produced during the Middle Ages.



Christmas in Rothenburg is like something from a fantasy book. – CHRISTMASMARKETSINEUROPEPIC

Historical winter wonderlands

➤ Guide to Europe's storied Christmas destinations

Silent Night's sacred origins

For those seeking the roots of Christmas music, Salzburg offers an unparalleled historical experience. The Austrian city is intrinsically linked to *Silent Night*, *Holy Night*, first performed in 1818 in the nearby village of Oberndorf. The Silent Night Chapel, built on the site of the original St Nicholas Church where the carol debuted, has constantly drawn visitors from around the world.

Additionally, the Salzburg Christmas Museum chronicles the development of Christmas traditions in the Alpine region, including the evolution of Advent calendars and Christmas markets. The city's baroque architecture, dusted with snow while the smell of roasted chestnuts and mulled wine fills the air, is a proven great backdrop for the exploration of these traditions.

Epicentre of religious Christmas tradition

No historical Christmas journey would be

complete without visiting the Vatican City, where some of the oldest Christian Christmas traditions continue unchanged. The Vatican's Nativity Scene display in St Peter's Square, a tradition dating back to 1982, features life-sized figures and carries on the practice of nativity scenes first attributed to St Francis of Assisi in 1223.

The midnight mass at St Peter's Basilica remains one of Christianity's most significant Christmas celebrations. While attending the mass requires advance planning (tickets must be requested months in advance), the experience of participating in this centuries-old tradition is unparalleled for followers of the Catholic faith.

Practical travel tips

For those planning their own historical Christmas journey, do consider these tips:

- 👉 Book accommodations well in advance as historical towns often have limited lodging options.
- 👉 Visit during early December to avoid peak



The Shambles during Christmas. – BESTTHINGSTODOINYORKPIC

tourist crowds while still enjoying full Christmas activities that would have already started.

- 👉 Research special historical tours and events as these often require advance reservations rather than walk-in participation.
- 👉 Pack appropriate clothing for the cold weather and considerable walking on uneven surfaces.
- 👉 Consider hiring local guides who specialise in historical interpretation.



Nuremberg *Christkindlesmarkt* attracts plenty of visitors. – LUXEADVENTURETRAVELLERPIC



The Silent Night Chapel in Oberndorf. – PANAROMATOURSPIC



Advance booking is advised if one wishes to attend Christmas mass at St Peter's Square. – PEXELSPIC



The Snake Show will treat audiences with an immersive experience of the world of Money Games.

Money Games preview

GET a sneak peek into the Year of the Snake early at *The Snake Show*, helmed by Hong Kong and Malaysia showbiz veterans Eric Tsang and Jack Lim, respectively, on Jan 18 next year at the Arena of Stars, Resorts World Genting.

Organised by KXL Crossover, the show leads up to the upcoming Chinese New Year movie *Money Games*, which Tsang and Jack co-starred and co-produced.

Directed by Malaysian filmmaker Matt Lai, the movie follows Master Tsang (played by Tsang) and his team of undercover agents breaking up a scam syndicate.

Unlike Jack's usual festive comedy flicks, *Money Games* marks his attempt at something different by highlighting current social issues. The movie was filmed in Hong Kong and Malaysia.

It also stars Hong Kong actors Bobby Au-Yeung, who is making a return to the silver screen, and Edmond So of the band Grasshopper. With unexpected plot twists, their characters will keep moviegoers on the edge of their seats.

At *The Snake Show*, Tsang, Jack, Au-Yeung and So will be joined by Malaysian cast members Haoren, Tomato and Ah Ya of Steady Gang, Jovi Heng, Wayne Thong, Jacqueline Tiang and Sandra Lim.

Singaporean actor-comedian Jaspers Lai, local media personality Aki Chan, the Go Hell Holiday ensemble and pop group TE3N will also be present at the show.

As the first-of-its-kind immersive interactive live show in Malaysia, *The Snake Show* brings the crowd into the world of *Money Games*. Tickets range from RM98 to RM298.

Pianist Maksim to serenade local fans

FANS of classical crossover music are in for a treat as world-renowned pianist Maksim Mrvica, simply known as Maksim, brings his Segmenti world tour to Kuala Lumpur.

The performance, organised by Lo-Fi Entertainment, will take place on Feb 12 next year at 8.30pm in Mega Star Arena.

Accompanied by an orchestra, Maksim will perform selections from his latest album *Segmenti*, which blends original compositions with reimagined hits from popular bands such as Abba and Queen.

The concert will also feature classical pieces from the likes of Chopin, Prokofiev and Tchaikovsky, showcasing Maksim's unique ability to merge classical and contemporary styles.

A native of Sibenik, Croatia, Maksim's journey to global acclaim began at nine, continuing through war-torn years in his teens. His training at prestigious music academies in Zagreb, Budapest and Paris has solidified his reputation as a piano virtuoso, capable of delivering stunning renditions such as *Croatian Rhapsody* and *Flight of the Bumblebee*.

Ticket prices range from RM188 to RM888.



The concert will feature timeless classical pieces.

Nick Carter is back with Who I Am world tour

➤ Backstreet Boys' youngest member returns for solo gig

MALAYSIAN fans of 90s pop are in for a treat as Nick Carter, the youngest member of the popular Backstreet Boys, announces a Kuala Lumpur stop on his Who I Am world tour.

The solo concert will take place on Feb 26 next year at Zepp KL, promising an unforgettable evening of nostalgia and timeless hits.

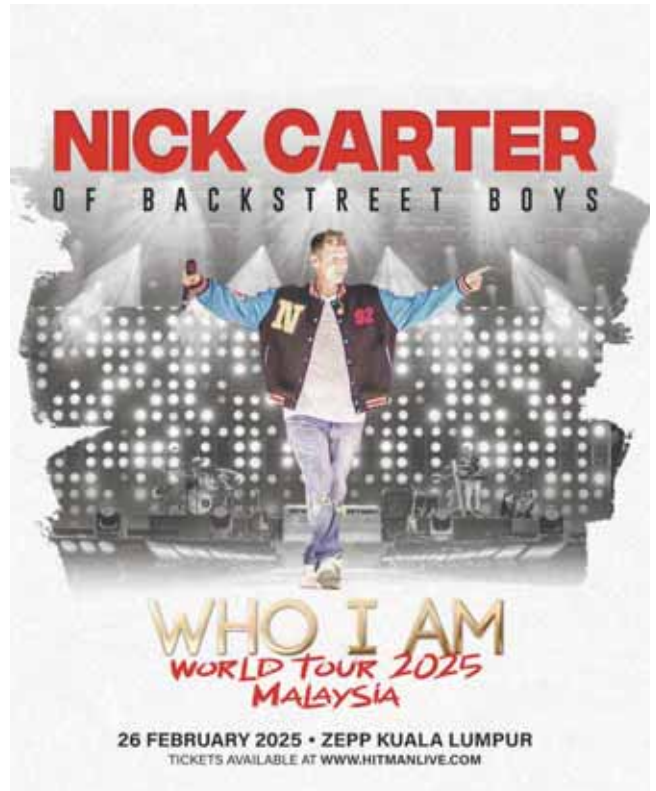
Marking his first return to Malaysia since 2015, when he performed alongside Backstreet Boys during its In a World Like This tour, Carter is back to captivate fans with a setlist blending solo hits, Backstreet Boys classics and personal favourites.

The tour comes on the heels of his successful 2023 solo comeback, highlighted by singles such as *Superman*, *Made For Us* and *Never Break My Heart (Not Again)*.

Organised by Hitman Solutions and Happymoon, the Kuala Lumpur concert is part of the Asian leg of Carter's global tour. The concert promises to be more than just a musical performance. Fans can expect a night filled with memories, singing along to the boy band's hits such as *Everybody*, *I Want It That Way* and *As Long As You Love Me*.

Tickets are available now, priced from RM248 to RM448. VIP Box packages, accommodating a maximum of 10 guests, are available for RM8,888.

The star will also be performing in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah a day earlier at Hakka Hall.



Carter is back to captivate fans with a setlist featuring solo hits, Backstreet Boys' classics and personal favourites.

Infinite returns to KL for 15th anniversary concert

K-POP group Infinite is back in Malaysia as a full group for the first time in a dozen years with its 15th Anniversary Limited Edition Concert Tour that will take place on Feb 22 next year at Mega Star Arena KL.

Following sold-out shows in Seoul, the tour has generated global excitement, with stops planned in cities such as Taipei, Macau, Jakarta, Singapore, Yokohama, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong.

Fans can look forward to a spectacular evening of live performances, featuring iconic hits such as *Be Mine*, *The Chaser*, *Bad* and *Destiny*, alongside new tracks. With its slick choreography, catchy melodies and charismatic stage presence, Infinite promises an unforgettable experience.

The tour marks a celebration of the group's music and gratitude to fans for their support over the years. Each member (Sung-kyu, Dong-woo, Woo-hyun, Sung-yeol, L and Seong-jong) is ready to make this concert a memorable event.

Having won over 30 major awards, such as Best Male Group and Best Dance Performance at the Mnet Asian Music Awards and a Bonsang Award at the Seoul Music Awards, Infinite remains one of K-pop's most influential groups.

Organised by AllStar Sports and managed by Star Planet, tickets are on sale now.



Infinite is a K-pop group that debuted in 2010.

Widening access to learning pathways

➤ Adult learners can pursue tertiary education through APEL

WHEN working individuals wish to further their studies at tertiary level, a lack of professional qualifications may become a barrier for entry to institutions of higher learning.

Similarly, while many may have worked in the particular industry for decades, the absence of formal academic credentials may hinder opportunities for promotion within the organisation, or even job mobility.

This is no longer a problem, as Management and Science University (MSU) now offers breakthrough pathways for working adults through its National Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) centre, which widens access to higher education for work-experienced individuals.

MSU offers a wide range of academic programmes to suit the varied needs of working adults, tailored to meet their hectic schedules.

Lifelong learning refers to the process of gaining knowledge and learning new skills throughout your life. Many people continue their education for personal development and fulfilment, while others see it as a

significant step toward career advancement.

APEL provides working professionals with a direct pathway to higher education without prior formal educational qualifications. The systematic process involves the identification, documentation and assessment of prior experiential learning to determine the extent to which an individual has achieved the desired learning outcomes, for access to a programme of study and/or award of credits.

APEL C, or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning via credit transfer allows assessment of credits against matching modules in a programme of study.

The APEL C pathway provides credit transfers for entry into diploma programmes up to PhD level. Once an APEL C applicant's competency level is determined, the credits can shorten his or her entire study duration considerably, saving time and money.

Normally, an individual with SPM qualifications applying for entry to university would qualify only for diploma studies. However, with APEL C, it now becomes possible to pursue a bachelor's degree directly.



Working adults can now pursue tertiary level education with APEL at MSU

Sitting for the APEL aptitude test
With ten locations, including Sabah and Sarawak, for potential candidates to take the APEL Aptitude Test as the non-conventional pre-qualification for entry into higher studies, MSU currently offers APEL A and C at T-3 (Certificate), T-4 (Diploma), T-6 (Bachelor's degree), and T-7 (Master's degree) levels. (APEL A applies to only Malaysian citizens).

Micro-credential programme
Another flexible option for adult learners to pursue higher education

is a micro-credential programme, which offers industry in-demand programmes that provide flexible and made-easy learning assessments that fulfil his or her needs for comprehensive education in preferred areas of study.

Management of APEL centre
The centre is currently managed by the MSU Continuing and Extended Education Centre (CEdEC), which was established with the objective to excel at providing continuing education in tandem with the current

needs of society. Blending technical vocational education and training (TVET) with traditional academic curricula, MSU enhances competencies with industry internship, community and creative entrepreneurship, as well as global exposure.

For more information on the full range of flexible programmes offered at MSU, please email enquiry@msu.edu.my, visit www.msu.edu.my or call 03-5521 6868.

#129 @ Asia

#28 @ South-Eastern Asia



ADULT LEARNING PROGRAMMES @ MSU

Learning that adapts to you - Flexibility for Busy Professionals
#beMSUrians



- 1) Entry using experience is possible with APEL A
- 2) Shorten your duration of study through APEL C

Fields of Study :

- . Health Sciences
- . Optometry & Visual Science
- . Business Management
- . Accounting & Finance
- . Education & Social Sciences
- . Hospitality & Creative Arts
- . Media Science & Graphic
- . Engineering & Technology
- . Information Sciences & Computing



Contact us : Email : enquiry@msu.edu.my

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MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE UNIVERSITY (MSU) DU019(B)
University Drive, Off Persiaran Olahraga, Section 13, 40100 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.



India's rain trouble

... as rain slows Australia's advance at the Gabba

AUSTRALIA'S pacemen rattled through India's top order on a rain-hit day three of the third Test in Brisbane yesterday but the recurring wet weather put the brakes on the hosts' charge.

India were 51 for four at stumps, trailing Australia's first-innings total by 394 runs, as play was abandoned nearly an hour early due to bad light at the Gabba.

Opener KL Rahul was unbeaten on 33 with India skipper Rohit Sharma yet to score.

Australia's bowlers could send down only 17 overs after being bowled out for 445 in the morning. Captain Pat Cummins did well to have Rishabh Pant caught behind for nine in the first over following a rain break before tea.

Two balls later, following a glorious cover drive for four by Rahul off Mitchell Starc, the players trudged off the ground as tea was called early.

More rain saw the resumption of play delayed after tea and when it finally kicked off again Australia were reduced to bowling only a couple of overs of spin due to poor light after paceman Starc had completed his earlier interrupted over.

It was a frustrating day for the loyal crowd of 16,180 but perhaps more so for the home

team, whose chances of forcing a result were progressively eroded.

Adding to the angst, there is more rain forecast for days four and five.

Australia, nonetheless, dominated what play there was, continuing on from their superb day two when Travis Head and Steve Smith scored centuries to build a big total.

Starc took two wickets in six balls with the help of namesake Mitchell Marsh, while Josh Hazlewood removed Virat Kohli as India's reply got off to a dreadful start.

Starc struck with the second ball of the innings, Yashuvi Jaiswal flicking a shot off his pads to be out for four, with Marsh jogging across from square leg to take an easy catch.

Big left-arm Starc then dismissed Shubman Gill for one as the number three drove at a full delivery to send a thick edge to Marsh, who leapt to his left in the gully to take a screamer of a catch.

Kohli lasted only 16 balls for his three runs, nibbling at a Hazlewood delivery to be caught behind. Rahul survived after wearing a painful blow on his wrist from Hazlewood's first ball of the morning.

The hosts resumed in the morning on 405 for seven, adding 40 runs for their last three wickets. - Reuters

Williamson scores big as NZ win third Test

ENGLAND face a colossal target of 658 to win the third Test after Kane Williamson's (pic) century yesterday rammed home New Zealand's advantage with more than two days remaining.

Williamson posted a 33rd ton to continue a career glut of runs at Seddon Park before departing for 156 as the home side were dismissed for 453 late on day three.

Daryl Mitchell scored 60 and Mitchell Santner 49 not out, setting up the prospect of a consolation New Zealand win after they were well beaten in the first two Tests of the three-match series.

England's hopes were dealt a blow by a hamstring injury to captain Ben Stokes while he was bowling midway through the second session.

The 33-year-old limped from the field in pain and he is in doubt to bat in the fourth innings.

The opening session was lost to rain in Hamilton but Williamson quickly found his methodical groove after resuming on 50.

He put on 105 for the third wicket alongside Rachin Ravindra, who was caught for 44 off a leading edge from seamer Matthew Potts.

Williamson departed soon after powering New Zealand to 274-4 at tea, top-edging a sweep into the deep of Shoaib Bashir (2-170).

Williamson survived a tight Brydon Carse lbw appeal review on 73 and was later dropped by wicketkeeper Ollie Pope,

when a difficult leg-side chance spilled from his glove off Stokes.

Mitchell was caught in the deep to hand part-time spinner Jacob Bethell a first Test wicket and, ultimately, England's best bowling figures for the innings of 3-72. - AFP



222 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF GUIDANCE VISION SDN. BHD. (Registration No. 20011009247 (545003-H)) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 439(2)(b) of the Companies Act 2016, that the Special and Ordinary Resolutions set out below were duly passed by the Members of the Company on 16th December, 2024:

- 1. THAT GUIDANCE VISION SDN. BHD. be wound up voluntarily by way of a Members' Voluntary Winding Up pursuant to Section 439(1)(b) of the Companies Act 2016.
- 2. THAT Madam Wong Nyuk Har (F) be appointed as Liquidator to act for the purpose of such winding up.

Dated this 17th day of December, 2024
YAP CHEE SING
Director

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF GUIDANCE VISION SDN. BHD. (Registration No. 20011009247 (545003-H)) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT the Creditors of GUIDANCE VISION SDN. BHD. are being wound up voluntarily, are required on or before 16th day of January, 2025 to send their names and addresses with particulars of their debts or claims, and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned, the Liquidator of the said Company, and, if so required in writing from the said Liquidator, are, by their solicitors or personally, to come in and prove their debts or claims at such time and place as shall be specified in such notice or in default thereof they will be excluded from the benefit of any distribution made before such debts or claims are proved.

Dated this 17th day of December, 2024
WONG NYUK HAR (F)
Liquidator
830, Jalan SS15/5A
47500 Subang Jaya
Selangor Darul Ehsan

222 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG DALAM KEBANKRAPAN NO. PA-29NC-655-09/2024

Per: Cho Cheong Kun
[No. K/P: 730731-07-550 / A2548272]
Penghujung Penghakiman

Ex parte: Hong Leong Bank Berhad
[No. Syarikat: 19340100023 (97141-X)]
Pemuting Penghakiman

NOTIS
Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 26-09-2024

Kepada: Low Khan Loom, 36, Jalan Bagan, 13600 Butterworth, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 11A, Lorong Bunga Raya 12, Raja Uda, 13000 Butterworth, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 9, Lintang Murni 5, Taman Desa Murni, 13400 Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang.

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DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG DALAM KEBANKRAPAN NO. PA-29NC-655-09/2024

Per: Low Khan Loom
[No. K/P: 63211-07-5040]
Penghujung Penghakiman

Ex parte: Hong Leong Bank Berhad
[No. Syarikat: 19340100023 (97141-X)]
Pemuting Penghakiman

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Dan/atau No. 9, Lintang Murni 5, Taman Desa Murni, 13400 Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 9, Lintang Murni 5, Taman Desa Murni, 13400 Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 9, Lintang Murni 5, Taman Desa Murni, 13400 Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 9, Lintang Murni 5, Taman Desa Murni, 13400 Seberang Perai, Pulau Pinang.

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG DALAM KEBANKRAPAN NO. PA-29NC-647-09/2024

Per: Chan Kok Heng
[No. K/P: 680413-07-5599 / A098264]
Penghujung Penghakiman

Ex parte: Hong Leong Bank Berhad
[No. Syarikat: 19340100023 (97141-X)]
Pemuting Penghakiman

NOTIS
Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 26-09-2024

Kepada: Chan Kok Heng, Plot 31 Lorong Bandar Utama 4, Bandar Utama, 06000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

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Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

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Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

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Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

Dan/atau No. 1147, Lorong Kempas 3/16, Taman Kempas, 08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah Darul Aman.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG DALAM KEBANKRAPAN NO. PA-29NC-584-09/2024

Per: Tan Chee Yuen
[No. K/P: 690128-07-5975]
Penghujung Penghakiman

Ex parte: Hong Leong Islamic Bank Berhad
[No. Syarikat: 200501009144 (686191-W)]
Pemuting Penghakiman

NOTIS
Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 10-09-2024

Kepada: Tan Chee Yuen, Block 23-02-21, Labuhayra Teras Teak, Taman Lela, 11060 Ayer Itam, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 11060 Ayer Itam, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 11060 Ayer Itam, Pulau Pinang.

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Dan/atau No. 11060 Ayer Itam, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 11060 Ayer Itam, Pulau Pinang.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG DALAM KEBANKRAPAN NO. PA-29NC-653-09/2024

Per: Nur Najmi Nadhirah Binti Mat Zuki
[No. K/P: 660615-07-5011 / A0412975]
Penghujung Penghakiman

Ex parte: Hong Leong Islamic Bank Berhad
[No. Syarikat: 200501009144 (686191-W)]
Pemuting Penghakiman

NOTIS
Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 10-09-2024

Kepada: Nur Najmi Nadhirah Binti Mat Zuki, No. 497 MK 12, Kampung Sekolah Juru, 14100 Simpang Ampat, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 497 MK 12, Kampung Sekolah Juru, 14100 Simpang Ampat, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 497 MK 12, Kampung Sekolah Juru, 14100 Simpang Ampat, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 497 MK 12, Kampung Sekolah Juru, 14100 Simpang Ampat, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 497 MK 12, Kampung Sekolah Juru, 14100 Simpang Ampat, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 497 MK 12, Kampung Sekolah Juru, 14100 Simpang Ampat, Pulau Pinang.

Dan/atau No. 497 MK 12

Barcelona stunned

Leganes beat Liga leaders as Atletico move level

LA LIGA leaders Barcelona stumbled 1-0 at home against Leganes yesterday as they suffered another blow in the Spanish title race.

Atletico Madrid pulled level on points with the Catalans with a 1-0 victory of their own against Getafe earlier on, their 11th straight win across all competitions.

Leganes defender Sergio Gonzalez headed home from a corner after four minutes for the visiting minnows and Barcelona missed a host of presentable chances as they failed to mount a comeback.

After a superb start to the season, Barcelona have lost three of their last six league games and won just one of those, seeing their lead whittled away.

Hansi Flick's side lead third-place Real Madrid by a single point, after the champions drew at Rayo

Barcelona's Raphinha reacts. - AFPIC



Vallecano on Saturday, having played one extra game than both their closest rivals.

"It was a messed-up game, it's impossible to be happy. I think we started the game half asleep," Pedri told DAZN.

"We woke up, we created chances but we didn't have the spark we needed to get the goal..."

"We have to be better in front of goal if we want to win points, we're in a bad run in the league and we have to turn it around."

Diego Simeone's Atletico have been in fine form and continued their winning run across all competitions with a

deserved home triumph thanks to Alexander Sorloth's goal.

The Norwegian target man came off the bench to head home the winner in the second half for his seventh league goal this season.

"I'll repeat it, I'm boring, I won't change - until the last day, we'll go game by game," Simeone told reporters when asked if his team could challenge for the title.

"I always say the best result is 1-0 because you work hard in defence and you're effective in attack, if you win 4-3 there are things you have to improve."

"Before the game I spoke with the players about thanking and recognising those who weren't going to start the game," said Simeone.

"There are very important players who are competing in an extraordinary way... it's our biggest strength."

Barcelona host Atletico in their final match of the year next weekend. - AFP

SIDENETTING

AC Milan flop for 125th birthday, Fiorentina lose

AC MILAN failed to honour the 125th anniversary of the club's foundation with yesterday's drab goalless draw with Genoa which left the seven-time European champions way behind Serie A's top teams. Fiorentina also lost ground in the title race by falling to a 1-0 defeat at Bologna and missing the chance to claim a club-record ninth straight league win. In front of over 70,000 fans and a host of icons who had come to the San Siro to watch their former team and celebrate Milan's birthday, Paulo Fonseca's side did nothing to live up to a glorious footballing history. "The players played with desire, they played like a team, the only thing that was missing was the goal," insisted Fonseca. "We were aggressive, won the ball back high up the pitch, we had a lot of shots but just couldn't score." Milan were a vintage kit for the occasion and before kickoff a host of icons paraded on the pitch carrying some of the vast number of trophies won since the club's foundation on Dec 16, 1899 as Milan Foot-Ball and Cricket Club.

Openda, Sesko score as Leipzig beat Frankfurt

GOALS from Benjamin Sesko and Loïs Openda took Leipzig to a 2-1 home win over Eintracht Frankfurt yesterday, days out from their trip to league leaders Bayern Munich. Sesko headed in a rebound after 19 minutes but Frankfurt's Nathaniel Brown equalised with a clever solo effort on the 41-minute mark, hitting a low shot in off the right upright. Openda, who was unlucky to be called offside when Leipzig's Christoph Baumgartner scored just one minute into the game, put the hosts back in front with a trademark rocket after 51 minutes. Leipzig, who lost 3-2 to Aston Villa last week to become the first club eliminated from the Champions League midweek, held on to grab all three points. Leipzig's Baumgartner toasted his sides' "hard bit of work". He added: "We've got quality up front and we've got speed. We've got to keep going like this against Munich. We might not have as many chances as we did today, but we'll go there and see what's possible." The win meant Leipzig drew level with Frankfurt on 27 points, six behind Bayern Munich, who were outclassed 2-1 by lowly Mainz on Saturday.

PSG beat Lyon to extend lead in Ligue 1

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN outclassed in-form Lyon yesterday, winning 3-1 to extend their lead at the top of the Ligue 1 table to seven points. Ousmane Dembele opened the scoring at the Parc des Princes and Vitinha added a penalty as PSG raced into a two-goal lead in what was expected to be one of the biggest tests of their credentials domestically this season. Georges Mikautadze pulled one back for Lyon before the break but they never really looked like equalising and substitute Goncalo Ramos wrapped up the points for PSG late on. The win for Paris comes after nearest challengers Marseille and Monaco were both held to draws on Saturday, putting them in an even stronger position to go on and retain their title. PSG now head to Monaco on Thursday (4am Malaysian time) in a rearranged fixture which will give them the chance to finish 2024 with a 10-point advantage over their nearest rivals. "We were up against a very good Lyon team on a good run but it was very important for us to take advantage of the fact that the teams immediately behind us didn't win this weekend," said Luis Enrique.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
PA-2900C-956-09/2024

Per: Lim Eng Hau (No. K/P: 740519-07-5783) Penghutang Penghakiman
Ex parte: Hong Leong Bank Berhad (No. Syarikat: 19340100023 (87141-X)) Pemuitang Penghakiman

NOTIS

Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 10-09-2024

Kepada: Lim Eng Hau No. 2, Desa Selatan 3, Jalan Jelutong, 11600 Georgetown, Pulau Pinang

AMBIL PERHATIAN bahawa satu Notis Kebankrapan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu dalam Mahkamah ini oleh Hong Leong Bank Berhad yang berlamat di Tingkat 30, Menara Hong Leong, No. 6, Jalan Damania, Bukit Damansara, 50490 Kuala Lumpur dan Mahkamah telah memintakan supaya Notis Kebankrapan tersebut disampaikan kepada kamu dengan menampal salinan-salinannya berserta satu salinan temeterai Perintah Untuk Penyampailan Ganti pada papan notis Mahkamah Tinggi di Pulau Pinang dan penampalan di tempat ketara premis Penghujung Penghakiman di No. 2, Desa Selatan 3, Jalan Jelutong, 11600 Georgetown, Pulau Pinang dan juga dengan menyiarkan Notis ini sekali di dalam akhbar tempatan berbahasa Inggeris iaitu "The Sun" dan bahawa penampalan dan penyiaran sedemikian disifatkan penyampaian yang sempurna dan cukup akan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut kepada kamu selepas tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan atau penyiaran sedemikian Notis ini mengikut mana yang berkenaan.

Jika kamu berniat untuk menentang dan/atau membela diri, kamu mestilah dalam masa tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan dan pengiklanan tersebut menjadi sempurna, memohon kepada Mahkamah untuk mengemukakan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut dengan memasukkan satu affidavit bagi maksud tersebut di mahkamah ini. Jika tidak, suatu Petyeyen Pemuitang boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu.

Notis Kebankrapan tersebut boleh diperiksa oleh kamu atas permohonan di Mahkamah ini.

Bertarikh pada 12 November 2024.

landatangan

MUHAMAD QAYUM BIN NOORDIN
Penolong Kanan Pendafatar
Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia
Georgetown

Notis ini difailkan oleh Tettan Kek Ooi & Lee Hong, Peguamcara bagi Pemuitang Penghakiman yang dinamakan di atas dan alamat untuk penyampaian kepadanya ialah di 53, Tingkat 1, Lebuhr Pantai, 10300 Pulau Pinang.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
PA-2900C-956-09/2024

Per: Cheah Kah Chye (No. K/P: 660917-07-5359) Penghutang Penghakiman
Ex parte: Hong Leong Bank Berhad (No. Syarikat: 19340100023 (87141-X)) Pemuitang Penghakiman

NOTIS

Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 11-09-2024

Kepada: Cheah Kah Chye No. 2, Desal Pinang 10, Seri Tanjung Pinang, Tanjung Tokong, 10470 Georgetown, Pulau Pinang

AMBIL PERHATIAN bahawa satu Notis Kebankrapan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu dalam Mahkamah ini oleh Hong Leong Bank Berhad yang berlamat di Tingkat 30, Menara Hong Leong, No. 6, Jalan Damania, Bukit Damansara, 50490 Kuala Lumpur dan Mahkamah telah memintakan supaya Notis Kebankrapan tersebut disampaikan kepada kamu dengan menampal salinan-salinannya berserta satu salinan temeterai Perintah Untuk Penyampailan Ganti pada papan notis Mahkamah Tinggi di Pulau Pinang dan penampalan di tempat ketara premis Penghujung Penghakiman di No. 2, Desal Pinang 10, Seri Tanjung Pinang, Tanjung Tokong, 10470 Georgetown, Pulau Pinang dan juga dengan menyiarkan Notis ini sekali di dalam akhbar tempatan berbahasa Inggeris iaitu "The Sun" dan bahawa penampalan dan penyiaran sedemikian disifatkan penyampaian yang sempurna dan cukup akan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut kepada kamu selepas tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan atau penyiaran sedemikian Notis ini mengikut mana yang berkenaan.

Jika kamu berniat untuk menentang dan/atau membela diri, kamu mestilah dalam masa tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan dan pengiklanan tersebut menjadi sempurna, memohon kepada Mahkamah untuk mengemukakan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut dengan memasukkan satu affidavit bagi maksud tersebut di mahkamah ini. Jika tidak, suatu Petyeyen Pemuitang boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu.

Notis Kebankrapan tersebut boleh diperiksa oleh kamu atas permohonan di Mahkamah ini.

Bertarikh pada 12 November 2024.

landatangan

MUHAMAD QAYUM BIN NOORDIN
Penolong Kanan Pendafatar
Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia
Georgetown

Notis ini difailkan oleh Tettan Kek Ooi & Lee Hong, Peguamcara bagi Pemuitang Penghakiman yang dinamakan di atas dan alamat untuk penyampaian kepadanya ialah di 53, Tingkat 1, Lebuhr Pantai, 10300 Pulau Pinang.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
PA-2900C-956-09/2024

Per: Siow Leong Keat (No. K/P: 631117-07-6003 / 7213398) Penghutang Penghakiman
Ex parte: Hong Leong Bank Berhad (No. Syarikat: 19340100023 (87141-X)) Pemuitang Penghakiman

NOTIS

Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 26-09-2024

Kepada: Siow Leong Keat 10-10-13, Lorong Semarak Api 2, Bandar Baru Air Itam, 11500 Ayer Itam, Pulau Pinang

AMBIL PERHATIAN bahawa satu Notis Kebankrapan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu dalam Mahkamah ini oleh Hong Leong Bank Berhad yang berlamat di Tingkat 30, Menara Hong Leong, No. 6, Jalan Damania, Bukit Damansara, 50490 Kuala Lumpur dan Mahkamah telah memintakan supaya Notis Kebankrapan tersebut disampaikan kepada kamu dengan menampal salinan-salinannya berserta satu salinan temeterai Perintah Untuk Penyampailan Ganti pada papan notis Mahkamah Tinggi di Pulau Pinang dan penampalan di tempat ketara premis Penghujung Penghakiman di 10-10-13, Lorong Semarak Api 2, Bandar Baru Air Itam, 11500 Ayer Itam, Pulau Pinang dan juga dengan menyiarkan Notis ini sekali di dalam akhbar tempatan berbahasa Inggeris iaitu "The Sun" dan bahawa penampalan dan penyiaran sedemikian disifatkan penyampaian yang sempurna dan cukup akan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut kepada kamu selepas tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan atau penyiaran sedemikian Notis ini mengikut mana yang berkenaan.

Jika kamu berniat untuk menentang dan/atau membela diri, kamu mestilah dalam masa tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan dan pengiklanan tersebut menjadi sempurna, memohon kepada Mahkamah untuk mengemukakan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut dengan memasukkan satu affidavit bagi maksud tersebut di mahkamah ini. Jika tidak, suatu Petyeyen Pemuitang boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu.

Notis Kebankrapan tersebut boleh diperiksa oleh kamu atas permohonan di Mahkamah ini.

Bertarikh pada 20 November 2024.

landatangan

MUHAMAD QAYUM BIN NOORDIN
Penolong Kanan Pendafatar
Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia
Georgetown

Notis ini difailkan oleh Tettan Kek Ooi & Lee Hong, Peguamcara bagi Pemuitang Penghakiman yang dinamakan di atas dan alamat untuk penyampaian kepadanya ialah di 53, Tingkat 1, Lebuhr Pantai, 10300 Pulau Pinang.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
PA-2900C-974-09/2024

Per: Saw Yu Cui (No. K/P: 910521-07-5386) Penghutang Penghakiman
Ex parte: Hong Leong Bank Berhad (No. Syarikat: 19340100023 (87141-X)) Pemuitang Penghakiman

NOTIS

Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 09-09-2024

Kepada: Saw Yu Cui Blok 1-1-20, Taman Lip Sin, Lenggok Nipah, 11900 Bayan Lepas, Pulau Pinang

AMBIL PERHATIAN bahawa satu Notis Kebankrapan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu dalam Mahkamah ini oleh Hong Leong Bank Berhad yang berlamat di Tingkat 30, Menara Hong Leong, No. 6, Jalan Damania, Bukit Damansara, 50490 Kuala Lumpur dan Mahkamah telah memintakan supaya Notis Kebankrapan tersebut disampaikan kepada kamu dengan menampal salinan-salinannya berserta satu salinan temeterai Perintah Untuk Penyampailan Ganti pada papan notis Mahkamah Tinggi di Pulau Pinang dan penampalan di tempat ketara premis Penghujung Penghakiman di Blok 1-1-20, Taman Lip Sin, Lenggok Nipah, 11900 Bayan Lepas, Pulau Pinang dan juga dengan menyiarkan Notis ini sekali di dalam akhbar tempatan berbahasa Inggeris iaitu "The Sun" dan bahawa penampalan dan penyiaran sedemikian disifatkan penyampaian yang sempurna dan cukup akan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut kepada kamu selepas tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan atau penyiaran sedemikian Notis ini mengikut mana yang berkenaan.

Jika kamu berniat untuk menentang dan/atau membela diri, kamu mestilah dalam masa tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan dan pengiklanan tersebut menjadi sempurna, memohon kepada Mahkamah untuk mengemukakan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut dengan memasukkan satu affidavit bagi maksud tersebut di mahkamah ini. Jika tidak, suatu Petyeyen Pemuitang boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu.

Notis Kebankrapan tersebut boleh diperiksa oleh kamu atas permohonan di Mahkamah ini.

Bertarikh pada 13 November 2024.

landatangan

MUHAMAD QAYUM BIN NOORDIN
Penolong Kanan Pendafatar
Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia
Georgetown

Notis ini difailkan oleh Tettan Kek Ooi & Lee Hong, Peguamcara bagi Pemuitang Penghakiman yang dinamakan di atas dan alamat untuk penyampaian kepadanya ialah di 53, Tingkat 1, Lebuhr Pantai, 10300 Pulau Pinang.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
PA-2900C-956-09/2024

Per: Muhammad Firdaus Bin Norhisaham (No. K/P: 941216-07-5891) Penghutang Penghakiman
Ex parte: Hong Leong Islamic Bank Berhad (No. Syarikat: 200501009144 (686191-W)) Pemuitang Penghakiman

NOTIS

Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 10-09-2024

Kepada: Muhammad Firdaus Bin Norhisaham No. 15, Lorong Rupanwani, 13200 Kepala Batas, Pulau Pinang

AMBIL PERHATIAN bahawa satu Notis Kebankrapan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu dalam Mahkamah ini oleh Hong Leong Islamic Bank Berhad yang berlamat di Tingkat 30, Menara Hong Leong, No. 6, Jalan Damania, Bukit Damansara, 50490 Kuala Lumpur dan Mahkamah telah memintakan supaya Notis Kebankrapan tersebut disampaikan kepada kamu dengan menampal salinan-salinannya berserta satu salinan temeterai Perintah Untuk Penyampailan Ganti pada papan notis Mahkamah Tinggi di Pulau Pinang dan penampalan di tempat ketara premis Penghujung Penghakiman di No. 15, Lorong Rupanwani, 13200 Kepala Batas, Pulau Pinang dan juga dengan menyiarkan Notis ini sekali di dalam akhbar tempatan berbahasa Inggeris iaitu "The Sun" dan bahawa penampalan dan penyiaran sedemikian disifatkan penyampaian yang sempurna dan cukup akan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut kepada kamu selepas tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan atau penyiaran sedemikian Notis ini mengikut mana yang berkenaan.

Jika kamu berniat untuk menentang dan/atau membela diri, kamu mestilah dalam masa tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan dan pengiklanan tersebut menjadi sempurna, memohon kepada Mahkamah untuk mengemukakan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut dengan memasukkan satu affidavit bagi maksud tersebut di mahkamah ini. Jika tidak, suatu Petyeyen Pemuitang boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu.

Notis Kebankrapan tersebut boleh diperiksa oleh kamu atas permohonan di Mahkamah ini.

Bertarikh pada 12 November 2024.

landatangan

MUHAMAD QAYUM BIN NOORDIN
Penolong Kanan Pendafatar
Mahkamah Tinggi Malaysia
Georgetown

Notis ini difailkan oleh Tettan Kek Ooi & Lee Hong, Peguamcara bagi Pemuitang Penghakiman yang dinamakan di atas dan alamat untuk penyampaian kepadanya ialah di 53, Tingkat 1, Lebuhr Pantai, 10300 Pulau Pinang.

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG
PA-2900C-956-09/2024

Per: Lok Huat Beng (No. K/P: 650110-07-5455 / A0047896) Penghutang Penghakiman
Ex parte: Hong Leong Bank Berhad (No. Syarikat: 19340100023 (87141-X)) Pemuitang Penghakiman

NOTIS

Dalam perkara Notis Kebankrapan yang bertarikh pada 26-09-2024

Kepada: Lok Huat Beng No. 14-2 Lebu Sandilands, 10300 Georgetown, Pulau Pinang

AMBIL PERHATIAN bahawa satu Notis Kebankrapan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu dalam Mahkamah ini oleh Hong Leong Bank Berhad yang berlamat di Tingkat 30, Menara Hong Leong, No. 6, Jalan Damania, Bukit Damansara, 50490 Kuala Lumpur dan Mahkamah telah memintakan supaya Notis Kebankrapan tersebut disampaikan kepada kamu dengan menampal salinan-salinannya berserta satu salinan temeterai Perintah Untuk Penyampailan Ganti pada papan notis Mahkamah Tinggi di Pulau Pinang dan penampalan di tempat ketara premis Penghujung Penghakiman di 14-2 Lebu Sandilands, 10300 Georgetown, Pulau Pinang dan juga dengan menyiarkan Notis ini sekali di dalam akhbar tempatan berbahasa Inggeris iaitu "The Sun" dan bahawa penampalan dan penyiaran sedemikian disifatkan penyampaian yang sempurna dan cukup akan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut kepada kamu selepas tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan atau penyiaran sedemikian Notis ini mengikut mana yang berkenaan.

Jika kamu berniat untuk menentang dan/atau membela diri, kamu mestilah dalam masa tujuh (7) hari selepas tarikh penampalan dan pengiklanan tersebut menjadi sempurna, memohon kepada Mahkamah untuk mengemukakan Notis Kebankrapan tersebut dengan memasukkan satu affidavit bagi maksud tersebut di mahkamah ini. Jika tidak, suatu Petyeyen Pemuitang boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu.

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Bertarikh pada 21 November 2024.

landatangan

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Teddy upset with Ratcliffe

MANCHESTER UNITED chief Sir Jim Ratcliffe has been blasted for his treatment of the club's loyal employees, with £85 million (RM478m) outcast Antony highlighted as an indictment of the club's mismanagement.

Ex-Red Devils striker Teddy Sheringham, speaking exclusively to *Express Sport*, has questioned the club's hierarchy for turning their backs on the people behind the scenes that help 'make the club tick' while wasting millions on players.

The *Telegraph* reported that United had controversially scrapped an annual £100 (RM563) bonus for employees and replaced it with a gift card for less than half the value. Instead of receiving the small cash reward, staff at Old Trafford were given a voucher with the value of £40 (RM225) to redeem with retailer Marks & Spencer.

United have splashed out huge fees on players over the years, with one of their most ineffective signings Antony costing £85m from Ajax alone. The Brazilian earns £160,000 (RM900,230) a week but has played for just 38 minutes in the Premier League this season, despite being fully fit.

While Ratcliffe did not sign Antony, the billionaire did sanction a £220 million (RM1.2b) spending spree this summer only a few months after United announced 250 club employees would be made redundant to cut costs.

The Ineos supremo has also since fired Erik ten Hag and sporting director Dan Ashworth, as well as hiring Ruben Amorim, at an overall cost of £26m (RM146m).

"I'm very surprised that the outburst from those people [the owners] is, they can go out and spend £85m on Antony and waste money, but then they want cutbacks on people that are earning 20 grand a year from the club," Sheringham said.

"It's upsetting a lot of people, I think... And the cuts that they've made recently, I've heard, is all people that have been there for 10, 15, 20 or 30 years. Not important jobs (on the pitch), but important jobs that make the club tick on a family basis, that everybody knows to make it feel homely when people come in." – *Express Newspapers*

Burnley up to third in Championship

BURNLEY beat Norwich 2-1 to climb to third in the English Championship yesterday as Watford overcame West Brom by the same scoreline.

Norwich defender Jose Cordoba headed home his first goal in English football in the second minute but Scott Parker's team hit back strongly after the break.

Substitute Zian Flemming's brilliant long-range strike levelled it for the Clarets midway through the second period and an emphatic finish from Josh Brownhill eight minutes later proved to be the winner.

Burnley, seeking an immediate return to the Premier League, are just one point behind second-placed Leeds, with the top two teams gaining automatic promotion.

Sheffield United top the table with 45 points, three clear of Leeds after 21 games.

Earlier, two sweetly taken goals by Vakoun Bayo gave Watford a 2-1 victory over West Brom at Vicarage Road that lifted Tom Cleverley's side back into playoff contention.

The Ivory Coast striker glanced home a first half header before superb control on his chest ended with a shot on the swivel early in the second period.

Jayson Molumby pulled one back in the 67th minute but Watford held on despite a late scare.

The victory lifted them above their opponents and into seventh place in the Championship, behind Middlesbrough only on goal difference, while West Brom's 12-match unbeaten run came to an end.

"We knew the test we were facing and we've really risen to the challenge," Cleverley told the *BBC*. "It's two teams with the same objectives and, with everyone around us winning yesterday, the pressure was compounded."

"We really wanted to take the game to them and had so many good pieces of play that led to dangerous moments around the box." – *AFP*

'It was incredible'

Amorim said he 'believed' after dramatic Man Utd win in derby

RUBEN AMORIM said Manchester United "deserved" to beat Manchester City after his side produced a dramatic late finish to win 2-1 at the Etihad yesterday.

City defender Josko Gvardiol opened the scoring with a first-half header but Fernandes levelled from the penalty spot in the 88th minute and Diallo struck two minutes later.

"It was incredible," Amorim told the *BBC*. "I think we deserved it. It was a very tough match but we believe until the end. We managed to score, we needed that win, it was important for us and for our fans."

"We were in the game for 90 minutes and that is very good. We talk about the Arsenal game (a 2-0 defeat), we played well in the first half but they were not believing that we could win. Today was so much more different."

"I also believe. Then we have Fergie time and we put the things together and something magic happened. It was a good day for us."

Amorim, who took over from the sacked Erik ten Hag last month, said the supporters needed

the win – just his second victory in the Premier League since arriving at Old Trafford.

"They (the fans) need it," he said. "Just like us, but you can see the way they celebrate is special."

"But we need to continue. Our club needs to win these kinds of matches, I understand the happiness of our fans but we need to continue."

"With a victory for City, the performance was the same. We need to improve a lot of things but today the guys deserved the win. They were in it until the last minute and that is important for us."

Bruno Fernandes hailed Diallo as "unstoppable" after the winger scored a 90th-minute winner against City.

City defender Josko Gvardiol opened the scoring with a first-half header but Fernandes levelled from the penalty spot in the 88th minute and Diallo struck two minutes later.

Diallo, 22, has been the standout player for United since Amorim arrived at Old Trafford last month and he delivered in dramatic fashion at the Etihad.

"I think there's still a lot to come from him because we really believe in his qualities, we

know what he's capable of doing," Fernandes told *Sky Sports*.

"He showed it today again. He's always happy, he's always alive, and this is why he gets the penalty, this is why he gets his goal."

He added: "We need him at this level, because when he's like this, he's unstoppable."

Diallo, named man of the match, said: "We wanted to win the game. We know it was not easy, obviously in the first half it was difficult, but in the second half I think we pressed good and we wanted to win."

"This is the derby, if you play this game you have to win, and we showed today we can win every game."

Fernandes said the United players were still getting used to Amorim's methods.

Speaking about match-winner Diallo, Amorim said: "He can play different positions, he is very humble. We have to be very careful with Amad because sometimes in our club we put young players in a special place. Lets stay calm with Amad." – *AFP*

Cucurella inspires Chelsea's title charge



Brentford's Fabio Carvalho (top) in action with Chelsea's Marc Cucurella. – *REUTERS/PIC*

BY JACK RATHBORN

A FRANTIC London derby built on instinct and emotion naturally propelled Marc Cucurella into the spotlight again. Enzo Maresca refuses to acknowledge Chelsea as title contenders, but for large spells, amid such intensity from Thomas Frank's excellent Brentford, they thrived and eventually held on for a precious victory, cutting the gap to leaders Liverpool to just two points, with the Reds holding a game in hand.

But the Spaniard was the protagonist once again here. He was immense and involved in everything the Blues did well, including a diving header to break the deadlock on the stroke of halftime.

But just as memories fade from his farcical slips at Tottenham, this dynamic display was given a late blemish as Cucurella earned a red card after the final whistle following a needless scuffle with Kevin Schade, meaning he will now miss next week's game against Everton.

This new role under Maresca sees Cucurella make the Blues tick in possession; the "leftback" is rarely in the conventional area of the pitch. Instead, the Spaniard could be seen here shuffling up the pitch and orchestrating attacks at every opportunity, creating a

spare man to provide overloads to constantly manoeuvre Brentford around on Sunday night.

"He was top on the ball and off the ball. Fantastic, we're happy with him and his performance tonight," a delighted Maresca said afterward.

With Brentford so diligent out of possession and often seen man-marking, Maresca's Chelsea relied on Cucurella to create overlaps, burst into space after every combination and even position himself close to centre-forward Nicolas Jackson, creating even more passing lanes once the Bees retreated.

Throughout the game, Cucurella flourished in three different positions; leftback, in midfield, creating a three with Enzo Fernandez and Moises Caicedo, and then in an advanced role right up alongside the Brentford back line.

"I think Cucurella is a top player," Frank said. "He is doing well. But I don't like it when players go to the ground and holding their face. I will say it to Cucurella because I respect him massively."

Maresca added: "I don't think we're ready to compete in the title, they know how to compete in the title, they won't concede the goals we concede. I think they know how to win titles, that's why they don't concede." *The Independent*

Southampton sack manager Martin after 5-0 thrashing by Spurs

SOUTHAMPTON sacked manager Russell Martin shortly after his side's 5-0 drubbing

at home to Tottenham Hotspur yesterday left them rooted to the bottom of the Premier League table.

The humiliating defeat, in which Spurs scored five times in the first half, left Southampton on five points from 16 matches.

Martin was the second Premier League manager sacked yesterday after second-bottom Wolverhampton Wanderers parted company with Gary O'Neil.

"The reality of our situation is clear. The board have supported Russell and his staff and been open and transparent regarding our expectations," a club statement read.

"We have all been on the same page in

recognising the urgency of needing results to improve.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank Russell and his staff for all the hard work and dedication they have given the club on and off the pitch over the last 18 months."

The 38-year-old Martin was booed during his side's capitulation against Tottenham and missed the fifth goal as he had already gone to the changing rooms.

Martin was appointed in June 2023 and guided Southampton to promotion via the playoffs last season, earning plaudits for his side's attractive style of football.

This season, however, they have been brutally exposed in the top flight, losing 13 of their opening 16 games and seemingly on

course for a quick return to the second tier.

Only one team in Premier League history has had fewer points after 16 games of the season.

After the defeat by Spurs, defender Taylor Harwood-Bellis said the players should take the blame.

"(The fans) want to see the team win, so it's normal. The booing should be on us players and not the manager. He's not creating the mistakes," Harwood-Bellis said.

"It is us on the pitch. But they just want to see the team win. Credit to them, they stuck with us after a first half that wasn't acceptable."

Earlier, Crystal Palace savoured a first win over rivals Brighton since 2021 as a 3-1 victory yesterday lifted the Eagles four points clear of the relegation zone. – *Reuters*

RESULTS & STANDINGS

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Brighton 1 (Guehi 87-og) **Crystal Palace 3** (Chalobah 27, Sarr 33, 82), **Manchester City 1** (Gvardiol 36) **Manchester United 2** (Fernandes 88-pen, Diallo 90), **Chelsea 2** (Cucurella 43, Jackson 80) **Brentford 1** (Mbeumo 90), **Southampton 0 Tottenham 5** (Maddison 1, 45+4, Son 12, Kulusevski 14, Sarr 25).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	15	11	3	1	31	13	36
Chelsea	16	10	4	2	37	19	34
Arsenal	16	8	6	2	29	15	30
Nottm Forest	16	8	4	4	21	19	28
Man City	16	8	3	5	28	23	27
Aston Villa	16	7	4	5	24	25	25
Bournemouth	15	7	3	5	23	20	24
Fulham	16	6	6	4	24	22	24
Brighton	16	6	6	4	26	25	24
Tottenham	16	7	2	7	36	19	23
Brentford	16	7	2	7	32	30	23
Newcastle	16	6	5	5	23	21	23
Man Utd	16	6	4	6	21	19	22
West Ham	15	5	3	7	20	28	18
Crystal Palace	16	3	7	6	17	21	16
Everton	15	3	6	6	14	21	15
Leicester	16	3	5	8	21	34	14
Ipswich	16	2	6	8	16	28	12
Wolves	16	2	3	11	24	40	9
Southampton	16	1	2	13	11	36	5

ENGLISH CHAMPIONSHIP: Watford 2 West Brom 1, Norwich 1 Burnley 2.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheff Utd	21	14	5	2	30	11	45
Leeds	21	12	6	3	37	15	42
Burnley	21	11	8	2	26	8	41
Sunderland	21	11	7	3	32	17	40
Blackburn	20	11	4	5	25	17	37
Mid'boro	21	10	4	7	35	25	34

LA LIGA: Atletico Madrid 1 (Sorloth 69) **Getafe 0, Alaves 1** (Jordan 67) **Athletic Bilbao 1** (Gomez 10), **Villarreal 1** (Baena 55) **Real Betis 2** (Roque 32, Lo Celso 47), **Real Sociedad 0 Las Palmas 0, Barcelona 0 Leganes 1** (Gonzalez 4).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	18	12	2	4	50	20	38
Athletic	17	11	5	1	31	11	38
Real Madrid	17	11	4	2	37	16	37
Bilbao	18	9	6	3	27	16	33
Mallorca	18	8	3	7	18	21	27
Villarreal	16	7	5	4	28	27	26

SERIE A: Bologna 1 (Odgaard 59) **Fiorentina 0, Como 2** (Gabrielloni 90+3, Paz 90+7) **Roma 0, Lecce 2** (Morente 3, Krstovic 44) **Monza 1** (Dorgu 37-og), **AC Milan 0 Genoa 0, Parma 2** (Sohm 19, 90) **Verona 3** (Coppola 5, Sarr 67, Mosquera 75).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Atalanta	16	12	1	3	39	17	37
Napoli	16	11	2	3	24	11	35
Inter Milan	14	9	4	1	34	15	31
Fiorentina	15	9	4	2	28	11	31
Lazio	15	10	1	4	30	17	31
Juventus	16	6	10	0	26	12	28

BUNDESLIGA: RB Leipzig 2 Eintracht Frankfurt 1, Borussia Dortmund 1 Hoffenheim 1, Heidenheim 1 Stuttgart 3.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B.Munich	14	10	3	1	42	12	33
Leverkusen	14	8	5	1	32	20	29
E.Frankfurt	14	8	3	3	34	20	27
RB Leipzig	14	8	3	3	23	15	27
Freiburg	14	7	3	4	20	19	24
Stuttgart	14	6	5	3	29	24	23

FRENCH LIGUE 1: Montpellier 2 Nice 2, Brest 4 Nantes 1, Le Havre 0 Strasbourg 3, Rennes 2 Angers 0, Paris Saint-Germain 3 Lyon 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paris SG	15	11	4	0	40	12	37
Marseille	15	9	3	3	32	18	30
Monaco	15	9	3	3	24	12	30
Lille	15	7	6	2	25	15	27
Lyon	15	7	4	4	27	20	25
Nice	15	6	6	3	28	19	24

PLBM confident lawn bowls will be back at 2027 SEA Games

THE Malaysian Lawn Bowls Federation (PLBM) are confident that the sport will be contested again at the 2027 SEA Games in Malaysia, after it was last held in the 2019 edition in the Philippines.

Its president Datuk Awalan Abdul Aziz said the chance for lawn bowls to be contested in the 2027 edition is seen as bright, after a comprehensive discussion with the Olympic Council of Malaysia (OCM) recently.

"We will continue to discuss to get the support of other countries, for now the Philippines, Singapore, Brunei and Thailand will enter.

"It can be said that every time lawn bowls is contested, Malaysia show a good performance to win in this sport. However, we cannot undermine other countries," he told *Bernama*.

After the sport was left out in the 2021 Vietnam and 2023 Cambodia editions, the

host of the next SEA Games, Thailand, also decided not to host lawn bowls during the SEA Games Federation (SEAGF) Council Meeting held in Bangkok on Oct 25.

In the 2019 edition, Malaysia emerged as champions by winning four golds and two bronzes from the six gold medals on offer, while at the 2017 edition in Kuala Lumpur, the national camp excelled to capture seven golds and one silver from the eight events contested.

Meanwhile, Awalan said PLBM will send the proposed athletes' names to be included in the Podium Programme to the National Sports Council (MSN) in preparation for the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland.

He said the long list of 10 male and 10 female athletes, the head coach and one male and female coach each will be submitted during the MSN working committee meeting, next month. - *Bernama*

Young Tigress qualify for 2025 WHJWC

THE national women's junior hockey squad qualified for the 2025 Women's Hockey Junior World Cup (WHJWC) in Santiago, Chile on merit for the very first time yesterday.

In an audio recording shared by the Malaysian Hockey Confederation, team manager Datuk Mohd Saiyuti Abd Samat expressed his satisfaction over the squad's success and said that they would plan a series of tours abroad to prepare for Chile next year, adding that the team would also have the opportunity to play in the local league next year to gain exposure.

Malaysia's qualification came courtesy of their 6-0 trashing of Thailand in the fifth/sixth place decider of the 2024 Women's Hockey Junior Asia Cup in Muscat, Oman yesterday.

The Young Tigress had finished third in Group A with six points from two wins, 6-1 against Bangladesh and 3-0 against Thailand, and two losses, 0-5 against India and 0-4 against China, allowing them to compete in the fifth-eighth place classification, in which they beat Hong Kong 11-0 on Sunday and today's victory against Thailand. - *Bernama*

Remarkable feat

Rexy gives Tang jie-Ee Wei nine out of 10 for impressive showing at WTF 2024

JUST shy of a perfect 10. That is Academy Badminton Malaysia (ABM) coaching director Rexy Mainaky's assessment of national top mixed doubles pair Chen Tang jie-Toh Ee Wei following their remarkable feat of finishing runners-up at the World Tour Finals (WTF) 2024 in Hangzhou, China, on Sunday.

Rexy said Tang jie-Ee Wei played with focus from day one of the annual season-finale in Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Gymnasium and did not waste their chance to clear the group stage.

"After that (the group stage), they played with more confidence and believed they could go far," he told *Bernama* when contacted yesterday.

The current world No. 8 duo created history by becoming the first Malaysians to grace the final since WTF kicked off in 2018.

However, their bid to clinch the WTF 2024 title was dashed by home pair and Paris 2024 Olympic Games gold medalists Zheng Si Wei-Huang Ya Qiong, who won 21-18, 14-21, 21-17 in the final.

Rexy hoped to see Tang jie-Ee Wei maintain their focus during training by constantly working on areas that need improvement.

The Indonesian gave a score of seven out of 10 to both national men's doubles pair Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik and national women's doubles duo Pearly Tan-M. Thinaah after they failed to advance to the last four.

He said that despite winning the first two matches and appearing to be on track to top Group B, Aaron-



Malaysia's Goh Sze Fei (right) and Nur Izzuddin play a point during the men's doubles final match. - AFP/PIC

Wooi Yik lost their edge in the final match against Indonesia's Sabar Karyaman Gutama-Moh Reza Pahlevi.

The world No. 5 suffered a stunning 16-21, 16-21 loss to Sabar-Moh Reza in their first ever meeting.

The result saw them finish third in Group B and thus failed to clear the group stage for the fifth time (2019, 2020, 2022, 2023 and 2024).

Aaron-Wooi Yik opened their campaign on a bright note when they saw off He Ji Ting-Ren Xiang Yu of China 21-17, 18-21, 21-15 and beat Indonesian pair Fajar Alfian-

Muhammad Rian Ardianto 19-21, 21-14, 21-15.

As for Pearly-Thinaah, Rexy said the world No. 6 duo should have beaten Japan's top pair Nami Matsuyama-Chiharu Shida in their opening Group A match.

The Malaysians let slip their first game win of 21-13 and went down to Matsuyama-Shida 17-21, 18-21 in the next two games.

Rexy also suspected that Pearly-Thinaah could not enjoy their game in the second match, which saw them losing to India's Treasa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand Pulella 19-

21, 19-21.

He said even though they managed to regain the momentum in the final match, it was too little too late as they suffered another defeat to world number one Liu Sheng Shu-Tan Ning of China 9-21, 21-18, 18-21 to return home winless.

Malaysian professional men's doubles pair Goh Sze Fei-Nur Izzuddin Rumsani emerged as runners-up in the tournament, losing 17-21, 21-17, 11-21 to world No. 3 Kim Astrup-Anders Skaarup Rasmussen of Denmark in the final. - *Bernama*

Cklamovski appointed new Harimau Malaya head coach

FORMER FC Tokyo manager Peter Cklamovski from Australia was announced yesterday as the new head coach of the national team, tasked with leading Harimau Malaya to qualify for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup and improve their Fifa world ranking to the top 100.

The Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) said Cklamovski will officially begin his duties on Jan 1, 2025.

FAM described Cklamovski as a capable young coach who will ensure the national team can compete at a higher level on the international

stage, starting with the 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers in March next year.

"He (Cklamovski) is here in Malaysia to establish a strong coaching staff to ensure that players called up to the Harimau Malaya training camp receive the best possible guidance, which will help improve their abilities and skills for international matches.

"To begin with, Cklamovski's primary mission is to ensure Harimau Malaya top the Group F qualification campaign to secure a place in the 2027 AFC Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia, as well as improve the Fifa ranking to break into the top 100

in the world," FAM said in a statement.

The 46-year-old, has spent over 15 years working under Tottenham Hotspur manager Ange Postecoglou, with whom he helped guide the Australian national team to victory in the 2015 AFC Asian Cup. They later won the J1 League (Japan's top tier) in 2019 while managing Yokohama F. Marinos.

Cklamovski was then appointed manager of J1 League club Shimizu S-Pulse in 2020, J2 League club Montedio Yamagata in 2021 and FC Tokyo in June 2023. - *Bernama*



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'I'm not good enough'

City lose eight in 11 games, and Guardiola cannot find the answers

BY IAN PARKER & JAMIE BRAIDWOOD

PEP GUARDIOLA said he was "not good enough" to find a solution to Manchester City's woes after they conceded two late goals to slump to a 2-1 home derby defeat to rivals Manchester United.

City had led through Josko Gvardiol's 36th-minute header but rarely looked comfortable in the game and it all unravelled in stunning fashion at the death.

Matheus Nunes, asked to fill in at leftback, was guilty of a poor back-pass and then fouled Amad Diallo trying to make amends to concede a penalty which Bruno Fernandes converted in the 88th minute, and two minutes later Diallo found space to latch on to a long ball and score

the winner.

"I'm the boss, I'm the manager, I have to find solutions but I don't find solutions," Guardiola said. "This is a big club and when you lose eight of (11) something is wrong. You can say the schedule is tough or the injuries to players, but no.

"I'm the manager and I'm not good enough, simple as that. I have to find a way to talk to them, to train them in the way we need to play, to press the way we need to press. I'm not good enough. I'm not doing well. That is the truth."

Guardiola signed a new two-year contract in November at a point when City had lost four in a row, saying he did not feel he could leave the club at a difficult time.

Now he is facing questions as to how - and

when - he can stop the rot.

"I'm here," he said. "I'm responsible. It would be easy for me to say we lost because of this action or this player or this situation but football is a team.

"I'm completely convinced in what I'm saying, that I'm not good enough to find a way for them to feel peace in their bodies and their minds. I want it desperately. I'm here to try and I will try again and again but that is the reality."

Bernardo Silva accused City of playing like "U-15s" as he ripped into the "stupid decisions" his team made in the final minutes of their

spectacular collapse against United.

"We deserved what happened," Silva told *Sky Sports*. "At this level a game or two is unlucky. We can't say this is lucky or unlucky - 10 games it's not about that.

"Minute 87 in a derby, winning 1-0 and our corner ends in a penalty for them, if we make these stupid decisions with three or four minutes to go you deserve to pay for that. Looking at the game I think there was only one team that could win the game, but at the end we lost.

"It's not one game, it's a lot of games lately. We have to look at ourselves. You can say oh it's a bit unlucky, no. It's the decisions you make. Today in the last minute we played like U-15s." - *The Independent*

