



Festive excitement peaks in run-up to Christmas

Visitors enjoy decorations, promotions and Yuletide mood at malls and popular attractions.

Report on
page 6

Steps to curb sexual harassment

Women, Family and Community Development minister highlights several govt initiatives to address issue, including measures to raise awareness and provide assistance to victims.

Report on
page 3



More than 4,400 cases of child abuse were recorded as of August, with 506 unregistered centres identified as of May. – *AMIRULSYAFIQ/THE SUN*

'Parental access to childcare centres' CCTV feeds improper'

While move could allay fears of negligence or abuse, association president says it may not be appropriate, citing privacy issues.

Report on > page 5

Shortage of charging ports choking EV growth

Only 2,288 stations operating in Malaysia as of October compared with govt target of 10,000 by 2025, which could deter potential buyers: MP

Report on > page 4

Govt pledges action to address nationwide shortage of doctors

➤ Minister outlines plans to bolster medical workforce amid high number of resignations

KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry does not take lightly the resignation of more than 6,000 doctors over the past five years.

Its minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the number included 3,200 contract medical officers (MO) who resigned to move to permanent positions, with some moving to the academic field, hence still contributing to the public health sector.

"I admit and am fully aware that the Health Ministry lacks staff, resulting in some of the ministry's personnel having to bear the burden of duties more than their colleagues.

"However, despite all the existing constraints, I will make sure all issues facing the Health Ministry on the ground will be dealt with in my second term as health minister," he said in a post on Facebook.

It was in response to a query by nephrology consultant Dr Rafidah Abdullah, who wanted to know the ministry's plans and strategies in dealing with the resignation of doctors, Bernama reported.

Dzulkefly also said the talent drain remains a significant challenge in all industries, including the health sector.

He said the ministry could not prevent MO and medical experts from migrating to the private sector, despite having implemented several strategies to retain them in the public sector.

"In the medium term, with the initiative of the Rakan KKM partnership, we will see some changes. The prospect of better rewards and upgraded health facilities, which will be achieved through cross-subsidisation by new income from #RakanKKM premium economic services, is expected to increase the incentive

for them to remain in the public sector.

"The short-term measures include salary increases and adjustments, more flexible work schedules and allowing locum practices," he said, adding that the ministry remains committed to improving the balance between work and life, and the welfare of medical professionals as a whole.

Regarding the shortage of staff at the Seri Manjung Hospital in Perak, Dzulkefly said the Human Resources Department will allocate more MO to critical departments.

"There is an increase in the distribution of MO to all ministry facilities every year, and a new cohort of MO was distributed last week. Therefore, the Seri Manjung Hospital will also soon receive additional medical staff.

"This challenge is not limited to the Seri Manjung Hospital but throughout the country. Therefore, the ministry will make every effort to address this urgent need," he said, adding that he remains committed to realising the establishment of the Health Services Commission.



Dzulkefly meeting health officers and specialist doctors at the Sungai Buloh Hospital yesterday. —BERNAMAPIC

Varsity instructed to probe sexual harassment claims

KUALA LUMPUR: Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Zambry Abdul Kadir has instructed Universiti Malaya (UM) to launch an immediate investigation into two sexual harassment allegations that have tarnished the university's reputation.

He emphasised that the university must not take the matter lightly to ensure justice is upheld, while stressing that the ministry will not tolerate any actions that violate the country's laws.

"I have been informed by the UM vice-chancellor about the measures taken, including those involving legal aspects. I have also been informed that the professor facing the accusations has filed a police report.

"To ensure fairness, let us leave it to the authorities, particularly the police, to conduct a thorough investigation," he said in a statement.

Zambry added that the vice-chancellor had assured him the university had taken the necessary steps, including engaging the UM Integrity Unit, from the very first day the complaint was lodged. —Bernama

Malaysia strengthens ties with Iran

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is intensifying efforts to deepen economic and cultural ties with Iran, identifying Gilan Province as a key hub for collaboration.

During his visit to Gilan, Malaysian ambassador to Iran Khairi Omar held productive discussions with Gilan governor Hadi Haqshenas, focusing on strengthening bilateral cooperation in key areas such as tourism, trade and academic exchange.

Regarding tourism and economic exchange, Khairi highlighted the environmental and climatic similarities between Gilan and Malaysia, expressing confidence that these shared features would boost Malaysian tourist arrivals in Iran.

"The natural beauty of Gilan mirrors that of Malaysia. This similarity makes it an appealing destination for Malaysian tourists, and we believe it can play a pivotal role in enhancing bilateral tourism," Khairi said. —Bernama

PM meets local, foreign media representatives

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim recently held a meeting with local and foreign media representatives to discuss the latest developments on the country's direction, government policies and several current and future issues in Malaysia.

In a Facebook post, he said the

session, held on Saturday, was important for providing clarification and information, particularly on the performance of the Cabinet, the eradication of extreme poverty, foreign policy and the national economy amid changes in global dynamics, regional issues and the rise of Asean.

He emphasised the crucial role of

the media in offering criticism, constructive feedback, perspectives, commentary and insights, contributing to the meaningful spirit of democracy in the country.

"Hopefully, this session will benefit everyone and pave the way for success in the future, ensuring proper awareness and understanding of

government policies, current issues, and other matters."

During the meeting, Anwar was also asked to comment on the country's oil and gas industry, which he acknowledged requires the cooperation of all stakeholders to advance to a more sophisticated level in the future. —Bernama

Ongoing efforts to repatriate M'sian scam victims stuck in Myanmar

SEREMBAN: The government is consistently striving to repatriate Malaysians who have fallen victim to job scams in Myanmar, according to Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan.

He said to facilitate the efforts, the government had appointed former Foreign Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri Othman Hashim as its special envoy to Myanmar to engage with several groups in the country.

Mohamad explained that apart from focusing on efforts to bring home stranded Malaysian scam victims, the discussions also addressed ways to end violence against the local population.

"The situation in Myanmar is very

challenging. Previously, we could negotiate, but now there are too many warlord factions controlling provinces, and they are armed with significant weaponry.

"I cannot promise to save everyone. Some have already lost their lives and there are various other issues, not just in Myanmar but also in the Philippines and along the Golden Triangle border of Thailand, Laos and Myanmar, which has become the largest drug-producing region.

"The proceeds fund these warlords, making the situation extremely difficult," he said after launching the Tok Mat e-Sports Cup tournament in Senawang on Saturday.

He added that Myanmar has

numerous problematic regions, each with its own strengths, complicating the government's efforts to resolve the issues.

"Our approach is to negotiate with these factions to assess their 'wish lists', which will then be compiled and studied to determine how we can align these demands. What is crucial is for Myanmar to return to being a peaceful country, where its people can live harmoniously."

He advised Malaysians to be cautious of job offers promising high salaries advertised on social media, particularly in Myanmar and other Southeast Asian countries.

"Recently, I asked a victim, a former university student, to show the

permanent disabilities he suffered after being tortured by syndicates for failing to meet the tasks assigned to him," he said, expressing hope that this would serve as a lesson to others.

Mohamad also expressed gratitude for the strong ties within Asean, which consistently provides assistance despite the constraints some member states face.

"Thank you to neighbouring Asean countries for maintaining excellent relations. They help as much as they can, although they sometimes face limitations and restrictions," he said.

Regarding the Asean Troika Informal Consultation and Extended Informal Consultation sessions in Bangkok on Friday, Mohamad said the

discussions focused on addressing the issues in Myanmar, as the crisis there poses significant challenges for Asean.

"As a peaceful, neutral and free regional bloc, the internal issues in Myanmar inevitably affect Asean.

"It is not about interfering in their domestic affairs. The problems have crossed borders, including transnational crimes, gambling, scams and drug trafficking.

"Thus, Asean is negotiating, and as Malaysia will chair Asean next year, we are preparing early strategies on how to reduce these internal issues because we do not want them to disrupt the stability of Southeast Asia," he said. —Bernama

Steps taken to curb sexual harassment

➤ Several initiatives set up to raise awareness, provide assistance to victims: Minister

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Women, Family, and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri told *theSun* that 1,842 sexual harassment cases have been reported in the country from January to October, with Selangor having the most, at 426 cases.

"Victims aged 18 to 30 made up the majority, accounting for 1,145 cases, while obscene humour emerged as the most common form of harassment, at 951 cases," she said.

Speaking in response to the growing concern among the public about such cases, Nancy acknowledged her ministry's challenges, such as limited resources in rural areas, underreporting by victims due to stigma and fear of

retaliation, and a lack of public awareness.

However, she also highlighted several initiatives implemented by her ministry to address sexual harassment at workplaces and public spaces.

"The Tribunal for Anti-Sexual Harassment provides an alternative to civil courts, offering a swift, affordable and simplified process for resolving complaints, with a filing cost of just RM30.

"Advocacy programmes such as Toleransi Sifar Keganasan@Advokasi Antingangguan Seksual help raise awareness among key groups, including university students, employees, and the public."

Additionally, the Advokasi Kasih Kanak-Kanak programme protects children by educating them, parents and guardians about their rights and

measures to prevent harassment.

"The ministry also collaborates with stakeholders to promote zero-tolerance policies at workplaces and provides support platforms like Talian Kasih 15999, which offer victims counselling and guidance on filing complaints."

Rekindle Centre for Systemic Therapy, which began operations in 2010, provides treatment for expatriates and locals, including individuals, couples and families ranging from children to the elderly.

Its counsellor and sexologist, Andrea Koh, said sexual harassment has profound psychological impacts on victims, often leading to anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, shame, guilt and anger.

"Such emotional burdens can result in isolation, loss of trust and a diminished sense of safety, with many sexual harassment victims remaining silent due to the power dynamics in which the perpetrators are often in positions of authority or close acquaintances.

"Psychological barriers such as

self-blame, fear of judgment and uncertainty about reporting procedures further deter victims from speaking out," she said.

Koh added that misconceptions like "silence means consent" or trivialising harassment as "just a joke" perpetuate the issue by undermining boundaries and personal autonomy.

Koh also said spending time with nature and connecting with trusted individuals or support groups can aid in recovery. Bystanders play a pivotal role in addressing sexual harassment as their actions can further perpetuate or disrupt the cycle of abuse.

A victim, who wanted to be known only as Aya, said on Oct 16, she was accompanied by a friend to the Wangsa Maju police station to report a case of sexual harassment and assault by a repeat perpetrator.

However, she claimed that the police initially refused to accept her report, dismissing it as an old case lacking evidence.

"A lance corporal (name withheld)

was assigned to my case. On Oct 20, he contacted me at inappropriate hours, claiming it was to discuss the case.

"During the calls, he made sexually inappropriate remarks, asked invasive questions about my body, and suggested explicit acts. He claimed this was standard procedure, which I knew was untrue.

"Despite my attempts to end the calls, he continued harassing me, repeatedly calling and making unrelated, inappropriate comments," Aya said.

Frustrated and fearful, she withdrew her report, claiming the police failed to handle the case professionally.

"His behaviour would be deeply traumatising, and I feel betrayed by the very policemen who are meant to protect victims. I'm afraid to return to the police station after experiencing victim-blaming and harassment.

"I hope no one else has to endure this mistreatment from those entrusted with (facilitating) justice," she said.

Early schooling aid extended to Form 6 students

PUTRAJAYA: Early schooling aid will be extended to Form 6 students starting from the 2025/2026 session, with each individual receiving RM150.

Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek said the initiative is expected to benefit over 100,000 students, involving expenditure of about RM15 million.

"We hope our initiatives for these students can help them improve because Form 6 is extremely crucial, (as) it is post-Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) and (aimed) specifically at

ensuring access to education for everyone," she said in a statement yesterday.

Fadhlina added that the aid will be distributed to existing Form 6 students in February while new students will receive theirs in July.

She said extending the initiative to Form 6 students also reflected the Madani government's concern towards easing the financial burden of parents and guardians as they prepare for their children's schooling needs.

Fadhlina said the initiative is also proof of the Education Ministry's continued commitment to encourage students to opt for Form 6 education after finishing their SPM examination.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, when tabling Budget 2025 at the Dewan Rakyat on Oct 18, announced that early schooling aid would be continued, with almost RM800 million allocated for 5.2 million students from Year 1 to Form 5, regardless of the income of parents. - Bernama

Action to stem cartel practices

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysia Competition Commission (MyCC) will focus on taking stern action against companies of all sizes displaying cartel elements and associations that encourage such practices.

Its chairman Tan Sri Idrus Harun said the commission would act without fear or favour and remains committed to protecting the interests of consumers and ensuring healthy competition in the market.

"MyCC expresses regret over recent actions of some associations, including in announcing price hikes, setting minimum prices for services and goods, and imposing new trade conditions that have had a negative impact on the people's cost of living.

"This matter raises concerns as it involves critical sectors such as transport, care services, health and food, which are the people's basic needs," he said in a statement.

Idrus said MyCC seriously views the actions of associations that had made statements regarding the issue, especially through the media, without considering the impact on the people.

He said based on information obtained, an association, through its leader, had attempted to mislead the public by claiming that the announced price increase was merely an expected future rise or a guide price, when in fact, it was the result of a decision influenced by cartel practices.

"MyCC would not be surprised if associations made secret decisions, hoping their actions would go undetected, as they are aware that such conduct violates competition laws."

Idrus said such an announcement could be considered an anti-competitive agreement or cartel, as it involved a decision by association committee members who were also competitors within the industry.

He added that the announcement could be seen as a signal from the association to its members, intended to widely disseminate the decision and ensure that members carried out the cartel in a coordinated manner.

MyCC welcomes cooperation of all parties, who disagree with cartel practices.

Complaints can be made directly to the MyCC office, or at www.myc.gov.my/bm/membuat-aduan or complaints@mycc.gov.my, with confidentiality guaranteed for whistleblowers and complainants. - Bernama



Johari mingling with guests at the scouts jamboree yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

'Scout jamboree helps develop skills among young leaders'

KUALA KUBU BHARU: The Malaysian Scout Jamboree serves as a platform for young leaders to develop skills and knowledge while practising the values of peace in daily life, said National Scout Council member Tan Sri Johari Abdul.

He added that peace is a core pillar in building a resilient and progressive nation.

"Scouts are agents of change, instilling

noble values, nurturing a responsible younger generation and fostering a more harmonious society.

"Let the theme 'Pengakap Untuk Keamanan' (Scouts for Peace) guide us wherever we go. Every small step today lays the foundation for a better world tomorrow," he said in his speech at the opening of the 14th Malaysian Scout Jamboree at Kem Bina

Semangat yesterday. The event will run until Friday.

The event coincides with the 8th Peace Jamboree of the International Union of Muslim Scouts organised by the Scouts Association of Malaysia. The event has attracted 3,600 participants from Malaysia and abroad, including Maldives, China, Pakistan and Jordan. - Bernama



Charging stations for electric vehicles lacking

➤ Infrastructure financially unviable in rural areas due to high installation cost and low usage: Expert

BY HARITH HISHAM
 newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Malaysia has embraced the adoption of electric vehicles (EV) to account for 15% of the total industry volume by 2030 and 80% by 2050, thanks to the government's Low Carbon Mobility Blueprint and the National Energy Transition Roadmap.

The Road Transport Department's latest data shows there were 19,208 EV registrations from January to November, marking an increase from the 10,318 units registered in the same period in 2023.

However, the shortage of EV charging stations is hampering its accelerated growth, said experts.

During the Budget 2025 debate on Oct 23, Puchong MP Yeo Bee Yin pointed out that there were only 2,288 EV charging stations operating in the country, compared with the government's target of 10,000 stations by 2025.

While Yeo supported the government's position on EV adoption, she said the slow progress in setting up charging stations could deter a greater number of potential buyers and undermine confidence in its adoption, which is a cornerstone of the National Automotive Policy 2020.

Malaysia Zero Emission Vehicle Association co-founder and executive secretary Aisha Daniyal agreed with her.

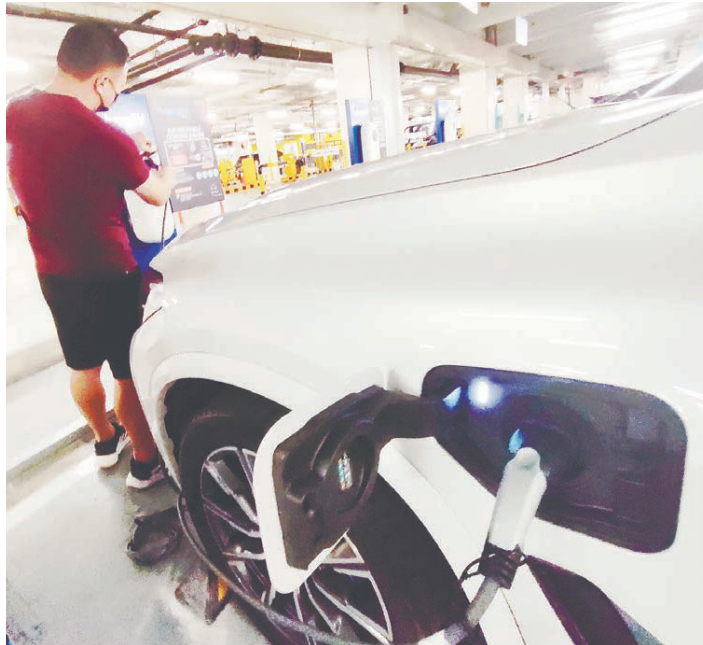
"The slow progress in expanding EV charging stations is due to the high installation and operational costs, especially in rural areas, and this has hampered a higher growth in its adoption.

"In rural areas, charging stations often have low usage, making them financially unviable. To break even, at least two EVs would need to use a station daily but many of them have few to no users."

She said efforts are under way to expand EV charging stations nationwide.

"Three to four years ago, charging infrastructure was limited but now charging stations are available between every 150km and 200km on key routes. While progress has been made, there is still an urgent need for improvement as EV adoption increases."

She said the wide availability of public charging stations, especially for interstate travel,



Aisha said the wide availability of public charging stations, especially for interstate travel, is crucial to building confidence and boosting EV adoption. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THESUN

is crucial to building confidence and boosting EV adoption.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Automotive Development Centre director Dr Mohd Azman Abas said the rapid rise of EVs is a positive step towards better environmental and economic benefits.

"EVs produce zero emissions, reduce air pollution and improve urban air quality. Electricity costs are typically lower and more stable than the cost of petrol or diesel."

He said EVs have fewer moving parts compared with traditional internal combustion engine vehicles and require less maintenance, adding that they have regenerative braking, which helps to extend their range by converting kinetic energy into stored energy in their batteries when slowing down.

He said motorists should understand the difference between EV types as choosing the right vehicle depends on individual requirements.

"The most popular EVs are battery electric vehicles, which rely solely on electricity and

have no backup fuel source, making charging infrastructure crucial to its operation. They are the best choice for those seeking the most environmentally friendly option with a long electric driving range.

"For greater flexibility, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEV) and hybrid electric vehicles (HEV) are good options.

"PHEV can be charged externally and runs on electric and gasoline power while HEV relies on the engine and regenerative braking to charge the battery, primarily operating on gasoline with assistance from an electric motor."

He said despite the growth of the EV industry, Malaysia is in the early stages of its adoption and many challenges lie ahead.

"The main concern for those who wish to shift to EVs is range anxiety, which is the fear of an EV not having enough battery power to complete a journey.

"The biggest hurdle is the shortage of charging stations, which should be addressed quickly, before the public's romance with the technology wanes."

Centres help women with entrepreneurial endeavours

KOTA KINABALU: The establishment of the National Information Dissemination Centre in Sabah has provided housewives with opportunities to gain knowledge, particularly in entrepreneurship, and contribute to their family's income.

Rafidah Dzulkiflee, 46, told Bernama that she initially joined a friend at a centre located at the Taman Sri Rugading People's Housing Project in Tuaran in 2017, where they were introduced to product digitalisation.

With no prior knowledge of digital tools, she was excited to learn how to market products online and offline, and how to brand them effectively.

"Coincidentally, my family had been producing prawn spring rolls, which were sold only during festive seasons. Through the centre, I saw the potential to commercialise the product.

"Now, I produce mini prawn spring rolls with the help of four workers, using my own recipe for the filling," said the mother of five.

She said the spring rolls, which are sold online and at petrol stations at prices of between RM8 and RM38 depending on weight and size, have received an overwhelming response, including from customers in Brunei.

Housewife Suzinah Sulid, 41, began producing pineapple juice in 2018 thanks to guidance from a centre in Pekan Puterajaya, which she joined in 2007 for better internet access.

She said her interest in the entrepreneurship courses offered by the centre led her to participate and eventually create her own products.

"I became actively involved with the centre in 2018. The courses offered, such as selling on Shopee and TikTok, designing labels and online classes, have been helpful."

She said her *sambal lada udang* product was created in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic when her brother's farm in Kota Belud faced a surplus of chillies.

To avoid waste, she turned the chillies into a product that could generate income. She introduced her latest product, *kerepek kentang*, last year.

"From having no products to learning about branding and label design, I gained all this knowledge at the centre."

Despite being unmarried, the embroidery skills of Edithsia Pius, 31, which she learned through YouTube in 2012, and her participation at a centre at Kampung Nosoob in Penampang have created an income-generating activity.

She said the centre offers many benefits, including various skill-building courses, updates on sales and exhibition opportunities.

"I create these crafts myself, mostly dolls in the form of rabbits, wolves and squids, along with hats, clothes and keychains, which are sold for prices of between RM3 and RM130," she said, adding that she receives keychain orders from schools and as door gifts for weddings.

Felix Joinsia, 52, said he and his wife Mary Gimpi, 50, were introduced to a centre by friends before participating in an exhibition at Luyang Nadi, which has been operational since Oct 18.

He said prior to that, they had been producing their own products, including dyeing shirts using imported powder and creating hats, handcrafted keychains and bags. — Bernama

RM700m worth of abandoned housing projects completed

KLUANG: The Johor government has completed seven housing projects categorised as sick and abandoned this year, representing an estimated property value of RM700 million.

State Housing and Local Government Committee chairman Datuk Mohd Jafni Md Shukur said the projects involved about 3,000 homeowners affected by the delays.

He highlighted some of the previously troubled projects, including Residensi Larkin, Taman Sri Saujana in Kota Tinggi, Taman Sri Molek Perdana in Plentong and Taman Impian

Jaya in Senai.

"We are willing to assist in completing these sick projects if the developers show intent and reach out to the government. However, if the developers have no intention of completing the projects, there is little the state government can do," he said at a press conference after officiating at the Taman Puterimas Phase Two house key handover ceremony here on Saturday.

Jafni said the agreements are primarily between developers, contractors, buyers and banks, with the state government playing no

formal role but ready to help if requested.

He said the state government is working on completing three more sick housing projects, aiming for their completion by next year.

The state government has set an ambitious target of delivering 30,000 units to homeowners by 2026 under the Johor Affordable Housing Scheme.

"We have handed over 13,000 such housing units to their owners and are committed to delivering the remaining 17,000 units as per the established timeline." — Bernama

'Access to CCTV feed at childcare centres compromises privacy'

► While safety is paramount, unrestricted control could disrupt trust between parents and service providers, says association chief

BY QIRANA NABILLA
MOHD RASHIDI
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: With a total of 4,424 cases of child abuse and neglect recorded in childcare centres as of August this year, concerns have been raised among parents on the safety of their children while there.

Noor Amira Zainal Ishkandar, 28, a mother of one, told *theSun* that parents should have full access to CCTV cameras at childcare centres to monitor the welfare of their children, especially since logbooks are not updated daily.

"Sending my two-month-old to a childcare centre was nerve-racking due to her fragile state. Having access to CCTV cameras would reassure me. I wouldn't mind paying extra if the cost is justified," she said.

Noor Amira said CCTV footage serves as a crucial resource to investigate incidents at childcare

centres and verify if an "accident" was due to negligence, lack of supervision, or an unavoidable mishap.

Father of two Mohd Ashraf Yahya, 30, said while improving staff qualifications and providing them proper training should be the priority, granting parents full CCTV access could serve as an added measure to help them remotely monitor their children.

"Such access would give parents peace of mind, knowing they can check on their child's well-being even while at work."

However, Malaysian Association of Registered Childcare Providers president Norsheila Abdullah objected to granting parents full access to CCTV cameras, citing privacy issues.

She claimed that while child safety is paramount, unrestricted access could compromise the privacy of other children and disrupt trust between parents and childcare providers.

"There is no need to link CCTV cameras to parents' phones or computers. No one would want to be continuously monitored like this.

"We are not criminals unless proven otherwise. Our primary role is to care for their children while parents are at work," she said.

Norsheila said to improve the quality and safety of childcare services, it is crucial for all parties to adhere to rules and regulations outlined in the Childcare Centre Act 1984 and the Child Act 2001.

She said parents must also respect and follow the regulations, just as childcare operators comply by implementing policies for managing their centres, staff, and parent interactions.

"When parents and childcare operators work together harmoniously, it fosters confidence and a sense of security as the child observes the positive relationships between both parties," she said.

Childline Foundation executive director Datin Wong Poai Hong said from a child protection perspective, the proposal to allow parents unrestricted access to CCTV cameras "may not be ideal."

She said allowing such access would raise confidentiality and privacy concerns as parents could view not only their own child but

also other children, potentially violating the privacy of third parties.

"Granting unrestricted access to parents could create complications in data protection and privacy laws.

"Parents might misuse the footage if they have malicious intentions, so rather than addressing issues reactively, it's crucial to consider the long-term implications of such demands."

As of May this year, 506 unregistered childcare centres have been identified, and Wong stressed that parents play a pivotal role in ensuring their children's safety by verifying whether a centre is registered before enrolling their child there.

She said while CCTV cameras were made compulsory in childcare centres years ago, cases of abuse persist, which highlight the need to address the root causes of such incidents.

"Parents who are concerned about their child's well-being can always request to view the CCTV footage in case of any issues or suspicions."

theSun reached out to the Selangor Social Welfare Department on Thursday for comments, but it has not replied as of press time.

4-year-old killed, 3 injured in motorcycle-lorry collision

BATU PAHAT: A tragic accident at Jalan Kampung Sungai Ayam here claimed the life of a four-year-old girl, while her father and two siblings sustained injuries when the motorcycle they were riding collided with a lorry on Saturday.

Batu Pahat police chief ACP Shahrulnazar Mushaddat Abdullah Sani said the victim, Afiqah Syaarah Qamarul Arifin, died at the scene from severe head injuries in the 10.30am incident.

"Preliminary investigations found that a 37-year-old man was riding a motorcycle with his three daughters, aged four, seven, and eight, heading from Senggarang towards Minyak Beku here.

"At the scene, a lorry driven by a 44-year-old local man exited a junction without giving way to the motorcycle," he said in a statement.

The two older children sustained minor injuries to their hands and legs, while their father suffered facial and chest wounds. They are being treated at Sultanah Nora Ismail Hospital.

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

Anyone with information can contact Johor Police Hotline at 07-221 2999, or Batu Pahat Police Hotline at 07-434 3999. - Bernama

Cops probe 'offensive' receipt reports

JOHOR BAHRU: Police have opened three investigation papers regarding images of a fast-food chain order receipt containing offensive remarks targeting the Malay community and Islam in three districts - Kluang, Muar and Batu Pahat.

Johor police chief Datuk M. Kumar said the case is being investigated under Section 4(1) of the Seditious Act 1948, Section 298 of the Penal Code and Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.

He said the viral images of the fast-food chain's tax invoice, dated Dec 19 and 20, were linked to the name "Suwash Muktan" and are believed to have been ordered by the same individual in the three districts.

"A police report on the incident has been received and efforts to apprehend the suspect involved are under way." - Bernama



ADRENALINE MACHINES ... Visitors admiring the motorcycles on display at the Kuala Lumpur Bike Week 2024 at Heritage Valley in Kuala Lumpur. The event ended yesterday. - **BERNAMAPIC**

Over 3,000 sea incidents recorded since 2006

PUTRAJAYA: The Search and Rescue and Disaster Assistance Division of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) has recorded 3,275 incidents at sea involving 16,420 victims from 2006 until Friday.

MMEA director-general Rear Admiral Datuk Mohd Rosli Abdullah said out of the total number of victims, 1,643 were reported dead, while 777 are still considered missing.

From January to December this year, he said, the division recorded 216 incidents at sea involving 1,253 victims.

"Of this total, 62 people were reported dead, and 26 have been classified as missing," he said in a statement.

Based on these statistics, he advised Malaysians to prioritise safety while engaging in marine activities during school holidays and Christmas celebrations.

"Those planning to take part in marine activities must always wear life jackets and ensure that the boats they board are in safe condition, especially given the unpredictable year-end weather due to the northeast monsoon," he said.

Mohd Rosli also reminded passenger boat operators to ensure their vessels are in good condition, provide life jackets before operations, and refrain from carrying passengers beyond permitted capacity. - Bernama

Man reported missing found dead in car

KUANTAN: A 55-year-old man who had been reported missing since Dec 13 was found dead in a car in a parking lot near a restaurant in Sungai Isap here on Saturday.

Kuantan district police chief ACP Wan Mohd Zahari Wan Busu said the victim, Safri Mohd Ali, whose address is in Kampung Hijrah here, was found

unresponsive by members of the public in a Perodua Viva car at about 4pm.

He said upon receiving information, the police, together with the Pahang Fire and Rescue Department and health workers, went to the scene of the incident.

The victim's death was later

confirmed by Tengku Ampuan Afzan Hospital assistant medical officer.

Wan Mohd Zahari said after carrying out further checks, police found the victim's identity card, mobile phone and backpack.

"Safri's body was taken to the hospital for a post-mortem and his family members confirmed the

victim was the missing person," he said on Saturday night, adding that police have not found any criminal elements.

Safri was reported missing since leaving home at about 8am on Dec 13 in a dark blue Perodua Viva to pick up medicine at the Kampung Kurnia Health Clinic. - Bernama



Excitement **peaking** as Christmas approaches

➤ Locals and tourists enjoying decor, promotions and festive mood at malls, popular attractions

KUALA LUMPUR: The Christmas cheer is building up as shopping malls are being decked out with vibrant decorations.

People from all walks of life, including foreign tourists, are taking the opportunity to enjoy the festive atmosphere ahead of the celebration on Wednesday, with many also doing last-minute preparations.

A survey at three shopping malls found bustling crowds of visitors taking advantage of year-end promotions while some posed for photos with the seasonal decorations.

Christane Jane, 35, who was at Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, said she was only able to make last-minute preparations due to her busy work schedule.

"I have been working the whole week and finally got some time to get items for cooking, as I will be hosting two dinners this year," she told Bernama.

Similarly, Rosemary Kutty, 60, met at The Exchange TRX, expressed excitement about celebrating Christmas with her siblings after years of being apart.



Family photographs with Santa Claus are popular at this time of the year. — **BERNAMAPIC**

"After our parents passed away, we no longer had Christmas dinners together and were separated by distance. But this year, my siblings are flying over to Malaysia to celebrate together," she said.

A tourist from Europe, who only gave her name as Liesa, 23, commended the festive atmosphere in Kuala Lumpur, describing it as more vibrant compared with London.

"I like the ambience here. It is very festive and decorative," she said.

Indian tourist Jagadish Pande, 38, who is

visiting with his wife and son, said: "We took the opportunity to explore Kuala Lumpur and take our son to Aquaria," he said at Suria KLCC.

Masrifah Masrodi, 43, a teacher at Sekolah Rendah Agama Selayang Baru, said she took advantage of the school holidays to organise a trip for 80 students and seven other teachers to various attractions in Kuala Lumpur.

"Every year, we organise excursions like this and this time, we took the students to Aquaria, a chocolate factory and the National Museum," she said.

Trial train service to Hat Yai launched

KUALA LUMPUR: Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB) is launching a special MySawasdee Penang Edition train service between Butterworth and Hat Yai, which will operate as a trial route from Dec 29 to Jan 5.

KTMB said in a statement the trial route is designed to evaluate user demand and response to the special train service, with plans for future services to key locations on the State Railway of Thailand network.

The service offers a one-way fare of RM45 and will make stops at several major stations, including Bukit Mertajam, Sungai Petani, Alor Setar, Arau and Padang Besar.

Ticket sales will begin today at 10am.

The departure from Butterworth is scheduled for 7.40am, arriving in Hat Yai at approximately 12.05pm (local time). The scheduled departure from Hat Yai is at 3pm (local time), with arrival in Butterworth at 9.45pm.

The introduction of the new route offers residents in northern states and tourists from Thailand the opportunity to enjoy a comfortable journey without the need to change trains, Bernama reported.

"This route is also expected to boost both domestic and international tourism, particularly by attracting more visitors from Hat Yai to Penang, renowned for its cultural heritage and unique local cuisine.

"It also has the potential to enhance domestic tourism and positively impact the local economy, benefitting businesses in the areas it passes through."

Travellers are urged to plan their journey in advance and purchase tickets via the KTMB mobile app, kiosk machines or at www.ktmb.com.my.

More information is available via the KTMB customer service centre at 03-9779 1200.

Penang optimistic on new flight route

GEORGE TOWN: The launch of a new direct flight route from Chennai to Penang via IndiGo, that commenced on Saturday, marks a significant milestone in enhancing connectivity, generating economic opportunities and solidifying Penang's position as a regional air travel hub, said State Tourism and Creative Economy Committee chairman Wong Hon Wai.

He added that he plans to visit key cities in India early next year to intensify tourism promotion efforts, particularly focusing on the

meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions sector.

"Penang is already a top choice for international business and conferences, and we want to continue opening new doors for cooperation and expanding our opportunities," he said in a statement.

Wong also said the new route would not only strengthen air connectivity between Penang and India but also act as a strategic bridge to tap into India's vast and rapidly growing market.

Additionally, the route would serve as a convenient gateway for travellers from the northern states of Perak, Kedah and Perlis, enabling seamless transit through Penang to Chennai.

The Chennai-Penang flight will provide a comfortable flying experience, with full-flat business class seats and in-flight entertainment systems.

The new service will operate daily, offering direct connections between the two cities.

As of November, Malaysia has welcomed over 1.01 million Indian visitors, marking a 47% increase from 2019 and a 71.7% growth compared with last year, indicating that Malaysia is becoming an increasingly popular destination for Indian travellers.

"With the launch of the Chennai-Penang direct flight service, I am optimistic that we can attract even more visitors from India to Penang, boosting the island's profile on the Indian tourism map," Wong added. — Bernama

EDUCATION

FOCUS 2025

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



theSun
Malaysian Paper
www.thesun.my

Contact us now for special deals on digital, video and print advertising.

☎ 03-7784 6688

✉ advertise@thesundaily.com

18 Jakarta cops held in Malaysian fans extortion case

➤ National Police Commission calls for decisive action

JAKARTA: Indonesian police have detained 18 personnel suspected of extorting Malaysian nationals who attended the Djakarta Warehouse Project (DWP) concert in Kemayoran, North Jakarta.

Public information bureau head Brig-Gen Trunoyudo Wisnu Andiko confirmed the personnel are from Metro Jaya District Police, Central

Jakarta Metro Police and Kemayoran police station.

"They have been detained by the Professional and Security Division (Propam) for further investigation," he said in a statement.

The detentions followed several complaints from Malaysian nationals who took to social media, alleging they were mistreated and extorted during the event.

"We will not tolerate any misconduct by our personnel," Trunoyudo said, adding that updates will be provided soon.

According to the claims, the Malaysian nationals were forced to undergo urine tests, asked to show

their passports, and pressured to pay money, although their drug test results were negative.

The three-day DWP concert at the Jakarta International Expo, organised by Ismaya Live, a division of Ismaya Group, concluded on Dec 15 and is one of Asia's largest electronic music festivals.

In a statement, the concert organisers expressed regret, acknowledging that while some issues were beyond their control, they understood the impact it had.

The organisers said they were working with the relevant authorities and government bodies to conduct a thorough investigation.

The case has drawn the attention of House of Representatives Commission III chief Habiburrahman, who said he was confident Propam would investigate the allegations fairly.

"If extortion did occur, those involved should be punished," he said.

The National Police Commission called for decisive action against the officers involved, urging ethical hearings and criminal penalties if a crime is confirmed.

"If it's a criminal matter, they should be prosecuted," Commissioner Muhammad Choirul Anam said. – *Bemama*

Weightlifting granny, 90, cheered at competition

TAIPEI: Cheng Chen Chin-Mei beamed broadly as she hoisted a 35kg weightlifting bar to her waist, dropped it and waved confidently to an enthusiastic crowd here.

Cheng Chen, 90, has been pumping iron for over a year, encouraged by her granddaughter to take up the sport after she was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. She credits the regimen with helping to fix her posture.

Three generations of her family were in the crowd watching Cheng Chen and 44 others aged 70 or over in a weightlifting competition on Saturday.

In the three-round competition, Cheng Chen lifted as much as 45kg using a hexagonal-shaped bar that is said to allow the lifter more stability and options for gripping.

"I want to tell all old people to join the workout. You don't need to work extremely hard, but this is to stay healthy," she said after the competition.

Cheng Chen was not the only nonagenarian in the competition. The oldest participant is 92.

Taiwan is projected to become a "super-aged society" next year, with 20% or more of its 23 million people aged 65 or older, according to National Development Council data.

The government has set up fitness centres across the island with equipment suitable for older people, to encourage them to train, according to the Health Promotion Administration, which encourages healthy lifestyles.

"The hex bar dead-lift is an easy workout. It is similar to squats or sitting down and standing up," said Cheng Yu-shao, head coach at LKK Wellness, which organised the event.



Cheng Chen lifting 45kg to break her personal record. – *REUTERS/SPIC*

It can help prevent muscle loss and minimise the risk of falls, he said during a training session with Cheng Chen last week.

During the workout, Cheng Chen

said weight training has helped with some of her health issues.

"My shoulders have become lighter after regular workouts," she said.

Cheng Chen won only a medal and a certificate for her performance but received the adulation of the crowd and the chance to wave like a superstar. – *Reuters*

China 'firmly opposes' US military aid to Taiwan

BEIJING: China said yesterday it "firmly opposed" US President Joe Biden's approval of US\$571.3 million (RM2.5 billion) in defence assistance for Taiwan.

The White House said on Friday that Biden had authorised the drawdown of up to US\$571.3 million in defence articles and services of the

Department of Defence, and military education and training, to provide assistance to Taiwan.

The White House statement did not provide details of the military assistance package, which comes less than three months after one worth US\$567 million was authorised.

"This move gravely infringes on

China's sovereignty and security interests," Beijing's Foreign Ministry said in a statement, adding it "firmly opposes this action".

China "has lodged stern representations with the US at the earliest opportunity," it said.

The United States does not officially recognise Taiwan, but it is

the self-ruled island's strategic ally and largest supplier of weapons.

China has repeatedly called for Washington to stop sending arms and assistance to the island, which it claims as part of its territory.

Taiwan earlier this week received 38 advanced Abrams battle tanks from the United States. – *AFP*

BRIEFS

LARGE QUAKE HITS BATTERED VANUATU

SYDNEY: A magnitude-6.1 earthquake rattled buildings on Vanuatu's main island, Efate, early yesterday but did not appear to have caused major damage, five days after a more powerful quake wreaked havoc and killed 12 people. Mobile networks remained knocked out, making outside contact with Vanuatu difficult and complicating aid efforts. In addition to disrupting communications, the first quake damaged water supplies and halted operations at the capital's main shipping port. The government announced it would lift a suspension on commercial flights. – *AFP*

BUSHFIRE EXPECTED TO 'BURN FOR DAYS'

SYDNEY: An uncontained bushfire raging in Australia's Victoria state that has prompted an evacuation order for hundreds of residents will burn for several days, officials said. The order to leave immediately, set at the highest danger rating, remained in place for the fire in and around Grampians National Park, about 241km west of Melbourne. "There's a lot of unburnt fuel in the Grampians still, so it's quite a challenge for the days ahead," Country Fire Authority deputy chief officer Garry Cook said, referring to the fire that now covered 34,000ha of bush. – *Reuters*

5,000 arrested in India child marriage crackdown

GUWAHATI: A crackdown on illegal child marriages in India's northeast has resulted in nearly 5,000 arrests, after 416 people were detained in the latest police sweep, a minister said yesterday.

"We will continue to take bold steps to end this social evil," said Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

"Assam continues its fight against child marriage," he said, saying raids have been carried out and that those arrested would be produced in court.

India is home to more than 220 million child brides, according to the United Nations, but the number of child weddings has fallen dramatically this century.

Assam state had already arrested thousands in earlier abolition drives that began in February 2023, including parents of married couples and registrars who signed off on underage betrothals.

It takes the total now arrested to more than 4,800 people.

Sarma has campaigned on a platform of stamping out child marriages in his state by 2026.

The legal marriage age in India is 18 but millions of children are forced to tie the knot when they are younger, particularly in poorer rural areas.

The results can be devastating, with girls dropping out of school to cook and clean for their husbands, and suffering health problems from giving birth at a young age.

In a landmark 2017 judgment, India's top court said that sex with an underage wife constituted rape. – *AFP*

Albania slaps 12-month ban on TikTok

➤ Move part of plan to make schools safer

TIRANA: Albania on Saturday announced a one-year ban on popular short video app TikTok, following the killing of a teenager last month that raised fears over the influence of social media on children.

The ban, part of a broader plan to make schools safer, will come into effect early next year, Prime Minister Edi Rama said after meeting parent groups and teachers from across the country.

"For one year, we will be completely shutting it down for

everyone. There will be no TikTok in Albania," Rama said.

"We are going to chase this thug out of our neighbourhood."

The government will launch programmes to "serve the education of students and help parents follow their children's journey", he said.

The blocking of the controversial social network comes less than a month after a 14-year-old student was killed and another injured in a fight near a school in Tirana.

The fight had developed from an online confrontation on social media.

The killing sparked a debate in the country among parents, psychologists and educational institutions about the impact of social networks on young people.

"In China, TikTok promotes how students can take courses, how to protect nature and how to keep traditions," said Rama.

"But on the TikTok outside China, we see only scum and mud."

"Why do we need this? The problem is not the children but our entire society."

TikTok's huge global success has been partly built on the appeal of its "challenges" – an interactive call that invites users to create videos featuring dances, jokes or games that sometimes go viral.

The platform attracts young people with a never-ending scroll of ultra-brief videos. It has more than one billion active users worldwide.

Neighbouring countries such as

Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia have also reported a negative impact from the platform, especially on the youth.

At least 22 cases of self-harm among girls from different schools in the Kosovo southwestern city of Gjakova reported two months ago were blamed on a TikTok challenge.

Two weeks ago, local media in North Macedonia reported that hospitals there had treated dozens of teenagers for injuries sustained after attempting the "Superman" TikTok challenge.

It involves one child leaping on to the linked arms of a few others.

In the southwestern city of Novi Pazar in Serbia, there were reports that children at several high schools

had taken part in a "choking" challenge.

A search for this on TikTok now produces a warning message from the platform that some challenges can be dangerous, and links to a short guide on how to spot them.

TikTok has faced accusations of espionage in the United States, and is under investigation by the European Union over claims it was used to sway Romania's presidential election in favour of a far-right candidate.

The platform has also been banned for use by personnel in state institutions in several countries.

AFP is paid by TikTok in several countries to verify videos that potentially contain false information. – Reuters/AFP

Trump threatens to take back Panama Canal

WASHINGTON: Incoming president Donald Trump slammed what he called unfair fees for US ships passing through the Panama Canal and threatened to demand control of the waterway be returned to Washington.

He hinted at China's growing influence around the canal, a worrying trend for American interests as US businesses depend on the channel to move goods between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

"Our navy and commerce have been treated in a very unfair and injudicious way. The fees being charged are ridiculous," he said in a post on his Truth Social platform.

"This complete 'rip-off' of our country will immediately stop."

The Panama Canal, which was completed by the United States in 1914, was returned to the Central American country under a 1977 deal signed by President Jimmy Carter.

Panama took full control in 1999. "It was solely for Panama to manage, not China, or anyone else. We would and will never let it fall into the wrong hands," Trump said.

He added that if Panama could not ensure "the secure, efficient and reliable operation" of the channel, "then we will demand that the Panama Canal be returned to us in full and without question".

Authorities in Panama did not immediately react to Trump's post.

Although he does not officially take office

until next month, Trump has nevertheless been flexing his political influence in the waning days of President Joe Biden's administration.

The real estate mogul boasted on the campaign trail that as an entrepreneur, he was uniquely positioned to fight for US business interests.

An estimated 5% of global maritime traffic passes through the Panama Canal, which allows ships traveling between Asia and the US East Coast to avoid the long, hazardous route around the southern tip of South America.

The main users of the passage are the United States, China, Japan and South Korea. – AFP

US Congress passes Bill to avert shutdown

WASHINGTON: The US Congress averted a Christmas time government shutdown on Saturday after weeks of tense negotiations that went down to the wire, passing a Bill to fund federal agencies through mid-March.

With the midnight deadline already expired by minutes, senators dropped normal procedure to fast-track the package to a vote, halting government shutdown preparations and saving Christmas for more than 800,000 workers at risk of being sent home without pay.

"It's good news that the bipartisan approach in the end prevailed. It's a good outcome for America and the American people," Democratic Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said in a speech on the Senate floor.

The Democrats run the Senate, so there was never much doubt that the funding package would get a rubber stamp after the party was crucial in helping the Republican majority in the House pass the Bill earlier in the day.

But with senators often dragging their feet over complex legislation, there were fears that the funding fight might spill into this week.

That would have meant non-essential operations winding up, with up to 875,000 workers furloughed and as many as 1.4 million more required to work without pay. – AFP

Activist pledges to 'end whaling worldwide'

PARIS: Animal rights activist Paul Watson, freed last week from detention in Denmark, vowed on Saturday to end whale hunting worldwide and to stop Japan if it tried to resume whaling in the Southern Ocean.

Watson, a 74-year-old Canadian-American, returned to France on Friday after spending five months in detention in the Danish autonomous territory of Greenland due to an extradition demand from Japan.

"One way or the other, we are going to end whaling worldwide," Watson told reporters in central Paris, where several hundred supporters had

gathered to greet him.

"We need to learn to live on this planet in harmony with all those other species that share this world with us."

"If Japan intends to return to the Southern Ocean, we will be there," said the founder of the conservation group Sea Shepherd and the Captain Paul Watson Foundation.

"We are not protesting Japanese whaling. We are simply requesting they obey the law."

Under international pressure, Japan, one of three countries to conduct commercial whaling along with Iceland and Norway, abandoned the hunts. Since 2019, it has only caught whales in its own waters.

But in May, Japan launched the *Kangei Maru*, a whaling mother ship.

Activists believe this means Japan intends to resume whaling in the Southern Ocean, although the company operating the vessel has denied this.

"If the *Kangei Maru* goes to the North Pacific or the Southern Ocean, then we will intervene against their illegal operations," said Watson.

He also said he would oppose attempts by Iceland to resume whaling next year. – AFP



An environmentalist holds a placard in Paris at a gathering to welcome Watson on Saturday. – REUTERS/PIC

Antitrust watchdog to rein in Google

TOKYO: Japan's competition watchdog is expected to find Google guilty of violating the country's antitrust law.

The Japan Fair Trade Commission (JFTC) will soon issue a cease and desist order asking Google to halt its monopolistic practices, *Nikkei Asia* reported yesterday, citing sources.

Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment, while JFTC could not be reached for comment.

The Japanese competition watchdog started investigating Google for a possible breach of antimonopoly laws in web search services last October, following similar steps by authorities in Europe and other major economies.

Chrome is the world's most widely used web browser and is a pillar of Google's business, providing user information that helps the company target ads more effectively and profitably.

Last month, the US Department of Justice argued ahead of a judge that Alphabet owned Google must divest its Chrome browser and should not be allowed to re-enter the browser market for five years in an effort to end Google's search monopoly. – Reuters

Pope slams 'cruelty' of bombing Gaza children

► Remarks 'disappointing': Tel Aviv spokesman

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Saturday condemned the bombing of children in Gaza as "cruelty", sparking a sharp response from Israel which accused him of double standards.

The pontiff made his remarks a day after the rescue agency in Gaza said an Israeli air strike had killed seven children from one family.

"Yesterday, they did not allow the Patriarch (of Jerusalem) into Gaza as promised," the pope told members of the government of the Holy See.

"Yesterday, children were bombed. This is cruelty, this is not war. I want to say it because it touches my heart."

An Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman described the pope's remarks as "particularly disappointing as they are disconnected from the true and factual context of Israel's fight against terrorism – a multi-front war that was forced upon it starting on Oct 7."

"Enough with the double standards and the singling out of the Jewish state and its people," he said.

"Cruelty is gunmen hiding behind children while trying to murder Israeli children; cruelty is holding 100 hostages for 442 days."

Gaza's civil defence rescue agency reported that an Israeli air strike had killed 10 members of a

family on Friday in the northern part of the territory, including seven children.

The Israeli military said it had struck "several gunmen who were operating in a military structure belonging to Hamas and posed a threat to IDF troops in the area."

"According to an initial examination, the reported number of casualties resulting from the strike does not align with the information held by the IDF," it said.

Francis, 88, has called for peace since the war started. In recent weeks he has hardened his remarks against the Israeli offensive.

In late November he said "the invader's arrogance ... prevails over dialogue" in Palestine, a rare position that contrasts with the tradition of neutrality of the Holy See.

In a recently published book the pope called for a "careful" study as to whether the situation in Gaza "corresponds to the technical definition" of genocide, an accusation firmly rejected by Israel.

Since 2013 the Holy See has recognised the State of Palestine, with which it maintains diplomatic relations, and it supports the two-state solution.

Israel's military offensive in Gaza has killed at least 45,206 people, a majority of them civilians. – AFP

Turkiye will do 'whatever it takes' to ensure security

ANKARA: Turkiye will do "whatever it takes" to ensure its security if the new Syrian administration cannot address Ankara's concerns about US-allied Kurdish groups it views as rebel groups, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Saturday.

Turkiye regards the YPG, the group spearheading the US-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) fighters who have fought an insurgency against the Turkish state for 40 years and are deemed terrorists by Ankara, Washington and the European Union.

Hostilities have escalated since the toppling of Bashar al-Assad less than two weeks ago, with Turkiye and Syrian groups it backs seizing the city of Manbij from the SDF on Dec 9. Assad's fall has left the Kurdish factions on the back foot as they seek to retain political gains made in the last 13 years.

In an interview with France 24, Fidan said Ankara's preferred option was for the new administration in

Damascus to address the problem in line with Syria's territorial unity, sovereignty, and integrity, adding that the YPG should be disbanded immediately.

"If it doesn't happen, we have to protect our own national security," he said. When asked if that included military action, Fidan said: "whatever it takes."

Asked about SDF commander Mazloum Abdi's comments about the possibility of a negotiated solution with Ankara, Fidan said the group should seek such a settlement with Damascus, as there was "a new reality" there now.

"The new reality, hopefully, they will address these issues, but at the same time, (the) YPG/PKK, they know what we want. We don't want to see any form of military threat to ourselves. Not the present one, but also the potential one," he said.

Ankara, alongside Syrian allies, has mounted several cross-border offensives against the YPG-led SDF in northern Syria, while repeatedly

demanding that its Nato ally Washington halt support for the fighters.

The US-backed SDF played a major role defeating IS in 2014-2017 with US air support, and still guards its fighters in prison camps. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned that the IS would try to re-establish capabilities in this period.

Fidan said he didn't find the recent uptick in US troops in Syria to be the "right decision", adding the battle against IS was an "excuse" to maintain support for the SDF.

"The fight against IS, there is only one job: to keep IS prisoners in prisons, that's it," he said.

Fidan also said that the group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which swept into Damascus to topple Assad, had "excellent cooperation" with Ankara in the battle against IS and Al-Qaeda in the past through intelligence sharing.

He said Turkiye was not in favour of any foreign bases remaining in Syria, but that the choice was up to the Syrian people. – Reuters



Syrians gather at Aleppo's Saadallah al-Jabri Square on Saturday as they take part in the 'Liberation Festival', celebrating the fall of Syria's president Bashar al-Assad. – AFP/IC

Rescuers say Israeli strikes killed 28

GAZA STRIP: Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes early yesterday killed at least 28 Palestinians, including at one family's home and at a school building.

There was no let-up in the violence in the Gaza Strip more than 14 months into the Israel-Hamas war, even as Palestinian groups said a ceasefire deal was "closer than ever".

Civil agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said at least 13 people were

killed in an airstrike on a house in central Gaza's Deir el-Balah belonging to the Abu Samra family.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has confirmed a separate strike further north, on a school in Gaza City.

Bassal said that eight people including four children were killed in the attack on the school, which had been repurposed as a shelter for Palestinians displaced by the war.

The Israeli military said it had carried out a "precise strike" targeting gunmen.

A military statement said that a Hamas "command and control centre ... was embedded inside" the school compound in the city's east, adding that it was used "to plan and execute attacks" against Israeli forces.

Bassal said an overnight strike killed three people in Rafah, in the south.

And a drone strike early yesterday hit a car in Gaza City, killing four people, Bassal said.

Hamas and two other Palestinian groups said on Saturday in a rare joint statement that an agreement to end the bloodshed was "closer than ever".

The groups, which include Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, said that a truce in Gaza and hostage release deal was possible provided Israel does not

impose new conditions in negotiations.

Indirect talks between Israel and Hamas, mediated by Qatar, Egypt and the United States, were held last week in Doha, rekindling hope of a potential breakthrough after months of stalling.

On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he was "hopeful" for a deal, but avoided making any predictions. – AFP

US hits Houthi targets in Yemen capital

SANAA: The United States on Saturday said it struck targets in Yemen's rebel-held capital, hours after a missile wounded people in Tel Aviv.

The missile, which wounded 16 people, was the second such attack in two days.

Among the targets of US forces was a missile storage centre and a "command-and-control facility", the US Central Command said.

American forces also shot down

drones and an anti-ship cruise missile over the Red Sea, it said, shortly after Al-Masirah TV channel reported that an "aggression" had targeted the Attan district of Sanaa, blaming Western forces.

American and British forces have repeatedly struck rebel targets in Yemen this year in response to attacks on shipping in Red Sea routes vital to global trade.

Israel has also previously struck

back, including against ports and energy facilities, after rebel attacks against its territory.

The rebels had claimed responsibility for the Saturday strike on Israel, saying they directed a ballistic missile at "a military target of the Israeli enemy".

The Israeli military said it failed to intercept the missile, forcing many residents to leave their homes in the early hours.

Houthi have repeatedly launched missiles against Israel in solidarity with the Palestinians since the war in Gaza began more than a year ago. Most of them have been intercepted.

"One projectile launched from Yemen was identified and unsuccessful interception attempts were made," after alert sirens sounded, the Israeli military said on its Telegram channel.

It stressed the country's "aerial

defence is not hermetic" so Israelis should follow security instructions.

AFP images showed a large crater where the missile hit, and debris in the bedroom of a nearby house that was damaged.

Police swiftly cordoned off the neighbourhood.

The Houthi rebels pledged to continue their attacks against Israel "until the aggression stops and the siege on the Gaza Strip is lifted". – AFP



LETTERS letters@thesundaily.com

Whipping contradicts modern justice principles

WE, the members of G25, strongly oppose the Terengganu Syariah Appeal Court's decision to uphold the Syariah High Court's sentence of public whipping for 42-year-old Affendi Awang, a widower and father of five, for the offence of *khalwat* (close proximity). The sentence, reportedly intended to deter both the offender and others, is particularly troubling given that the offender is a repeat offender.

We respectfully urge the federal government and the Conference of Rulers to adopt a progressive stance, recognising that it is wrong for state governments, through their respective state Syariah Enactments, to criminalise the moral conduct of Muslims and impose cruel punishments.

Criminalising personal behaviour infringes upon human rights and the fundamental liberties guaranteed by the Federal Constitution.

We urge the relevant authorities to halt the scheduled public whipping on Friday. In line with the prime minister's commitment to reforms, he should intervene promptly by speaking out against this practice, ensuring action is taken before it is too late.

Public whipping by the Syariah Court violates both the Federal Constitution and the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 (Act 355), which does not provide for public whipping.

Offenders of *khalwat* are not criminals as their personal behaviour and transgressions pose no threat to life, property or the peace and security of the country.

State religious departments should uphold a more humane approach through *dakwah* (missionary) activities, focusing on counselling, guidance and support to help individuals become better Muslims. Public humiliation should never be considered an option.

We wish to remind the public and state authorities that Islam forbids the shaming and humiliation of fellow Muslims, and nowhere in the *Quran* does it sanction the public whipping of sinners for the act of *khalwat*.

Islam should not be distorted into a cruel



Criminalising personal behaviour infringes upon human rights and the fundamental liberties guaranteed by the Federal Constitution. — **BERNAMAPIC**

religion that teaches through humiliation but rather it should be recognised as a faith that embodies compassion and dignity.

The decision to hold the whipping in a mosque after Friday prayers, effectively stripping the individual of his dignity and right to privacy, is an injustice and affront to the values of compassion in Islam.

It also raises concerns about whether true justice is being served, particularly considering the potential emotional harm to the offender's five children, who may suffer from the public spectacle of their father's punishment.

Furthermore, holding such an act in a mosque, a place of worship and reverence, not only undermines the sanctity of the space but also risks demeaning the image of the mosque itself, turning it from a place of peace and prayer into one of humiliation and punishment.

We reiterate that whipping contradicts the principles of modern justice, which asserts that even the most serious offenders deserve to be treated with respect. Even a convicted murderer, facing the death penalty, is entitled to die with dignity and privacy.

Malaysia is a constitutional democracy founded on the universal principles of justice. The practice of public whipping raises serious

concerns about the country's image as a progressive Muslim-majority nation.

We have long prided ourselves on being a moderate and tolerant country, guided by the principles of *Wassatiyah* and *Maqasid al-Syariah*, which call for a more compassionate and moderate approach to how Islam is practised in our lives.

G25 supports the call by Suhakam (Human Rights Commission of Malaysia) for the abolition of corporal punishments, and that Malaysia should accede to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment 1984.

The majority of countries in the world have already ratified or acceded to this convention, including many Muslim-majority countries. It is time that Malaysia be a party to this convention.

Should the public whipping proceed, we can no longer call ourselves a moderate Muslim nation. We, therefore, ask members of the public not to attend the whipping, should it proceed.

Let us act with restraint and respect, and show through our actions that we do not support this cruel and humiliating form of punishment.

G25 Malaysia

Call for judicial independence

THE Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) supports the call made by members of the Bar Council forum last week for amendments to the Judicial Appointments Commission Act 2009 (JAC) to ensure that recommendations are effectively implemented.

Currently, the prime minister has the power to appoint members to JAC and is not obligated to follow the advice of the chief justice or JAC.

He can also reject their recommendations, granting him absolute authority in selecting names to be submitted to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Conference of Rulers. However, the executive, legislative and judiciary should remain independent, as mandated by the Federal Constitution. This concentration of power undermines judicial independence.

The authority to advise the Yang di-Pertuan Agong on judicial appointments should rest with the chief justice.

The MCCBCHST also recalls that Pakatan Harapan had promised before the last general election to implement reforms to ensure judicial independence and separate the roles of the attorney-general and solicitor-general. Therefore, the MCCBCHST urges the government to honour this commitment and carry out these reforms.

Furthermore, the prime minister's current absolute power in judicial appointments could negatively impact the judiciary's image.

Signatories

Dao Zhang Tan Hoe Chiew
President MCCBCHST
President – Federation of Taoist Associations Malaysia

Venerable Chuan Yuan
Deputy President MCCBCHST
Asst Dharma Propagation Officer of Malaysian Buddhist Association

Archbishop Julian Leow Beng Kim
Vice President MCCBCHST
Honorary Treasurer – Christian Federation of Malaysia

Sardar Jagir Singh
Vice President MCCBCHST
President - Malaysian Gurdwaras Council

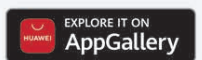
Ganesh Babu Rao
Vice President MCCBCHST
Deputy President Malaysia Hindu Sangam

ENJOY A SEAMLESS READING EXPERIENCE.

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



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



COMMENT by Dr Margarita Peredaryenko and Avyce Heng

Nexus between narcotics and terrorism

DESPITE ongoing efforts, substance abuse in Malaysia persists, driven by socioeconomic challenges and the global drug trade.

Beyond harming public health and economic stability, it exacerbates security risks by fuelling radicalisation and violent extremism. Addressing this crisis is crucial not only to combat addiction but also to safeguard national resilience and close gaps exploitable by extremist ideologies.

Substance abuse, defined as the harmful use of psychoactive substances, like illicit drugs and alcohol, often leads to substance use disorder, causing severe physical and mental health impacts.

Despite ongoing interventions, Malaysia's substance misuse problem is worsening. The National Anti-Drugs Agency reported a 2.8% increase in recorded drug addicts, rising from 23,517 in 2022 to 24,186 in 2023, with youths aged 19 to 39 making up 62.2% of cases.

A study revealed even higher prevalence rates of drug use, alcohol consumption and smoking than those reported by the National Health and Morbidity Survey, suggesting significant under-reporting as many cases go unnoticed.

Compounding the problem, Malaysia's role as a regional drug transit hub is highlighted in a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Report, which recorded 6.9 tonnes of ecstasy seizures in 2023 – 85% of the total in East and Southeast Asia.

The report also noted a resurgence in domestic methamphetamine production, with links to the Golden Triangle, and increasing seizures of local drug labs for the first time since 2018.

The connection between drugs and terrorism, often termed narcoterrorism, is well-documented. A key example is the Taliban's extensive opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan's Golden Crescent, one of the world's largest opium-producing regions.

The resulting drug trade generates significant revenue, enabling terrorist organisations to expand operations, acquire weapons, recruit members

and develop advanced IT infrastructures.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party has facilitated the illegal drug trade from the Golden Triangle to Europe by offering protection to traffickers.

Although narcoterrorism in Malaysia remains largely covert, the police acknowledge that drug-terrorist connections exist. Malaysia's strategic location – bordered by the Malacca Strait and South China Sea – makes it a critical transit hub for illicit criminal networks.

Proximity to the Golden Triangle further compounds the issue. Porous borders, particularly along Sungai Golok, Bukit Kayu Hitam and Padang Besar, have become hotspots for daily drug-smuggling activities, cementing Malaysia's role as a regional transit point and enabling the infiltration of illicit drugs into Malaysian society.

Substance use in terrorist groups

While no direct empirical studies link substance use to radicalisation, substantial evidence highlights its significant role in terrorist recruitment, radicalisation and operations.

Herrington (2019) found that 75% of 52 lone-wolf *jihadi* suicide attackers in Europe (2012–2017) had a history of chronic substance abuse. Similarly, Basra (2019) reported that two-thirds of *jihadi*s in their dataset consumed drugs before and during their radicalisation.

Terrorist groups often target individuals struggling with substance abuse, exploiting their vulnerabilities for recruitment.

According to the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), substance misuse can exacerbate mental health issues, such as distress, anxiety and identity confusion, that increase susceptibility to extremist ideologies.

The RAN report also identifies substance use as a key factor in both violent Islamist extremism and violent right-wing extremism (VRWE), with a notably higher prevalence in VRWE contexts.

Substance use leading to violence

Substance use is inextricably linked to violence, with psychoactive

substances frequently triggering acts of armed conflicts, intimate partner violence, public violence and violent extremism.

A meta-analysis discovered that individuals with drug use disorder are four to 10 times more likely to commit violence than the general population.

In Malaysia, substance-related violence is a recurring concern as reflected in the media.

In February, a man who tested positive for cannabis pushed his girlfriend to her death from the 23rd floor of an apartment building.

Similarly, in August, a Rohingya man who admitted to consuming amphetamine, methamphetamine and morphine murdered his wife, 10-year-old daughter and year-old son.

These findings highlight substance abuse as a key vulnerability indicator for violent extremism and terrorism (VE&T). Therefore, addressing substance abuse within preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) frameworks is crucial, using targeted approaches that recognise its role in radicalisation.

Leading countries in P/CVE adopt a centre-out strategy that integrates identification efforts with local and regional entities. A notable example is Denmark's police, social service and psychiatry (PSP) cooperation model, which effectively identifies at-risk individuals – such as those struggling with substance abuse, suicide risk or mental illness – and coordinates early interventions to address these vulnerabilities, preventing extremist ideologies from taking root.

Complementing this, info-houses – dedicated communication hubs – are established in every police district to address radicalisation concerns, conduct intelligence-led assessments and implement tailored rehabilitation measures. These hubs act as vital connectors between law enforcement, social services and communities, ensuring a proactive and unified response to emerging threats.

Collaborating with local partners in P/CVE efforts enables the creation of holistic interventions and rehabilitation programmes tailored

to specific community needs.

Sustained communication with stakeholders further ensures the timely exchange of up-to-date knowledge and methodologies, strengthening the overall effectiveness of these initiatives.

A comprehensive exit plan relies on effectively disengaging individuals from extremist ideologies while addressing underlying vulnerabilities. Given the frequent co-occurrence of trauma, mental disorders and substance abuse, these interconnected risk factors must be central to the design of effective deradicalisation programmes.

Notably, narrative exposure therapy for forensic offender rehabilitation has shown promise in exit work. Evidence indicates that violent extremists in conflict settings who undergo this therapy experience improved mental health, reduced criminal behaviour, decreased drug use and better reintegration into society.

Furthermore, continuous monitoring and evaluation standards, grounded in data and science, are essential to securing sustained resources and funding for P/CVE rehabilitation efforts. These include specialised services such as substance addiction treatment and mental health programmes, ensuring interventions remain effective, evidence-based and responsive to evolving challenges.

Moreover, victims of terrorist attacks may also resort to substance use as a coping mechanism. A meta-analysis revealed that in the two years following the 9/11 attacks, 7.3% of the US population reported increased alcohol consumption while 16.3% reported higher mixed drug use.

Therefore, to build a proactive and effective P/CVE strategy, it is essential to establish the necessary infrastructure, including trained professionals, to address such post-trauma vulnerabilities and prevent further harm.

However, Malaysia's current P/CVE framework does not explicitly incorporate this critical component, leaving, obviously, a significant gap.

Educational institutions play a critical role in drug prevention efforts, particularly as substance use

becomes increasingly common among Malaysian teenagers, some as young as 13.

However, it has been observed that the success of drug prevention education programmes in Malaysian schools is often undermined by limited resources and inadequate teacher training.

To overcome these challenges, schoolteachers should receive specialised training through workshops, seminars and mentoring sessions with experts to enhance their ability to deliver national drug prevention programmes such as "Pintar and Shields". Given their daily interaction with students, teachers are uniquely positioned to identify early signs of substance misuse as well as potential radicalisation.

Needless to say, such training must be grounded in robust, up-to-date research to ensure its relevance and impact.

Heavy reliance on research-based evidence is a global best practice in P/CVE, championed by countries like Germany, Sweden and Denmark.

To this end, the link between substance use, addiction and radicalisation must be rigorously examined, particularly within the local context, to uncover these underlying causes and processes. These insights are essential for counter-VE&T agencies to design, evaluate, and enhance P/CVE strategies effectively.

Substance abuse must be recognised not only as a societal issue but also as an early indicator of radicalisation, given its strong association with violent outcomes and terrorist activities.

By integrating substance addiction into P/CVE frameworks, policymakers can develop more comprehensive and holistic interventions, tackling VE&T threats at their roots.

Dr Margarita Peredaryenko and Avyce Heng are part of the research team at Emir Research, an independent think-tank focused on strategic policy recommendations based on rigorous research.

Comments: letters@thesunday.com

Use creative methods to tackle errant bikers

PROMINENT social activist Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye recently expressed deep concern over the high accident rate among motorcyclists in the country.

He also underscored the grim statistics of road fatalities annually in the country, with motorcyclists accounting for about 70% of deaths.

However, the reality is that many people are riding their bikes to work to save on toll charges, petrol costs and for faster travel time, especially through traffic gridlocks – further contributing to the accident rate.

Interestingly, Tan Sri Lee had also called for stricter measures to address the alarming number of those running red lights while proposing a creative approach to reward those who are law-abiding.

But while rewarding or incentivising

them may bear some fruits, it must be balanced with appropriate punishment and strict enforcement.

One effective form of punishment for serious traffic offenders would be by denying them government financial aid or Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR). The police and Road Transport Department (RTD) should link up with the Income Tax Department to flag individuals who commit serious traffic offences, allowing for a deduction from their STR.

For those who are not eligible for STR, community service could be considered as an alternative.

Conversely, to incentivise law-abiding road users, an additional cash payout under the STR could be offered. For example, if an individual is eligible for RM900 in 2025 and has no serious

traffic offences in the current year, they could receive a good behavior bonus of RM300.

As for those with a clean traffic record who are not eligible for STR, a tax rebate could be given as a reward.

To be fair, hardworking police and RTD personnel should also be rewarded based on their KPIs for nabbing traffic offenders, which can be done by way of monthly performance bonus payout; won't this also help to dissuade them from accepting bribes?

As for enforcement, the police and RTD must assume greater responsibility on the ground.

Currently, how often do we see them actively stopping those running red lights at intersections or cracking down on drivers using emergency



One effective form of punishment for serious traffic offenders would be by denying them government financial aid or Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah. – SUNPIC

lanes on highways?

Finally, to enhance stricter enforcement, more must be invested in automation and artificial intelligence as well as high-tech speed traps and red-light cameras in high-risk areas, especially traffic-light junctions.

In conclusion, given the failure of

outdated measures, isn't it time to implement innovative solutions that combine punishment, incentives and strong enforcement to reduce the senseless carnage on our roads?

Jeyakumar Joseph Malacca

Transforming accessibility and efficiency in the digital age

INSURANCE has long been an essential safety net, particularly for vehicle owners. Without it, individuals face the risk of significant financial and legal consequences. Imagine being personally liable for damages in an accident or incurring hefty fines for non-compliance with insurance laws.

These scenarios underscore the importance of maintaining valid insurance coverage – not only for legal peace of mind but also for the safety and protection of all road users.

Historically, the process of renewing insurance has been anything but straightforward. Outdated systems, extensive paperwork, time-consuming in-person visits, and a lack of transparency have made the process cumbersome. However, the advent of digital platforms has revolutionised this landscape, making insurance renewals faster, more convenient, and highly accessible.

Gone are the days when renewing insurance was a tedious task, especially during peak periods when long queues and manual procedures were the norm. Today's digital solutions simplify the process, enabling policy renewals with just a few clicks. For many Malaysians, this shift offers a much-needed reprieve from traditional inefficiencies, which often left individuals feeling frustrated and, in some cases, discouraged from staying insured.

This is where platforms such as Golnsuran are making a significant difference. By recognising and addressing the challenges faced by consumers, Golnsuran has introduced a user-friendly online solution that not only streamlines the renewal process but also empowers users to make informed decisions about their insurance.

One of the platform's standout features is its commitment to transparency. Trust is para-

mount in the insurance industry, and a clear understanding of policy terms, renewal fees, and road tax rates builds confidence among users.

Golnsuran provides detailed breakdowns of these elements, ensuring that users can make well-informed decisions without relying on intermediaries or conducting extensive research. For many, this level of transparency is transformative, as it simplifies the process of choosing the right policy while fostering trust in the platform.

Efficiency and Accessibility

Time efficiency is another key advantage of the Golnsuran platform. With the new digitised platform, renewing a policy can be completed in as quickly as three minutes. For busy urban professionals or those in rural areas with limited access to traditional insurance offices, this convenience is invaluable. No need to take time off work or make

multiple trips – everything can be handled online, at any time.

Beyond convenience, Golnsuran's platform is designed to ensure accessibility. Its intuitive interface caters to users with varying levels of digital familiarity, making it inclusive for everyone. Whether you are tech-savvy or new to online services, the platform makes staying insured and protected seamless and straightforward.

As Malaysia continues to embrace digitalisation across industries, Golnsuran is setting a new benchmark for the delivery of essential services such as insurance. What was once seen as a complex, time-consuming task is now a quick, reliable, and accessible process that integrates effortlessly into modern life.

This article is contributed by Tan Chong Insure head Joshua Yong.

SME Bank's Business Export Programme onboards 83 firms

Facilitates more than RM192 million in total sales and enables them to enter key global markets

PETALING JAYA: Small Medium Enterprise Development Bank Malaysia Bhd (SME Bank)'s Business Export Programme (BEP) has onboarded 83 companies, which has facilitated more than RM192 million in total export sales and successfully entered key global markets such as Southeast Asia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and beyond.

Launched in 2020, the BEP is a structured intervention programme curated by the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development with SME Bank as the implementing agency in collaboration with Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade).

The BEP is aimed at enabling high-performing SMEs to penetrate or expand their presence in the export markets. Participating SMEs under the programme are involved in a stringent process that includes screening, training, and evaluation of their performance based on an assessment criterion that aligns with the programme's objectives.

Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Minister Datuk Ewon Benedick said, "The Ministry recognises the importance of SMEs as the backbone of the country as they make up a significant portion of the businesses today, contributing RM613.1 billion or 39.1% to



Mohammad Hardee (second from left), Entrepreneur and Cooperatives Development Ministry deputy secretary-general (policy & monitoring) Noor Afifah Abdul Razak (third from left) and SME Bank chairman Datuk Muslim Hussain (second from right) together with the top three winners of the Best Exporter Award at SME Bank's Business Export Programme 2024 graduation ceremony.

Malaysia's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023. As such, we always welcome strategic initiatives that continue to advance the presence of our SMEs not just in the domestic market but also at the international level as this is in line with the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030."

He added that the BEP supports one of the policy's strategic thrusts – internationalisation of local entrepreneurs – and thus, he is pleased to see government agencies such as SME Bank reaffirming their development mandate by being at the forefront of fostering the SME ecosystem.

SME Bank acting group president/CEO Datuk Dr Mohammad Hardee Ibrahim said,

"The BEP is a comprehensive programme that identifies and equips high-potential SMEs with the capabilities to thrive in international markets, which is structured across four phases since its inception in 2020."

Forty-three companies from the initial two phases have completed the BEP and graduated while remaining 40 companies are scheduled to complete the programme by 2026.

"Our support for local SMEs to expand their global footprint extends beyond the BEP. Our SMEs can also tap into the Bank's wide array of propositions that are designed to provide SMEs with access to financing that can help them sustain and grow their business further."

AmBank Group raises public's awareness about financial scams via 'Ringgit Thieves'

PETALING JAYA: AmBank Group is presenting *Ringgit Thieves*, a miniseries on its official social media channels, with the objective to raise awareness about the risk of financial scams.

The initiative is part of the broader financial services sector #JanganKenaScam campaigns led by Bank Negara Malaysia and the National Scam Taskforce, together with the Association of Banks in Malaysia and the Association of Islamic Banking and Financial Institutions Malaysia.

AmBank Group CEO Jamie Ling said, "Educating the public is a very crucial step in today's digitalised world. Fighting cyber financial crime activities and preventing the exploit of human or security vulnerabilities to steal passwords, data or money directly is an ongoing imperative. With *Ringgit Thieves*, we hope to increase the awareness of all Malaysians to this risk. An informed society is tougher to scam. While we had fun producing these mini-series internally, our message is a serious one that affects many of us personally. We seek the support of all Malaysians to please help us amplify the message #JanganKenaScam."

Ringgit Thieves is inspired by true events where they highlight the tactics and *modus operandi* used by scammers including investment scams, love scams, identity theft and other fraudulent schemes. It features engaging storytelling to resonate with audiences of all ages. These internally produced miniseries has released four episodes so far, which can be viewed on AmBank's social media channels or visit <https://www.ambank.com.my/rt>.

Follow AmBank Group's official social media channels to view the upcoming episodes.

AmBank remains highly committed in its efforts to support national initiatives such as #JanganKenaScam and urges the public to stay informed and vigilant always. Customers facing any malicious transaction made through their AmBank account can call AmBank Contact Centre at 03-2178 8888 immediately, or visit the nearest branch and, at the same time, make a police report.

Bank Muamalat, AmanahRaya roll out Visa Platinum Credit Card-i

PETALING JAYA: Bank Muamalat Malaysia Bhd and Amanah Raya Bhd (AmanahRaya) are targeting 15,000 new registrations for their Visa Platinum Credit Card-i within the first year of launch.

Bank Muamalat president and CEO Khairul Kamarudin said the Bank Muamalat AmanahRaya branded card targets those over 25, with families, and planning for the future.

"This innovative credit card enables customers and potential customers of AmanahRaya to make instalments, up to 10% discount on selected AmanahRaya products, as well as various other special benefits," he said during its launch recently.

The card provides various benefits, including a first-year annual fee waiver, 0.5% cashback, a balance transfer plan, complimentary takaful coverage on Credit Card-i outstanding balance and complimentary takaful coverage for travel accidents.

Khairul said the credit card is an initiative to enable easy and smarter planning and management of finances and assets.

He said Bank Muamalat is committed to providing financial solutions that benefit all levels of society, especially regarding wealth and legacy management. "By providing credit facilities for wealth management through AmanahRaya, we

hope more individuals will be involved in estate planning, which will reduce complications regarding inheritance and foster economic stability."

AmanahRaya group managing director Ahmad Feizal Sulaiman Khan said that as a pioneer in the estate and legacy industry, the company will always help people realise their aspirations through its services.

"Legacy planning services not only fulfil our customers' financial needs, but this will also provide them with peace of mind with early planning because AmanahRaya will manage their estate," he added. – Bernama



Swift Energy eyes export growth of 80% post-IPO

Automation and power systems provider wants to strengthen international footprint

BY HAYATUN RAZAK
sunbiz@thesundaily.com

SHAH ALAM: Industrial automation and power systems provider Swift Energy Technology Bhd (SET) aims to increase export growth to 80% from the current 60% after its listing on Bursa Malaysia Securities' ACE Market scheduled for Jan 8, 2025.

CEO Tan Bin Chee said the company plans to use proceeds from its RM70.06 million initial public offering (IPO) to strengthen its foothold in international markets.

"My vision here is to build more export markets while maintaining our strong foundation in Malaysia. So we can have more geographical diversity and we can split the risk. This is my personal aim," he told *SunBiz* in an exclusive interview.

Tan also shared SET's plans to venture into other regions, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar.

"The government has been instrumental in supporting us through initiatives like Matrade's sponsorship for Adipec (Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference) and mid-tier company training. These efforts have helped us secure partnerships, such as with UAE-based Suwaidi Engineering," said Tan.

He said SET hopes to develop new products that can help address the Middle East market with the hotter ambient temperature.

"Currently, most of our projects cater to Asean and Asia-Pacific, where temperatures do not exceed 40°C. In the Middle East, temperatures range from 40°C to 55°C. Products for these conditions require special testing to ensure durability. We plan to acquire a temperature chamber simulating 55°C.

Testing products in this environment will provide valuable data for this significant market," Tan explained.

He disclosed that SET plans to expand operations in Indonesia.

"Indonesia is projected to become the sixth-largest economy globally and has the fourth-largest population. They demand food-related products like cooking oil, flour, sugar, and biodiesel, driven by Go Green initiatives requiring a 10% biofuel mix. It's a vast market."

Tan said SET, led by COO Chin Saw Yong, has been serving Indonesia since 2000. The company now has 300-400 installation bases

and plans to address its existing markets while exploring new opportunities.

"SET's collaboration with PT Sutrako, a specialist in offshore MCM maintenance projects, connects the company with Pertamina, Indonesia's national oil company. With this support, we hope for expansion beyond Malaysia and Thailand," Chin said.

Additionally, Tan said, SET's focus on digitalisation and continuous training has enabled it to maintain a competitive edge in the industrial automation and power systems market.

"The ACE Market listing will provide us with the resources needed to invest in research and development, talent acquisition, and modern facilities. Currently, we have a complete range, and we hope during this one, two years ahead, we can focus on enhancing the current offering with a higher rating, with a wider coverage," said Tan.



Tan (left) and Chin at their office in Shah Alam. — AMIRUL SYAFIQ/THE SUN

Malaysia strengthens economic ties with Iran, views Gilan Province as key hub

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is intensifying efforts to deepen economic and cultural ties with Iran, identifying Gilan Province as a key hub for collaboration.

During his visit to Gilan, Malaysian Ambassador to Iran, Khairi Omar, held productive talks with Gilan Governor Hadi Haqshenas, focusing on enhancing bilateral cooperation in key areas such as tourism, trade and academic exchange.

On tourism and economic exchange, Khairi highlighted the environmental and climatic similarities between Gilan and Malaysia, expressing confidence that these shared features would enhance Malaysian tourist arrivals in Iran.

"The natural beauty of Gilan mirrors that of Malaysia. This similarity makes it a preferred destination for Malaysian tourists, and we believe this can be a key factor in boosting bilateral tourism," said the ambassador.

To further strengthen tourism and trade connectivity, Khairi proposed establishing a direct flight route between Malaysia and Iran.

Welcoming Khairi's remarks, Haqshenas proposed offering provincial incentives to establish a direct flight between Gilan's Rasht International Airport and major Malaysian cities.

Meanwhile, Khairi noted that Malaysia's growing demand for high-quality produce aligns with Gilan's production capacity, creating opportunities for expanded trade.

"Malaysia is open to exploring avenues for closer collaboration in agricultural trade, particularly in rice and tea production. This collaboration can support our shared goal of enhancing food security and promoting sustainable trade," said the ambassador.

Currently, Gilan produces 30,000 tonnes of green tea annually, while Iran's national demand stands at 100,000 tonnes.

Haqshenas expressed Gilan's willingness to pursue joint ventures and agricultural cooperation with Malaysia to help bridge this production gap.

Khairi praised Gilan's agricultural research institutions and expressed interest in partnerships with Malaysian research centres to promote innovation and sustainability. — Bernama

Thumbs up to BNM's interim steps to address high medical insurance premiums

PETALING JAYA: The Financial Planning Association of Malaysia (FPAM) sees the move by insurers and takaful operators (ITO) to cap yearly premium adjustments at 10% for at least 80% of policyholders as a positive step.

The association believes this measure will help alleviate the financial burden faced by many Malaysians due to medical claims inflation and escalating healthcare costs.

FPAM president Alvin Tan said it encourages Malaysians who have recently surrendered their policies due to premium revisions to contact their insurance agents or ITO immediately to discuss the possibility of reinstating their policies at a lower premium in accordance with Bank Negara Malaysia's (BNM) directive.

"Ensuring uninterrupted protection is critical for financial stability and peace of mind," he said in a statement.

FPAM welcomes the interim measures announced by BNM last week to address Malaysians' concerns about premium revisions for medical, health and takaful (MHIT) products.

However, FPAM remains concerned that these interim measures are set to expire by the end of 2026.

It noted that without addressing the root causes of rising medical costs and the increasing utilisation of medical services, Malaysians may continue to face significant premium adjustments beyond 2026. A sustainable, long-term solution is urgently needed to ensure MHIT products remain affordable for all.

FPAM also highlighted the concerns of households whose annual income growth does not keep pace with double-digit premium inflation.

"Many families are worried about the rising costs, which outstrip their ability to pay for necessary insurance coverage. This disparity underscores the importance of systemic reforms to balance affordability with adequate protection," said Tan.

In addition, FPAM called on regulators, ITO and other stakeholders to collaborate to improve public awareness of medical billing practices in private healthcare facilities.

"The public must be equipped with the knowledge to scrutinise hospital bills and question any potential overcharges. Transparency and education are vital to containing unnecessary costs," Tan emphasised.

Think tank Datametrics Research and Information Sdn Bhd managing director Pankaj Kumar welcomed the measures introduced by the central bank to address escalating cost of medical insurance.

"However, these are seen as rather a short to medium-term measure as the core issue is the high hospital charges and we need to address that in a more holistic manner, especially when it involves pure profiteering, taking advantage of an insured patient," he told *SunBiz*.

Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia (APHM) president Datuk Dr Kuljit Singh said the association is weighing in on BNM's interim measures to assist policyholders and to promote continued access to suitable medical and health insurance and takaful products.

"APHM welcomes this positive interim measure by Bank Negara Malaysia as an immediate step in alleviating the burden of Malaysians and prioritising the health of the country. We value patient well-being and APHM, along with ITOs and the government, will contribute to the RM60 million fund to accelerate health reforms," he said.

In addition, Dr Kuljit said APHM is in discussions with key stakeholders to ensure both the short-

term and long-term solutions are sustainable and in the best interest of all.

Last week, the Life Insurance Association of Malaysia, Malaysian Takaful Association and Persatuan Insurans Am Malaysia or General Insurance Association of Malaysia announced interim measures to support policyholders impacted by the recent premium repricing.

In a joint statement, the agencies said the interim measures include spreading premium increases due to medical claims inflation over at least three years until the end of 2026 and limiting annual adjustments to under 10% for 80% of policyholders.

Further measures include a one-year freeze on premium increases for those aged 60 and above covered under the minimum plan, allowing reinstatement of policies lapsed or surrendered in 2024 without additional underwriting and offering alternative MHIT products at the same or lower premiums for policyholders unwilling to continue repriced plans, with insurers required to make these products available by the end of 2025.

Age-related premium increases remain unaffected and will be managed by insurers or takaful operators.

Problems faced by importers, exporters

INTERNATIONAL trade is extremely important to Malaysia. In the first 10 months of 2024, exports rose 4.8% to RM1.243 trillion and imports increased by 14.6% to RM1.140 trillion, which mainly consists of manufactured goods, commodities and minerals.

For the movement of goods internationally, documentation is absolutely key. Malaysia generally adopts the documentation prescribed by World Trade Organisation. Any failure to comply with documentation requirements will give rise to an offence and consequently monetary consequences.

As far as importers and exporters are concerned, as long as goods are cleared from customs by freight forwarders, the matter has come to a close. Unfortunately, that is not the case because the Royal Malaysian

Customs Department (RMCD) is now very vigilant in carrying out post-importation audits where they are discovering errors, which gives rise to additional tax liabilities and penalties.

Moving your goods out of customs is not final because when the post-audit team comes in later, they will scrutinise your documents thoroughly and may take a different position from the position taken at the port, giving rise to additional taxes or duties. This is permitted under the law. Even if fraud is not involved, they can review your position in the past six years. There is no guarantee that when goods are cleared, that is the final tax.

The common problems

The most common problem is documentation errors, which include missing or incomplete information documents to support a position.

When the auditors come in subsequently, missing documents will lead to further scrutiny and suspicion.

Other problems include the details of shipping invoices where the values differ from the subsequent commercial invoice or payment made. It is not uncommon to find that the original bill of lading has been changed and therefore there is discrepancy. The documents presented subsequently to the banks may also not reconcile with the true intent of export or import.

The RMCD is now going one step further to validate against the importation and exportation documents. They also connecting correspondence with bankers or other third parties, and with nominal ledgers together with bank statements to validate the position taken by an importer or exporter.

It is not uncommon to find importers or exporters looking at it from a tax planning perspective to reduce customs duties. Wherever

there are possibilities, importers or exporters will utilise such opportunities. But you have to be careful that you are not fragmenting goods on importation artificially. An example would be to bring finished goods broken down into parts so that it is seen to be brought in completely knocked down instead of completely built up, where the duties may be lower for the separate parts as opposed to a complete unit.

Exemptions are available for imports and exports, but they are tied down to specific items, specific persons and conditions to be met. It is incorrect for groups of companies to assume that the exemption given to one company in a group is available to other companies.

Most importers do not pay attention to transfer pricing and valuation issues when they import and export goods to related companies. You cannot rely on the transfer pricing documentation prepared for income tax purposes for customs declaration

purposes. Although there is a general overlap of the key arm's length principle, the rules for transfer pricing under customs valuation are very rigid, and you have to follow the sequence of rules to arrive at proper valuation. When it comes to related party transactions, the valuation rules are more prescriptive and it veers towards transaction value of identical or similar goods, and use of the deductive value of identical or similar goods, or computed value of identical or similar goods and etc.

The incorrect use of harmonised system code and tariff classification is another significant problem faced by importers and exporters. And finally, the use of the free trade agreements have to be strictly complied with, otherwise, you may be subject to additional duties.

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



TAX MATTERS
BY S.M. THANNEERMALAI

CBH Engineering ups its game on bullish M&E outlook

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian mechanical and electrical (M&E) engineering services sector continues to show promising growth, driven by increasing foreign and domestic investments that lead to a rise in commercial and industrial properties.

Further, the long-term development of key end-user industries, particularly data centres, where CBH Engineering Holding Bhd holds a proven track record, places the group in a strategic position to benefit from these market dynamics.

CBH aims to strengthen its internal capabilities by recruiting more skilled professionals to meet rising demand. This will enhance its operational efficiency and ensure it continues delivering innovative and high-quality engineering solutions. Simultaneously, CBH is focused on strengthening its financial resources to support the working capital required for larger and more complex M&E engineering projects.

These efforts will allow CBH to solidify its reputation as a trusted and leading service provider in the M&E engineering sector.

Launching its prospectus in conjunction with its upcoming initial public offering (IPO) in Kuala Lumpur on Friday, CBH managing director Cheah Boon Hwa said the company's

upcoming listing on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia represents a transformative step.

It will enable the company to strengthen operations, expand its team, and seize new opportunities within the growing M&E engineering services industry.

CBH provides electrical and M&E services, including designing, installing, testing, and maintaining electrical systems across various voltage levels and mechanical systems like air conditioning and mechanical ventilation, fire protection, plumbing, and renewable energy.

The group has a diverse portfolio of projects, including substations, commercial properties such as data centres, shopping malls, hotels, office towers, industrial properties such as factories and warehouses, and highrise residential properties.

Showcasing strong financial growth from the financial years ended Dec 31, 2021 (FY21) to FY23, CBH achieved a two-year net profit compound aggregate growth rate of 203.8%, rising from RM3.6 million to RM33 million. This was underpinned by revenue growth from RM67.6 million to RM208.0 million over the same period.

For the eight-month period ended Aug 31, 2024 (FY24), CBH reported a net profit of

RM30.7 million and revenue of RM178.2 million, reflecting increases of 150.9% and 126.3%, respectively, against FY23.

Looking ahead, CBH's optimism is grounded in its unbilled order book of RM203.7 million and a tender book valued at RM559.7 million as of Nov 25, 2024.

The bulk of the RM83.4 million to be raised through the IPO will be allocated for business expansion purposes. Specifically, RM38.5 million (46.2%) will be earmarked for the procurement of equipment and components for future projects, while RM17.3 million (20.7%) will be allocated to bank guarantees for future projects.

Additionally, RM18.5 million (22.2%) will be used towards the payment to subcontractors for future projects, while RM3.5 million (4.1%) will be set aside towards the recruitment of engineers and other personnel. The remaining RM5.7 million (6.8%), will be used to defray listing expenses.

With an enlarged issued share capital of 1,880.9 million shares and an IPO price of 28 sen per share, CBH will have a market capitalisation of RM526.7 million upon listing.

Mercury Securities Sdn Bhd is the principal adviser, sponsor, sole underwriter and sole placement agent for CBH's IPO.

Qube Integrated signs MoU with Asia CEO Community, launches Mitec Preferred Card

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (Mitec), owned by Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade), has announced the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between Qube Integrated Malaysia Sdn Bhd and the Asia CEO Community.

In a statement yesterday, Mitec said the MoU, signed on Dec 18 during the Malaysia-China Summit 2024, themed "Shared Prosperity", marks a significant milestone in strengthening collaboration and fostering innovation across the region.

The summit, focused on emerging technologies, sustainable mobility, and regional infrastructure, serves as a platform to unite Malaysia, China, ASEAN, and the global business community, Mitec said.

At the event, Qube Integrated also launched the Mitec Preferred Card, an exclusive initiative to recognise and reward valued clients while welcoming new partnerships in 2025.

The Mitec Preferred Card is designed to enhance client experiences by offering exclusive benefits and fostering greater engagement within Mitec's ecosystem.

Qube Integrated group executive chairman Richard Teo said the collaboration between Mitec, managed by Qube Integrated, and the Asia CEO Community reflects a shared vision of driving growth, innovation, and leadership development across key sectors.

"The Mitec Preferred Card is our way of showing gratitude to our clients and reinforcing Mitec's position as a hub for dialogue, innovation, and leadership. As we approach 2025, we invite our community to continue building extraordinary possibilities together," he said.

Asia CEO Community founder Gary Lim said the organisation has always sought to connect visionary leaders to drive meaningful business growth.

"Partnering with Mitec and Qube Integrated expands our reach and allows us to create a more vibrant platform for collaboration. Together, we look forward to enhancing regional cooperation and supporting businesses in realising their full potential," he added. - Bernama

M'sian govt debt yields poised to rise as Fed adjusts stance

KUALA LUMPUR: Domestic bond yields are expected to rise this week, with 10-year Malaysian Government Securities (MGS) trading above 3.85%, driven by signs of a strengthening US economy, which may lessen the likelihood of more interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve (Fed) in 2025.

Kenanga Investment Bank Bhd said US inflation, as shown by the core personal consumption expenditures price index released last week, remains a key focus and is expected to sustain momentum for higher yields. Hence, we expect higher net outflows and lower foreign holdings on bonds in the coming weeks and well into 2025.

"The quantum of outflows will depend on clarity in US trade and foreign policies once the new US administration takes charge in January," the research firm said in a note.

MGS and Government Investment Issues (GI) yields saw modest increases last week, ranging from 0.7 to 4.3 basis points (bps).

The 10-year MGS rose by 3.1bps, settling at 3.83%, while the 10-year Gil climbed by 4.3bps, settling at 3.844%.

Local bond yields were lifted by Fed chair Jerome Powell's hawkish tone despite a 25bps rate cut at the recent Federal Open Market Committee meeting.

Kenanga said the strong US data, particularly robust retail sales and a healthy services sector, pressured local yields higher. It said that domestically, improvements in November trade data and continued foreign investment inflows boosted demand for debt early in the week.

On the ringgit, Kenanga noted that the USD index (DXY) had an impressive week, bolstered by a hawkish shift in the Fed messaging, the Bank of Japan's cautious stance, a deteriorating eurozone growth outlook, and political instability in Canada.

The DXY surged past 108, marking its highest level since November 2022, and driving the ringgit above 4.50/USD, precisely as projected in last week's forex report.

Kenanga said that while the Fed delivered a 25bps rate cut as anticipated, the ringgit weakened due to a more pronounced shift in Fed policy signals. The updated dot plot suggests only 50bps of additional easing in 2025.

"The Fed's less dovish stance is likely to support continued US dollar strength into the new year, keeping the ringgit above 4.50/USD next week and potentially well into 2025.

Kenanga also noted that a few major catalysts are expected this week, but robust US domestic demand indicators could signal persistent inflationary pressures. This, coupled with uncertainties surrounding Donald Trump's policies, may strengthen the case for the Fed to delay rate cuts early in the year, reinforcing US dollar strength.

"While markets currently anticipate just one rate cut in 2025, we hold to our projection of two to three cuts. If realised, this could offer some relief for the ringgit in the latter half of 2025," Kenanga said.

EPF's new scheme raises practicality, impact concerns

► Key issues in Retirement Income Adequacy framework include financial literacy, early saving and delivery of impartial advice

KUALA LUMPUR: The Employees Provident Fund's (EPF) newly launched Retirement Income Adequacy (RIA) framework establishes a solid foundation for retirement planning, however, questions about its feasibility and effectiveness remain.

Asia School of Business deputy CEO and practice professor of finance Joseph Cherian said the success of the RIA depends on two critical factors.

"Cultivating a culture of financial literacy and early proactive saving among individuals and policymakers and ensuring financial professionals deliver impartiality are critical issues that need to be addressed.

"Further, there is also the issue of cost-effective advice and tailored financial products to help individuals

meet their specific RIA target income," he told *SunBiz*.

Cherian said these elements are essential to transforming the framework from a blueprint into a practical tool for securing retirement readiness.

"Yes, the three tiers of the RIA framework are feasible. However, achieving the desired or target income level in retirement depends on having a sufficiently long savings runway and ensuring income adequacy during one's working years to save in a manner that achieves one of the three RIA benchmarks.

"This requires careful financial planning, disciplined savings, good and unbiased financial advice, and strategic management of financial

resources over time," he said.

On Dec 12, EPF rolled out RIA, a new three-tier savings framework as a reference for Malaysians to maintain different levels of financial security post-retirement.

Launched in tandem with Belanjawanku 2024/2025, the newly introduced RIA framework revises the recommended savings level from a single benchmark to three tiers, comprising "basic", "adequate", and "enhanced" levels of savings.

Cherian noted that the newly launched RIA framework by the EPF aims to address retirement planning in Malaysia, given rising living costs and an ageing population.

Cherian said ideally, retirement payouts under the framework should be indexed to inflation, cost of living, or standard of living metrics to ensure financial security.

He said that without such adjustments, the framework risks losing relevance and purchasing power in an inflationary and volatile economic environment.

Additionally, the government should consider incorporating a form of tail risk insurance into the framework.

For example, Cherian said, structuring the RIA scheme as a life annuity of payouts rather than a term annuity would ensure lifelong income security.

"This is especially true for individuals who outlive their planned retirement period, the average life expectancy in Malaysia notwithstanding.

The RIA savings levels table needs to be recalculated to accommodate these tweaks," Cherian said.

Moreover, he added, a needs-based social security scheme would support those unable to meet the savings threshold, providing a more comprehensive approach to our social security net.

EPF's recent data reveals a concerning trend, with only 36% of active formal members achieving the basic savings level of RM240,000 by age 55, highlighting a growing retire-

ment crisis.

This issue is particularly severe for individuals with limited financial capacity to save adequately.

Cherian said addressing this challenge requires actionable solutions.

"Extending work life, supported by upskilling and flexible education opportunities, can boost savings and delay fund depletion.

"Increasing savings rates through higher contributions during working years can mitigate future shortfalls. Additionally, homeowners could consider reverse mortgage schemes to convert home equity into retirement income.

"While these strategies provide viable options, their success relies on comprehensive policymaking and systemic reforms to ensure long-term impact," he said.

Cherian said the RIA framework is a commendable step forward, but addressing the complexities of retirement savings and adequacy over one's lifecycle demands comprehensive, data-driven strategies and active collaboration among individuals, the academy, institutions, and the government.

"It also involves coming up with feasible strategies for those who cannot make the cut, no matter what.

"By fostering financial preparedness and implementing innovative policies, Malaysia can turn its retirement challenges into sustainable growth and social stability opportunities," Cherian said.



The industrial process equipment segment remains the largest contributor, making up half of the group's quarterly revenue.

—KAWAN RENENERGY WEBSITE

Robust process plant segment energises Kawan Renenergy's Q4 revenue growth

KUALA LUMPUR: Kawan Renenergy Bhd (KRB), an engineering solutions provider, posted a revenue of RM39.2 million for the fourth quarter (Q4) ended Oct 31, 2024 (FY24), an increase of 23.1% quarter-on-quarter (QoQ).

This growth was driven by the process plant segment's robust order book pipeline.

The segment recorded a 43.9% QoQ increase in revenue and contributed 39.8% of the total revenue.

The industrial process equipment segment remained the largest contributor, having accounted for half of the quarterly revenue. The group's net profit remained robust at RM5.3 million.

FY24's revenue grew 15% to

RM113.1 million compared to RM98.4 million in the previous year.

Growth was attributed to increased contributions across all business segments, primarily fuelled by increased demand from the power, oleochemical, and chemical industries, which significantly bolstered the group's order book.

The robust revenue growth enabled the group to report a 44.5% increase in net profit of RM19.2 million.

This exceptional performance underscores Kenergy's ability to execute its growing order book efficiently and profitably.

KRB managing director Ir Lim Thou Lai said aligned with the company's growth strategy, investment in

additional machinery and equipment, coupled with upgraded production processes, is designed to enhance efficiency, minimize wastage, and achieve greater precision.

"These initiatives position us to capitalise on the strong growth of Malaysia's industrial process equipment sector, which recorded a CAGR of 14.6% from 2020 to 2023.

"These initiatives are also driven by increasing foreign direct investment inflows, according to the independent market research report by Smith Zander International.

"With a healthy order book of RM141.7 million as of Oct 31, 2024, we remain optimistic about the group's future prospects," he said in a statement.

Aeon Credit registers Q3 net profit of RM62m

KUALA LUMPUR: Aeon Credit Service (M) Bhd posted revenue of RM562 million in the third quarter (Q3) ended Nov 30, 2024 (FY25), a 15.5% growth compared to RM486.51 million in the same quarter of FY24.

This was underpinned by a 16.2% increase in total transactions and financing volume to RM2.12 billion in Q3'25, driven by strong performance in personal financing, automobile financing and credit card business.

For Q3 FY25, Aeon Credit registered an operating profit of RM103.03 million subsidising by 7.5% compared to Q3'24.

The lower operating profit was mainly attributed to higher operating expenses, resulting from increased transaction volume and promotion expenses and increased impairment losses on financing receivables in the absence of a general provision reversal.

Aeon Credit recorded a net profit of RM62.07 million in Q3'25.

For the nine-month period (9M) of FY25, Aeon Credit recorded a 14.8% growth in transaction and financing volume, reaching RM6.25 billion compared to RM5.4 billion posted in 9M of FY24.

Correspondingly, gross financing receivables rose to RM13.67 billion, an increase of RM1.76 billion from Nov 30, 2023.

This growth was primarily driven by the increased use of digital onboarding solutions, effective marketing campaigns, and collaborative activities within the Aeon group.

In line with the increase in total transactions and gross financing receivables, total operating

income for 9M'25 was registered at RM1.79 billion, reflecting a 15.2% growth compared to RM1.56 billion in 9M'24.

The non-performing loans (NPL) ratio has reduced to 2.42% as of Nov 30, 2024 as compared to 2.73% as of Nov 30, 2023, attributed to effective credit management and continuous monitoring of underperforming portfolios.

Operating profit for 9M'25 was RM379.32 million, compared to RM402.58 million in the same period last year.

The decrease was mainly attributable to an increase in impairment losses on financial receivables of RM116.42 million and higher other operating expenses of RM89.39 million, partly due to increased transaction and financing volume.

This is offset by the incremental increase in revenue of RM214.77 million.

The group adopts a cautious outlook amid geopolitical tensions, inflationary pressures, and global market volatility, focusing on prudent asset growth and closely managing credit risks.

To boost operational efficiency, the Aeon Group launched a new collection system on Dec 6. This system enables single-point engagement for customers with multiple products.

This advanced system, featuring real-time reporting and strategic capabilities, is expected to enhance productivity.

Aeon Group remains confident in maintaining business momentum for the financial year ending Feb 28, 2025, barring unforeseen challenges.

Asian hedge funds bet on Xiaomi, Baidu

Managers say they are upbeat about growing AI adoption in China

HONG KONG: Some Asian hedge funds are betting on leading Chinese tech companies such as Xiaomi and Baidu, buoyed by their artificial intelligence innovations, despite the threat of further US curbs that could take effect next year.

A US ban imposed on advanced chip exports to China has kept many global investors on the sidelines.

But those scouring China for potential winners said firms there are developing AI products for a massive home market as their self-developed large language models catch up, and valuations are lower than their US peers.

Fund managers say they are particularly upbeat about growing AI adoption in the lives of China's 1.4 billion people, from mobile phones and smart wearables to social apps and games. "Chinese innovations are reaching end-users rapidly," said Nilesh Jasani, founder of GenInnov Funds and former vice-chairman for Asia at Jefferies.

"We have been extremely excited by China's ascendancy in mobility and mobiles, benefiting names like Xiaomi and Baidu," he said, noting his fund has been raising exposure to China.

China's leading search engine company Baidu recently launched a text-to-image generation tool for its ad clients.

It also plans to release AI glasses early next year and debut its robotaxi service outside mainland China.

Hong Kong hedge fund Monolith Management, which manages assets worth US\$300 million (RM1.3 billion), has set its sights on smartphone maker Xiaomi and its suppliers.

"Xiaomi offers compelling edge AI user experience through its self-developed HyperOS, with a larger ecosystem of IoTs and cars to tap into, compared to its Western counterparts," said Timothy Wang, chief investment officer at Monolith.

Chinese tech stocks have lagged behind their US counterparts in this year's global AI frenzy.

The Hang Seng Tech Index and CSI AI sector have risen 19% and 21%, respectively, while the Nasdaq 100 has gained over 30%.

But Wang predicts growth opportunities for China's homegrown AI-powered products and services in the coming year.

The advances would be driven by the proliferation and commercialisation of large language models, coupled with the country's supply chain strengths and a wealth of skilled product managers, he said.

ByteDance's AI chatbot Doubao became the world's second most popular AI application in

November with 60 million monthly active users, only behind ChatGPT, according to Aicpb.com.

"We are seeing breakthroughs in AI software, such as text-to-video generation and multimodal AI," said Sean Ho, CIO of Triata Capital, which manages US\$770 million in assets.

"The high rankings of Chinese AI models on open-source platforms like Hugging Face reflect their ambition to lead globally, a trend that is unlikely to be derailed by ongoing tech conflicts," he said in recent investor communications.

Not everyone is convinced, especially as US, Taiwan, and Japan semiconductor stocks dominate tech investors' portfolios and deliver strong results.

Eventually, it comes down to whether artificial intelligence can boost earnings growth, said Andy Maynard, head of equities at China Renaissance Securities.

"China is clearly lagging the US in terms of monetisation at the listed company level," he said. - Reuters

Sony buys 10% of 'Elden Ring' owner for ¥50 billion

TOKYO: Japanese electronics titan Sony said it had paid ¥50 billion (RM1.4 billion) for a 10% stake in the media conglomerate behind the smash-hit game *Elden Ring*.

Kadokawa, which is known for producing anime and publishing books including manga comics, said last month that Sony had made an approach to the firm, sending the media firm's stocks soaring.

They said in a joint statement last week that they had signed a "strategic capital and business alliance agreement".

The new deal will see Sony pay ¥50 billion for 12 million new Kadokawa shares, making it the company's biggest shareholder.

The transfer to Sony, which has already held a stake in Kadokawa since 2021, is due to take effect on Jan 7.

The move will expand Sony's games and cartoons portfolio, after its 2021 purchase of Crunchyroll, a once semi-legal US-based sharing site that is now a streaming giant for Japanese anime.

Kadokawa and Sony "historically have collaborated on various projects, and through this capital and business alliance, intend to further strengthen our collaboration to maximise both companies' IP value globally", the statement said.

Kadokawa also owns FromSoftware, the creator of the dark fantasy role-playing adventure game *Elden Ring*, which was developed with help from *Game of Thrones* author George R.R. Martin.

Sony said last month that its net profit jumped in the second quarter thanks to stronger sales in gaming, music and imaging sensors.

Its PlayStation 5 Pro console hit shelves in November, but its price tag - €799.99 (RM3,817) in Europe - has raised eyebrows among gamers. - AFP



Sony PlayStation games are displayed at a Best Buy store in the US city of San Rafael. - AFP/IC

SK hynix to get US\$458m funding for US chip facilities

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden's administration has finalised an award of up to US\$458 million (RM2 billion) for SK hynix, officials said last week, furthering efforts to lock in his legacy in boosting American semiconductor production before Donald Trump takes office.

The money supports a broader SK hynix investment of around US\$3.9 billion in Indiana, where the South Korean semiconductor firm is building facilities including a memory packaging plant for artificial intelligence products, said the Commerce Department.

US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said "we are solidifying America's AI hardware supply chain" with the move.

SK hynix is the world's second-biggest maker of memory chips.

"This facility will develop state-of-the-art advanced packaging, which is more and more important to US semiconductor leadership," said Arati Prabhakar, assistant to the US president for science and technology.

The investment is expected to create some 1,000 new facility jobs, and there will also be a research hub set up via SK hynix's partnership with Purdue University, the Commerce Department added.

Besides the direct funding of up to US\$458 million, the United States is also providing up to US\$500 million in loans to the company, through a loan authority under the CHIPS and Science Act.

The Biden administration has unveiled billions in grants through the CHIPS Act, and officials have been working to get deals across the finish line in recent weeks - before the new US administration enters the White House.

Trump has previously criticised the CHIPS Act, which the grant falls under.

But a finalised award means that funds can start flowing as companies reach milestones.

Of more than US\$36 billion in proposed funding allocated, officials have finalised US\$26 billion so far.

Other companies whose agreements have also been firm up in recent days include Taiwanese chip giant TSMC, GlobalFoundries, Intel and Micron Technology.

The United States makes some 10% of the world's chips, with none being the most advanced, and Washington has been working to shore up the country's chipmaking capabilities. - AFP

Australia expects export resource earnings to drop

MELBOURNE: Australia expects its resource and energy export earnings to fall by 10% to A\$372 billion (RM1 trillion) in the fiscal year ending June 2025 mostly due to falling iron ore prices and relatively weak global growth, the government said.

The department of industry warned that policy moves by the incoming Donald Trump administration in the US across trade, fossil fuel production and climate change could affect its forecasts, particularly protectionist policies.

The figures for the December report were mostly in line with the department's September update.

Australia expects export earnings for its top earner iron ore to slide by around a fifth, or A\$30 billion, to A\$108 billion by the end of June 2025 from the year before, amid concerns about China's economy and surging global supply.

Supply is expected to expand when Rio Tinto's part-owned Simandou mine in Guinea starts production next year.

The mine is set to add some 60 million metric tons to the roughly 2.5 billion ton market once fully ramped up.

The increased supply will continue to weigh on Australia's iron ore export earnings with a further 11% fall projected in fiscal 2026, the report said.

Australia has trimmed its outlook for iron ore prices by US\$1 a metric ton, to US\$83 a ton in the current fiscal year and US\$77 a ton in the following financial year.

Elsewhere, the report projects falls in energy exports.

Lower liquid natural gas (LNG) prices will cut earnings by A\$4.6 billion, to A\$64 billion in fiscal

2024/25, and then to A\$60 billion in fiscal 2025/26.

Thermal coal export earnings are forecast to drop by A\$3 billion, to A\$37 billion, and metallurgical coal exports to decline by A\$11 billion, to A\$43 billion.

There is little in the way of relief for prices of lithium, which is used in electric vehicle batteries and is in oversupply.

Export earnings are estimated at A\$4.9 billion in the current financial year, half of last year's A\$9.9 billion.

Two outperformers are gold and alumina.

Gold export earnings are expected to edge up by A\$1 billion, to A\$34 billion, while alumina export earnings are expected to rise to A\$11.5 billion in fiscal year 2024/25 due to supply disruptions from Guinea. - Reuters



Powell departing after speaking at a press conference in Washington. – REUTERS/SPIC

Trump poses challenges for Fed's independence

➤ Incoming president wants 'at least' a say in setting interest rates

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's return to the White House could put the independence of the US Federal Reserve under strain, potentially weakening its ability to fight against inflation and unemployment free from political interference.

The Fed has a dual mandate from Congress to act independently to tackle both inflation and unemployment – primarily by raising and lowering interest rates.

Anything that undermines the Fed's independence could spook traders in the financial markets, who might come to question if it could effectively tackle inflation.

"The prevailing view for the past 30 years, with the exception of the first Trump administration, has been that it's best to give the Fed the widest possible latitude to conduct monetary policy," David Wilcox, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), told AFP.

"Monetary policy is complicated enough even without having to take that additional consideration," added Wilcox, a former senior adviser to three Fed chairs who is also Bloomberg's director of US economic research.

The Federal Reserve System includes a decentralised network of 12 regional reserve banks and a seven-member Board of Governors in Washington.

Fed governors are nominated by the US president to serve staggered 14-year terms, and must be confirmed by the Senate.

The Fed chair and vice-chairs are appointed from among these seven governors and, once appointed, cannot be removed without cause.

The Fed Board of Governors also plays a role in approving nominations to run the 12 regional reserve banks.

However, those nominations are made by the regional reserve banks' own directors, adding a layer of protection against too much meddling from the centre.

Where a future President Trump can – and very likely will – have a significant influence over the Fed is in his choice of nominations.

Jerome Powell is scheduled to step down as Fed chairman in May 2026, and Trump is not expected to renominate him.

The president-elect is a fierce critic of Powell – whom he first nominated to run the US central bank – accusing him without evidence of supporting the Democrats, and once even questioning if he was a bigger enemy than China President Xi Jinping.

The president-elect has also said he has "better instincts" on the economy than many Fed governors, and argued that the US president should have "at least" a say in setting interest rates.

But once Powell steps down as Fed chairman, he will remain a governor until 2028, should he choose to stay on, complicating Trump's nomination process.

To replace him with someone not currently on the board, Trump must either pressure an existing governor to quit, or replace Fed

governor Adriana Kugler when her term expires in January 2026, and then nominate her replacement to the top job.

Given the "outsized influence" wielded by the US central bank chairman, the next Trump-appointed Fed chief "could change the dynamic and the independence of monetary policy", Nationwide chief economist Kathy Bostjancic told AFP.

"If someone is nominated and appointed and are seen to have political leanings, and it allows them to influence their monetary policy decisions, then that would become quite messy for the Federal Reserve," she said.

But even with Trump's Republican Party back in control of the Senate, the next Fed chairman is still likely to receive plenty of scrutiny, said Steve Englander, Standard Chartered's head of North America macro strategy.

"It's not like you can pick a name out of a hat and drop him into the Senate, he gets confirmed the next day, and he's voted in the day after," he said.

Senators "take their role very seriously," he added.

A final backdrop also exists in the bond markets, which take into account expectations of where the Fed's interest rates will be in the future, and which impact borrowing rates on everything from mortgages to car loans.

"You can't appoint someone 180 degrees out of the mainstream ... because the bond market will reject that immediately," Englander said.

"The bond market is a guardrail.

"There's a limit." – AFP

US Q3 GDP growth revised up on consumer, export boost

WASHINGTON: The American economy expanded faster than originally estimated in the third quarter, according to government data released last week, despite analysts' expectations that growth would remain unchanged.

The world's biggest economy grew at an annual rate of 3.1% in the July-September period, up from earlier estimates of 2.8%, the Commerce Department said.

This was due to "upward revisions to exports and consumer spending", the report said, although it noted that the increase was partially offset by a downward revision to private inventory investment.

In the second quarter, GDP growth was 3%. The US economy has shown resilience even as consumers drew down on savings from the Covid-19 pandemic period and grappled with higher interest rates as the Federal Reserve battled to rein in inflation.

Consumer spending in particular has been a key factor behind growth – even as Americans felt the pinch from higher costs of living – supported by a relatively healthy jobs market.

"Compared to the second quarter, the acceleration in real GDP in the third quarter primarily reflected accelerations in exports, consumer spending, and federal government spending," said the Commerce Department.

A consensus estimate pegged third quarter GDP growth at 2.8% initially, unchanged from before, according to Briefing.com. – AFP

Accenture sees strong demand for genAI services

NEW YORK: IT service provider Accenture beat Wall Street estimates for first-quarter revenue last week, on the back of growing demand for its services to help clients adopt AI-powered tools.

Businesses are investing heavily to scale their AI projects and digitalise their core operations to boost efficiency and cut costs, which is helping companies such as Accenture.

The company's new bookings rose to US\$18.7 billion (RM84 billion) for the first quarter from US\$18.4 billion a year earlier.

Ahead of the results, analysts said tech budgets for fiscal year 2025 will likely improve which bodes well for IT service providers such as Accenture and EPAM.

Accenture's GenerativeAI business recorded new bookings of US\$1.2 billion, whereas its consulting and outsourcing segments reported US\$9.2 billion and US\$9.5 billion, respectively.

Its first-quarter revenue stood at US\$17.7 billion, beating analysts' estimates of US\$17.12 billion, according to data compiled by LSEG.

The company expects annual revenue to grow between 4% and 7%, compared with analysts' expectations of 5.63%.

It had earlier forecast growth of 3%-6%. Accenture forecast second-quarter revenue of US\$16.2 billion to US\$16.8 billion, the mid-point of which is below analysts' average estimate of US\$16.63 billion. – Reuters

Medline sets stage for blockbuster IPO with confidential filing

NEW YORK: Medline has confidentially filed for an initial public offering in the United States, paving the way for one of the major stock market flotations in 2025 that could value the medical supplies provider as high as US\$50 billion (RM225 billion).

The company has not determined the size of the offering, it said, but Reuters reported last month the stock sale could fetch US\$5 billion.

Economic resilience, a market rally and hopes of a business-friendly administration are fueling a

surge in IPO activity, with Medline set to be one of the many high-profile companies competing for investor dollars next year.

A wave of interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve has already bolstered the IPO market in 2024, allowing cloud-based software company ServiceTitan and China's self-driving startup WeRide to go public.

Medline's offering could also be a major win for its private equity owners – Blackstone, Carlyle and Hellman & Friedman, which together acquired the

company in a deal worth US\$34 billion in 2021.

Medline is one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of medical supplies such as surgical equipment, gloves and laboratory devices used by hospitals around the world.

The company was founded in 1966 by brothers James and Jon Mills.

It traces its roots to a garment manufacturer, which initially made butcher's aprons for the meatpacking industry starting in 1910.

In the years that followed, its predecessor

began sewing surgeons' gowns and uniforms at the request of nuns from Mercy Hospital in Chicago.

Medline went public in 1972, before being taken private again by the brothers.

Its longtime CEO Charlie Mills, the son of James Mills, retired from Medline last year, with company veteran Jim Boyle replacing him at the helm.

The IPO could value the Illinois-based company at US\$50 billion and may come as early as the second quarter. – Reuters



BLISSFUL
ESCAPE AMIDST NATURE
berjyahotel.com

BERJAYA
LANGKAWI RESORT
MALAYSIA

Water bills in England, Wales set to rise by a third

➤ Utility firms had wanted 44% hike over five years to help tackle sewage spills

LONDON: Water bills in England and Wales are set to rise by just over a third in the next five years to help tackle sewage spills, after the regulator said it would allow a bigger increase than it previously flagged – though still less than companies wanted.

The average increase of 36% before inflation for companies including ailing Thames Water – equivalent to £31 (RM175) a year over five years – compares to the 44% average requested by companies and the 21% regulator Ofwat proposed in July.

The pumping of raw sewage into rivers and seas has become a scandal in Britain, with privatised water companies accused of prioritising dividends and management bonuses over investment, leaving infrastructure to degrade.

Ofwat said it had given the companies an opportunity to regain customers' trust and

improve their environmental record by investing £104 billion in upgrading reservoirs, storm overflows and pipes.

"We can see clearly how public confidence has been damaged by issues such as sewage spills," Ofwat chief executive David Black told reporters.

"The need for change is recognised by ourselves, as well as government, companies, environmental groups and other regulators."

Shares in listed water companies rose last week in reaction to what Barclays described as a positive development.

Thames Water, which is on the brink of collapse and needs to secure new funding to survive beyond March, will be able to increase bills by 35% a year, Ofwat said.

It had wanted 53%. It will be allowed an extra £11 on average in 2029-30 once Ofwat has clarity over its plan.

Thames said it would "take time to review the determination in detail before making its response", while another operator, Pennon, said it was reviewing the implications.

Black said Thames needed to improve its performance and its financial resilience, adding that its proposal had been treated on

its merits, the same as the others.

He said the ruling "offered a reasonable rate of return for investors if the company performs in an effective manner".

None of the companies will be allowed to raise bills as much as they had wanted.

Southern Water which had demanded the highest increase, at 83%, will increase bills by 53%.

They have until Feb 18 to appeal Ofwat's decision.

The regulator said it would hold companies to account for improving services and investing in infrastructure.

Showing its tough approach, Ofwat used new powers to fine Thames £18 million for paying dividends to its parent company in 2023 and 2024 that were not linked to performance.

The sector has blamed the regulator for wanting to keep bills low, and the industry, saddled with tens of billions of pounds of debt, is now under pressure to fund an overhaul of pipes and treatment plants.

Environmental groups, however, have questioned whether the companies can be trusted to invest to stop sewage spills after repeated failures. – Reuters

BT defeats customer 'overcharging' lawsuit

LONDON: BT last week defeated a £1.3 billion (RM7.4 billion) lawsuit brought against the British telecoms company that alleged it had overcharged millions of customers for fixed telephone lines.

The Competition Appeal Tribunal (CAT) in London ruled in favour of BT in a case which accused the former telecoms monopoly of excessively increasing prices.

"Overall, we considered that, whether taken by itself or in comparison with other prices, BT's prices were not unfair, and therefore there was no abuse of dominant position," the CAT said in a written summary of its ruling.

BT said: "We take our responsibilities to all of our customers very seriously and welcome today's ruling."

Justin Le Patourel, who led the lawsuit on behalf of around 3.7 million BT customers, said he was disappointed with the ruling and was considering whether to bring an appeal.

The claimants alleged BT charged unfairly high prices to customers who took a standalone fixed voice connection between 2009 and 2017, when regulator Ofcom said the company should reduce its charges, which BT did the following year.

BT, however, said the lawsuit was "profoundly flawed" and ignored basic economic principles and market practices by arguing the company's prices were excessive.

The claimants' lawyer Ronit Kreisberger argued at the start of the trial in January that BT had exploited its loyal fixed-line customers, many of whom were older and not technically minded, to drive prices above competitive levels.

She said the declining market segment was ripe for market abuse because it was not targeted by competitors, allowing BT to make "hay while the sun still shines".

But BT's lawyer Daniel Beard said large numbers of people frequently switched providers, with internal BT documents revealing concerns about losing landline customers.

He also argued that the case failed to take account of the value customers place on the BT brand and its service quality. – Reuters

Serbia capital to make public transport free

BELGRADE: All public transport in Serbia's capital Belgrade will be free from next month – the latest European city to adopt the radical measure to counter gridlocked roads.

"This means no one will have to pay for a ticket anymore," mayor Aleksandar Sagic said last week, with the city following the example of Luxembourg, the Estonian capital Tallinn and the French city of Montpellier.

Belgrade – which has a population of nearly 1.7 million – struggles with terrible traffic jams, with the number of cars on its roads increasing by 250,000 over the past decade, according to Sagic.

The Serbian capital is one of the few major European capitals without an underground mass transit system.

A metro system has been promised for 2030, although ground has yet to be broken on the project amid numerous delays.

Sagic also vowed that the city's entire fleet of buses, trams and trolley buses would be replaced by 2027.

Last month the mayor's plans to demolish a major World War II-era bridge triggered protests and criticism that the removal of the river crossing would only exacerbate the city's traffic problems.

The measure announced last week was the latest in a series of handouts greenlit by Belgrade's municipal government backed by the ruling Serbian Progressive Party.

Over the past year, kindergartens have been made free and students in the capital have also been given financial aid. – AFP



Demonstrators holding placards as they protest against Thames Water in London. – REUTERS/SPIC

Cryptocurrencies growing more popular in Europe

FRANKFURT: The number of eurozone consumers who own cryptocurrencies has more than doubled in the past two years, with most using them as an investment, a European Central Bank survey indicated.

Nine percent of those quizzed said they owned crypto assets such as bitcoin or ether, up from four percent in 2022, according to the ECB's study of payment habits in the euro area.

Cryptocurrencies' popularity is growing despite their often extreme volatility and controversies such as the collapse of several industry giants, most notably the FTX exchange platform.

Bitcoin surged past \$100,000 earlier this month in the wake of the US election victory

of Donald Trump and his pledge to make the United States the "bitcoin and cryptocurrency capital of the world".

The ECB has however been highly critical of crypto assets in the past.

Among the 20 euro area countries, 13 have cryptocurrency ownership rates of above 10 percent, the Frankfurt-based institution said.

The highest rates were in Slovenia, with 15 percent, and Greece at 14 percent.

In Germany, the eurozone's biggest economy, only six percent of respondents had crypto assets, with cash still remaining relatively popular.

People aged 25 to 39 were most likely to own crypto assets, followed by those aged 18 to 24, the survey found.

The survey indicated a "clear preference for using crypto assets only as a means of investment," rather than as a means of payment, the ECB said.

For instance in the Netherlands, 90 percent of respondents said they used crypto assets only for investments while the figure in Germany was 82 percent.

When it comes to number of payments, cash continues to dominate and is used at the point of sale in 52 percent of transactions, although it is down several points from 2022, according to the biennial study.

In terms of value, cards are the most dominant payment method, with a share of 45 percent, followed by cash and mobile apps, it said. – AFP

MARKET ROUND-UP: DECEMBER 20

BURSA MALAYSIA

Trade Statistic 20 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	12,222.90 -54.04
FBMVKLCI	1,591.41 -8.68
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	537.52 -1.23
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	170.26 -0.64
CONSTRUCTION	305.27 +3.08
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,703.30 -137.10
ENERGY	804.11 -6.95
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	533.51 +0.19
HEALTH CARE	2,337.41 -47.31
TRANSPORTATION	1,039.87 +4.00
PROPERTY	1,089.03 +4.64
PLANTATION	7,497.27 -88.84
FBMSHA	12,221.80 -41.95
FBMACE	5,268.65 +12.25
TECHNOLOGY	63.50 -0.23

TURNOVER: 3.206 bil **VALUE: RM3,766 bil**

KL shares succumb to continued selling pressure

BURSA Malaysia ended last week on a lower note as it continued to face selling pressure, tracking losses in regional peers driven by weak global equity markets performance overnight, said an analyst.

At 5pm, the FBM KLCI fell 0.54% or 8.68 points to its intraday low of 1,591.41 from Thursday's close of 1,600.09.

The benchmark index opened 0.32 of-a-point higher at 1,600.41 and thereafter moved to its intraday high of 1,606.28 before trending downwards to 1,591.41 in late trading.

The broader market was also negative with decliners beating gainers 541 to 464 while 498 counters were unchanged, 970 untraded and 58 suspended.

Turnover expanded to 3.38 billion units valued at RM3.76 billion versus 3.20 billion units worth RM3.03 billion on Thursday.

Rakuten Trade Sdn Bhd equity research vice-president Thong Pak Leng said investors remained cautious as they are closely watching the release of November's US personal spending data for further cues on interest rate.

Among heavyweights, Maybank and IHH Healthcare fell 10 sen each to RM9.96 and RM7.03 respectively, CIMB shed 9 sen to RM7.95, Petronas Dagangan erased 84 sen to RM19.02, and CelcomDigi dipped 7 sen to RM3.54.

For the most active stocks, Zen Tech was flat at 1 sen, YTL Corporation added 3 sen to RM2.58, YTL Power International rose 6 sen to RM4.14, TWL eased half-a-sen to 2.5 sen, JCY climbed 1 sen to 52 sen, and Sarawak Cable improved 2.5 sen to 14 sen.

On the index board, the FBM Emas Shariah Index shaved 41.95 points to 12,221.81, the FBM Emas Index decreased 54.04 points to 12,222.94, and the FBMT 100 Index declined 56.53 points to 11,908.60. - Bernama

Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
ZENTECH	0.010	-	-	1,573,951
HM-R1	0.015	-	-	1,333,710
YTL	2.580	+0.030	+1.18	1,209,007
HSI-CWAM	0.070	-0.015	-17.65	819,475
ANEKA-WA	0.020	-0.005	-20.00	814,199
YTLPOWR	4.140	+0.060	+1.47	733,242
HSI-CWAO	0.045	-0.010	-18.18	726,768
HSI-CY8	0.045	-0.020	-30.77	605,608
TWL	0.025	-0.005	-16.67	576,555
JCY	0.520	+0.010	+1.96	547,386
YTL-C98	0.070	-	-	538,493
HSI-PWB1	0.170	+0.005	+3.03	510,753
SCABLE	0.140	+0.025	+21.74	502,737
YTLPOWR-C64	0.065	-	-	391,108
MYEG	0.950	+0.010	+1.06	350,723
SUPERMX	1.200	-0.040	-3.23	334,891
GAMUDA	4.780	+0.070	+1.49	330,729
TOPGLOV	1.320	-0.080	-5.71	326,689
YTL-C79	0.035	+0.005	+16.67	297,979
PBBANK	4.460	-0.030	-0.67	294,850



Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
PPB	12.140	+0.260	26,683
KLCC	8.210	+0.250	1,414
HEIM	24.100	+0.180	1,299
SUNCON	4.720	+0.180	31,030
MCEMENT	5.010	+0.170	12,470
FGN	27.820	+0.140	659
UWC	3.100	+0.130	50,520
AEONCR	6.220	+0.120	11,863
HTPADU	3.060	+0.120	8,519
IGBB	2.800	+0.120	1,998
TAKAFUL	4.140	+0.120	21,013
HUMEIND	3.160	+0.110	2,352
SUNCON-C11	0.925	+0.110	566
SUNWAY-PA	4.620	+0.110	697
PLB	1.130	+0.100	35
GASMSIA	4.290	+0.090	3,873
TM	6.720	+0.090	52,962
AAX	1.940	+0.080	42,786
IGBREIT	2.180	+0.080	70,004
KLK	21.500	+0.080	12,632

Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
YTL-C89	0.020	+300.00	39,547
DNEX-C34	0.010	+100.00	382
GENETEC-CD	0.020	+100.00	16,069
MBSB-C72	0.010	+100.00	501
MRCB-CUJ	0.010	+100.00	2,180
OCR-WE	0.010	+100.00	650
TRIVE-WO	0.010	+100.00	3,625
WEGMANS-WC	0.010	+100.00	1,406
YTL-C90	0.010	+100.00	15,059
YTL-C94	0.060	+100.00	2,951
YTL-C96	0.030	+100.00	17,900
SUNCON-C17	0.080	+77.78	31,005
RENEUCO-WA	0.025	+66.67	19,978
SUNCON-C22	0.025	+66.67	14,955
JCY-C15	0.015	+50.00	6,690
TENAGA-C2N	0.015	+50.00	610
SUNCON-C16	0.145	+38.10	2,487
SUNCON-C27	0.110	+37.50	19,990
YTLPOWR-C69	0.055	+37.50	2,226
RANHILL-CL	0.075	+36.36	13,067

World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	42,840.26	498.02	1.18
S&P 500 (US)	5,930.85	63.77	1.09
NASDAQ (US)	19,572.60	199.83	1.03
NYSE (US)	19,119.44	161.23	0.85
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	4,862.28	-16.72	-0.34
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,084.61	-20.71	-0.26
DAX (GER)	19,884.75	-85.11	-0.43
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	38,701.90	-111.68	-0.29
TOPIX (JPN)	2,701.99	-11.84	-0.44
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	19,720.70	-31.81	-0.16
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,927.74	-17.72	-0.45
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	179.22	-1.31	-0.73
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,368.07	-1.96	-0.06
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,404.15	-31.78	-1.3
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	78,041.59	-1,176.46	-1.49
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,066.96	-101.26	-1.24
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,316.69	-98.34	-1.17
FBM KLCI	1,591.41	-8.68	-0.54
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,719.93	-42.95	-1.14
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	69.46	0.08	0.12
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	72.94	0.06	0.08
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,645.10	37	1.42
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	29.96	0.55	1.86
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	927.8	3.26	0.35
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	410.05	2.35	0.58
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	8,941.00	58	0.65
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	446.25	5.5	1.25
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	533	0	0
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	39.88	-0.54	-1.34
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	11,954.00	-153	-1.26
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	192.9	-1.5	-0.77

As at 5pm, Dec 20

Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
UTDPLT	31.820	-1.320	23,520
PETDAG	19.020	-0.840	6,738
MPI	25.200	-0.800	2,004
ALLIANZ	20.260	-0.200	384
BKAWAN	20.000	-0.140	35
HARTA	3.910	-0.140	106,958
HLIND	14.260	-0.140	263
AIRPORT	10.500	-0.140	107,697
JCBNEXT	1.600	-0.120	320
APOLLO	6.450	-0.110	144
HLFG	17.900	-0.100	939
IHH	7.030	-0.100	74,313
MAYBANK	9.960	-0.100	166,173
ORIENT	7.090	-0.100	1,483
PANAMY	17.500	-0.100	69
PENTA	4.110	-0.100	12,002
RHBBANK	6.300	-0.100	77,120
CIMB	7.950	-0.090	245,966
SDG	4.820	-0.090	58,755
AJ1	15.240	-0.080	305

Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
GENM-C2Z	0.010	-75.00	1,002
UNISEM-C39	0.010	-66.67	500
BORNOIL	0.005	-50.00	5,842
MFLOUR-CG	0.005	-50.00	6,850
MNRB-CH	0.035	-50.00	250
PMETAL-C11	0.005	-50.00	28,800
SIME-C82	0.005	-50.00	500
SOP-CS	0.010	-50.00	3,900
VITROX-C5	0.005	-50.00	2,500
TOPGLOV-C4K	0.025	-44.44	12,072
JTASA-CW	0.025	-37.50	9,000
TM-C1R	0.095	-36.67	700
PENTA-C45	0.035	-36.36	11,599
HM-WC	0.010	-33.33	5,000
HENGYUANC57	0.020	-33.33	7,112
JAKS-WC	0.010	-33.33	10,630
MFLOUR-C1	0.010	-33.33	4,999
MI-C22	0.020	-33.33	1,500
PETDAG-C11	0.030	-33.33	1,201
SNTORIA	0.020	-33.33	242,248

MARKETS/FROM THE BROKERS

SUNBIZ presents extracts of a selection of commentaries and research reports received from stockbrokers on counters that could be of interest to investors.

Compiled by SunBiz Team

DISCLAIMER: The information is extracted from stockbrokers' commentaries and research reports and do not represent the views or opinions of Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd. It is not a solicitation, recommendation or an offer to buy or sell the equities featured. Sun Media Corporation shall not be liable or responsible for any consequences resulting from usage of the information.

Palm oil expected to average RM4,600 a tonne by 2025

KUALA LUMPUR: Palm oil prices are projected to average RM4,600 per tonne by 2025, with both upside and downside risks impacting the market outlook.

Upside risks include lower-than-expected soybean production and Indonesia's tightening palm oil export policies.

Conversely, weaker demand from key markets such as China and India, adverse weather conditions, and increased production of substitute edible oils pose downside risks.

Malaysian Rating Corporation Bhd (MARC Rating) highlighted that near-term palm oil prices are likely to face upward pressure due to supply constraints, seasonal production declines, and reduced inventories.

Production typically peaks in September or October, tapering off in the first quarter of the following year.

On the demand side, biodiesel mandates, rising edible oil consumption, and geopolitical factors affecting substitute oils are expected to sustain prices.

Indonesia's policy-driven biodiesel demand remains robust, with the blend rate set to increase from 35% (B35) to 40% (B40) in 2025, and further to 50% (B50).

Achieving B40 will require an additional 1.7 million tonnes of palm oil, while B50 could drive demand up by an extra 5 million tonnes, underscoring biodiesel's growing importance.

Domestically, replanting progress in Malaysia lags behind targets.

In 2023, only 132,000ha (2.3% of the total planted area) were replanted, falling short of the 4% annual target.

Similarly, Indonesia has achieved just 206,000ha of its 2.5 million-hectare replanting goal by 2025.

Ringgit lower against dollar amid upbeat US data

THE ringgit ended marginally lower against the US dollar on the final trading day last week, pressured by a stronger greenback following upbeat US economic data that exceeded market expectations.

At 6pm, the local currency weakened to 4.5055/5100 versus the greenback, from Thursday's close of 4.5030/5080.

SPI Asset Management managing partner Stephen Innes noted that the latest US economic data outperformed expectations. GDP figures were revised upwards, while initial jobless claims fell, signalling robust employment growth supported by strong consumer spending.

"As a result, US 10-year yields have risen, initially strengthening the dollar. This has led traders to scale back expectations for 2025 rate cuts to fewer than the two initially anticipated by the Federal Reserve," he told Bernama.

The ringgit traded mostly higher against other major currencies.

It strengthened against the British pound to 5.6328/6384 from 5.6999/7062 and improved against the euro at 4.6776/6823 from 4.6876/6928 on Thursday.

However, it weakened against the Japanese yen to 2.8747/8779 from 2.8687/8723.

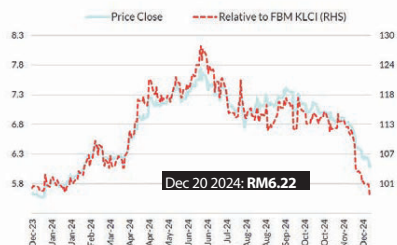
Against Asean currencies, the ringgit showed a mixed performance.

It declined against the Thai baht to 13.0670/0861 from 13.0322/0530, the Indonesian rupiah to 277.7/278.1 from 276.0/276.4, the Singapore dollar to 3.3146/3181 from 3.3130/3169, and the Philippine peso to 7.66/7.67 from 7.63/7.64.

Exchange Rates			
FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 US Dollar	4.5780	4.4400	4.4300
1 Australian Dollar	2.8700	2.7510	2.7350
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3610	3.2600	3.2520
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1740	3.0870	3.0750
1 Euro	4.7530	4.5950	4.5750
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5850	2.4870	2.4710
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3610	3.2600	3.2520
1 Sterling Pound	5.7290	5.5430	5.5230
1 Swiss Franc	5.1310	4.9090	4.8940
100 UAE Dirham	126.1200	119.4900	119.2900
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.9110	3.6390	3.4390
100 Chinese Renminbi	63.1700	60.4600	N/A
100 Danish Krone	65.3200	60.0600	59.8600
100 Hongkong Dollar	59.5500	56.5500	56.3500
100 Indian Rupee	5.4700	5.1300	4.9300
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0291	0.0263	0.0213
100 Japanese Yen	2.9060	2.8100	2.8000
100 New Taiwan Dollar	15.1000	N/A	N/A
100 Norwegian Krone	41.0400	37.7100	37.5100
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6700	1.5700	1.3700
100 Philippine Peso	7.8600	7.4000	7.2000
100 Qatar Riyal	126.9400	120.5100	120.3100
100 Saudi Riyal	123.1400	116.9000	116.7000
100 South Africa Rand	25.7700	23.2600	23.0600
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.6100	1.4800	1.2800
100 Swedish Krona	42.8300	38.9600	38.7600
100 Thai Baht	13.8200	12.2400	11.8400

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

AEON Credit Service (M) Bhd Buy. Target price: RM8.00



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

AEON Credit Service's (ACSM) Q3'25 net profit of RM62.1 million (-27% YoY, -13% QoQ) brought the 9M'25 figure to RM239.6 million (-20% YoY) – this formed 66% and 60% of our and consensus full-year estimates. For 9M, total operating income growth continued its strong momentum, up 14% YoY from strong Nil (+15%) and non-Il (+6%), though this was offset by a 20% increase in opex.

The main drag on profit, however, came from impairment allowances, where credit costs reached 5% in Q3'25 (Q2'25: 4.4%, Q3'24: 4.7%) – this brought the 9M average to 4.2% (9M'24: 3.7%). Elsewhere, associate losses during the quarter moderated to RM15.2 million (Q2'25: RM18.7 million), with total losses for 9M of RM45.5 million falling within management's RM60-70 million guided range. All in, 9M'25 ROE stood at 12%, down from the 16.5% achieved in 9M'24 and slightly below management's target of 13% for the year.

ACSM's gross financing receivables stood at RM13.7 billion in Nov 2024, up 15% YoY and 4% QoQ. Growth was broad-based, but most apparent in credit cards (+18% YoY, +7% QoQ) and personal financing (+21% YoY, +7% QoQ). On a YTD (annualised) basis, growth of 16% is ahead of management's +10% target for the year – we think this is likely to be surpassed, especially with the revisions to the minimum wage and civil servants' remuneration.

Separately, management sees minimal impact arising from the proposed abolition of the Rule of 78 for interest calculation on personal finance products, as ACSM presently uses the effective interest rate model for interest income computation.

BUY with RM8 TP. – RHB Research, Dec 20

Mynews Holdings Bhd Buy. Target price: RM0.81



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

FY24 core profit of RM12.5 million (FY23: -RM9.9 million) met 99% and 128% of our and consensus forecasts. This marks the fifth consecutive profitable quarter and continued improvement.

YoY, FY24 revenue grew 10.1% to RM804.2 million, driven by an increase in store count (from 591 to 620) and stronger in-store sales supported by an improved product mix. FY24 GPM expanded by 2.5ppts to 37.6%, benefiting from enhanced bargaining power with suppliers following the consolidation of the Mynews and CU management teams, as well as improved wastage control. Consequently, FY24 ended with a core profit of RM12.5 million, marking a significant turnaround from the RM9.9 million loss recorded in FY23. QoQ, Q4'24 sales rose marginally by 0.5% to RM208.4 million due to the absence of major festivals and lengthy holidays in both periods. Still, core profit increased by 23.7% to RM4.5m, supported by GPM expansion of 1ppt, likely driven by year-end supplier rebates.

We expect Q1'25 sales to improve with year-end festivities and school holidays, while year-end rebates from suppliers should enhance near-term profitability. Further ahead, the planned opening of 100 new outlets in FY25 (60% Mynews, 40% CU) is set to drive higher volume and improve the FPC's utilisation rate. GPM expansion should sustain, underpinned by the consolidation of Mynews and CU management teams and outlet growth, which will enhance bargaining power with suppliers, alongside effective wastage control. Additionally, the Maru Coffee outlet launched in Q4'24 is performing well, catering to growing demand for its coffee and fresh food offerings. Meanwhile, rising tourist arrivals are anticipated to boost foot traffic at WH Smith locations in airports.

BUY with RM0.81 TP – RHB Research, Dec 20

Pentamaster Corporation Bhd Buy. Target price: RM5.12



Source: RHB Research, Bloomberg

PENTAMASTER Corp (PCB) plans to privatise subsidiary Pentamaster international (PIL), with Puga Holdings – a special purpose vehicle (SPV) backed by Achi Capital PCB and Puga will be acquiring the remaining 866k or 36.1% of PIL's total shares that are not currently owned by the offerors. PCB will acquire a further 170.4k shares (7.1% of PIL's total shares), increasing its stake to 71% from 63.9%. The cash consideration will total HK\$158.5 million (RM91.8 million), representing HK\$0.93/share and be financed by internal resources. This acquisition will not strain the group's balance sheet, in our view, given its healthy operating cash flow and net cash position of RM466.7 million as of Q3'24. The offer price represents a premium of 16.3% over the last traded price of HK\$0.80 or 39.7% over the average price for the past six months.

PIL was listed on the HKSE in 2018 to strengthen its presence in the Chinese market and support PCB's customer development. However, its shares have consistently traded at significantly lower valuations vis-a-vis PCB (5-year mean P/E of 7.6x vs 29.6x), rendering the costs and regulatory requirements of maintaining the listing unjustifiable. We believe the planned delisting is strategically sound, as the remaining 29% stake will be acquired by Puga, an SPV backed by Achi Capital – a private equity firm specialising in semiconductor and technology investments in China. Achi Capital's expertise and network are likely to drive PIL's growth and enhance its market position. Additionally, the proposal allows PIL to streamline operations and reduce compliance costs. As PIL contributes the entirety of PCB's PAT, the 36.1% stake in PIL not owned by the group is currently recorded as minority interest in PCB's financials.

BUY with RM5.12 TP. – RHB Research, Dec 20



the Sun **LYFE**

MONDAY | DEC 23, 2024

Editorial
T: 03-7784 6688
F: 03-7785 2625
E: lifestyle@thesundaily.com

Advertising
T: 03-7784 8888
E: advertise@thesundaily.com



WEEKLY FOCUS

MONDAY
Technology and social media

TUESDAY
Travel and leisure

WEDNESDAY
Fashion and beauty

THURSDAY
Home and living

FRIDAY
Food and beverage

Gift guide for techies

Gadgets as stocking fillers - P22

INSIDE

p23 Apps to boost productivity

p24 Reshaping brands with AI

p25 *Lembayung* delivers scares

p26 Local siblings release Yuletide album

- FREEPIK/IC



JOLLY GIFTING GUIDE

Tech gifts that come in tiny packages

➤ Stocking fillers that wow without breaking bank

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

THIS holiday season, skip the mundane socks and chocolates – instead, give the gift of technology, small packages that pack a punch of excitement and utility.

Here is a curated list of tech-savvy stocking stuffers by *theSun* that will not break the bank, with every item priced between an affordable range of RM50 and RM70.

These stocking fillers are sure to light up faces and tech-loving hearts, no matter their age or gender.

Music in your pocket

A decent pair of wireless earbuds is a good investment, whether for oneself or for others, and who does not love a good pair of these? The standard Realme Buds (around RM59) or Xiaomi Redmi AirDots (RM65)



Yeelight Smart Bulb. –YEELIGHTPIC

offer budget-friendly audio bliss. Compact, wireless and delivering surprisingly good sound quality, these little gems are guaranteed to bring a smile to anyone's face.

Always charged and ready

For a smartphone-dependent world, having a portable charger on-hand is like a lifeline. The Xiaomi Mi Power Bank 10,000mAh (RM69) and similar power banks are able to provide the extra juice when it is most needed.



Rather than the typical stuffing of Christmas candies, try tech goodies instead. –FREEPIKPIC

Slim, lightweight and capable of multiple charges, these power banks are practical gifts that everyone can appreciate.

Lighting up Christmas

Transform any room with a smart LED bulb from Yeelight with its Smart Bulb (RM59) allowing users to control lighting via smartphone, change colours and create ambience with just a tap. Yes, it is a small gift but it comes with a big wow factor.

Grip, stand and accessorise

Combining functionality with style, smartphone ring holders from brands such as PopSockets (RM50) offer a secure grip, instant stand and a dash of personal flair.



These accessories prevent phone drops and make selfies and video calls a breeze.

Sound in tiny package

Portable mini Bluetooth speakers such as those from Soundpeats (RM65) punch well above their weight. These palm-sized sound machines deliver impressive audio quality, making them ideal for impromptu dance parties or outdoor adventures.

Unleash photography

Enhance smartphone photography with clip-on lens kits from brands such as Apixel (RM55). Wide-angle, macro and fisheye lenses can transform ordinary phone cameras into creative tools, making them a delightful gift for social media enthusiasts and budding photographers.

Ultimate connectivity tool

Say goodbye to tangled cables with a versatile USB multi-charging cable. Brands such as Baseus, Ugreen and Mcdodo offer compact cables (RM50) that support multiple device types (USB-C, Lightning and Micro-USB) ensuring everyone stays connected.

Cord-free convenience

Wireless charging pads from brands such as Yootech (priced between RM60 – RM70) offer a sleek, cord-free charging experience. Compatible with most modern smartphones, they are practical and futuristic.

Never lose anything again

Budget-friendly options such as some Ugreen models (RM59) or generic brands help in tracking keys, wallets and bags using Bluetooth technology. A thoughtful gift for the chronically amnesiac person in your life.

Mobile gaming upgrade

For mobile gamers, an adjustable phone controller clip from premium to generic brands can transform smartphone gaming, providing a console-like experience right from their device.

Most of these items can be found on popular Malaysian e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Lazada and local tech retailers. Prices may fluctuate, so keep an eye out for holiday deals and discounts.



Apixel lens kit. –APEXELPIC

Updates you may have missed on WhatsApp this year

WHILE maintaining its private and easy to use nature, WhatsApp has introduced a number of features to make messaging more personal and fun. Here are some helpful features that might have slipped your attention this year.

Organise like a pro

You can now manage contacts from WhatsApp Web, Windows or other linked devices. Plus, the option to save contacts exclusively to WhatsApp means changing devices will be seamless! WhatsApp also introduced Custom Lists and Favourites to help you organise and access your most important chats with ease.

Staying close is even easier

The new Events feature allows users to create events, track RSVPs and receive automatic reminders. Event details are always accessible in the group's information page, so you always have it at your fingertips. Video calls can now take up to 32 participants and you can even play around with Filters and Backgrounds to match your mood. WhatsApp also improved

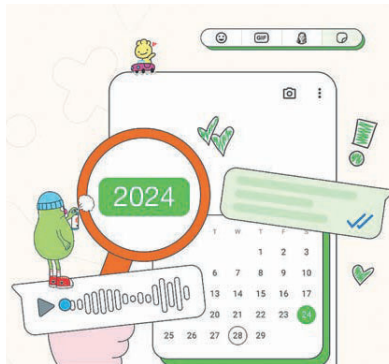
call reliability through MLow codec. Calls made on mobile devices have improved noise and echo cancellation, making it easier to have calls in noisy environments and video calls have higher resolution for those with faster connections.

Follow what matters most to you

You can now find channels that interest you more easily by looking through Channel Categories such as people, organisations, lifestyle, sports, entertainment, businesses and news. If you like what you see, you can forward it to a chat or post it directly to your status.

Express yourself in new ways

Turn your photos into stickers or search a huge bank of Giphy stickers directly from WhatsApp! If you are a channel creator, you can now share Voice Updates with your followers, which have been very popular. Each channel now supports up to 16 administrators, making it easier to start and manage your own channel.



Among the new features include users to manage contacts from WhatsApp Web, Windows or other linked devices.



Xiaomi Redmi AirDots. –XIAOMIPIC

BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

PROCASTINATION is one of the biggest obstacles to productivity but with the right tools, you can break the cycle and get back on track. Whether you need help managing your time, staying focused or organising your tasks, these nine free apps, available on Android and iOS, offer practical solutions to help you overcome procrastination and achieve your goals.

Forest

Forest is a unique app that gamifies productivity by letting you plant virtual trees that grow as you stay focused on your tasks. If you leave the app before completing your session, your tree withers, creating an incentive to stay off distractions. Over time, your hard work results in a lush virtual forest and the app even lets you contribute to real-world reforestation efforts by using the coins you earn. This blend of visual motivation and meaningful environmental impact makes Forest engaging and rewarding for anyone struggling with focus.

Todoist

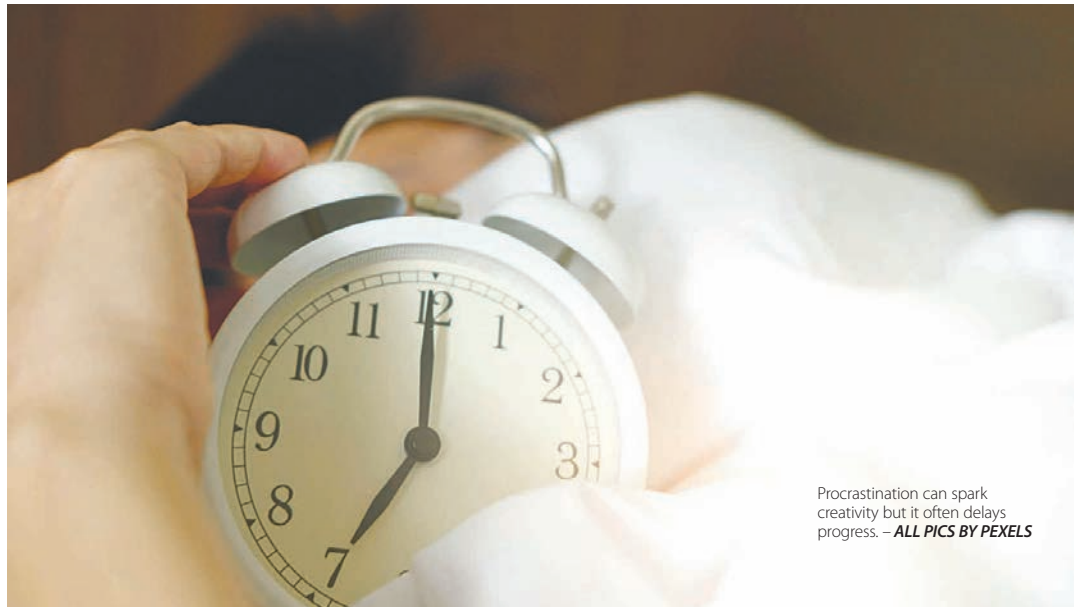
Todoist is a popular task management app that keeps you organised and on top of your to-do list. Its clean and intuitive interface allows you to categorise, prioritise and set reminders for your tasks, ensuring nothing slips through the cracks. Todoist works particularly well for people who feel overwhelmed by unorganised schedules as it breaks down tasks into smaller, manageable steps. The collaborative features are an added bonus, allowing you to share projects and delegate tasks when needed.

Focus Keeper

Focus Keeper is based on the Pomodoro Technique, a time management method that involves breaking your work into 25-minute focus sessions with short breaks in between. This structure helps you maintain consistent productivity while preventing burnout. The app also provides progress reports and insights to optimise your workflow. It is particularly effective for those who struggle with time management as the ticking timer creates a sense of urgency that keeps you from delaying tasks.

Habitica

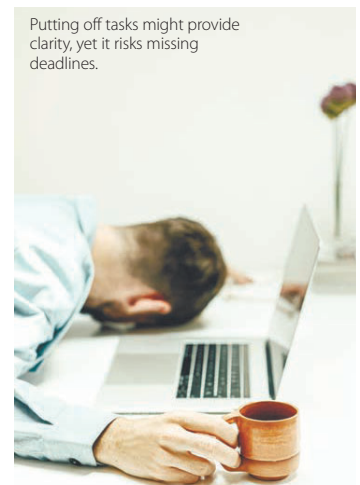
Habitica takes a fun and gamified approach to building productive habits. By completing tasks, you earn points to level up your in-game character, unlock rewards and avoid penalties. This RPG-style app motivates you to tackle even mundane tasks such as doing laundry or studying, making it especially useful for people who find it hard to stay consistent. The competitive and social features, such as joining a party with friends to tackle challenges together, add an element of accountability, ensuring you stick to your commitments.



Procrastination can spark creativity but it often delays progress. — ALL PICS BY PEXELS



Structured procrastination can prioritise tasks but chaos may follow.



Putting off tasks might provide clarity, yet it risks missing deadlines.

Productivity boost

➤ Nine effective apps to help you beat procrastination

Trello

Trello uses a card-and-board system to help you organise your tasks visually, making it easy to track your progress and prioritise effectively. Whether you are managing a group project or planning a solo venture, Trello's flexibility allows you to create custom

workflows to suit your needs. Its drag-and-drop interface makes task organisation intuitive while features such as deadlines and checklists ensure you do not lose sight of important goals. This visual representation of your work helps combat the mental clutter that often leads to procrastination.

Flipd

Flipd helps you stay focused by locking distracting apps on your phone for a designated period. The app tracks your productive hours, making it easier to identify patterns and adjust your habits for better results. For those who often find themselves scrolling through social media instead of working, Flipd is a game-changer. Its group sessions feature also creates a communal sense of accountability as you can join others who are working towards their goals in real time.

Notion

Notion is an all-in-one productivity platform that combines note-taking, task management, and habit tracking into one app. You can customise it to suit your personal or professional needs, making it ideal for users who want everything in one place. Its simple design and user-friendly templates make planning and organising less overwhelming while its collaborative features are ideal for team projects. Notion's ability to streamline multiple productivity tools into a single app eliminates the disorganisation that often

triggers procrastination.

Google Keep

Google Keep is a simple yet effective note-taking app that helps you jot down ideas, create checklists and set reminders on the go. Its ability to sync seamlessly across devices means your notes are always accessible, no matter where you are. The colour-coded labels and search functionality make it easy to organise your thoughts and quickly find what you need. For people who procrastinate because they forget tasks or lose track of ideas, Google Keep is a lifesaver.

TickTick

TickTick is a robust task manager that stands out for its built-in Pomodoro timer and habit tracker, in addition to its traditional to-do list features. Its smooth interface lets you set priorities, deadlines and recurring tasks with ease. The app also includes focus statistics to help you monitor your productivity patterns. TickTick is especially useful for users who need a combination of task organisation and time management tools in one app, making it easier to overcome procrastination caused by poor planning.

Procrastination does not have to be a permanent roadblock. These nine apps offer a range of solutions. The best part is that all these apps are free and available for Android and iOS, so there is no excuse not to try them out. Take the first step today and transform the way you approach productivity.



Downtime can recharge you but excessive delays harm momentum.



Psy was fined for building code violations.
— PSYNATIONPIC

Gangnam Style singer Psy faces legal troubles

SOUTH Korean music sensation Psy has found himself in hot water due to building code violations at his luxurious duplex. The property is located in Seoul's affluent Hannam-dong neighbourhood. The villa, purchased in 2008 for 2.20 billion won (RM6.83 million), was seized by local authorities.

This is after Psy failed to comply with orders to rectify unauthorised construction and expansion.

Following the purchase, Psy undertook significant renovations to the property, including connecting it to a nearby office space. However, these alterations were found to be in violation of building codes. Despite being ordered to restore the villa to its original state, the singer failed to comply, resulting in hefty fines.

The situation escalated when Psy neglected to pay these fines for over a year, leading to the seizure of the property. It was not until October 2024 that the singer finally settled the outstanding payments, including accrued interest and backdated charges.

While dealing with the legal fallout from the villa seizure, Psy made another significant property investment. In September 2024, he purchased a high-end residence in Itaewon, valued at over 10 billion won. This acquisition, made before settling the unpaid fines, has raised eyebrows.

Psy's experience serves as a reminder even celebrities are subject to the law and failure to comply with regulations can have serious consequences.
— Hallyubeat

Rose inks international deal with WCM

ROSE of Blackpink has inked a global publishing deal with Warner Chappell Music (WCM). The collaboration between Rose and WCM comes at a time of unprecedented success for the artist. Her recent collaboration with Bruno Mars, *APT*, achieved remarkable chart success, breaking numerous records and solidifying her status as a global superstar.

"I am beyond excited to join the team at Warner Chappell. There is so much more to come that I cannot wait to share – it is going to be an amazing journey," Rose expressed her enthusiasm for the partnership.

WCM (North America) president Ryan Press, echoed Rose's excitement, praising her groundbreaking achievements and expressing confidence in their future collaborations.

With this new deal, Rose will continue to push the boundaries of K-pop and explore new creative horizons as well as provide the necessary support and resources to help her achieve her musical aspirations.

Rose released her debut solo album *Rosie* earlier this month and it was well received by fans.
— Hallyubeat



Rose's collaboration with Mars cemented her status as a global superstar.
— ATLANTICRECORDSPIC

AI, ML to transform marketing

➤ **Technological advances reshape consumer engagement strategies**

ADVANCED technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) have reshaped how brands capture attention, drive engagement and build customer loyalty – and industry experts predict the momentum will continue next year.

According to analytics company Adjust, the continuous evolution will require marketers to adjust their strategies in accordance to the technological advancements, regulatory changes and consumer behaviours to succeed in 2025 and beyond.

Redefining marketer-audience connections

AI and ML are expected to mature further in 2025, enabling marketers to deliver enhanced user experiences, improved functionality and stronger security features. As 2024 was about proving the potential of these models, next year will see developers and marketers scaling them.

Despite the great leaps made in the realm of generative AI this year, marketers are advised to move beyond it to instead focus on addressing critical performance challenges.

New revenue streams in Asia

In the Asia-Pacific (Apac) region, consumers continue to be receptive to alternative purchasing channels, especially as direct-to-consumer investments grow in popular platforms and super apps such as Grab, Shopee and Touch 'n Go. With more consumers willing to explore new app experiences, especially from major e-commerce platforms, the region is poised for rapid innovation.

The new channels will allow brands to bypass traditional app stores, which in turn will open new opportunities to drive revenue.

Cross-regional acquisitions

Furthermore, larger US-based companies are predicted to acquire regional apps in Europe as US firms in certain markets begin to plateau. The move will provide access to new markets, data and customer insights.

This trend is said to be important to the Apac region as the market is highly fragmented with rapid scaling by

local apps.

Key to trust and compliance

In Apac, concerns over digital privacy continue to be widespread. A recent report revealed seven in 10 consumers expressed concerns about how their data is collected. This is particularly high in markets such as the Philippines (86%), Thailand and Singapore (both 81%).

In 2025, data privacy regulations will be more complex and demanding. New Regulations such as the European Digital Markets Act will require marketers to adopt new approaches to data storage and sharing with ad networks.

As such, there will be an increase in the adoption of multiple measurement frameworks to guide marketing decisions, making it an ideal time to explore what predictive and incremental solutions have to offer and it is vital for marketers in Apac to adapt strategies that meet changing consumer behaviours as technology rapidly evolves.

With Apac countries spending a significant amount of time within apps, businesses have a prime opportunity to engage with customers in diverse ways. This trend is expected to grow in the coming years and will continue to shape the mobile marketing space.



As AI and ML evolve, marketing firms in Apac will need to do the same by leveraging the evolving tech. — FREEPIKPIC





Lembayung Clinic harbours a chilling and dark past.



Yasamin as Arum captures the descent into possession with chilling precision, leaving viewers terrified and sympathetic.

BY YASMIN ZULRAEZ

Lembayung exceeds expectations

➤ Indonesian horror flick delivers goods with plenty of panache

ONE of 2024's most compelling horror films is *Lembayung*, directed by Baim Wong. With a gripping storyline, stellar performances and cinematography that immerses viewers in the eerie setting of a haunted clinic, this Indonesian gem is more than just your average scare fest. While the ending leaves room for interpretation, the journey is well worth it, offering thrills, chills and enough mystery to keep audiences hooked.

Story that keeps you guessing

The film follows Pica (Taskya Namya) and Arum (Yasamin Jasem), two nursing students assigned to the mysterious Lembayung Clinic for their internship. The clinic, recently reopened after years of closure, harbours dark secrets linked to a doctor's tragic suicide.

What starts as a seemingly routine placement quickly spirals into chaos when a strange, long-haired patient arrives late one night. Her presence sets off a series of supernatural events, including terrifying hauntings, possessions and a string of unexplained deaths among the clinic staff.

Lembayung's ability to balance suspense with character-driven storytelling makes it stand out. Pica's determination to uncover the truth behind the clinic's history is compelling and her bond with Arum adds emotional depth to the horror. The narrative moves steadily, with just enough twists to keep the audience engaged without overwhelming them.

Acting that brings horror to life

The cast delivers performances that elevate the film. Taskya shines as Pica, portraying a mix of vulnerability and determination that makes her character relatable and endearing. Yasamin as Arum



This Indonesian gem is more than just your average scare fest. —ALL PICS BY IMDBPICS

captures the descent into possession with chilling precision, leaving viewers terrified and sympathetic.

Anna Jobling, as the enigmatic Doctor Tantri, commands attention with her composed yet unsettling presence while Arya Saloka as Doctor Teto brings a layered performance that hints at deeper connections to the clinic's dark past. The supporting cast, including Oka Antara and Asri Welas, also delivers strong performances, adding credibility and richness to the story.

Lembayung excels in its cinematography with Baim using light, shadow and angles to create a sense of dread and unease. The clinic feels like a character in the film with its dimly lit corridors and eerily sterile rooms serving as the

DIRECTOR:

Baim Wong

CAST:

Anna Jobling, Taskya Namya, Yasamin Jasem, Arya Saloka, Daffa Wardhana

E-VALUE

8

ACTING

8

PLOT

7



Taskya shines as Pica, portraying a mix of vulnerability and determination that makes her character relatable and endearing.

right backdrop for the unfolding horror.

The camera work is meticulous,

capturing the grandeur and claustrophobia of the setting. Dream sequences and supernatural moments are visually striking, blending surreal imagery with grounded realism to heighten the tension. The sound design further enhances the experience, with subtle whispers and unsettling noises adding to the film's immersive atmosphere.

Confusing but intriguing ending

While the film is strong in its storytelling, the ending is bound to leave audiences scratching their heads. It veers into ambiguous territory, raising more questions than it answers. However, this is not necessarily a drawback. The open-ended conclusion invites viewers to theorise and interpret, making the film conversation pieces long after audiences have left the cinema.

The ending adds an extra layer of engagement for those who enjoy

The ending may perplex some viewers but it is proof of the film's depth and ambition.

piecing together clues and debating possible meanings. It is the kind of finish that demands a rewatch, offering new details and fresh perspectives with each viewing.

Lembayung is a showcase of Indonesian talent. With a cast of well-known names delivering exceptional performances and a director who knows how to build suspense, the film is proof of the strength of Indonesian cinema. Fans of the genre will appreciate the attention to detail while newcomers will find plenty to enjoy in its mix of scares and storytelling.

The film is best approached with an open mind. Do not expect jump scares at every turn or a neatly wrapped-up conclusion. Instead, immerse yourself in the characters' journey, let the haunting visuals take hold and enjoy the slow unravelling of the mystery.

Exceeding expectations

Lembayung is a horror film that exceeds expectations. It combines strong performances, beautiful cinematography and a compelling story. While the ending may perplex some viewers, it is proof of the film's depth and ambition.

For fans of supernatural thrillers and psychological horror, *Lembayung* is a must-watch. It is a film that delivers on its promise of scares while offering a thoughtful exploration of guilt, redemption and the lingering impact of the past. Watch it for the star-studded cast, stay for the haunting story and prepare to spend hours discussing its cryptic ending.



Lembayung excels in its cinematography with Baim using light, shadow and angles to create a sense of dread and unease.





Malaysian siblings release Christmas album

➤ Martin, Lav Looi team up for festive shindig *Wrapped In Harmony*

SIBLINGS duo Martin Looi and Lav Looi have released a Christmas album that combines Martin's melodious violin with Lav's soulful vocals.

Titled *Wrapped In Harmony*, the eight-track album is a hybrid of instrumental arrangements with Martin's violin work as the focal point, blending with Lav's distinct voice on selected tracks.

The duo covered classics such as *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*, *Silent Night* and *Hallelujah*. Other tracks include the duo's previous release *The Christmas Song* and an upbeat *Santa Tell Me*.

With *Wrapped in Harmony*,

Martin and Lav deliver unique arrangements of beloved Christmas classics, such as Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, reimagined with a modern flavour. The siblings took three months to complete the album.

"Our goal with this album was to spread the holiday spirit and put a little bit of ourselves into each piece," said Lav.

Martin is a violinist known for his prowess on the instrument and his sharp sense of style. He has performed for notable figures such as singer Marsha Milan, deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof and Raja Permaisuri of Perak Tuanku Zara Salim.

As for Lav, she is a music producer and vocalist based in Spain. She started playing classical piano at four and attended Berkeley College of Music, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Contemporary Writing and Production.

She has since made a successful musical career, producing compositions for clients such as KFC, Gojek, Pizza Hut, Lazada and L'Oréal.



The album took three months to complete.

Voice of *The Lion King's* iconic cry returns for Disney prequel

BORN into poverty in apartheid-era South Africa and propelled to Hollywood heights, Lebo M became the voice of Disney's classic film *The Lion King* with his powerful Zulu cry.

Now, 30 years after his chant of "Nants' Ingonyama" soared above the film's memorable opening sequence, the 60-year-old South African singer, producer and composer is back.

This time he sings another opener for the prequel *Mufasa: The Lion King*, which tells the story of orphaned lion Mufasa who grows up to be the king of the Pride Lands and the father of Simba.

Lin-Manuel Miranda, who wrote the music for the film, released worldwide last week, said on the red carpet he would not have done it without Lebo M.

"That was the dream. I sort of insisted on that the moment I took the job because I think he is the secret sauce."

"I think he is the sound of *The Lion King* and his choral arrangements, that were in addition to the songs I wrote, I think really make the movie feel of a piece with the original," he said at the world premiere in Los Angeles.

The film, directed by Barry Jenkins, opens with Lebo M's composition *Ngomso*.

After the enormous impact of his work on the 1994 film, Lebo M said he felt the pressure to produce a



Lebo M is scheduled to perform a series of live concerts in South Africa April next year. - AFP/PIC

worthy successor.

"I loved writing the first opening but having to write and perform a new opening for *The Lion King* after 30 years... it is quite a big challenge," he said.

He then said writing *Ngomso* turned out to be a remarkably

similar process.

He said the "Nants' Ingonyama" cry heard at the start of *Circle of Life* in the original film had been a demo for which he simply turned up, performed and left without expecting much to come of it.

Three decades later, he arrived

at the studio early in the morning and just started making music with a hi-hat (cymbals) and bongo.

"By the time the director and everyone else came in at 11am, I had written the entire song."

He said committing to the film had the advantage of allowing him to finally work with Miranda, something he had been keen to do for many years.

"It is just amazing energy non-stop. Very little discussion about these chords, this melody. We do! Just go in and everything flows. It allowed us to be very authentic to the movie," he said.

Born in Soweto, South Africa in 1964, Lebo M has built a reputation as the go-to artiste for directors wanting authentic African flair for their productions.

He produced and composed for the 2010 football World Cup opening and closing ceremonies in South Africa.

A long creative association with composer Hans Zimmer, who has written music for more than 150 films, has seen him feature as a special guest on all Zimmer's world tours.

But success was hard won with low points including racism he experienced in the entertainment industry, and two years of living on the streets in Los Angeles in the mid-1980s.

"I am constantly conscious of the fact I am a refugee, I am

non-American," he said.

"It was very difficult when *Lion King* became big in 1994. It was always about the three white guys - Elton John, Tim Rice and Hans Zimmer.

"Being born into extreme poverty was never here or there for me. I had music," he said, adding that as a teenager he had the choice of being a gangster, soccer player or a nerd.

This meant immersing himself in music and the arts. By the age of 14, he was the youngest and in-demand nightclub singer in South Africa.

Despite an illustrious career, Lebo M said he still bears the scars of the years when he was homeless.

"I have been in survival mode all the way. Even with the perception of success that one is believed to have, it is still survival mode," he said.

He believes, however, the US entertainment industry allowed him to flourish more than anywhere else in the world.

After decades of being mostly behind the scenes, he said he is finally ready to meet his audience in a series of concerts scheduled for April next year in South Africa.

"I am ready because I know there is anticipation in a global audience that would like to experience Lebo M live, not as a guest, not through movies.

"And I also would like to experience that," he said. - AFP



210 Other Properties for Sale / Rent

LE NOUVEL Condominium
 new luxury units (partial/ fully furnished)
 1,700 sq ft to 2,900 sq ft next to KLCC
 Call 03 21813185 or 012 3213380

302 Jobs

WE ARE HIRING

1 MEDIA SALES EXECUTIVE / ACCOUNT MANAGER

Job Description:

- Building and sustaining strong working relationship with advertising agencies and clients.
- New business development and business retention.
- Conceptualize, plan, and execute creative and innovative marketing campaigns to enhance brand visibility and engagement.
- Create, develop and continuously improve marketing material, presentations and proposals that showcase our products/services effectively.

Requirement:

- SPM Level with at least 2 years of experience.
- Diploma or Bachelor's degree in business, marketing or other related fields.
- Fresh graduates are encourage to apply, training will be provided.
- Good communication, presentation, problem-solving and organisational skills.
- Passionate in client servicing
- Possess own transport and willing to travel.
- Able to start work immediately.

Office based in Petaling Jaya (5 days a week)

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH MAJLISRET DI KUALA LUMPUR DALAM WILAYAH PERSEKUTUAN, MALAYSIA
GUAMAN SUDU NO. WA-472-162-11/2024

ANTARA

ONE JELATEK MANAGEMENT CORPORATION [SEL: 480112] ... PLAINTIFF

DAN

AZLAN SHAH BIN SHAHABUDIN (No. K/P: 73067-14-5113) ... DEFENDAN

NOTIS PENYAMPAIAN GANTI - BENTUK IKLAN

Kepada :
 AZLAN SHAH BIN SHAHABUDIN
 33 Jalan Angerik
 Taman Uda Jaya,
 Ampang Jaya, 68000 Ampang
 Selangor Darul Ehsan

AMBIK PERHATIAN bahawa suatu tindakan telah dimulakan terhadap kamu di Mahkamah Majlisret di Kuala Lumpur, Guaman No. WA-472-162-11/2024 oleh One Jelatek Management Corporation yang beramat penyampaian di Management Office, Level 1, Pangsupari 1 Jelatek, Jalan Jelatek, 54200 Kuala Lumpur untuk jumlah RM4,200.20 setakat 21/10/2024; dengan faedah pada kadar 10% setahun dikenakan ke atas jumlah RM3,755.20 dari tarikh 22/10/2024 sehingga tarikh penyelesaian sepenuhnya dan kos tindakan ini.

Dan adalah diperintahkan bahawa penyampaian writ dalam tindakan ini kepada kamu dilaksanakan melalui iklan ini. Jika kamu berhasrat untuk membela tindakan ini kamu hendaklah dalam tempoh (21) hari dari tarikh pengiklanan notis ini, tidak termasuk hari pengiklanan, mememukakan kehadiran di Pentadbir Mahkamah. Jika kamu ingkar mememukakan kehadiran, pengiklanan boleh diberikan terhadap kamu.

Bertakrif pada 17 DECEMBER 2024.

TANDATANGAN

WONG LU PEEN & TUNJU ALINA
 Pegasam cara bagi pihak Plaintiff

Notis Penyampaian Ganti-Bentuk Iklan ini difailkan oleh WONG LU PEEN & TUNJU ALINA, pegasam cara bagi Plaintiff yang beramat di 21-B, Block B, The Boulevard, Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra, 59200 Kuala Lumpur.
 (No. Telefon: 03-22018378)
 (Rujukan Fail: L3 16256)
 (Email: general@wplta.com.my / farhanah.faris@wplta.com.my / siti.hardinah@wplta.com.my)

2 MEDIA SALES REPRESENTATIVE / AGENT (FREELANCE)

Requirement:

- Minimum 1 year sales experience in classified ad, print and digital advertising
- Those without sales experience but with media advertising knowledge can apply.
- Attractive commission package and incentive.
- Able to start immediately.
- Central, Northern, Southern, East Coast and Sabah/Sarawak.

Send in your CV with your photo via email to : thesun.hr2@gmail.com

Advertisement with us & connect to our urban readers.

KLANG VALLEY PENANG KEDAH PERAK PERLIS PAHANG KELANTAN TERENGGANU
 MS. Shohra / MS. Balqish
 TEL: 03-7784 8888
 WHATSAPP: 018 261 6626

MALACCA
 MR. Rajah
 TEL: 012-520 2844
 FAX: 06-764 2051

JOHOR BAHRU
 MS. Anne Lim
 TEL: 013-770 6699
 FAX: 07-355 5549

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF KEMUNING JAYA AUTO PARTS SDN BHD (201701011359 (1225524-V)) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 439 of the Companies Act, 2016, that the special resolution set out below was duly passed by the members of the Company at a General Meeting held on 20 DECEMBER 2024.

"That the Company be wound up voluntarily pursuant to Section 439(1)(b) of the Companies Act, 2016 and that Mr. TAN ONG HONG (NRIC No. 940510-09-5447) of No 16 Lot 106, Jalan Damai 2/2, Taman Damai 2, 45200 Sabak Bernam, Selangor be and is hereby appointed as Liquidator for the purposes of such winding up with all powers given by Section 456 of the Companies Act, 2016."

CHIA BAN LOONG
 Director
 Kuala Lumpur
 Date: 23 DECEMBER 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF KEMUNING JAYA AUTO PARTS SDN BHD (201701011359 (1225524-V)) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above-mentioned company which is wound up voluntarily are required on or before 22nd January 2025 to send in their names and addresses with particulars of their debts and claims, and names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned Liquidators of SAKURA KRISTAL SDN BHD (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation) c/o Falcon Management Services Sdn Bhd, B-5-4, Block B, Megan Avenue 1, 189, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur and, if so required by notice in writing from the said liquidators, or by its solicitors, to come in and prove their said debts and 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 and claims are proved.

TAN ONG HONG
 Liquidator
 No. 29-2, Jalan 45A/26, Taman Sri Rampai, 53300 Kuala Lumpur, W.P. Kuala Lumpur.
 Date: 23 DECEMBER 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF THE MATTER OF SAKURA KRISTAL SDN BHD (Co Reg No. 614979 - P) (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)

At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company held at B-5-4, Block B, Megan Avenue 1, 189, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur on 08th November 2024 the following special resolution was duly passed:

"That the Company be wound-up voluntarily and that Lee Chee Hong (NRIC No: 680222-10-6487) of Falcon Management Services Sdn. Bhd. be and are hereby appointed the liquidators of the company for the purpose of such winding-up."

By order of the Board
 Lee Hoy Voon
 Director
 Dated this 23rd December 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF M&A CREW SDN BHD (Co Reg No. 938993 - U) (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)

At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company held at B-5-4, Block B, Megan Avenue 1, 189, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur on 08th November 2024 the following special resolution was duly passed:

"That the Company be wound-up voluntarily and that Lee Chee Hong (NRIC No: 680222-10-6487) of Falcon Management Services Sdn. Bhd. be and are hereby appointed the liquidators of the company for the purpose of such winding-up."

By order of the Board
 Lee Hoy Voon
 Director
 Dated this 23rd December 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF M&A CREW SDN BHD (Co Reg No. 938993 - U) (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)

At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company held at B-5-4, Block B, Megan Avenue 1, 189, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur on 08th November 2024 the following special resolution was duly passed:

"That the Company be wound-up voluntarily and that Lee Chee Hong (NRIC No: 680222-10-6487) of Falcon Management Services Sdn. Bhd. be and are hereby appointed the liquidators of the company for the purpose of such winding-up."

By order of the Board
 Lee Hoy Voon
 Director
 Dated this 23rd December 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF KEMUNING JAYA AUTO PARTS SDN BHD (201701011359 (1225524-V)) (IN MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above-mentioned company which is wound up voluntarily are required to, on or before 14 JANUARY 2025 to send in their names and addresses with full particulars of their debts and claims and the names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned, the Liquidator of the Company, and, if so required by notice in writing from the Liquidator, either personally or by their solicitors, 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 benefits of any distribution made before such debts or claims are proved.

TAN ONG HONG
 Liquidator
 No. 29-2, Jalan 45A/26, Taman Sri Rampai, 53300 Kuala Lumpur, W.P. Kuala Lumpur.
 Date: 23 DECEMBER 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF SAKURA KRISTAL SDN BHD (Co Reg No. 614979 - P) (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above-mentioned company which is wound up voluntarily are required on or before 22nd January 2025 to send in their names and addresses with particulars of their debts and claims, and names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned Liquidators of SAKURA KRISTAL SDN BHD (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation) c/o Falcon Management Services Sdn Bhd, B-5-4, Block B, Megan Avenue 1, 189, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur and, if so required by notice in writing from the said liquidators, or by its solicitors, to come in and prove their said debts and 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 and claims are proved.

Lee Chee Hong
 Liquidator
 Dated this 23rd December 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF M&A CREW SDN BHD (Co Reg No. 938993 - U) (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above-mentioned company which is wound up voluntarily are required on or before 22nd January 2025 to send in their names and addresses with particulars of their debts and claims, and names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned Liquidators of M&A CREW SDN BHD (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation) c/o Falcon Management Services Sdn Bhd, B-5-4, Block B, Megan Avenue 1, 189, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur and, if so required by notice in writing from the said liquidators, or by its solicitors, to come in and prove their said debts and 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 and claims are proved.

Lee Chee Hong
 Liquidator
 Dated this 23rd December 2024

322 Notices

Pawnbrokers' forfeited pledges under Section 23 of the Pawnbrokers Act 1972 (Pawnbrokers' Control and Licensing) Regulations 2004

The above will be sold by public auction during the first week of January 2025 at YMCA, No. 211 Macalister Street, Penang for articles pawned in March 2024 and earlier commencing from the date and time stated below:-

Date	Time
06.01.2025	11:30 AM

Note: Interested bidders are to register with the licensed auctioneer 7 working days before the auction date.

*Term and conditions apply.

A Dennis & Co Sdn Bhd
 Licensed Auctioneers
 22-07-704 Panang Chinese Town Hall,
 Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling,
 10200 Pulau Pinang.
 Tel no's: 04-2611551/2

322 Notices

FOCAL PARK SDN BHD (358698-H)

NOTIS SELING AWAM KENDERANGAN UNTUK DIOLONG SEPERTI SEDIA ADA

TEMPAT & TARJAH SELING: Northern Region (Arau Sebat, Butterworth & Ipoh) 06-12-2024 (Kawadil Pukul 11:00am)

TARJAH MELIAT: SEBELUM TIGA HARI LELONG (Pukul 9:00pagu - 4:00ptg)

PENTAWAN (No): Butterworth 04-3567972, Arau Sebat 04-787 7572, Ipoh 05-5259971

PNIC - PELELONG BERSEKUTU: di Mr. Chew Wee Koh, di Mr. Steven Lee Peng Gem (017395), di Pn Nazaria Binti Abu Samah (00918)

Alamat : 302, Penangang Tok, Jaja Makom Sg Dua 13000 Butterworth, 141135A, Shah J, Jalan Lenggong 04040 Arau Sebat, 0171883, Jalan Jelapang, Kms Perindustrian Tim Meru 30020 Ipoh

SILA LAMAR LAMARAN WEB: <http://www.kedajipark.com>

Item	Reg No	Brand / Model	Tahun
AM1	TB2234	CHEVY EASTAR 2.0	2016
AM2	G1M1380	CHEVROLET CAPTIVA (A) 2.0	2010
AM3	WU18411	CHEVROLET CRUZE LT 1.8	2011
AM4	AKM9542	SHIM MI 1.5 AMT	2016
AM5	AKM7986	HONDA HRV 1.8	2016
AM6	W654689	KIA CERATO 1.8	2015
AM7	BPX2706	NISSAN ALMERA (A) 1.5	2017
AM8	AK2124	PROTON EXORA 1.6	2015
AM9	AL832	PROTON PERSONA 1.6	2018
AM10	AK27085	PROTON SAGA 1.3	2017
AM11	AK25194	PROTON SAGA 1.3	2017
AM12	PAK4204	PROTON SAGA 1.3	2022
AM13	AKM3075	PROTON SAGA 1.3	2021
AM14	AGM8007	MERCEDES BENZ E200K	2008
AM15	AH8465	PROTON PERSONA 1.6	2010
AM16	WAP860	VOLKSWAGEN VENTO 1.6	2017
AM17	JT51689	HONDA Brio 1.5	2019
AM18	PKS2701	PROTON EXORA 1.6	2012
AM19	TC4033	PROTON PERSONA 1.6	2021

(Perhatian: Kenderaan-kenderaan diatas yang tidak dibida dalam peritolehan akan diolong semula pada 09-01-2025)

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF AGREGAID SDN BHD (Co Reg No. 600250-W) (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)

At an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Company held at B-5-4, Block B, Megan Avenue 1, 189, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur on 08th November 2024 the following special resolution was duly passed:

"That the Company be wound-up voluntarily and that Lee Chee Hong (NRIC No: 680222-10-6487) of Falcon Management Services Sdn. Bhd. be and are hereby appointed the liquidators of the company for the purpose of such winding-up."

By order of the Board
 Lee Kar Men
 Ng Wei-Huang Joshua
 Director
 Dated this 23rd December 2024

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF AGREGAID SDN BHD (Co Reg No. 600250-W) (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of the above-mentioned company which is wound up voluntarily are required on or before 22nd January 2025 to send in their names and addresses with particulars of their debts and claims, and names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned Liquidators of AGREGAID SDN BHD (In Members' Voluntary Liquidation) c/o Falcon Management Services Sdn Bhd, B-5-4, Block B, Megan Avenue 1, 189, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur and, if so required by notice in writing from the said liquidators, or by its solicitors, to come in and prove their said debts and 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 and claims are proved.

Lee Chee Hong
 Liquidator
 Dated this 23rd December 2024

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF MAJU MAYANG SDN. BHD. (Registration No.: 201801035022 (127048-A)) (IN LIQUIDATION) (MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the General Meeting of the Company held at No. 438, Jalan 14, Taman Heawood, 31100 Sungai Siput (U), Perak on 14th December, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. the following Special Resolution was duly passed:-

"That MAJU MAYANG SDN. BHD. be wound up voluntarily and that Mr. Chan Wai Meng of B-2-13, Tingkat 2, Irtan Business Centre 2, Labuh Medan Ipoh, Bandar Baru Medan, 31400 Ipoh, Perak Darul Ridzuan be and is hereby appointed Liquidator for the purpose of winding-up the Company."

SHOW SEE KIAT
 Director
 Ipoh
 Dated: 23rd December, 2024

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF MAJU MAYANG SDN. BHD. (Registration No.: 201801035022 (127048-A)) (IN LIQUIDATION) (MEMBERS' VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

Notice is hereby given that the creditors of the above-mentioned Company which is being voluntarily wound up, are required, on or before 22nd January, 2025 to send in their names and addresses with particulars of their debts and claims, and names and addresses of their solicitors (if any) to the undersigned Liquidator and, if so required by notice in writing from the said Liquidator, are by their solicitors or personally to come and prove their said debts and 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 and claims are proved.

CHAN WAI MENG
 Liquidator
 B-2-13, Tingkat 2,
 Irtan Business Centre 2
 Labuh Medan Ipoh, Bandar Baru Medan
 31400 Ipoh, Perak
 Dated: 23rd December, 2024

PTP
 A Member of MMC Group

NOTICE OF PRE-QUALIFICATION

Port of Tanjung Pelepas Sdn. Bhd. (328719-K) ("PTP") is one of the largest transhipment container terminals operating in Malaysia. The port consists of 14 berths totalling over 5.04 km of linear wharf and associated container stacking yard area. PTP wishes to invite qualified and experienced contractors with proven expertise and track record to participate in a Pre-qualification exercise as described below.

CONTRACT FOR THE WORKS OF PACKAGE 1 (DREDGING, RECLAMATION AND BERTH 2) AND PACKAGE 2 (CONTAINER TERMINAL YARD AND INFRASTRUCTURES) FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BERTH 0 AT PELABUHAN TANJUNGG PEELEPAS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

PTP intends to develop and construct 360m of new berth and associated container stacking yard area.

The scope of works to be carried out for Package 1 includes but not limited to the followings:

- Dredging and reclamation works
- Ground treatment and reventment works
- Marine pile works
- Wharf structures and furniture works

The scope of works to be carried out for Package 2 includes but not limited to the followings:

- Container Yard
- Road and drainage works
- Sewerage system
- Water reticulation
- Mechanical and electrical works
- Ancillary Buildings

PRE-QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Applicants has relevant experience in ports, and/or marine with related civil works with the following pre-qualification requirements:
 - Local applicants shall be registered with Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia (SSM) and foreign applicants shall have their companies registered with the relevant bodies of their respective countries.
 - Local applicants shall be registered with the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) - Grade G7 with at least one of the following Specialisation Codes: CE03, CE18 and/or CE21 and foreign applicants shall be registered with CIDB - Grade G7.
- Applicants must have experience in construction of ports, and/or marine related civil works with a minimum value of **RM100 million** in a single contract completed within the last 10 years.
- Applicants shall submit a list of relevant ongoing/completed projects over the past 10 years.
- Applicants shall not be involved in any litigation or disputes issued against the companies and/or the companies' directors and shall disclose any material litigation to PTP if any.
- Applicants shall have a proven high quality track record on safety performance.
- Applicants shall submit their annual financial statements over the last 3 years proving there is sufficient revenue and financial capacity available to carry out the Works.

PRE-QUALIFICATION (PRE-Q) FORM

Interested applicants which meet the minimum criteria are required to complete the Pre-Q Form available at our website: <https://www.ptp.com.my/contracts/supply-chain>. Please click link at the Announcement column. The duly completed form should be submitted via email to: General Manager, Procurement and Tender Department, Supply Chain Division at SupplyChain@ptp.com.my not later than 31 DECEMBER 2024, 12.00 noon (GMT+8). Late submissions will not be taken into consideration.

Oz teen Konstas ready for challenge



TEENAGE opener Sam Konstas (pic) says he is ready and equipped to take on India's feared pace attack in the Boxing Day Test after being called up to Australia's squad for the first time.

The 19-year-old is poised to open alongside veteran Usman Khawaja – twice his age at 38 – at a sold-out Melbourne Cricket Ground after Nathan McSweeney was axed after just three Tests.

"I'm very excited," he told *Fox Sports* after being dismissed for a three-ball duck playing for Sydney Thunder in the Twenty20 Big Bash League on Saturday.

"I want to be challenged and I've got a few plans against India's bowlers. I feel like I'm moving really nicely so hopefully I get that opportunity."

Australia's top-order has been terrorised by pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah over the first three Tests of the five-match series, which is locked at 1-1.

While McSweeney paid the price, Khawaja is also under pressure after a lean spell.

Konstas is not a guaranteed starter, with Josh Inglis and all-rounder Beau Webster also in the squad as other options.

Should he pad up, he would become Australia's youngest Test debutant since skipper Pat Cummins took the field against South Africa at Johannesburg in 2011.

Konstas thrust himself into the frame after becoming the youngest player since Ricky Ponting to score two centuries in the same Sheffield Shield match.

He also slammed a century playing for the Prime Minister's XI against India.

Konstas was batting in the nets last week when he got the call from Australian selector George Bailey.

"I was so thrilled and called my parents straight away, and they were very emotional," he said.

"Mum was in tears, so I was trying not to cry. Dad was super proud. It's been an amazing journey with all the ups and downs." – AFP

Usyk beats Fury in rematch

Ukrainian beats Briton 116-112 on all three scorecards to cement place among greats

OLEKSANDR USYK won his heavyweight championship rematch against Tyson Fury by unanimous decision in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia yesterday to stay unbeaten across two divisions and cement his place among the greats.

The Ukrainian, who forced the pace and repeatedly tagged Fury with his accurate left hook, was awarded the fight 116-112 by all three judges, handing Fury his second straight loss.

Usyk's win takes him to 23-0 with 14 knockouts and extends one of the all-time best careers that includes Olympic gold and undisputed champion at cruiserweight.

"He's a great fighter, it's a great performance," Usyk, 37, said of Fury, who was unbeaten over 35 fights until he lost their four-belt unification bout in May. "Unbelievable 24 rounds for my career."

Only the WBA, WBO and WBC belts were on the line this time after Usyk, focused on the lucrative rematch, relinquished his IBF title rather than face challenger Daniel Dubois.

By beating Fury in May, "The Cat" had already

joined the likes of Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis and Mike Tyson as undisputed heavyweight, and the first of the four-belt era.

"He's my best friend," he said of Fury. "I respect this guy because I think he's a really tough opponent. Tyson Fury makes me strong."

But the defeat opens up an uncertain future for the 36-year-old Fury, now 34-2-1, who announced his retirement in 2022 only to return to the ring.

"I thought I've won both fights, but then again I've got two losses on my record now, so there's not much I can do about it," said the Briton, who refused to discuss his next steps.

Promoter Frank Warren also called the judges' decision "nuts". But Usyk dismissed his complaints.

"Uncle Frank, I think is blind... crazy man," joked the Ukrainian.

Fury, wearing a Santa-style red-and-white robe and bushy beard, appeared to Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas Is You" before a determined-looking Usyk strode out in Cossack gear.

The 206cm Briton's jab held Usyk at bay early

on and he landed a jarring right in round two. Usyk caught Fury flush with a left as he raised the pace in round three.

They went toe-to-toe in a punishing fifth round, with Fury pummeling body shots while Usyk launched a flurry to the head. In the sixth, he stung Fury with a clean hit to the nose.

The supremely fit Usyk, renowned for taking charge in the closing rounds, was the aggressor in the seventh, tagging Fury with a hook as the "Gypsy King" backed away.

Fury regained the initiative in the ninth, wielding his jab and one-two combinations and leaning on the Ukrainian, employing his career-heaviest 127.4kg of weight.

It was see-saw stuff as they traded blows but Usyk rocked Fury in the 11th with a lightning combination that ended with yet another left hook to the face.

An Usyk uppercut to Fury's chin highlighted a furious final round and there seemed little doubt about the winner as the Ukrainian sank to his knees, arms aloft. – AFP



Britain's Tyson Fury (right) and Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk exchanging blows during their heavyweight world championship rematch at the Kingdom Arena in Riyadh yesterday. – REUTERS/PIC

Judges got it wrong: Gypsy King

BRITISH heavyweight Tyson Fury said the judges made a mistake in awarding a unanimous decision win to Oleksandr Usyk of Ukraine in their clash for the WBA (Super), WBO and WBC titles at the Kingdom Arena yester, claiming he should have won.

"I was quite confident. I thought I won that fight again. I can just fight my heart out and do the best I can, but again, I'll always believe until a day I die, I won that fight."

He added: "There was a little bit of Christmas spirit in there. He got a little Christmas gift."

Fury said he had been on the front foot all night, but in truth Usyk, who gave up big advantages in terms of height, weight and reach, was the more dominant fighter for the majority of the contest as he scored another decision win.

"It is what it is. I'm not going to cry over spilled milk, it's happened now. I know boxing, I've been in it all my life."

"You can't change no decisions, but I'll just always feel a little bit hard done-by. Not a little bit actually – a lot," Fury said.

The 36-year-old waved away talk of what is next for him after his second straight defeat.

"I'm going to go home and have a good Christmas, I've been away 12 weeks, I put a lot of work in for this fight, I'm going to go home now and enjoy it," he said.

Meanwhile in Kiev, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed Usyk's victory, calling it proof that Ukraine "will not give up what's ours".

"Victory!" Zelensky said in a post on Telegram. "So important and so necessary for all of us now."

Ukraine remains locked in war nearly three years after Russia invaded, but Zelensky said Usyk's triumph was a mark of Ukrainian resiliency and determination.

"Having retained the championship belts, Oleksandr proves: we are Ukrainians and we will not give up what's ours. And no matter how difficult it is – we will win."

"Be it the ring, battlefield or diplomatic arena – we fight and we will not give up what's ours."

"Congrats on the victory, Cossack! Congrats on the victory Ukraine! Glory to Ukraine." – AFP/Reuters

India skipper Rohit's knee injury not serious, says fast bowler Akash

INDIAN pace bowler Akash Deep played down concerns over skipper Rohit Sharma's knee injury in the build-up to their fourth Test against Australia this week after the batsman was hit during a practice session yesterday.

Rohit, who missed the opening Test to spend time with his newborn son and has been struggling for form since returning to the team, looked in

discomfort after being struck on his left knee in the nets at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

The 37-year-old continued batting but later received care from a physiotherapist and had an ice pack strapped to his leg, which he rested on a chair.

"Such injuries are quite common when you play cricket and it doesn't

make much of a difference," Akash told reporters, adding that the practice wicket had been challenging.

"I think this was a wicket for white-ball cricket, so the ball kept a bit low and it was a bit difficult to bat on. But such blows happen and it's not a concern."

India battled hard to earn a draw in the rain-interrupted third Test in

Brisbane to leave the five-match series locked at 1-1 ahead of the Boxing Day clash.

The tourists won the first test in Perth by 295 runs before crashing to a 10-wicket defeat in Adelaide.

"It's 50-50 right now. In the last match, even though we were behind, we built some confidence. This Test match will be very important for both

teams," Akash said.

"Our mindset as fast bowlers is that we can get some quick wickets with the new ball and cause problems for them. We have seen in the three matches that we can create chances with the new ball."

"After 30 overs, however, you have to wait for the batsmen to make mistakes." – Reuters

SIDENETTING

Blades stay top of Championship

SHEFFIELD UNITED remained three points clear at the top of English football's second-tier Championship after a 2-0 win away to Cardiff on Saturday where Kieffer Moore scored twice against his old club. "We're getting stretched a little bit at the moment with six senior players out, but this young team keeps doing what they do," said Blades manager Chris Wilder. It was a valuable victory given all of the Blades' three nearest challengers also won as well on Saturday. Leeds stayed within three points of their Yorkshire rivals after overwhelming Oxford 4-0 thanks to goals from Dan James, Jayden Bogle, Brenden Aaronson and Manor Solomon. Burnley, meanwhile, remained a point further back after edging out fellow promotion hopefuls Watford 2-1. Fourth-placed Sunderland stayed in touch in the hunt for automatic promotion by coming from behind to beat 10-man Norwich 2-1.

Saints appoint Juric as new manager

PREMIER LEAGUE basement club Southampton yesterday appointed Ivan Juric as their new manager on an 18-month contract. The former Roma and Torino boss replaces the sacked Russell Martin, who was dismissed after an embarrassing 5-0 loss at home to Tottenham the previous weekend. "We remain focused on fighting for survival this season and believe this appointment will provide us with the grit and determination needed to improve results on the pitch," Southampton said in a statement. The club said Juric had a "reputation for helping his teams punch above their weight". The 49-year-old Juric said: "It's a really big challenge but I'm very optimistic because I saw a team that can do better. It's important to immediately be connected with the fans. I want an aggressive team and I think that fans of Southampton will like that."

Hammers cling on for Brighton point

MOHAMMED KUDUS earned West Ham a point against bogey side Brighton in yesterday's 1-1 draw at the London Stadium.

The Ghana winger headed his third of the season, and his first since completing a five-match ban for his red card at Tottenham in October, to cancel out Mats Wieffer's maiden goal for Brighton.

Brighton almost snatched victory but Hammers goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski made a fine reaction save from Yasin Ayari's deflected shot and Yankuba Minteh's cross for Kaoru Mitoma was deflected onto a post.

Germany striker Niclas Fullkrug had been handed a long-awaited full Premier League debut after an injury-hit start to his West Ham career following a big-money summer move from Borussia Dortmund.

But after 56 underwhelming minutes, and just two touches in the opposition penalty area, the 31-year-old was replaced by Crysencio Summerville.

"It's true that now he's not in his best way," Hammers boss Julen Lopetegui admitted after the match. "But it's true that he needs minutes to achieve this level that we need."

"I think that when he's going to be better, he's going to last more. It's about the minutes, about the matches, the way to recover his best."

"Sometimes, knowing that the player is not in his best way, you need to put him in to play, because we think that we are going to need him in his best way."

Brighton have now gone five Premier League matches without a win yet there were signs that Fabian Hurler's side are working themselves back into some kind of rhythm.

"There were plenty of chances to win this game, and in the end we weren't able to score, so it's our fault, our responsibility, that we don't leave the pitch as a winner," said Seagulls boss Hurler. – The Independent/Agencies

Nuno remains grounded despite Forest rise

NOTTINGHAM FOREST manager Nuno Espirito Santo said his team have not "achieved anything yet" after they ended Brentford's unbeaten record at the Gtech Community Stadium to consolidate their place in the Premier League top four.

Ola Aina and Anthony Elanga scored goals in either half to send Forest to a 2-0 win, their third victory in a row in the League as they continued their remarkable transformation from relegation candidates last season to European contenders.

Goalkeeper Matz Sels produced a stunning save in the second half to deny Kristoffer Ajer though it was not without a touch of fortune, deflecting the ball away with his face from point-blank range.

"We started well, realising Brentford are very strong at home," said Nuno. "The team was

mature enough to understand that and be stable and compact, then trying to have control of the game. Overall a very good performance.

"I think there's a lot of room for improvement. Our message is not about the table, it's about improving the team, finding solutions."

"We didn't achieve anything yet, it's a still a very long way to go, starting against Tottenham (on Boxing Day). It's going to be very hard."

This was a seventh League win in 10 for Forest and it is growing difficult to ignore the challenge they pose to the more established clubs looking to finish in the top four.

It added to victories achieved at Old Trafford and at Anfield whilst they also took a point away from Stamford Bridge.

"It says a lot about the way we are working,"

said Nuno. "From the beginning we realised there were so many things to improve and still are, but very proud of the players."

"We push them every day and demand very much. We want to compete well, we want to make things right."

Brentford boss Thomas Frank reflected on a game he felt his side are unfortunate to lose.

"It's a result business, it's definitely more fun to win," he said. "Our performance was good."

"I think we dominated large spells and were on top against the time that are third in the table. We lacked cutting edge offensively but created dangerous situations."

"What we gave away in this game was very little, in that sense we were very good defensively. Nottingham defended very well." – The Independent

Gunners' Christmas demand

Arteta wants Arsenal to keep levels up after losing Saka at Palace



Arsenal's Thomas Partey (left) fights for the ball with Crystal Palace's Daichi Kamada during their English Premier League match on Saturday. – AFPIC

ARSENAL boss Mikel Arteta described the Christmas schedule as "absolutely crazy" after losing Bukayo Saka to injury against Crystal Palace.

The Spaniard saw his side win 5-1 at Selhurst Park, but the win was soured by his key forward limping off after 25 minutes.

Saka, 23, appeared to get treatment on his knee before heading down the tunnel.

And afterwards, Arteta refused to speculate on the severity of the knock before taking aim at League organisers.

"I don't know how serious (it is)," said Arteta. "He had to come off because he felt something, it's not good news obviously. So we wait and see now."

Saka was seen leaving Selhurst Park on crutches, flanked by a physio and a club staff member.

The England international now almost certainly faces another spell on the sidelines.

He's already missed almost six weeks of the 2024/25 campaign, after injuring his hamstring on Three Lions duty in October.

Despite the ruthless nature of his team's performance, Arteta demanded his players keep their levels up for the remainder of the season.

Asked about their title chances, he replied: "We want it, but we have to show it for 10 months."

"The demands are incredible to play every three days for 12 or 13 weeks is crazy. We are trying our best. We have lost some players, it is happening to every

team. We want to try."

After back-to-back draws in the Premier League, Arteta's has enjoyed a positive week in terms of results.

The Gunners beat the same side 3-2 in the League Cup on Wednesday, and the 42-year-old was pleased with how the visitors asserted themselves.

"It's always really tough to come here against this team, so to play them twice in three days makes it trickier," he said.

"But we started the game really well, good control, good dominance and we were very clinical. I am very happy to score five away from home in the Premier League."

"I don't know how many times we have done that in the calendar year but quite a lot. It is remarkable."

"In front of goal and the way we approach the games away from home it tells everything about the team, the hunger, the desire, the way we want to play and these records hopefully will come to give us the big things that we want to achieve."

As well as Saka, Myles Lewis-Skelly, Jurrien Timber, Kai Havertz, and two-goal hero Gabriel Jesus all came off before full time.

The north-London side now lie three points off leaders Liverpool, but have played two games more.

Next, Arteta's side host Ipswich on Dec 27. That game will be followed by a clash with Brentford on New Year's Day, before another away trip to Brighton three days later. – Express Newspapers

Isak stars to cap perfect week for Newcastle and Howe

A HATTRICK from Alexander Isak helped Newcastle United follow up a midweek Carabao Cup success with a 4-0 thrashing at Ipswich Town to give their supporters the perfect week before Christmas.

The Magpies entered this fixture after they secured a place in the League Cup semifinals on Wednesday with a 3-1 victory over Brentford to remain on track for a first major trophy since 1969.

Ex-Norwich attacker Jacob Murphy set up the opener and was a constant threat against the rivals of his old club as he grabbed Newcastle's second before his back heel allowed Isak to complete a 54-minute treble, after he also struck at the end of the first half following more woeful

Ipswich defending.

It ensured Eddie Howe masterminded a third consecutive victory, while Kieran McKenna's side are left to lick their wounds on a day to forget.

"I am absolutely thrilled with what my players have achieved during this very important week for us," Howe said as per the BBC.

"We have reached the semifinals of the League (Carabao) Cup, which was genuinely one of Newcastle's objectives, and our fortunes in the have also needed to improve – so we are very pleased to secure two consecutive victories."

"There are plenty of little things to elevate our level, and we are constantly trying to tweak and enhance our performance."

"I'm delighted that our creative play has

returned to what it has always been – we look like we can create dangerous chances at any moment in the match – from the first minute to the last."

"And we are scoring freely. Indeed, we have no doubts about the quality of Alexander Isak – his goals clearly demonstrate his composure in front of goal and skill level."

"I think they've found the perfect balance wherein they have the freedom to move and express themselves on the pitch."

"Right now, I believe we need to focus on the players we have and get the best out of them, rather than looking at external factors – particularly the upcoming winter transfer window." – The Independent/Agencies

Laboured Napoli lead Serie A

NAPOLI moved to the top of Serie A yesterday with a laboured 2-1 win over Genoa, the team's fourth victory in their last five outings.

Frank Anguissa and Amir Rahmani scored Napoli's goals in an eight-minute spell in the first half before Andrea Pinamonti cut the deficit early in the second period.

Genoa were on top for large parts of the remainder of the game with Mario Balotelli squandering a great opportunity to equalise in the 85th minute.

"In another situation we would be crying bitter tears," said Napoli coach Antonio Conte.

"It's right that the boys enjoy the three points but at

the same time understand that the games must be played from start to finish, always trying to keep the foot on the accelerator.

"In the second half I didn't like anything, absolutely." Napoli have 38 points, one ahead of Atalanta who can reclaim pole position overnight when they hunt an 11th successive win at home to Empoli.

In yesterday's other late game, Lazio defeated 10-man Lecce 2-1 to move into fourth place on 34 points.

The win came six days after Lazio were humbled 6-0 at home by Inter Milan.

Lecce's French fullback Frederic Guilbert was red-carded on the stroke of halftime for handball on the goalline.

Valentin Castellanos, back from suspension, tucked away the resulting penalty to give Lazio the lead.

Tete Morente levelled the score on the 50-minute mark before Adam Marusic grabbed the winner for Lazio in the dying moments. - AFP

Leverkusen close gap to Bayern

BAYER LEVERKUSEN closed the gap on Bayern Munich at the top of the German Bundesliga to four points after Patrik Schick (pic) scored four in a 5-1 victory over Freiburg yesterday.

The final Bundesliga games of the year struck a bleak tone following the deadly car attack at a Christmas market in Magdeburg on Friday, killing at least five people and injuring more than 200.

Players and many fans wore black armbands with a minute's silence preceding each fixture.

On the field, Xabi Alonso's side were looking to limit Bayern's dominance at the top of the table ahead of the winter break.

Alonso chalked up his 50th win as a Bundesliga coach after just 75 matches, with

only Pep Guardiola taking fewer such games to reach the half-century (61).

Nevertheless, the Leverkusen boss was adamant the contest was not as straightforward for his side as the scoreline suggested.

"The result may have been spectacular and Patrik scored four goals, but the game was not as easy as it seemed," he told reporters.

"We had a good opponent, and we had to prepare our actions intelligently.

"It was a very important victory for us today. We wanted to continue our sequence and go into the break with a good feeling. We managed that. We will continue to attack in the new year." - AFP/Agencies



SPORTS TOTO RESULTS

DRAW NO: 5900/2024 DATE: 22/12/2024 (SUN)
 STW LOTTERY SDN. BHD.
 19691000090 (8420-D)

TOTO 4D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

1st Prize	7819
2nd Prize	1610
3rd Prize	6419

Special	7482 3477	Consolation	1109 7208
	8085 5621		7964 7743
	8911 7240		6801 5297
	0059 4922		1400 8628
	2741 1896		0702 5779

4D JACKPOT
 Jackpot 1 **RM 2,835,201.29**

Jackpot 2 **RM 151,854.78**
 Winning combination of any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

4D Zodiac

1st Prize	7819	+	SNAKE
2nd Prize	1610	+	
3rd Prize	6419	+	
4th Prize	Special Prize	+	
5th Prize	Consolation Prize	+	
6th Prize	Any 4D drawn number	+	

TOTO 5D & 6D PRIZE PAYMENTS GUARANTEED IN FULL

5D 1ST	6 3 9 1 1
2ND	9 9 4 2 1
3RD	5 0 2 4 3
4TH	3 9 1 1 1
5TH	9 1 1 1
6TH	1 1 1

6D

1ST	2 6 1 2 5 8
2ND	2 6 1 2 5
3RD	2 6 1 2
4TH	2 6 1
5TH	2 6

TOTO GAMES GIVES YOU MORE WINNING CHANCES!

SUPREME 7/36 4 9 11 24 37 44
 Jackpot **RM 60,813,585.86**

POWER 7/36 12 18 24 28 29 36
 Jackpot **RM 5,221,315.92**

STAR 7/36 1 10 33 38 39 43 + 23
 Jackpot 1 **RM 2,033,964.10**
 Jackpot 2 **RM 126,335.90**

Toto 4D Jackpot 1
RM 6,211,442
Toto 4D Jackpot 2
RM 300,076
Toto 4D Jackpot 2 (i-System)
RM 26,825 won on 21/12/2024!
 Visit www.sportstoto.com.my for e-Results and more info.



Atletico top La Liga

Simeone's side snatch late win at Barca to go three points clear

Barcelona's Alex Balde (left) is challenged by Atletico Madrid's Alexander Sorloth during their La Liga match yesterday. - AFP/PPIC

ATLETICO MADRID came from behind to snatch a last-gasp 2-1 victory over Barcelona and claim leadership of La Liga yesterday.

Pedri sent the Catalans ahead but second-half goals from Rodrigo De Paul and Alexander Sorloth helped Diego Simeone's side move three points clear at the top of the table, having played one match fewer than Barca.

Hansi Flick's side dominated at the Olympic stadium but Atletico clung on before claiming a 12th consecutive victory across all competitions with Sorloth's stoppage-time strike.

Barcelona started the season in superb form but have stumbled in recent weeks and have now won just one of their last seven league games.

This was their third consecutive home league defeat, their worst such run since 1987, while it was also Simeone's first ever away triumph against Barcelona in La Liga.

Despite suffering their first home defeat to Atletico in 18 years, Flick praised his team's performance and expressed optimism that the upcoming winter break would allow them to regain their early-season momentum.

"Today, we played extraordinarily well. Perhaps this break has come at an opportune moment for us.

"I take pride in how we performed, but we must learn from our mistakes. Losing nine points is simply not acceptable, and we need to focus on rectifying that," Flick stated in a

press conference. Flick emphasised his pride in the young talent at his disposal and his commitment to restoring their confidence.

"As I head to training at 6:30 in the morning, I feel fulfilled to be working with these players. "The atmosphere in the dressing room is not great at the moment, but that's part of football. I am sure we will bounce back," he remarked.

"It's crucial for us to rebuild our confidence and ensure they take pride in their performances. My role is to instill confidence in every player.

"In Munich, I had a squad filled with seasoned players. But here, I'm genuinely excited about this young team, which possesses incredible potential."

Atletico coach Simeone acknowledged Barca were the better side for much of the game and highlighted his players' fighting spirit after they rallied from a goal down to pick up their first win away to the Catalans since 2006, five years before his arrival at the club.

"I'm very happy with the team's effort. We were humble enough to suffer and to defend against a team that plays very well. "In the first half and I think until our goal they were far superior to us," Simeone told reporters.

"Then I think we started to find our feet a bit in the game, and we saw that we could compete in the game. The team managed to hold on." - AFP/Reuters/Agencies

WINNING NUMBERS

da macai

Draw Date: 22/12/24 (Sun) Draw No: 5847/24 Venue: WISMA GENTING, KL

1-3D SUPER1+3D

1st Prize	6489
2nd Prize	2485
3rd Prize	0563

Starters	6470 5941	0998 4966
	2275 4911	9453 0764
	1794 0052	0879 5446
	1725 0361	1709 8622
	9898 0326	7301 5908

3-3D Bonus

Jackpot 1	RM5,202,972.80
6489 + 2485	2485 + 6489
6489 + 0563	0563 + 6489
2485 + 0563	0563 + 2485
Jackpot 2	RM546,332.10

Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of 10 Starter Prizes.

3-3D Bonus

1st Prize	106 489 + DOG	1st Prize Bonus	RM1,041,146.80
2nd Prize	552 485 + OX	2nd Prize Bonus	RM1,015,904.60
3rd Prize	010 563 + RABBIT	3rd Prize Bonus	RM1,511,506.00

Starters	556 470 025 941	470 998 064 966
	012 275 894 911	589 453 150 764
	401 794 010 052	600 879 595 446
	281 725 610 361	841 709 268 622
	539 898 930 326	777 301 035 908

3D

1st Prize	489
2nd Prize	485
3rd Prize	563

3D Jackpot **RM838,279.60**

489 + 485 + 563	485 + 563 + 489
489 + 563 + 485	563 + 489 + 485
485 + 489 + 563	563 + 485 + 489

Winning combination matches the Top 3 Prizes in any order.

3+3D 2nd Bonus RM89K and 3rd Bonus RM134K won on 21/12/24!

The Community Chest is an independent, not-for-profit, non-governmental charitable organisation which supports education for the sole benefit of the Malaysian community and is primarily funded by the profits of Da Ma Cai.

Pan Malaysian Pools Sdn. Bhd. (171698-0) www.damacal.com.my
 dmcGO play anywhere: www.dmcGO.com.my or call 03-2333 2000

RESULTS & STANDINGS

MALAYSIA CUP (Quarterfinal, 2nd leg): Johor Darul Ta'zim 4 Kuala Lumpur City FC 0, Terengganu FC 4 Negeri Sembilan FC 2 (Terengganu win 6-2 on aggregate).

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE: Aston Villa 2 (Duran 16, Rogers 65) Manchester City 1 (Foden 90+3), Brentford 0 Nottingham Forest 2 (Aina 38, Elanga 51), Crystal Palace 1 (Sarr 11) Arsenal 5 (Jesus 6, 14, Havertz 38, Martinelli 60, Rice 84), Ipswich 0 Newcastle 4 (Isak 1, 45+2, 54, Murphy 32), West Ham 1 (Kudus 58) Brighton 1 (Wieffer 51).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liverpool	15	11	3	1	31	13	36
Chelsea	16	10	4	2	37	19	34
Arsenal	17	9	6	2	34	16	33
Nottm Forest	17	9	4	4	23	19	31
Aston Villa	17	8	4	5	26	26	28
Man City	17	8	3	6	29	25	27
Newcastle	17	7	5	5	27	21	26
Bournemouth	16	7	4	5	24	21	25
Brighton	17	6	7	4	27	26	25
Fulham	16	6	6	4	24	22	24
Tottenham	16	7	2	7	36	19	23
Brentford	17	7	2	8	32	23	23
Man Utd	16	6	4	6	21	19	22
West Ham	17	5	5	7	22	30	20
Crystal Palace	17	3	7	7	18	26	16
Everton	15	3	6	6	14	21	15
Leicester	16	3	5	8	21	34	14
Ipswich	17	2	6	9	16	32	12
Wolves	16	2	3	11	24	40	9
Southampton	16	1	2	13	11	36	5

CHAMPIONSHIP: Burnley 2 Watford 1, Cardiff 0 Sheffield United 2, Hull 2 Swansea 1, Leeds 4 Oxford 0, Millwall 1 Blackburn 0, Plymouth 3 Middlesbrough 3, Portsmouth 4 Coventry 1, QPR 2 Preston 1, Sheffield Wednesday 2 Stoke 0, Sunderland 2 Norwich 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sheff Utd	22	15	5	2	32	11	48
Leeds	22	13	6	3	41	15	45
Burnley	22	12	8	2	28	9	44
Sunderland	22	12	7	3	34	18	43
Blackburn	21	11	4	6	25	18	37
Mid'boro	22	10	5	7	38	28	35

LA LIGA: Getafe 0 Mallorca 1 (Larin 53-pen), Celta Vigo 2 (Duran 40, 45+1) Real Sociedad 0, Osasuna 1 (Torro 25) Athletic Bilbao 2 (Guruzeta 31, Berenguer 74), Barcelona 1 (Pedri 30) Atletico Madrid 2 (De Paul 60, Sorloth 90+6).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Athletic	18	12	5	1	33	12	41
Barcelona	19	12	2	5	51	22	38
RealMadrid	17	11	4	2	37	16	37
Bilbao	19	10	6	3	29	17	36
Mallorca	19	9	3	7	19	21	30
Villarreal	17	7	6	4	29	28	27

SERIE A: Torino 0 Bologna 2 (Dallinga 71, Pobega 80), Genoa 1 (Pinamonti 51) Napoli 2 (Anguissa 15, Rrahmani 23), Lecce 1 (Morente 50) Lazio 2 (Castellanos 45+3 pen, Marusic 87).

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Napoli	17	12	2	3	26	12	38
Atalanta	16	12	1	3	39	17	37
Inter Milan	15	10	4	1	40	15	34
Lazio	17	11	1	5	32	24	34
Fiorentina	15	9	4	2	28	11	31
Juventus	16	6	10	0	26	12	28

BUNDESLIGA: Stuttgart 0 St Pauli 1, Eintracht Frankfurt 1 Mainz 3, Hoffenheim 1 Borussia Moenchengladbach 2, Werder Bremen 4 Union Berlin 1, Holstein Kiel 5 Augsburg 1, Bayer Leverkusen 5 Freiburg 1.

TOP 6	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
B. Munich	15	11	3	1	47	13	36
Leverkusen	15	9	5	1	37	21	32
E. Frankfurt	15	8	3	4	35	23	27
RB Leipzig	15	8	3	4	24	20	27
Mainz	15	7	4	4	28	20	25
Bremen	15	7	4	4	26	25	25

Turtle's coach hails magnificent fightback

TERENGGANU FC (TFC) head coach Badrul Afzan Razali described his team's remarkable fightback from 2-0 down to beat Negeri Sembilan FC (NSFC) 4-2 in the Malaysia Cup quarterfinals, return-leg tie as "extraordinary".

The home win at Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Kuala Nerus allowed TFC to win 6-2 on aggregate and qualify for the semifinals.

Badrul Afzan attributed the early setback in the game to his team's penchant for attacking football, resulting in them losing focus.

"I admit I was anxious when we went 2-0 down. But, overall, we controlled the game.

"My players were too complacent and we were also too focused on scoring to ensure we make the semifinals.

"That led to us making mistakes we shouldn't have," he told the post-match press conference.

The comeback victory has fuelled Badrul Afzan's determination to prepare his team for their semifinal, first-leg match against defending champions Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) on Jan 17, 2025.

NSFC coach K. Nantha Kumar, meanwhile attributed his team's defensive mistakes for allowing TFC back into the game.

"Once they equalised, we slowed down. In the second half, TFC controlled the game. We



TFC's Muhammad Akhyar Abdul Rashid celebrates after scoring a goal in the Malaysia Cup match against NSFC. -BERNAMAPIC

will focus on our Super League challenge after this. We have nine more matches to get ourselves out from the bottom of the 13-team Super League standings," he said.

Meanwhile, JDT lived up to expectations to advance to the last four by thrashing Kuala Lumpur City FC 4-0 in the quarterfinal, return-leg clash at the Sultan Ibrahim Stadium in Iskandar Puteri on Saturday for a 6-1 aggregate victory.

JDT head coach Hector Bidoglio said he was pleased with his players' aggressive performance and consistency as they chase their third trophy for this season, having clinched the Charity Shield and FA Cup crowns.

"My players performed well. We tried to press them (KL City) and we also played aggressively and with high intensity," he told the post-match press conference. - Bernama

Say no to corruption, match-fixing

Do not take shortcuts in pursuit of wealth, athletes told

YOUTH and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh reminded all national athletes to avoid taking shortcuts in their pursuit of wealth by engaging in unethical practices such as corruption or match-fixing.

She emphasised that victories in sports should be achieved with dignity and integrity, ensuring that success is both admirable and respected.

"We consistently uphold the Safe Sports Code, and I hope that recent incidents serve as a valuable lesson. I urge our athletes not to be tempted by such practices or to take shortcuts to get rich quickly," she said.

She highlighted the ministry's proactive measures to combat corruption in sports.

"Since last year, KBS (the Ministry of Youth and Sports) has been collaborating with the MACC (Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission) to ensure not only badminton but all sports remain free from corruption and match-fixing," she told reporters after the National Women's Football League (LWN) 2024 Prize Presentation Ceremony at Stadium Merdeka on Saturday.

On Friday, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) announced a 12-month suspension on former men's singles player Liew Daren and a three-month suspension for National Sports Institute analyst Jerry Gan after they were found

guilty of engaging in betting activities.

The BWF confirmed that Daren had participated in betting activities from 2018 to 2021 and attempted to obstruct the investigation by concealing information.

Meanwhile, touching on the 2024 National Women's Football League (LWN), Yeoh congratulated the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) for the successful organisation of the league.

"Our Sports Matching Grant is normally awarded to one association. However, we have revised the conditions to allow associations to apply for funds more than once.

"So I hope the women's team will use the opportunity to get funds to make the National Women's League more successful," she said.

Meanwhile, Yeoh has condemned the brawl involving football fans at the Bandar Tasik Selatan Light Rail Transit (LRT) Station on the Ampang-Sri Petaling Line on Friday (Dec 20).

Yeoh stressed that winning and losing is part of the game and all sides must respect government assets, which are the proceeds of taxpayers, including the perpetrators themselves.

Prasarana (Prasarana Malaysia Berhad) said yesterday that it had filed a police report about the incident at the Sungai Besi Police Station. - Bernama

'Bin Shen's successor must have midas touch'

THE successor to Tan Bin Shen as the national men's doubles coach must possess the "midas touch" to secure the elusive Olympic gold for Malaysia at Los Angeles 2028 (LA28), said former national badminton great Datuk Razif Sidek.

Razif said Bin Shen had proven his worth and it is now incumbent on the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) to find a coach who could match or even surpass his achievements.

"We have to thank Bin Shen for his good work, including raising the world rankings of our players.

"Now BAM have no choice but to find a better coach. It doesn't matter which country the coach is from, as our ultimate aim is to clinch gold at the 2028 Olympic Games," he told Bernama when contacted yesterday.

Last Friday, BAM announced that Bin Shen will

resign on Jan 13 after serving the national body since December 2020.

Former international Bin Shen played an instrumental role in raising the standard of several men's doubles pairs, including helping Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik secure Malaysia's first-ever world title in 2022.

Media reports said the 40-year-old would be joining the Hong Kong national team coaching stable under former world No. 1 Wong Choong Hann in February, alongside two other Malaysians, Jeremy Gan and Loh Wei Sheng.

Razif declined to name his preferred candidate for the national men's doubles coaching job, stressing that what is important is building trust between the new coach, the players and BAM management. - Bernama

Magnum Corporation Sdn Bhd (8272-D)
Winning Results
 Full payment guaranteed

Draw No: 137/24 Date: 22/12/2024

4D Classic

1st Prize **0048**
 2nd Prize **9053**
 3rd Prize **3898**

SPECIAL		CONSOLATION	
4289	8614	1714	4756
4149	9775	0982	1921
7544	3234	1052	4570
3165	2529	1458	0251
1170	2224	3668	0819

4D Jackpot

Jackpot 1 **RM4,193,831.94**
PARTIALLY WON

0048 + 9053	0048 + 3898
9053 + 0048	9053 + 3898
3898 + 0048	3898 + 9053

Jackpot 2 **RM255,914.63**
PARTIALLY WON

Winning pair matches any 1 of Top 3 & any 1 of Special prizes.

Play smarter. Get rewarded with MyMagnum 4D app!

Magnum Life

5	20	22	24	27	28	29	36
+							
21		31					

Grand Prize
 RM1,000 EVERY DAY for 20 years

2nd Prize
 RM1,000 EVERY DAY for 100 days

Jackpot Gold

Jackpot 1 **RM11,208,851.43**
 Jackpot 1 - Group 1 + Golden Number

Jackpot 2 **RM225,775.46** PARTIALLY WON
 Jackpot 2 - Group 2 + Golden Number

GROUP 1	4	8	5	3	9	8						
GROUP 2	4	8	5	3	9	8	OR	8	5	3	9	8
GROUP 3	4	8	5	3	9	8	OR	5	3	9	8	
GROUP 4	4	8	5	3	9	8	OR	3	9	8		
GROUP 5	4	8	5	3	9	8	OR	5	3			

GOLDEN NUMBER 00

All jackpot amounts stated above are for this Draw. Subject to T&Cs of the Scheme. Please visit to www.magnum4d.my for more info. THE BIGGER PLAY IS TO PLAY RESPONSIBLY.



Read **theSun** iPaper at www.thesun.my
 Free access to iPaper PDF Download
 or download **theSun** app from the App Store or Google Play™.

SCAN ME

Noble Haaland

Norwegian striker takes blame for City woes after Aston Villa defeat

Manchester City's Erling Haaland (left) in action with Aston Villa's Pau Torres during their English Premier League match at Villa Park. - REUTERS/SPIC

ERLING HAALAND has taken full responsibility for Manchester City's recent poor form, urging fans to lay the blame on him.

The Norwegian striker had another disappointing day as City suffered their ninth defeat in their last 12 matches across all competitions.

Haaland declared: "I haven't been good enough and I haven't delivered for City this season."

"I need to step up and work harder. I just need to get better. It just isn't good enough. I will do everything I can to do better."

"In the defining moments I'm failing to score - in the defining moments, we're conceding goals."

"The margins are small and that's how it is. I will do everything I can to turn this around."

Haaland confessed that their dire run of form, which has seen City win only one of their last 12, is taking its toll on the team.

He admitted: "We know how important confidence is and you can see that it affects every human being. The confidence levels are not the best."

"But we have to continue, we have to believe and we have to keep working hard."

But Haaland expects Pep Guardiola to figure it out: "He won the Premier League six times in seven years, so we will never forget that."

"He will find the solutions. He has been doing that every single year. We still believe in him."

Guardiola said himself in the wake of the Villa Park defeat: "We have to think positive and I have incredible trust in the guys."

"Some of them have incredible pride and desire to do it. We have to find a way, step by step, sooner or later to find a way back."

"The solution is to bring the players back. We have just one central defender fit, that is difficult."

"And there are a lot more reasons. We



concede the goals we don't concede in the past, we (don't) score the goals we score in the past. Football is not just one reason. There are a lot of little factors."

According to Premier League icon Stephen Warnock, City players are questioning each other amid a dreadful downturn in fortunes.

City have been on a downward spiral since losing Rodri to an ACL injury at the end of September and have lost six of their last eight top flight encounters.

The eight-time Premier League champions have also lost two of their last three Champions League matches and were dumped out of the Carabao Cup by Tottenham at the end of October.

And Warnock, who made 212 Premier League appearances during spells with

Liverpool, Blackburn and Aston Villa, has given his verdict on the situation at the Etihad Stadium.

"Obviously there has been a lot of talk about the Rodri situation and I do think that's had a big knock-on effect," the former left-back told *Express Sport*.

"But I think what we're seeing is a team that has never suffered in confidence and now they're suffering in confidence. And they've never had to deal with this."

"It's such a difficult thing to try and turn back on and the players are starting to sort of question each other at the moment and finding life difficult on the pitch."

"Guardiola has so often come up with an answer and at the moment he hasn't found that answer to the system. They have had a lot of injuries as well. I don't think we can

hide behind that."

"He does work with a small squad, albeit a very talented squad. But they're finding it difficult to find those answers."

"What we're seeing at City and what Guardiola's spoken about is the need for a little bit of a change of the guard if you like and he needs to freshen things up within the squad. And we'll start to see that probably straight away in January."

City will be aiming to turn their form around over the festive period and will be targeting maximum points when they host Everton on Boxing Day. - *Express Newspapers*

Usyk beats Fury in rematch

Story on page 28

Gunners' Christmas demand

Story on page 29

Atletico top La Liga

Story on page 30