



# Sinkhole fears persist

Shopkeepers and vendors in Jalan Masjid India grapple with poor business as locals and tourists still afraid to shop near the tourist hotspot more than four months after pavement opened up and claimed the life of tourist.

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## M'sia gets down to work as Asean chair

New role provides opportunity to enhance Asean network, strengthen regional and international cooperation, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

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## Almost 1,000 incest cases reported in 4 years

Situation reflects social and familial dysfunction, with consequences extending to individuals and society: Academic

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Many locals and foreigners used to shop here, but now most just rush by, says a fashion shop assistant. —ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN



Anwar welcoming Prabowo at KL International Airport's Kompleks Bunga Raya yesterday. – BERNAMA/PI

# Regional, global cooperation M'sia's focus as Asean chair

➤ We do not want to consolidate strength solely in our country and marginalise others, says PM

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia has begun its Asean chairmanship this year by strengthening regional and international cooperation with visits by the leaders of neighbouring countries, namely Singapore, Indonesia and Japan, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the Asean chairmanship provides the nation an opportunity to enhance the Asean network to benefit both Malaysia and its regional partners.

"This is what we emphasised with the prime minister of Singapore. We do not want to focus on consolidating strength solely in Malaysia and marginalise others.

"Instead, we aim to find ways and methods to solve and discuss issues that complicate us, including Myanmar, because the main prerequisite for raising economic strength, peace and political stability includes clear policies and economic strategies that drive growth.

"This can be achieved through active private sector involvement and an efficient public sector," he said in his keynote address at the Malaysian Economic Forum yesterday.

Anwar said Malaysia and Singapore launched the Johor-Singapore Special

Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) during the visit by Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong last Monday.

He said JS-SEZ is expected to become a key economic driver for Johor, Singapore and the surrounding regions.

He added that the working visit by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto yesterday strengthens economic cooperation between Malaysia and Indonesia.

"This includes collaboration in Indonesia's key sectors, and partnerships with Khazanah Nasional Berhad and major Malaysian companies, particularly in the digital sector."

Indonesia is one of Malaysia's key trading partners, ranking as the seventh-largest globally and the third-largest among Asean member states in 2023.

Total trade between the two nations reached RM111.21 billion last year. Between January and October 2024, bilateral trade was valued at RM95.50 billion compared with RM94.37 billion for the corresponding period in 2023.

He said Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's visit this week is to discuss investment opportunities, trade and energy transition initiatives, including plans to make Sarawak a

new energy hub in the Southeast Asian region. Anwar said his meeting with former Thai prime minister Dr Thaksin Shinawatra near Langkawi last month enabled preparations for Malaysia's role as Asean chair.

He said his discussions with Thaksin included exploring avenues for cooperation with Thailand and the Indochinese region, particularly in emerging fields such as microchips, semiconductors and blockchain technology - areas Malaysia should prioritise for future growth.

Anwar said the Malaysian Economic Forum provided an opportunity to strategise ways to enhance Malaysia's economic strength, Bernama reported.

He highlighted the importance of exploring new industries while learning from existing success stories, such as Penang's semiconductor industry.

"Although the semiconductor industry in Penang has been established for a long time, we risk falling behind if we do not actively explore new areas. We must build comprehensive strengths to stay competitive."

Anwar also urged all parties to collaborate and focus on meaningful work, avoiding trivial issues that could undermine and weaken the country's progress.

"With fresh discourse, a willingness to embrace change and the humility to acknowledge our weaknesses, including in the government, we can drive meaningful progress for the benefit of all."

## 'Civil service recruitment based on meritocracy'

**PUTRAJAYA:** Recruitment of officers into the civil service is guided by principles of meritocracy and equal opportunity, said Public Service director-general Tan Sri Wan Ahmad Dahlan Abdul Aziz.

He said the recruitment process was handled fully by the appointing authority, which had the legal mandate to appoint individuals to various services.

"This recruitment process aims to ensure fair participation from all ethnic groups in the public sector, in line with the government's objective of providing more inclusive job opportunities while simultaneously selecting the best talents to deliver services to the people," he said in a media statement.

Wan Ahmad Dahlan said a total of 44,559,514 applications were received by the Public Services Commission, the Judicial and Legal Service Commission and the Education Service Commission between 2019 and 2023.

He said Malay applicants constituted the highest percentage of applicants at 77% while applications from Chinese and Indian applicants accounted for 2% and 3%, respectively.

Applications from Sabah and Sarawak Bumiputera, Orang Asli and other ethnic groups made up 18% of the total.

Wan Ahmad Dahlan said despite the lower number of applications from Chinese candidates over the five-year period, the percentage of appointments in relation to candidates interviewed was the highest at 85%, followed by Indians at 68%, Orang Asli at 54%, Sabah and Sarawak Bumiputera at 45%, other ethnic groups at 42% and Malays at 41%.

"This clearly demonstrates that marginalisation of any ethnic group does not occur in the recruitment process for civil service positions."

He said appointments were made in line with the government's principle of selecting the most suitable and qualified candidates for available positions based on their qualifications and performance in tests and interviews.

As of Dec 31, 2024, the Human Resource Management Information System recorded a total of 1,302,429 civil servants, excluding police personnel and the Malaysian Armed Forces.

Of the total, 77.7% are Malays, 5.4% Chinese and 3.7% Indians. The remaining 13.2% consist of Sabah and Sarawak Bumiputera, Orang Asli and other ethnicities.

"The ethnic composition gap in the civil service is primarily due to the very low number of non-Malays applying for government positions, despite having the highest appointment success rates each year compared with Malays."

Wan Ahmad Dahlan said the government would continue to enhance the recruitment system and processes to make it more efficient, transparent and accessible to all citizens.

He said the government urges all qualified Malaysians to take advantage of the opportunities available by joining the public service to contribute to national development while fostering more equitable and inclusive opportunities for all. – Bernama

## Nation's neutrality affords vast economic opportunities: Anwar

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Malaysia will optimise on its geographical centrality this year as a conduit for electricity, talent and supply chain diversification.

Referring to the Asean power grid connecting Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, including the Sarawak-Peninsular Malaysia connection via undersea cable, Anwar said it is "a fantastic field in terms of advancing Asean as a cohesive force" and as a regional

energy grid.

Anwar, who is also finance minister, said Malaysia also wants to refine its expertise in oil and gas, semiconductor and Islamic finance.

"We can be global market leaders in each field. It's our neutrality and openness for partnerships that make us a natural hub for all," he said at the Malaysia Economic Forum 2025 yesterday.

He said as superpowers retreat from responsibilities, build walls of protectionism and

lean towards economic isolation while simultaneously chanting the mantra of a rules-based world economic order, Malaysia sees an opening.

"This is a rare opportunity to recalibrate policy positions towards economic pluralism, cooperation across multilateral platforms and decisions infused with a moral conscience."

Anwar said Malaysia's Asean chairmanship is an opportune moment.

He said in today's shifting world economic

order, an empowered Asean and a stable Malaysia mean "we are no longer satisfied with playing the spectator".

"As Asia becomes the centre of the global economy, Asean is projected to be the fourth largest economic bloc.

"The lion's share of global growth will stem from a combination comprising Asean, India and China. (This will) result in a burgeoning middle class and growing influence over decision-making." – Bernama



Ron95 unchanged, Ron97 and diesel up five sen

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The retail price of RON95 will remain unchanged at RM2.05 per litre, while the price of RON97 will increase by five sen from RM3.28 to RM3.33 per litre from Jan 9 to 15.

The Finance Ministry, in a statement, said the retail price of diesel in Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan would remain at RM2.15 per litre, while in Peninsular Malaysia it would increase by five sen from RM2.98 to RM3.03 per litre during the same period.

"In line with the increase in global oil prices, the government has set the retail price of RON97 at RM3.33 per litre and diesel in Peninsular Malaysia at RM3.03 per litre.

"The retail price of diesel in Peninsular Malaysia still remains low compared to the floated price of RM3.35 per litre set on June 10, 2024," the statement said.

The prices were fixed based on the weekly retail prices of petroleum products using the Automatic Pricing Mechanism formula. — Bernama

## MOE denies leak of 2024 SPM history paper

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Education Ministry (MOE) has determined that the alleged leak of the 2024 Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) History examination papers is unfounded.

In a statement, the MOE said this conclusion followed an investigation, including all related broadcasts and screenshots of the allegation that went viral on social media.

"The screenshots that were shared only contained a list of titles from the History textbook that were used as predictions.

"No questions from the 2024 SPM History Papers 1 and 2 were displayed in any of the broadcasts or screenshots.

"Therefore, this allegation does not meet the definition of a leak as stipulated in the procedures for managing and handling cases of examination paper leaks and the security control of the MOE's Examination Board," the statement read.

The MOE said it takes the allegation of a History examination paper leak seriously and remains committed to ensuring the confidentiality of public examination papers. — Bernama

# Fears on Jalan Masjid India still linger despite reopening

■ BY HARITH HISHAM  
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➤ Shopkeepers and vendors struggle to revive business after sinkhole tragedy

**PETALING JAYA:** Despite Jalan Masjid India in Kuala Lumpur reopening on Dec 31, 2024 after a sinkhole claimed a life, lingering fears continue to affect shopkeepers and vendors due to poor business.

Al Rabia Fashion worker Muhammad Shaheed Irfan Zurkanain, 21, whose shop is located opposite the sinkhole, said the owner kept the shop open during the ordeal to stay afloat but customers rarely visited.

"Business was badly impacted. I understand that people fear coming to the street because of the sinkhole but it only affected that one location. There's no sign of any issues elsewhere," he said, adding that the shop relied on locals and tourists for business.

"This area is a tourist hotspot. Many locals and foreigners used to pass through but now most just rush by and cross over to the other side as soon as possible. Rent is high

here and business almost collapsed. Suppliers didn't want to come because of fear and the road closure."

Muhammad Shaheed said negative media coverage also worried the public and kept customers away but with the reopening, business is slowly recovering and foot traffic has returned to pre-sinkhole levels.

"The road has been cemented and fixed but there's still some lingering fear. People don't want to walk at the spot where the sinkhole opened up even though the road is now safe."

Hairul Hizwan Bakri, 36, who has run a stall selling coconut water and street food for over 10 years, said the closure of Jalan Masjid India was a heavy blow to his business.

"The sinkhole affected many

small traders like me. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, I had to close shop for a while which was financially stressful but things got better after the movement control order was lifted. Then the sinkhole happened and people avoided the road like the plague. Business hasn't fully recovered even though the road has reopened."

Hairul Hizwan said while the sinkhole only affected one particular spot, many people avoided the entire road out of fear.

"It's sad to see such a popular hotspot suddenly lose its appeal but we're hoping for better times soon."

Emily Liew, 34, a clerk who works close to Jalan Masjid India, believes the fear surrounding the area is no longer justified as the entire stretch of road, including the repaired sinkhole site, is now safe.

"Now that it's reopened, I feel people shouldn't be afraid anymore. The road is stable and safe.

"I've worked around this area for seven years. When the sinkhole opened up, I was genuinely concerned but here I am, walking on this road daily. I am surprised many people are scared to come here. Even some of my colleagues continue to avoid walking through this area and opt for longer routes."

Kuala Lumpur Mayor Datuk Seri Dr Maimunah Mohd Sharif said restoration and repair work included fixing damaged sewage channels, restoring walkways at ground zero and upgrading the drainage system around Wisma Malayu and Jalan Masjid India.

On Aug 23, 2024, Indian tourist G. Vijaya Lakshmi, 48, was swallowed up by an eight-metre-deep sinkhole that suddenly opened up in Jalan Masjid India as she walked by. Her remains have not been recovered since the incident.



**DEVOUT PRAYER ...** A devotee praying at the Tian Hock Kung Temple in Klang ahead of the Chinese New Year celebration on Jan 29, which also marks the year of the snake. — ADIB RAWI YAHYA/THESUN

## Two Umno leaders sworn in as senators

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Two Umno leaders were sworn in as senators before Dewan Negara president Datuk Awang Beme Ali Basah yesterday.

They are Wanita Umno secretary Datuk Rosni Sohar and Ipoh Barat Umno division chief Datuk Shamsuddin Abd Ghaffar.

Shamsuddin's appointment is a reappointment by the Perak State Assembly, effective from Dec 20 until Dec 19, 2027, while Rosni was appointed by the His Majesty, Sultan Ibrahim, King of Malaysia for a term starting today until Jan 8, 2028.

In his speech at the event, Awang Beme congratulated the two senators and encouraged them to use social media to enhance public understanding of the roles of the Senate.

"To also enhance public understanding of the supremacy of the Constitution and the rule of law among the people of Malaysia, social media can provide an influential platform for this purpose," he said.

Meanwhile, Awang Beme noted that in an effort to perform their duties and responsibilities more effectively, the Senators' Council has established three committees addressing public interests.

These committees are the Special Select Committee on Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption, the Committee on Social and Community Affairs and the Committee on Legal Review.

"All committee members are encouraged to engage with both public and private sectors, domestically and internationally, specifically but not limited to those practicing the Westminster system." — Bernama

## MACC reports progress on national anti-corruption strategy

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Five out of the 60 sub-strategies outlined under the national anti-corruption strategy 2024-2028, covering education, public accountability and enforcement, have been successfully implemented since its launch in May last year.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), in a statement, said under the education strategy the Integrity and anti-corruption course module had been introduced as a compulsory course for all students of higher education institutions to provide them with exposure to the issue of corruption, and its negative impact on society and the nation.

"The Duta Sahsiah Kit launched by the Education Ministry on Nov 25 last year helps foster the value of *karamah insaniah* among students.

"In addition, in line with the aspirations of the National Education Philosophy, themed weeks on ethics, moral values and anti-corruption have been included in the school academic calendar to educate students from an early stage," said the statement.

According to the MACC, focus was also given to strengthening the integrity of civil servants through the implementation of the Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strengthening Module to cultivate a

culture of good governance by government organisations by emphasising the involvement of all levels in ministries, departments and agencies.

Under the public accountability strategy, the commission said the government had taken decisive action by placing serious emphasis on resolving emerging issues reported through the AG Dashboard.

"The role of the Internal Audit Unit (UAD) in federal and state ministries and departments has been reinforced with the introduction of the 'Guidelines on the Roles and Responsibilities of National Audit Department Officers Assigned to

UAD in Ministries, Departments or State Secretary Offices', which came into force on July 1.

"More aggressive measures are being taken to prevent leakages and misappropriation of public funds, ensuring that government spending is optimised for the people's benefit," the statement said.

Under the enforcement strategy, the Border Control and Protection Agency Act (Act 860) was gazetted on Oct 17, 2024, strengthening the enforcement mechanism by creating a coordinated approach to more efficient national border control to protect Malaysia's national interests and security. — Bernama

# Beware dark side of skin whitening 'drip' treatment

➤ Undergoing unapproved IV procedure could cause vein inflammation and anaphylactic shock, warns dermatologist

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**PETALING JAYA:** Experts are sounding the alarm over the growing popularity of advertisements touting "intravenous (IV) skin-whitening drips" at beauty spas across Malaysia, citing the lack of regulatory approval and the significant health risks involved.

Beauty parlours are offering such treatments on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. Even a branch of a popular medical clinic is advertising the treatment on TikTok.

However, aesthetic dermatology expert and founder of a supplements company Dr Lim Ing Kien said while certain IV procedures are allowed under strict medical supervision in clinics or hospitals, the Health Ministry has not approved IV skin-lightening treatments.

"The ministry is adamant about stopping IV skin-lightening drips and will send enforcement teams to crack down on doctors or practitioners offering such treatments.

"Also, based on current peer-reviewed studies, there is no scientific evidence that IV drips can reliably or safely lighten the skin tone."

Lim said most claims come from anecdotal stories or unverifiable sources, adding that he strongly recommended caution against such "miraculous promises".

He said the short-term risks of IV whitening drips include allergic reactions, vein inflammation, infections, or even anaphylactic shock, while the long-term risks, though under-researched, raise serious concerns.

These include liver and kidney stress, immune suppression with repeated use of high-dose glutathione, and the potential risk of cancer.

"IV administration delivers substances directly into the bloodstream. The liver and kidneys must work overtime to filter out excess or foreign substances, and high or frequent doses can lead to organ stress or damage over time."

Lim said unregulated treatments come with additional risks, including incorrect dosing, the use of unapproved substances, and complications that may go untreated if performed by unqualified individuals.

He attributed the proliferation of such skin-lightening treatments to weak

enforcement, financial gain, and misinformation since there is a high demand for quick-fix beauty solutions.

Central Dermatology Specialist Clinic consultant dermatologist Dr Teeba Raja echoed Lim's warning that IV drips for skin lightening, such as those containing glutathione or high-dose vitamin C, are not approved by the Health Ministry or the US Food and Drug Administration.

She too warned that there is limited scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of such treatments for skin lightening, adding that the treatments are prompted by "society's ideas of what defines beauty".

"The popularity of skin-lightening treatments often reinforces narrow and unrealistic beauty ideals that equate fair skin with attractiveness. This can contribute to feelings of inadequacy, particularly among younger people who may feel pressured to conform to such standards and sign up for these unapproved treatments."

Teeba said using sunscreen daily, staying hydrated, eating a balanced diet, exercising and following a proper skincare routine can make a huge difference.

"For specific concerns, treatments such as chemical peels, skin boosters, or lasers administered by professionals can be safer and more effective options."

She also emphasised the importance of public education to combat the risks of unproven cosmetic procedures.

"Dermatologists can provide accurate, evidence-based information, guide patients towards using approved products, and encourage treatments performed by professionals holding a letter of credentialing and privileging, which is a certification that allows medical doctors to practise aesthetic medicine."

She added that collaboration with the Health Ministry to enforce regulations and stop illegal medical practices is also critical.

Lim and Teeba urged the public to consult licensed medical professionals for any cosmetic treatments.

"Skin health is about overall well-being and not just the colour of one's skin tone. Embracing a balanced lifestyle and avoiding shortcuts will save one from taking life-threatening risks," said Lim.



Lim attributed the proliferation of skin-lightening treatments to weak enforcement, financial gain and high demand for quick-fix beauty solutions. – SYED AZAHAR SYED OSMAN/THESUN

## Tourism promotional video to be redone: Minister

**PETALING JAYA:** The promotional video for Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VM2026) will be redone in more detail to effectively promote each state, and is expected to be aired in a week.

Tourism, Arts, and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing said the ministry and its relevant agencies have been instructed to produce a new video and divide the promotion of states by zones, as he was not satisfied with the final version of the promotional video shown to him yesterday.

"I want the video to be divided by zones, so that people would know what (attractions) each state has to offer," Tiong said at the engagement session with the tourism industry players for the central region, here yesterday.

He said all state governments were told to cooperate by supplying information about their tourism attractions, which would be highlighted in the video.

Tiong also emphasised that the 41-second video, which has sparked controversy on social media, is not the video that will be used for promotional purposes.

On Wednesday, Tiong reportedly said elements of mosque architecture will be included in a more comprehensive promotional video.

He said the disputed video, which was shown during the launch of the VM2026 logo, mascot, theme song, and aircraft livery on Monday was a short promotional montage for the event.

The montage, which was also uploaded to Tourism Malaysia's official Facebook page, features several popular tourist destinations, including Petaling Street (Kuala Lumpur's Chinatown), Central Market, Mulu Caves (Sarawak), Langkawi Skywalk (Kedah), Batu Caves (Selangor), and an old church in Malacca.

Tiong reminded the public not to politicise the issue or turn it into a religious or racial matter.

He also urged tourism agencies to take full responsibility for ensuring the safety of tourists, including providing two tour bus drivers for long-distance journeys, limiting work hours to no more than eight hours, and ensuring that tour bus drivers are free of drugs. – Bernama

## Centre set to bring benefits for villagers

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The setting up of a National Information Dissemination Centre (Nadi) at Kampung Orang Asli Kelinsing, Sepang, Selangor, an adopted village of the Communications Ministry, is set to bring significant benefits to the local community.

The ministry's Development Division undersecretary Maizatuzsima Judi said the provision of the Nadi facility would enhance the potential and well-being of the villagers, bring them closer to technology and help improve their living standards through various digital resources.

"Kampung Kelinsing is the sole Madani Adopted Village in the country to be equipped with Nadi.

"This initiative is not part of the RM2.5 million allocation (for the adopted village programme). Instead, it reflects the commitment of Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil and the ministry's secretary-general Datuk Mohamad Fauzi Md Isa to provide infrastructure that will help villagers learn something new, such as gig and digital economy," she said on Bernama TV's *Apa Khabar Malaysia* programme yesterday.

She said the Nadi facility, managed by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), is to be launched tomorrow.

Maizatuzsima said various activities have been planned for the event, including a *gotong-royong*, an exhibition showcasing *Orang Asli* handicraft and culture, and an online safety awareness programme by MCMC.

She added that the ministry has also helped rebuild a cultural hall and a canteen at a designated site for cultural activities.

"The ministry saw the need to improve infrastructure here, so we have paved the roads leading to the village and upgraded drainage systems, as this area previously faced flooding problems," she said.

Maizatuzsima added that these infrastructure improvements are expected to attract more tourists to the village, thereby promoting local handicraft in time for Visit Malaysia Year 2026.

The *Madani* Adopted Village is an initiative by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim under Budget 2024 to enhance access to basic facilities through government approach. – Bernama

## Aye to pedestrianising Jalan Bukit Bintang

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Transit Malaysia strongly supports the idea of pedestrianising Jalan Bukit Bintang.

The NGO, in a statement, said currently, the street experienced daily congestion due to private vehicles being parked on the side of the three-lane road with road traffic often coming to a standstill during peak periods such as weekends or evenings when private vehicle movement in the city centre is high.

"By redesigning to accommodate more people travelling to Bukit Bintang by foot or public transport, Jalan Bukit Bintang will retain its energy, no matter the traffic situation," said the NGO.

The proposal by the authorities aims to reduce traffic congestion by limiting private vehicle access and prioritising pedestrians, making the area safer and more vibrant.

In supporting the plan, the group also suggests redesigning the Jalan Bukit Bintang-Sultan Ismail intersection to allow pedestrians to cross from all angles at more frequent intervals, and introducing bus-only lanes to improve public transport accessibility.

Transit Malaysia also believes that increasing pedestrian space could boost business growth in the area.

"The area is already well served by public transport, with connections to the MRT Kajang Line, KL Monorail Line, and several GoKL bus routes," the NGO said. – Bernama





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■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH  
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**PETALING JAYA:** Incest is a growing concern in Malaysia, with 996 cases reported from 2021 to October 2024.

On Dec 16 last year, Bukit Aman Sexual, Women and Child Investigation Division principal assistant director Asst Comm Siti Kamsiah Hassan said victims, often as young as six years old, are mainly targeted by their biological fathers or close relatives.

She said most incidents involve low-income families with limited education, in which parents often fail to provide religious and moral guidance or show affection towards their children.

Lawyer Kokila Vaani Vadiveloo said incestuous relationships in Malaysia are addressed under various laws that criminalise sexual offences and protect minors from abuse and exploitation.

She said the legal framework defines incest as sexual intercourse between individuals prohibited from marrying one another under law, religion or cultural customs, emphasising that the definition lacks clarity.

"The focus is often on prohibiting marriage between immediate family members rather than adopting a broader understanding of incest as a criminal offence.

"Even under the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territories) Act 1984, the minimum marriage age is 18 for men and 16 for women but exceptions allow marriages below these ages provided written consent is obtained from a *syariah* court."

# Nation faces growing issue of incest

➤ Incidents involve low-income families with limited education, in which parents often fail to provide guidance or show affection: Expert

She said for non-Muslims, who are governed by civil law, the minimum marriage age is 18 and those aged between 18 and 20 require parental consent to marry.

She also said 16-year-old girls can marry in certain states with permission from the chief minister, as outlined in the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act 1976.

"One key factor contributing to the problem is Malaysia's dual legal system that combines the common law system with *syariah* law. This creates loopholes that enable child marriages to exist, potentially increasing the risk of incest."

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia sociology and anthropology lecturer Prof Dr Novel Lyndon said incest reflects social and familial dysfunction, with consequences that extend to individuals and society.

He said emotional stress, cramped living conditions and

exposure to pornography often contribute to such behaviour while offenders, who are typically male, may be driven by unresolved childhood trauma, substance abuse or the need to dominate another.

"Cultural factors often deter families from reporting incest due to fears of tarnishing their reputation or social status. This reluctance stems from societal stigma as public exposure could lead to scrutiny and humiliation, especially in an era in which information spreads rapidly."

Lyndon said incest cases highlight the tension between preserving family dignity and protecting children's rights, and historically, laws in some societies allowed girls as young as 12 years old to marry with family consent.

"This reflects a clash between modern legal protections and traditional norms. Religious and cultural perspectives on

marriageable age and practices complicate discussions on incest and child marriage."

He said addressing the issue requires an approach that integrates education, community involvement and legal enforcement.

"Sex education in schools and universities is crucial for teaching young people about healthy relationships and boundaries.

"Awareness campaigns, anonymous reporting mechanisms, and support from religious institutions and social workers could help foster a safer environment."

Technological solutions, such as mobile apps to report abuse, could enable victims to seek help discreetly while families play an essential role in the prevention of incest by educating children about its legal consequences, apart from teaching values and religion.

"Monitoring behaviour, fostering open communication and addressing signs of potential abuse are critical steps towards creating safe home environments. Awareness campaigns on the law and consequences of incest could empower society to safeguard children and uphold their rights."

## Highest post-Covid revenue collection

**PUTRAJAYA:** The Customs Department recorded a revenue collection of RM65.57 billion in 2024, which is its highest post-pandemic collection.

Its director-general Datuk Anis Rizana Mohd Zainudin said the collection exceeded the Finance Ministry's reviewed projection of RM61.17 billion.

She said the collection marks an 18.85% increase from the RM55.17 billion recorded in 2023, Bernama reported.

"This reflects the department's efforts in strengthening the country's revenue collection through empowering enforcement, tax compliance and efficient digitalisation initiatives."

She said the department aims to collect RM67.25 billion in revenue this year, as stipulated by the ministry in the 2025 Fiscal Outlook and Federal Government Revenue Estimates report.

"This year, we will try to achieve the key performance indicator set by the ministry."

She said the department also thwarted 7,215 attempts of smuggling and embezzlement of funds in 2024.

She added that these cases involved the seizure of various goods with a total value of RM1.644 billion.

"This figure shows an increase of 85.91% compared with the 2023 seizure of RM884.27 million."

She said among the commodities that recorded the highest value of seizures were cigarettes, liquor, currency, meat or frozen chicken, and spare vehicle parts.

## Indian Navy aids Malaysian vessel in distress

**PETALING JAYA:** A Malaysian-flagged sailing vessel that was stranded in the Indian Ocean was given critical support by the Indian Navy after it had run low on fuel.

The vessel, with five Chinese nationals aboard, was 225 nautical miles west of Indira Point, the southernmost tip of the Indian mainland, on Jan 4 when it called for help.

According to India News Network (INN), the vessel sought assistance through the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), a regional maritime security initiative established by India.

Responding promptly, the Indian Navy deployed a surveillance aircraft to monitor the vessel's movement.

Indian Naval Ship (INS) Kirch was redirected to provide assistance.

It intercepted the vessel on Tuesday and delivered 1,000 litres of fuel, enabling it to resume its journey to its next port of call.

The IFC-IOR, headquartered in Gurugram, India, played a pivotal role in coordinating this assistance.

Established in 2018 under India's Security and Growth for All in the Region vision, the IFC-IOR aims to enhance maritime domain awareness, foster regional cooperation and address security challenges in the



Indian Ocean region.

"The Indian Navy is steadfast in its resolve to ensure the safety of mariners in the Indian Ocean.

"This mission exemplifies our dedication to maritime cooperation and the humanitarian principles that guide our operations," said a senior Navy official quoted by INN.

The incident highlights the

strategic importance of enhancing maritime infrastructure and cooperation in the region.

With increasing commercial and strategic activities in the region, maintaining maritime security mechanisms is vital to address challenges such as illegal fishing and environmental emergencies.

Providing assistance in the Indian

Ocean's challenging environment requires extensive planning and coordination. The region's vastness, coupled with harsh weather conditions, poses significant hurdles.

INS Kirch's timely intervention and the Indian Navy's efficient use of resources underscore their excellence in responding to such emergencies.

The incident highlights the strategic importance of enhancing maritime infrastructure and cooperation in the region.  
—SIDHANT SIBAL/X

## Vehicle inspection officers held in bribery case

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) has arrested another 13 vehicle inspection officers on suspicion of their involvement in a syndicate that approves heavy vehicles inspections.

According to sources, the suspects, all men aged between 20 and 40, were arrested on Tuesday and Wednesday when they went to give evidence at the MACC headquarters in Putrajaya.

"Preliminary investigations revealed that all are believed to have received bribes of between RM150 and RM1,500 per month in cash from runners in return for helping to approve vehicle inspections at their place of duty.

"The arrests follow the detention of six vehicle inspectors on Monday and the results of an interrogation conducted by MACC on an agent handed over by the Road Transport Department," one source said.

Its deputy chief commissioner (Operations) Datuk Seri Ahmad Khusairi Yahaya confirmed the arrests and said the case is being investigated under Section 16(b)(A) of the MACC Act 2009. — Bernama

## Private contractor loses RM5.9m in investment scam

**SHAH ALAM:** A private contractor has lost over RM5.9 million after being scammed by an investment scheme via Facebook.

Selangor police chief Datuk Hussein Omar Khan said the 58-year-old victim began participating in the investment in

September after he was attracted by the impressive-sounding credentials of an investment ad by Davidson Kempner Capital Management.

He said the victim was instructed to download the A-Trade app.

"The victim needed to ensure the amount in his account was sufficient

to purchase the desired share units and make the instructed transactions.

"He transferred RM5,900,506.48 through 30 transactions into eight different company accounts from September to November 2024."

Hussein said the victim, who realised he had been duped after not

receiving any returns, filed a report at the Kajang district police station on Tuesday, Bernama reported.

Authorities advise the public to be wary of investment offers on social media platforms by parties not approved by Bank Negara or the Securities Commission of Malaysia.



**THAI HELD IN CAMBODIA OVER FATAL SHOOTING**

BANGKOK: A suspect wanted over a former politician's fatal shooting was arrested in Cambodia on Wednesday. Former lawmaker Lim Kimya, 74, was killed by a gunman in Bangkok on Tuesday. He was a member of the Cambodia National Rescue Party, the popular opposition that was dissolved by a court ahead of the 2018 election over an alleged treason plot, which the party dismissed at the time as a fabrication. Bangkok police chief Sayam Boonsom said Thailand would be requesting extradition of the suspect, who is a Thai national. A Thai court earlier on Wednesday issued an arrest warrant for the 41-year-old motorcycle taxi driver, who police officers said was a former marine. — Reuters

**YAKUZA BOSS PLEADS GUILTY TO TRAFFICKING**

WASHINGTON: The leader of a Japanese crime syndicate who was charged by US authorities with trafficking nuclear materials from Myanmar pleaded guilty on Wednesday. Takeshi Ebisawa, 60, of Japan, pleaded guilty in Manhattan, New York, to conspiring with a network of associates to traffic nuclear materials, including uranium and weapons-grade plutonium, from Myanmar to other countries. Ebisawa also pleaded guilty to international narcotics trafficking and weapons charges. In February 2024, US authorities charged Ebisawa with conspiring to traffic nuclear materials from Myanmar for expected use by Iran in nuclear weapons. — Reuters

**Philippines arrests 400 foreigners in scam centre raid**

MANILA: Around 400 foreign nationals were arrested on Wednesday in a raid on an online scam farm here.

Authorities raided a building and found workers allegedly engaged in online scam operations targeting victims abroad.

International concern has grown over similar scam operations in Asia which are often staffed by trafficking victims who were tricked or coerced into promoting bogus cryptocurrency investments and other cons.

"Their operations were found to be in violation of immigration laws and posed significant risks to the public," said Fortunato Manahan, the Bureau of Immigration intelligence division chief.

President Ferdinand Marcos in July announced a ban by the end of 2024 on Philippine online gaming operators (POGO) that Manila says have been used as cover by organised crime groups for human trafficking, money laundering, online fraud, kidnappings and even murder.

The Bureau of Immigration had been monitoring the "POGO-like activities" of the raided company "for some time".

The foreign nationals, many of whom were Chinese, were undergoing booking procedures, said immigration bureau spokeswoman Dana Sandoval.

They will be temporarily detained while awaiting deportation.

The Washington-based think-tank United States Institute of Peace said in a May 2024 report that online scammers target millions of victims around the world and rake in annual revenues of US\$64 billion (RM288 billion). — AFP

# Black Nazarene procession draws hundreds of Filipinos

## Devotees mass in Manila for a miracle

MANILA: Hundreds of thousands of Catholic pilgrims swarmed the streets of Manila in search of a miracle yesterday, straining to reach a centuries-old statue of Jesus Christ in an annual display of religious fervour.

The procession to the Philippine capital's Quiapo Church, which started before dawn after an open-air mass, was expected to swell to more than two million participants from across the heavily Catholic country, church officials said.

Barefoot men and women in maroon shirts — the colour of the robe that covers the black, wooden Jesus the Nazarene statue —

scrambled to grab the rope used to draw the life-sized icon, believing it would bring good health.

"I prayed that my mother be healed from her heart attack," said Dong Lapira, 54, of a previous procession where he had been bruised and jostled in his attempt to join those pulling the rope.

But he vowed to try again this time to see his wife healed of gallstones.

"The Nazarene is very sacred. It has granted many prayers," he said.

Some faithful threw white towels to worshippers tasked with guarding the float, hoping God's blessings might rub off on the cloth used to clean the statue's glass case.

One of the volunteer guards, Alvin Olicia, 38, said he was unaffected by the "extreme heat or rain" he had confronted at past processions.

"I don't feel it at all. I like my task,

because through catching other's handkerchiefs, I feel like I am connecting them to their faith and to the Nazarene."

While authorities have banned devotees from climbing on the carriage, some still clambered over other attendees, risking life and limb to be near the statue.

Ester Espiritu, 76, who travelled 35km from her home in Cavite province, said just catching a glimpse of it would be enough.

"Even if I'm struggling to come here because of my age ... I feel happy and well whenever I see the Nazarene," said Espiritu, who added she was praying for relief from a lingering shoulder injury.

The giant religious parade commemorates the arrival of the wooden statue of the genuflecting Jesus the Nazarene from Acapulco, Mexico, in the early 1600s, shortly after the start of the Spanish

colonial conquest.

The late Filipino priest and theologian Sabino Vengco said in 2019 the statue's revered black colour was due to the mesquite wood used in building the image, debunking a longstanding myth its blackened image was due to a fire that erupted on the ship that carried it to the Philippines.

President Ferdinand Marcos said the annual celebration of the icon was a "testament to our people's solidarity and camaraderie".

Manila Archbishop Cardinal Jose Advincula told devotees to turn away from evil, greed and vices and follow the teachings of Jesus Christ.

"Let us live up to his commandments, embrace his teachings and follow his example. It is better to follow the Beloved Lord," Advincula said in his homily ahead of the procession. — AFP/Reuters



Filipinos jostle to touch the carriage carrying the statue of the Black Nazarene yesterday. — REUTERS/SPIC

## Myanmar airstrike kills 40, says rescue worker

YANGON: A Myanmar military airstrike killed at least 40 people in a village in western Rakhine state, a rescue worker and an ethnic minority armed group said.

The Arakan Army (AA) is engaged in a fierce fight with the military for control of Rakhine, where it has seized swathes of territory in the past year, all but cutting off the capital Sittoung.

The Rakhine conflict is one element of the bloody chaos that has engulfed Myanmar since the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian government in a 2021 coup, sparking an uprising.

AA spokesperson Khaing Thu Kha told AFP a military jet bombed Kyauk Ni Maw, on Ramree island, around 1.20pm (4.50pm in Malaysia)

on Wednesday, starting a fire which engulfed more than 500 houses.

"According to initial reports, 40 civilians were killed and 20 were wounded," he said.

A member of a local rescue group whose team was helping people in the area said 41 people were killed and 52 wounded.

"At the moment, we don't even have enough betadine and methylated spirit to treat them as the transportation is hard," the rescue worker said on condition of anonymity to protect their safety.

Photos of the aftermath of the bombing showed dazed residents walking through charred, smoking ruins, the ground littered with corrugated metal, trees stripped bare of leaves and buildings

reduced to a few scraps of walls.

AFP has attempted to contact the government for comment on the incident, but calls have not been answered.

Ramree island is home to a planned China-backed deep sea port that when completed will serve as a gateway for Beijing to the Indian Ocean, though construction has been stalled by the unrest.

The military is struggling to fight opposition to its rule on multiple fronts around the country and it has been regularly accused of using air and artillery strikes to hit civilian communities.

As well as youth-led "People's Defence Forces" that emerged to oppose the coup, the military is also battling numerous long-established

and well-armed ethnic minority armed groups, including the AA, which control large areas of territory along the country's borders.

In November, the UN Development Programme warned that Rakhine was heading towards famine as fighting squeezed commerce and agricultural production.

The United Nations last week said that more than 3.5 million people have been displaced by the conflict in Myanmar — an increase of 1.5 million from last year.

The outlook for the coming year was "grim", the UN humanitarian agency OCHA said, with 19.9 million people — more than a third of the population — likely to need aid this year. — AFP



# Search called off, focus shifts to quake survivors

➤ More than 45,000 people moved to shelters

**BEIJING:** Authorities moved more than 45,000 people in earthquake-hit Tibet to shelters in a massive rescue operation at the foot of the Himalayas as they wound down the search in a high-altitude environment where the odds of survival were always slim.

The epicentre of Tuesday's 6.8 magnitude quake, one of the Chinese region's strongest tremors in recent years, was in Tingri, a rural county with a population of about 60,000 people around 80km north of Mount Everest.

The tremor shook buildings as far away as Nepal and parts of India, and destroyed more than 3,600 houses around Tingri, presenting a formidable task to rescuers in an area where the average elevation is more than 4,000m.

Forty-eight hours after the quake, experts say those trapped under the rubble are likely to have succumbed to hypothermia, with

temperatures dropping as low as -18°C at night.

An initial tally on Tuesday night showed at least 126 people had been killed and 188 injured, according to Chinese state media. It remained unchanged yesterday.

Rescue operations have focused on 27 villages within a 20km radius of Tingri. The area is home to 7,000 people.

Chinese officials on Wednesday ended the search for survivors, saying the focus was shifting to relocating the displaced and treating the injured after pulling 407 people from the rubble.

Authorities have yet to say how many people remain missing.

The State Council Information Office, which handles queries from the media on behalf of the central government, did not respond to a request for comment.

Foreign journalists need official permission to enter Tibet, which has been under Chinese rule since 1959.

"Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee, people in disaster areas

will certainly be able to overcome the catastrophe and rebuild their homes," a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday.

China's post-disaster response has been swift, with 11,000 rescuers deployed to the quake zone within hours of the first tremors. There have been more than 1,000 aftershocks.

Vice-Premier Zhang Guoping has led the quake-relief effort visiting the most severely affected areas.

Reconstruction must be accelerated to ensure the displaced can move into safe and warm homes as soon as possible, Xinhua cited Zhang as saying on Wednesday.

Around 46,500 people affected by the earthquake have been transferred to 187 resettlement sites in towns surrounding the epicentre in Tingri, state media said.

Rescue personnel have begun erecting prefabricated houses to replace the tents for the displaced, CCTV reported. About 1,000 of the earthquake proof and heated houses are being sent to Tingri and can be erected in about 10 minutes. — Reuters

## Afghanistan, India strengthen ties

**KABUL:** Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry said they saw India as a "significant regional and economic partner" after a meeting with its most senior Foreign Ministry official, the highest level talks with Delhi since the change in government in 2021.

India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Dubai on Wednesday.

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that they had discussed expanding relations and boosting trade through Chabahar Port in Iran, which India has been developing for goods to bypass the ports of Karachi and Gwadar in Pakistan.

"In line with Afghanistan's balanced and economy-focused foreign policy, the emirate aims to strengthen political and economic ties with India as a significant regional and economic partner," the Foreign Ministry statement said late on Wednesday.

India's Foreign Ministry said India was considering engaging in development projects in Afghanistan and looking to boost trade ties.

No foreign government, including India, officially recognises the Afghan administration.

However, India is one of several countries with a small mission in Kabul to facilitate trade, aid and medical support and has sent humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

Regional players including China and Russia have signalled they are willing to boost trade and investment in Afghanistan.

The Delhi meeting could ruffle Pakistan, which borders both countries and has fought three wars in the past against India.

Pakistan and Afghanistan also have a strained relationship, with Pakistan saying that several attacks that have occurred in its country have been launched from Afghan soil — a charge Afghanistan denies.

Earlier this week India's Foreign Ministry told journalists they condemned airstrikes conducted late last year by Pakistan on Afghan soil. — Reuters

## Military investigator acquitted in key case

**SEOUL:** A military court yesterday acquitted a former Marine Corps chief investigator of insubordination in a case that has been linked to the country's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol.

The case concerns a 20-year-old marine who was swept away during flood relief work in July 2023, with reports saying he had not been given a life jacket.

Park Jung-hun investigated the incident for the military but was allegedly told to "hold off" on sending his report to police after he found a number of top military brass bore some responsibility for the accident.

At the time, the office of President Yoon was accused by media of involvement in the cover-up.

Yoon later vetoed lawmakers' efforts to set up a special investigation.

Park was accused of insubordination and dismissed from the military for allegedly transferring his findings to police, but the court acquitted him yesterday.

The incident is regarded as a key event — alongside the 2022 Itaewon crowd crush tragedy and first lady Kim Keon Hee's Dior Bag bribery scandal — that contributed to President Yoon's growing unpopularity.

Park, who was met by cheering supporters outside the court, thanked the military judges for their "wise and courageous decision".

He said the verdict was also a result of "the support, encouragement, and backing from the people" and vowed to continue his work to ensure justice for the late marine, Chae Su-geun.

The Military Court of Korea did not respond to a request for comment. — AFP



Rescuers inspect a damaged house in Shigatse on Wednesday. — AFP/IC

## Folk singer Peter Yarrow dies at 86

**WASHINGTON:** American singer and songwriter Peter Yarrow (pic), who found fame with the 1960s folk music trio Peter, Paul and Mary, died on Tuesday at the age of 86.

Yarrow died at his New York home surrounded by family following a four-year battle with bladder cancer, publicist Ken Sunshine said.

"Our fearless dragon is tired and has entered the last chapter of his magnificent life," Yarrow's daughter Bethany said in a statement provided by Sunshine.

"The world knows Peter Yarrow the iconic folk activist, but the human being behind the legend is every bit as generous, creative, passionate, playful, and wise as his lyrics suggest."

Yarrow formed Peter, Paul and Mary with Noel Paul Stookey and Mary Travers. The group helped popularise the early work of Bob Dylan

and sang hits such as *Puff, The Magic Dragon*, which Yarrow co-wrote.

The group's version of Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind* helped transform the song into a civil rights anthem and introduced his music to a wider audience.

The trio were noted for their political activism. They performed at the 1963 civil rights March on Washington and at demonstrations protesting the Vietnam War.

Throughout his life, Yarrow campaigned for social change and causes, including equal rights, peace, the environment, gender equality, homelessness, hospice care, public

broadcasting and education.

In 1970, he served three months in jail after pleading guilty to charges that he sexually assaulted a 14-year-old girl who had gone to his hotel room to seek an autograph. Yarrow received a presidential pardon from President Jimmy Carter in 1981.



Stookey, the only living member of the trio, praised Yarrow's creative influence and said he would deeply miss his former bandmate.

"Being an only child, growing up without siblings may have afforded me the full attention of my parents, but with the formation of Peter, Paul and Mary, I suddenly had a brother named Peter Yarrow," Stookey said.

"And while his comfort in the city and my love of the country tended to keep us apart geographically, our different perspectives were celebrated often in our friendship and our music." — Reuters



## Johns Hopkins discrimination case settled

**WASHINGTON:** The US Education Department has reached a settlement with Johns Hopkins University over complaints about discrimination against people of Arab and Jewish ancestry at the institution.

The university has agreed to review its anti-harassment policies and to provide training to staff and students on addressing discrimination and harassment based on ancestry and ethnicity, according to the settlement posted online by the Education Department.

Johns Hopkins confirmed the settlement to local media.

"Discrimination of any kind, including antisemitism and anti-Arab bias, is not only at odds with university policy, but is also antithetical to our fundamental values," said a spokesperson for Johns Hopkins.

Rights advocates have noted rising antisemitic, anti-Arab and Islamophobic incidents, including during campus protests, since Israel launched its assault on Gaza after the Oct 7, 2023 attack.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 bars racial discrimination in US education programmes that receive federal funding.

US universities saw months of protests in which student demonstrators demanded an end to US support for Israel's war in Gaza and to college investments in companies that allegedly supported Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. — Reuters



Carter's flag-draped casket is transferred to a horse-drawn caisson at the US Navy Memorial before travelling on to the Capitol in Washington, DC, on Tuesday. — AFP/IC

# America mourns former president Jimmy Carter

► 'One of the most decent and humble public servants'

**WASHINGTON:** Jimmy Carter was honoured yesterday with a state funeral at Washington's National Cathedral, amid a groundswell of tributes honouring the 39th US president and the last from the so-called Greatest Generation.

The service caps a week of mourning that has seen Americans quietly filing past the flag-draped coffin in the US Capitol to pay their respects to Carter, who died on Dec 29 at the age of 100 in his home state of Georgia.

President Joe Biden delivered the eulogy for his fellow Democrat at the Episcopal church that has been a traditional venue for send-offs of

US presidents, from Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan to George H.W. Bush.

Biden revealed in an interview with *USA Today* published on Wednesday that Carter had asked him to do the honours when the pair — longstanding friends — met for the last time four years ago.

"Carter was a decent man. I think Carter looked at the world not from here but from here, where everybody else lives," Biden said as he gestured from above his head towards his heart.

Biden's living predecessors — Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump — joined around 3,000 mourners at the service, and yesterday was designated a national day of mourning, with federal offices closed.

Carter, who served a single term before a crushing election loss to Ronald Reagan in 1980, was

perceived as naive and weak in the dog-eat-dog world of politics.

A more nuanced image of him has emerged as the years passed, reassessing achievements like the brokering of a peace deal between Israel and Egypt.

He also received high praise for his humanitarian efforts and a Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

The first president to reach triple digits, he had been in hospice care since February 2023 in his hometown of Plains, Georgia, where he died and will be buried next to his late wife, former first lady Rosalynn Carter.

Mourners begun paying their respects on Saturday, as the carefully choreographed six-day farewell got under way with US flags flying at half-staff around the country.

A black hearse bearing Carter's remains paused at his boyhood family peanut farm in Plains, where

a bell was rung 39 times and staff stood in silent tribute.

Crowds gathered along the roadside to say their goodbyes, snap photographs or salute as the motorcade rolled slowly past.

Carter's flag-draped casket arrived at Washington's snow-covered US Capitol on Tuesday atop a gun carriage.

It was accompanied by hundreds of service members, with military pallbearers carrying Carter to the Rotunda to lie in state ahead of yesterday's ceremony — the first presidential funeral since Bush Senior died in 2018.

Chuck Schumer, the leader of the Democrats in the Senate, described Carter as "one of the most decent and humble public servants we have ever seen".

"President Carter was a living embodiment of leadership through service, compassion, and a thirst for justice for all." — AFP

### BRIEFS

#### THREE DETAINED SINCE OCTOBER

**SINGAPORE:** Three men have been detained since October for preparing to travel to the Middle East to fight against Israel. One had expressed willingness to carry out attacks in Singapore if instructed to do so. The Home Affairs Ministry said in a statement the three men were not linked to one other and had been "radicalised" online, but there was no indication others had been recruited. It was not immediately clear why the ministry announced the detention yesterday. The three were a director of a digital marketing company, a lift mechanic and a security guard, aged 41, 21 and 44, respectively. — Reuters

#### MILITARY TIGHTENS MEDIA RULES

**TEL AVIV:** The Israeli military placed new restrictions on media coverage of soldiers on active combat duty. The move came after a reservist vacationing in Brazil left the country abruptly when a judge ordered police to open an investigation following allegations that he had committed war crimes. Under the new rules, media interviewing soldiers of the rank of colonel and under will not be able to display their full names or faces, similar to the rules for pilots and special forces units. — Reuters

## Children among 12 killed in Israeli strikes

**GAZA STRIP:** Israeli forces pounded the Palestinian territory yesterday, killing at least 12 people including three girls.

The latest strikes came as Qatar, Egypt, and the United States mediate negotiations in Doha between Israel and Hamas for a deal to end the fighting in Gaza and secure the release of hostages.

Three girls and their father were killed when an airstrike hit their house in Nuseirat refugee camp, the civil defence agency reported.

Paramedic Mahmud Awad said he

helped transfer the bodies of two girls and their father, Mahmud Abu Kharuf to a hospital.

"Their bodies were found under the rubble of the house that the occupation bombed in the Nuseirat camp," Awad said. The body of the third girl had been found earlier by residents.

In a separate strike, eight people were killed when their house was struck in the town of Jabalia in northern Gaza.

Several more were wounded in that strike, the agency said.

Israeli airstrikes and shelling continues across Gaza, even as mediators push on with their efforts to halt the fighting and secure a deal for the release of hostages.

The Israeli military said its troops had recovered the body of Bedouin Arab hostage Youssef al-Zayadna in Gaza and brought it back to Israel.

"The troops located and recovered the body from an underground tunnel in the Rafah area of the Gaza Strip," the Israeli military said in a statement.

Earlier on Wednesday, Defence

Minister Israel Katz had said that the remains of Zayadna's son, Hamza, had also been brought to Israel.

The military clarified that the son's body had not been recovered, although "evidence found was linked to Hamza ... which raises serious concerns for his life".

The Bedouin Arab father and son were seized from Kibbutz Holit near the Gaza border on Oct 7, 2023.

Kidnapped with them were Hamza's sister and brother, who were released during a week-long truce in November 2023. — AFP



**UNDER ONE ROOF**

# Balancing household rules

**Q:** With three young children at home, I am trying to create order by setting rules. However, it feels like I am constantly needing to add new ones. How many rules should I set?

**Focus on the Family Malaysia:** There is much to be said about setting guidelines and boundaries that helps everyone in the family, but it is important to avoid overdoing it.

There was one mum who decided to write down her rules. It took her days to remember all of them and she ended up with six full pages.

She had close to a hundred rules and several had sub-points. She thought creating guidelines for almost every area of life would make it easier for her children to behave. Instead, she was making it harder.

Having too many rules may set children up for failure. When there are so many plates to keep spinning, they will constantly feel defeated. Sooner or later frustration will set in and your children's behaviour will get worse, not better.

Here is a tip for measuring if you have too many rules: if you cannot keep track of all of the household standards, your children do not stand a chance of remembering them, either.

How many rules should you have? There is no magic number but it is best to limit yourself to only what your children can remember and handle at their age. Less is better for parents, too. It helps you focus on what truly matters for your child's well-being.

To some extent, many rules can be seen as situational interpretations of the "golden rule", which is often paraphrased as: treat others the way you wish to be treated.

Making that your overall household standard will allow for adaptation to each scenario as it arises.

No matter how many rules you establish, it is important to remember that too many can be counterproductive. However, a reasonable number can help guide your children toward personal growth and greater maturity.

**Q:** I have been married for eight years. My wife

and I are trying to get back into the habit of regular "just us" dates. But we enjoy spending time with friends, too. How do we balance it all?

**Focus on the Family Malaysia:** Married couples need to spend a lot of one-on-one time together. But you also need to surround yourselves with other couples who can positively influence your relationship and help strengthen it.

Your marriage is not an island. You need to interact with other couples – to invest in their lives and for them to invest in yours. This is especially important because so many people live far away from members of their extended family and cannot benefit from their influence.

If you do not have family support, the influence of good friends is invaluable.

That is why it is helpful to double date with other couples. There is no hard-and-fast rule for how often but making one out of every four dates a double date is a pretty reasonable goal.

If you date your spouse once a week, which

we think is the optimum, that is one double date a month. But if you and your spouse only go out once a month, you can still squeeze in three double dates a year. That may not sound like much but do not underestimate the impact it can make.

Relationships with other couples can help keep your marriage healthy and will be especially invaluable if your marriage hits a rough spot.

During troubled times, couples tend to isolate. Friendships will give your marriage a strong shoulder to lean on and help you get through the painful times you are facing.

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

**LETTERS** letters@thesundaily.com

## Urgent call for awareness and action on water security

**AS** a Malaysian student who recently returned from studies in Australia, I was immediately confronted with an all-too-familiar problem: a water disruption in my neighbourhood caused by burst pipes.

This was not just a one-off incident. I soon discovered that burst pipes and water disruptions, often linked to pollution, are a recurring challenge in Malaysia. For a country blessed with abundant rainfall, this is ironic and deeply frustrating.

During the disruption, I was further disheartened to see blatant water wastage in my neighbourhood. Neighbours continued watering plants excessively, washing cars with running hoses and leaving taps on unnecessarily.

This behaviour reflects a worrying lack of awareness about water as a finite resource. This experience made me question the state of water security in Malaysia and how it compares with countries like Australia.

Water security is about ensuring the availability of sufficient, safe water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being and economic development while preserving ecosystems.

While Australia, despite its dry climate, has embraced water conservation as a way of life, with rainwater harvesting systems, strict regulations and public awareness campaigns, Malaysia's water security faces significant challenges.

Through my reading and research, it is quite sad to come to terms with the fact that despite our high annual rainfall, water security in Malaysia is compromised by several factors.

Firstly, ageing infrastructure poses a significant challenge, with burst pipes frequently occurring due to outdated and poorly maintained systems. This leads to substantial water loss before it even reaches consumers.

Secondly, the pollution of water sources remains a critical issue, with industrial contamination affecting rivers and catchment areas.

Incidents such as the Sungai Kim Kim crisis in Johor in 2019, where illegal chemical waste dumping caused toxic fumes that hospitalised thousands, and the Sungai Gong pollution in Rawang in 2020, which disrupted water supply to over a million consumers, highlight the severity of this issue.

Similarly, odour pollution from industrial discharges into Sungai Selangor in 2019 led to widespread water shortages. These are not isolated cases but symptoms of a systemic failure



to regulate and enforce environmental standards effectively.

Even when perpetrators are caught, penalties often amount to fines that are easily absorbed as operational costs by industries. This lack of stringent consequences allows repeat offenders to continue polluting with impunity. Isn't it time for harsher measures, such as incarceration, to serve as a true deterrent?

Thirdly, and perhaps the most frustrating challenge, is our casual attitude towards water wastage.

Whether it is leaving taps running, over-watering gardens or using a hose to wash cars, such behaviour is deeply entrenched. This reflects a broader cultural problem – a perception that water is an unlimited resource simply because of our high annual rainfall.

The *tidak apa* (indifferent) attitude of many Malaysians towards water wastage is alarming. Most Malaysians do not fully grasp the concept of water security or its importance. This lack of awareness exacerbates the problem as people continue to take water for granted.

In contrast, during my time in Australia, I observed communities actively working to conserve water.

Practices such as rainwater harvesting, greywater systems and strict adherence to water-saving measures are commonplace. This behaviour stems from a collective understanding that water is precious. It is time Malaysians adopt a similar mindset.

Recently, I came across SPAN's (National Water Services Commission) WaterWise campaign, which aims to educate the public about water security and conservation. I commend SPAN for this much-needed initiative.

The campaign, rooted in principles of sustainability, preservation, advocacy and nurturing awareness among younger generations, is a significant step toward bridging the awareness gap in Malaysia.

Through WaterWise, SPAN is not only raising awareness but also fostering a culture of conservation.

By tackling issues such as pollution, ageing infrastructure and lackadaisical public attitude,

this campaign has the potential to inspire lasting change.

However, public education alone is not enough. Policymakers must complement these efforts with stricter regulations, better enforcement against polluters and investment in upgrading water infrastructure.

As Malaysians, we cannot afford to remain complacent. Every drop of water matters, and every action counts. Simple measures like fixing leaks, turning off taps while brushing teeth or reusing rainwater for household tasks can collectively make a huge difference.

Water is not just a resource; it is the foundation of life and a shared responsibility. The time to act is now.

Let us support initiatives like WaterWise and hold ourselves accountable for the way we use and protect our water resources – for our well-being, our communities and the generations to come. Water security is not just an environmental issue; it is a matter of national survival.

**Daniel Delaney**

Water security is about ensuring the availability of sufficient, safe water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being and economic development while preserving ecosystems.  
– BERNAMAPIC





# the Sun **LYFE**

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## **CNY** delights

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# Usher in Chinese New Year with good food

BY **EE ANN NEE**

**T**HIS Chinese New Year (CNY), embark on a gastronomic journey that celebrates Chinese tradition, prosperity and family reunions.

From *yee sang* to reunion dinners, here are dining options for you to go *yee sang*-tossing and festive feasting for a prosperous and abundant year ahead.

## St Regis Kuala Lumpur

The hotel welcomes the Year of the Snake with the grace of tea blossoms, integrating the tradition of Chinese tea into its offerings this CNY.

### ➔ Premium *yee sang*

Begin the celebration with a tasteful *yee sang*, crafted from a recipe passed down through generations of the hotel-owning family, originating from Puan Sri Sharon Chua's ancestral kitchen. Featuring a base of fruits and vegetables, complemented by nuts, seeds and a signature sauce, elevate the experience with choice of abalone & jellyfish, yellowtail hamachi & jellyfish, salmon & jellyfish or vegetarian mixed nuts for a unique twist. The *yee sang* starts from RM205+ per set and is available until Feb 12.

### ➔ Prosperity Set Menu

Continue the tradition of CNY reunions with the Prosperity Set Menu, crafted by executive Chinese chef Cheong Boon Fei and his team. A Longevity Vegetarian Set Menu is also available for guests who prefer green delights. The Prosperity Set Menu is available at The Brasserie as well as in the hotel's private dining rooms. These private dining rooms, with flexible layouts, can accommodate groups of eight to 50, offering an intimate setting for gatherings. The Prosperity Set Menu starts from RM432+ per person and is available until Feb 12.

## Oversea Restaurant

Oversea Restaurant's festive feast, Cantonese cuisine infused with modern creativity, will be available until Chap Goh Mei. Returning seasonal delights, including the *yee sang*, Prosperity Treasure Pot and Hong Kong-style claypot waxed meat rice, promise a hearty feast for the tummy.

### ➔ *Yee sang*

Oversea Restaurant adds a modern twist to this tradition with options such as the Fabulous Fruity *Yee Sang* in dragon fruit sauce or *yee sang* with jellyfish & Korean snow pear, offering fresh textures and flavours. For those who prefer the classic, there is *yee*

## ➔ *Yee sang* reunion dinner options



St Regis Kuala Lumpur's Prosperity Set Menu.

Cheong showcases the *yee sang* selection at St Regis Kuala Lumpur.



Auspicious Set Menu for a private reunion at Element Kuala Lumpur.



Element's Prosperous *Yee Sang*.

*sang* with smoked salmon or abalone – or a more refined choice such as *yee sang* with abalone & black truffle. Starting from RM78+.

### ➔ Festive favourites

The Prosperity Treasure Pot (*poon choi*) is a symbol of abundance, featuring layers of ingredients slow-braised in a rich broth. Premium items include Cantonese roast duck, crispy roasted pork belly, Iberico pork ball and dried seafood such as whole abalone, Japanese dried scallops and fish maw. The Prosperity Treasure Pot (RM688+) is a symbol of fortune and prosperity for sharing with loved ones. Available in portions for six people, choose to dine in or take it home to enjoy at reunion parties. Its Hong Kong-Style claypot waxed meat rice uses the traditional method of cooking in a claypot, locking in moisture and

infusing grains of rice with the essence of the ingredients. The aroma of fragrant rice, three types of waxed meat, along with the smoky, savoury combination ensure every spoonful is a delight. Oversea Restaurant offers portions for six people at RM138++ and 10 people at RM168++. All offerings will be available until the end of CNY at every Oversea Restaurant outlet. If you are looking for a pork-free lunch or dinner, visit Oversea Group's other establishments – EMP and Oversea Seafood.

## Element Kuala Lumpur

The hotel has an array of festive culinary specialties at its high-floor venues. From *yee sang*, private reunion menus and buffet spreads to high tea sets, there is something for everyone to enjoy in this season of

prosperity and togetherness.

### ➔ Prosperous *Yee Sang*

Executive Chinese chef Linus Mak reimagines the classic *yee sang* with a unique twist. Instead of the traditional plum sauce, Mak has created a special pineapple dressing that balances sweetness and tanginess. This vibrant platter features a mix of shredded fresh fruits and vegetables, such as mango, jackfruit, rose apple and more, along with choice of toppings such as raw salmon slices, crispy fish skins or whole abalones. Available for dine-in and takeaway at Trace Restaurant & Bar, the *yee sang* will also be served as a starter in its private reunion set menus.

### ➔ Private Reunion Set Menus

The hotel offers two menus at its high-floor banquet rooms. Both eight-course menu sets begin with

the ceremonial presentation of *yee sang*, followed by a double-boiled chicken soup. Diners can look forward to an array of chicken, fish, tiger prawn and vegetable fusion dishes prepared in various styles. Standout dishes from Mak include the double-boiled chicken consomme with dark garlic, chicken roulade with homemade green pesto sauce, steamed tiger grouper fish and wok-fried tiger prawn with golden cereal and truffle. Save room for some desserts: chilled monk juice with peach gum jelly, snow fungus, longan and snow lotus seed and fried house-made *nian gao* (glutinous rice cake). Prosperous Set Menu costs RM2,388+ per table of 10 guests, with minimum booking of three tables.

## Sunway Resort Hotel

### ➔ Reunion Dinner Set Menu

On Jan 28, the Grand Ballroom sets the stage for a one-night-only reunion celebration, combining grandeur, lively festivities and cherished traditions. The festivities begin with the toss of fresh Norwegian salmon & snow pear *yee sang*, symbolising prosperity and unity. CNY specialties are headlined by the debut of the Sea Moss Abalone En Croute, featuring a succulent abalone encased in a truffle-infused flaky crust. The set includes other highlights such as the steamed whole mangrove Jack snapper, lobster bisque with crispy rice and more. The eight-course reunion dinner set menu costs RM1,728+ per table of six persons or RM2,688+ per table of 10 persons.

### ➔ CNY Dinner Set Menu

At Sunset Terrace, guests can enjoy a CNY roundtable reunion dinner with an eight-course menu. Held in Sunset Gallery, diners will be treated to a view of Sunway City Kuala Lumpur through the large windows directly looking at the theme park while indulging in a feast with loved ones. Begin the meal with the lobster & fresh Norwegian salmon *yee sang*. The culinary journey continues to unfold with highlights such as the Sea Moss Abalone En Croute, Typhoon Shelter Tiger Prawns, steamed barramundi fillet and more, each dish a celebration of fortune-filled indulgence. The eight-course CNY dinner set menu costs RM2,688+ per table of 10 persons, available from Jan 15 to Feb 12.

Be it intimate family reunions, get-togethers or gatherings with friends, nothing spells CNY quite like enjoying a table full of delicacies with people you value and cherish.



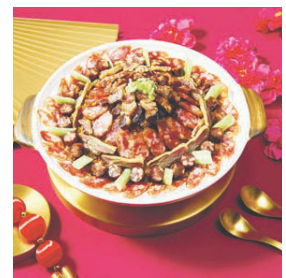
Lobster & fresh Norwegian salmon *yee sang* at Sunway Resort Hotel.



The reunion dinners by Sunway Resort Hotel debut the Sea Moss Abalone En Croute.



Oversea Restaurant serves *yee sang*, symbolising new beginnings.



Aromatic Hong Kong-style claypot waxed meat rice at Oversea Restaurant.





# theSun Biz & Finance

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Savings of up to RM7.5b annually from diesel subsidy reform expected

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The government's targeted diesel subsidy reform is expected to yield savings of up to RM7.5 billion annually, nearly double the initial RM4 billion projection.

Finance Minister II Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan highlighted the importance of a robust, data-driven system to identify those who truly need the subsidy while minimising fiscal risks.

"The government attributed the improved savings forecast to the effective rollout of a well-structured subsidy mechanism that reduces risks across different sectors without causing inflationary pressure," he said at the Malaysia Economic Forum 2025 yesterday.

Amir Hamzah emphasised the ongoing collaboration between the Economy Ministry and the Finance Ministry to refine the eligibility cut-off points and subsidy mechanisms, ensuring smooth implementation.

He said the targeted approach is also being extended to RON95 fuel subsidies, with a two-tier system under consideration.

"Similar to diesel, RON95 subsidies will be restructured to balance market-driven pricing with public assistance.

By implementing these reforms, Amir Hamzah noted that the government aims to enhance fiscal resilience, reduce wastage, and allocate resources more effectively.

He said these measures align with broader efforts to strengthen Malaysia's economic fundamentals while addressing the fiscal challenges posed by global volatility and rising costs.

"This reform not only reduces fiscal risk but also positions Malaysia as a model for balancing economic inclusivity with market efficiency," he added.

He said that a two-tier system will be applied to RON95, where those in need of support will receive targeted assistance, while others will be subject to market prices.

The 2025 Budget, presented in October last year, outlined the government's proposal to implement targeted subsidies for RON95 petrol by mid-2025, with an estimated allocation of approximately RM12 billion benefiting 85% of Malaysians. - by **AIMIE SHAZRIE**

## Rafizi: We'll shift to net disposable income approach

■ BY **AIMIE SHAZRIE**  
[sunbiz@thesundaily.com](mailto:sunbiz@thesundaily.com)

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia is set to overhaul its decades-old income classification system, replacing the B40, M40, and T20 framework with a more granular and equitable approach based on net disposable income.

Economy Minister Rafizi Ramli said this change aims to better reflect the realities of household income disparities and improve subsidy targeting.

"The legacy classification system, introduced in the 10th Malaysia Plan, has been criticised for its simplistic statistical lines, which risk excluding or misclassifying households," he said during a fireside chat at Malaysia Economic Forum 2025 yesterday.

Rafizi said this policy shift is critical as Malaysia prepares for the rationalisation of RON95 fuel subsidies, a major government initiative scheduled for implementation in the coming months.

"The Economy Ministry has confirmed that the necessary data

➤ B40, M40 and T20 classification system will be phased out in overhaul to ensure fairer subsidy targeting

infrastructure is ready, with the final decision on subsidy targeting expected from the Cabinet.

"Two key announcements regarding subsidy eligibility and implementation mechanisms would be made soon after Cabinet approval. The government plans to retarget the RON95 subsidy towards eligible recipients, ensuring equitable access for about 85% of the population," he said.

Rafizi highlighted that the RON95 rationalisation aligns with the government's broader effort to transition from outdated income classifications to a net disposable income approach.

"By leveraging digital records and advanced data systems, the government seeks to address the limitations of the B40, M40, and T20 framework, creating a fairer system

that reflects the actual needs of households," he said.

He added that the announcement aligns with broader goals under the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP or RMK13), which is being positioned as a dramatic and radical departure from traditional five-year economic plans.

Unlike previous plans that focused heavily on economic development and infrastructure projects, 13MP will prioritise education, upskilling, and workforce transformation, he said.

Rafizi emphasised that this shift is essential to prepare Malaysia's human capital for the demands of a developed nation.

Furthermore, he said, a significant highlight of 13MP is its focus on inclusivity.

"While past five-year plans were

often viewed as relevant only to specific economic sectors, the new emphasis on education and skills development is expected to resonate with every Malaysian. The government believes this focus will make RMK13 more impactful, touching on areas that directly influence the lives of citizens and enhancing the nation's overall competitiveness," he added.

Rafizi also addressed concerns over stagnant wages, emphasising that labour market reforms and wage growth will underpin Malaysia's economic transformation.

He pointed out that median wages remain low, with civil servants earning just above the poverty line. "The government is pushing for a progressive wage system tied to productivity, alongside creating higher-skill job opportunities through new industries and technology-driven sectors."

Additionally, Rafizi said the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone is expected to position Johor as a serious competitor to the Klang Valley within the next five to 10 years.

He stated that initial estimates suggest the newly established special economic zone, formalised recently, will contribute an additional US\$28 billion (RM125.9 billion) annually to the country's gross domestic product.

Commenting on data centres, Rafizi noted that Malaysia is poised to become a hub in the region, with Johor playing a key role in this emerging growth sector.

"If you imagine the next 10 to 15 years, there will be numerous data centres, and this trend is irreversible. Therefore, Malaysia needs to strengthen its energy sector to support this growth."

Rafizi also said Malaysia plans to locally manufacture graphics processing unit chips within the next five to 10 years.



Rafizi (right) speaking during a fireside chat at Malaysia Economic Forum 2025 moderated by Maybank president and group CEO Datuk Khairussaleh Ramli in Kuala Lumpur yesterday - **BERNAMAPIC**

## Avoid speculative property plays in Johor-Singapore SEZ: Expert

■ BY **HAYATUN RAZAK**  
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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Market players and stakeholders should avoid speculative property plays in the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) to prevent repeating the past speculative booms of Iskandar Malaysia (Southern Economic Corridors), which could inflate entry-level prices and destabilise the market, urged real estate agency CBRE WTW Valuation & Advisory Sdn Bhd.

Group managing director Tan Ka Leong said that with tax breaks, special travel passes, and enhanced connectivity through the RTS link, the JS-SEZ is expected to rejuvenate retail

and drive increased cross-border economic activity.

"The announcement of tax incentives, in fact, mirrors what was done 15 years ago when Iskandar Malaysia or the Southern Economic Corridors at the time was first introduced. During the 2010-2013 period, there was a lot of competition and speculative activity," he told a press conference at CBRE/WTW's 2025 Market Outlook event yesterday.

While the JS-SEZ will positively impact various sectors, Tan stressed that economic growth should be prioritised over speculative property plays.

"If the focus shifts to property first, we risk repeating past mistakes where inflated property prices harm long-

term sustainability," he added.

Tan said Johor has experienced more significant impacts from such cycles compared to other parts of Malaysia.

"I believe the intention behind offering the special tax incentives is to attract investors to the special economic zone. The aim is also to encourage skilled and knowledgeable workers to enter the JS-SEZ area, with special fixed-rate income tax provisions for them."

He added that this initiative aims to create job opportunities that contributes to the growth of the economy and increases in household income eventually.

"Within five years, they intend to scale job opportunities. This is all part of

the broader goal to grow the economy and raise household incomes," Tan said.

CBRE WTW adviser Foo Gee Jen pointed out that analysts from securities houses have predicted that property and construction sectors will benefit the most.

"I beg to differ. If we follow that cycle, it won't be sustainable. The ecosystem must be driven by the economy first. Property should be the last to follow," he said.

He explained that the economy should create job opportunities, which in turn creates demand for property and not the other way around. "We should not repeat the mistake of letting property play dominate first, which drives up entry-

level prices and makes it unaffordable for everyone," he said.

According to analysts, property and construction players stand to be the biggest beneficiaries of the JS-SEZ.

Hong Leong Investment Bank Bhd said contractors are the immediate beneficiaries of the JS-SEZ through construction jobs in the zone, which will require infrastructure, as well as industrial buildings and possible renewable energy projects.

RHB Investment Bank noted that road infrastructure projects would also create opportunities, with the JS-SEZ covering 3,500 sq km. Foreign direct investments into the zone would create demand for industrial buildings and offices.

# Nvidia investments seen enhancing Malaysia's role

➤ They will strengthen country's position in global chip supply chain, says Tufts University professor

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Nvidia's significant investments in Malaysia are relevant for the country, as the company focuses on specialised chip architectures, strengthening Malaysia's position in the global chip supply chain, said an expert.

Nvidia's total investments in Malaysia amount to US\$21.2 billion (RM95.5 billion).

Professor of International History, Dr Chris Miller (pic), at The Fletcher School, Tufts University, noted that while Nvidia is the world's largest chip company, it primarily designs chips and does not engage in manufacturing, packaging, or assembly. Despite this, he noted that Nvidia remains the largest chip company by market value.

"I think this trend and growing focus on chip design is highly relevant for Malaysia as it seeks to diversify its position in the chip supply chain and take on an even bigger role in the future," he said at the Malaysia Economic Forum 2025 here yesterday.

He said major tech firms such as Nvidia, which specialise in special-purpose chips

solely for artificial intelligence (AI), are where the advancements are occurring most rapidly.



"This is why the world's biggest technology companies are becoming chip designers. Microsoft, Alibaba, Baidu, and Facebook are all designing their own chips, realising that having chips tailored to their exact needs makes them more capable of running the AI workloads they require," he said.

Miller added that specialisation is a key driver of progress, but also increases the power and influence of the largest tech companies, giving them access to higher-quality, lower-cost computing than other players in the economy.

This forces companies to push the limits of physics and chemistry as they bring more computing capabilities together.

He noted that a trend called advanced packaging is reshaping the chip industry.

"All of this has significant implications for countries like Malaysia, which, of course, is far from a newcomer in the chip industry," he said.

"Malaysia has been an integral part of the multinational semiconductor supply chain for half a century. This means Malaysia has both real opportunities and I think, extraordinary challenges arising from this shift in the supply chain."

Regarding Malaysia's semiconductor strategy, Miller opined that the geopolitical landscape presents both opportunities and risks, making neutrality difficult in such a strategic industry.

"The geopolitical landscape, the fracturing of supply chains, and the politicisation of every segment of chip design and manufacturing will force Malaysian companies to consider not only the economics of supply chains but also the politics, even in segments that might not have seemed sensitive in the past are increasingly politicised today," he said.

Miller also pointed out that Malaysia's strength in packaging and assembly will see increased research and development, and value-added services (though with more competition from advanced economies).

"The packaging and assembling capabilities where Malaysia excels today are undergoing dramatic change, driven by trends in advanced packaging. Every AI processor today depends on new packaging capabilities, which are set to reshape the packaging landscape," he said. — Bernama

## 'Asean needs deeper trade pacts, domestic reforms to build resilience'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Deeper trade agreements and domestic reforms are needed to build economic resilience in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and East Asian Pacific regions, especially during extreme change and uncertainty.

The World Bank's East Asia and Pacific Chief Economist Research Centre senior economist Aakash Mohpal said the conflicts resulting from the ongoing geopolitical crisis have significantly impacted the global economy.

He said this includes disruptions in transport, including shipping and travelling from Asean to the West and vice versa, requiring a longer winding route than the previous Suez Canal route, causing a 40% increase in cost.

"At the same time, China's slower growth rate will affect other developing economies, including Asean, to slow down as well.

"Policy uncertainties worldwide, (such as) an increase in trade-distorting measures in the forms of subsidies and other tariffs, are also impacting economic growth," he said in a panel session titled "The World Bank's Economics Outlook for Asean" at the Asean Economic Opinion Leaders Conference: Outlook for 2025 event here yesterday.

Aakash said Asean could do better than its peers in pursuing deeper structural reforms and exploring new markets and opportunities for trade beyond traditional ones, similar to China's diversification.

He also said there is a need to boost productivity, especially in light of technological and artificial intelligence (AI) advancements, and to address wage growth without corresponding productivity gains in countries like Malaysia and the Philippines.

"Emphasis should also be given to the small and medium enterprises to create resilient local economies and drive job creation.

"We need to invest and promote local home-grown SMEs to make local economies more resilient," said Aakash.

Elaborating on the matter, he stressed that it is important to create favourable market conditions, including access to capital, inputs, labour and human capital.

He said this is also in line with the social policies to foster a culture in which failure is seen as part of the entrepreneurial process and not discouraging.

Besides, he noted the need for policies to protect SMEs from anti-competitive practices by larger players so that SMEs can compete effectively.

Aakash posited that despite technological shifts creating winners and losers, there would be more job creation overall, and existing skills would need to be reskilled or upskilled.

"It is crucial to ensure that the benefits of AI are maximised through workforce preparation.

"The basic digital skills in the labour force are vital, even for well-established jobs that now require basic computer abilities," he said.

He added that there is a need to revamp university curricula and incorporate digital skills. — Bernama

## Affin Bank expects economy to grow 5.2% in 2025

**GEORGE TOWN:** Affin Bank Bhd expects Malaysia's economy to grow by 5.2% this year compared to its 5% estimate in 2024.

The bank said the projection is in line with the Finance Ministry's forecast of between 4.5% and 5.5%.

Group chief economist Alan Tan said this year will bring steady economic growth, especially for an open economy like Malaysia's because its electrical and electronics exports are expected to rebound in tandem with global semiconductor sales.

"Export figures in 2023 were not very good but they began to recover in 2024, supported by global semiconductor sales. They will likely continue to recover going into 2025, we are seeing a pickup in demand for semiconductors.

"Malaysia is an open economy. We have a lot of high-class electronic firms based in Penang that contribute to Malaysia's E&E exports. Going into 2025, we think this trend will continue," he said in a briefing "Malaysia's Economic Outlook 2025" during the bank's Chinese New Year 2025 celebration here on Wednesday night.

Tan said the local economy is poised to benefit from domestic demand due to stable labour market conditions and household spending.

On US President-elect Donald Trump's



Guests enjoying themselves at Affin Bank's Chinese New Year 2025 celebration in George Town on Wednesday night. — BERNAMAPIC

intention to impose tariffs on China and its global economic implications, Tan said Malaysia would likely benefit because of the China plus one strategy which involves diversifying its investments and manufacturing operations out of China into other countries.

"We will continue to see trade diversion with exporters, companies in China relocating their plants to Asean like Malaysia to escape tariffs. This could continue. Therefore, Malaysia

should continue to benefit," he said.

On the ringgit, Tan said the bank sees room for the local note to end 2025 at RM4.10 to the US dollar. It anticipates the US Federal Reserve to continue cutting rates.

Tan said Affin Bank expected Bank Negara Malaysia's Overnight Policy Rate to remain stable, thus narrowing the interest differentials between local rates and the US Fed rate. "This will bring about some ringgit inflows." — Bernama

## Malaysia Airlines launches global 'Time For' marketing campaign

**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysia Airlines is kick-starting the new year with its global "Time For" signature marketing campaign, inviting travellers world-wide to embrace the joy of discovery and make 2025 a year of memorable journeys.

The campaign will see Malaysia Airlines positioning Malaysia on the

global stage with activations such as tram wraps in Melbourne, taxi and bus branding in the United Kingdom, and more. These efforts align with Visit Malaysia 2026, showcasing the country's vibrant appeal to international audiences.

In conjunction with the launch of the Time For marketing

campaign, Malaysia Airlines is offering an exclusive global sale with savings of up to 20% on fares to over 60 destinations. The sale is available from today until Jan 22.

Malaysia Aviation Group chief commercial officer of Airlines Dersensih Aresandiran said, "Our Time For marketing campaign is

more than just a celebration of travel; it's an invitation for the world to discover Malaysia and connect to the best of Asia and beyond. Malaysia Airlines is committed to positioning Malaysia as the ultimate gateway to this vibrant region while showcasing the warmth and diversity of our

culture."

Meanwhile, to enhance connectivity during the upcoming Chinese New Year period, Malaysia Airlines will operate 102 additional red-eye flights between Jan 24 and Feb 4, bringing the total to 219 weekly flights to and from Sabah and Sarawak.



## Step into Malaysia's future with MDEC's IP360 Metaverse Platform

**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) yesterday announced the public launch of the IP360 Metaverse Platform, a groundbreaking initiative showcasing Malaysia's leadership in digital innovation and cultural preservation.

In partnership with Ammobox Studios Sdn Bhd, this pioneering platform redefines how global audiences experience Malaysia's rich heritage and creative prowess.

In a statement, MDEC said the IP360 Metaverse Platform, currently in its Minimum Viable Product (MVP) stage, offers a seamless, interactive gateway into Malaysia's 3D digital experiences for both local and international audiences. Powered by Unreal Engine 5 and Pixel Streaming, it delivers stunning, high-quality visuals accessible via any web browser, eliminating the need for high-performance hardware.

The platform features two immersive experiences designed to captivate global audiences while celebrating Malaysia's cultural heritage:

**Virtual Theme Park:** Dive into interactive experiences featuring Malaysian intellectual properties

like *Ejen Ali* and *Didi and Friends*.

From engaging games such as *Find the Spy* to skill-building activities at the "Training Centre", the theme park sets a new standard for digital entertainment. *Didi and Friends* is tentatively set to premiere in the first quarter of this year.

**Digital Museum:** Explore Malaysia's cultural legacy through artifact interactions, treasure hunt games, local language lessons, and holographic traditional dance performances.

The IP360 Metaverse Platform is a result of strategic collaborations with organisations, including Tourism Malaysia, Aswara, Istana Budaya and prominent Malaysian IP brands. These partnerships reflect a shared vision of fostering innovation while amplifying Malaysia's cultural assets globally.

MDEC CEO Anuar Fariz Fadzil stated, "The launch of IP360 Metaverse Platform aligns with Malaysia's national agenda to strengthen its creative digital industries. It leverages immersive technologies to create jobs and drive economic growth. By 2030, Malaysia aims to be recognised as a hub for high-quality, innovative digital content production."

## Yinson's FPSO Atlanta achieves first oil

➤ A 72-hour test was completed and final acceptance has been obtained from Brazil's Brava Energia

**PETALING JAYA:** Yinson Production announced yesterday that its floating production storage and offloading vessel *FPSO Atlanta* achieved first oil on Dec 31, 2024.

In a Bursa filing, it said a 72-hour test was completed and final acceptance has been obtained from Brazil's Brava Energia. This marks the commencement of the project's firm charter, with contracted day rates being paid to Yinson Production for a period of 15 years, until 2039.

The project has also achieved a safety milestone of 9.8 million man-hours without lost time incident.

*FPSO Atlanta* is the third asset in Yinson Production's fleet to operate in Brazil after the successful delivery of *FPSO Maria Quitéria* in October 2024 and *FPSO Anna Nery* in May 2023.

The asset has been delivered to Brava Energia, formerly known as Enauta Energia SA, one of the largest independent oil and gas producers in Latin America.

Yinson Production CEO Flemming Grønnegaard said, "We are proud to achieve first oil with *FPSO Atlanta*, marking another significant milestone in our partnership with Brava Energia. This accomplishment showcases our commitment to delivering exceptional operational performance while prioritising sustainability and safety. Our team's dedication and expertise have been instrumental in bringing this project to fruition, and we look forward to a successful 15-year charter."



*FPSO Atlanta* will operate in the Atlanta field in the Santos Basin offshore Brazil.

Brava Energia CEO Décio Oddone said, "The first oil from *FPSO Atlanta* is a notable milestone for Brava. We have worked hard to reach this moment. Brava Energia is the first and only independent company in the country to develop a greenfield deepwater production system. This achievement is the result of the effort and dedication of our team over the years. We celebrate today and continue working to make Brava Energia an even stronger company."

Yinson production project manager Scott Bendiksen said, "The successful delivery of *FPSO Atlanta* is a testament to the collaborative spirit and resilience of our team and our contractors. We have achieved an impressive safety record and implemented innovative carbon-reducing solutions, demonstrating our focus on responsible operations. We are excited to continue supporting Brava Energia's growth in the Brazilian market."

*FPSO Atlanta* is a redevelopment project awarded to Yinson Production

by Brava Energia on Feb 21, 2022 as an EPCI (engineering, procurement, construction, installation) project. In July 2023, Yinson Production exercised its option to purchase *FPSO Atlanta*, which includes a 15-year firm plus a five-year option contract for the supply and operations and maintenance.

*FPSO Atlanta* will operate in the Atlanta field in the Santos Basin offshore Brazil. The FPSO has a production capacity of 50,000 barrels of oils per day and a maximum storage capacity of 1,200,000 barrels.

The vessel will feature an efficient carbon management process plant, which utilises fuel gas for cargo tank inertisation that will significantly reduce flare gas emissions through a closed flare system. The plant introduced is a part of Yinson Production's continuous sustainability efforts in reducing carbon emissions and makes Yinson Production the frontrunner in decarbonising the FPSO industry towards the goal of net zero.

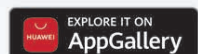


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## Tokyo to consider 'economic security' in 7-Eleven Japan takeover

**TOKYO:** Japan will look at the "economic security" aspects of any foreign acquisition of 7-Eleven, a government minister said as Canada's Couche-Tard pursues a takeover of the world's largest convenience chain.

Alimentation Couche-Tard, which owns the Circle K brand, wants to buy the store owner's parent Seven & i but the Japanese firm last year rejected an initial offer worth nearly US\$40 billion (RM180 billion) from Couche-Tard.

That led the Canadian company to make a revised bid reportedly 20% higher.

"Economic security is a new area ... but, for example, I think the acquisition of 7-Eleven is majorly related," Ryosei Akazawa, Japan's minister for economic revitalisation, said on Wednesday.

Akazawa highlighted the role Japan's convenience stores can play in times of crisis, such as after major earthquakes and other disasters, particularly in remote regions.

"If, for example, 7-Eleven becomes completely owned with foreign capital, to pursue profitability as its first priority, would it really offer full cooperation when a disaster occurs?" he asked reporters.

His comments came after US

President Joe Biden on Friday blocked Nippon Steel's US\$14.9 billion takeover of US Steel, citing national security concerns.

The move drew harsh criticism from the Japanese government and businesses, which in 2023 invested almost US\$800 billion into the United States.

In September, the Japanese Finance Ministry designated Seven & i as a "core" industry in terms of national security.

Other entities rated the same in Japan include manufacturers in the nuclear, rare earths, and chip industries, as well as cybersecurity and infrastructure operators.

Seven & i, however, said at the time that the rating "has nothing to do with the takeover offer" from Couche-Tard.

Seven & i said in November that it was studying a counter-offer from the company's founding family reportedly worth ¥8 trillion yen (RM225 billion).

Japanese media quoted Couche-Tard executives as saying they would not sweeten the bid again, or launch a hostile offer.

The 7-Eleven franchise began in the United States, but it has been wholly owned by Seven & i since 2005 and has 85,000 stores worldwide. - AFP



A pedestrian walking past a 7-Eleven store in Tokyo. - REUTERS/SPIC

## China money rushes offshore via Hong Kong mutual funds

➤ Demand driven by low domestic yields and yuan depreciation

**HONG KONG:** Investors from mainland China are buying up large amounts of Hong Kong mutual fund products that invest overseas, particularly bonds, after authorities expanded a cross-border trading channel this month and opened for them an avenue to get better yields.

Several mutual funds that are registered in Hong Kong and allowed to market products to mainland investors were sold out with 24 hours of opening for subscription at the beginning of the year, fund statements show.

The funds had reopened for subscription in the past week after China relaxed limits for Hong Kong funds that are approved to sell on the mainland under the Mutual Recognition of Funds (MRF) scheme.

It lifted the sales quota to a maximum of 80%

of the funds' total assets from Jan 1 from the previous 50% limit.

The investment frenzy points to pent-up demand in China for overseas investments at a time when bond yields are hitting record lows at home, the yuan is at 16-month lows and the stock market is struggling.

"We've seen robust demand for overseas fund allocations, given the outperformance of overseas markets in the past two years," said Niki Wu, senior research analyst at Morningstar. Funds that focus on US Treasuries and other bonds seemed most popular with investors.

Two bond funds run by JPMorgan - JPMorgan Global Bond Fund and JPMorgan Asian Total Return Bond Fund, had to suspend subscriptions by mainland investors this week after nearing their limits.

Last week, ChinaAMC's Select Fixed Income Allocation Fund and E Fund (HK)'s Select Bond Fund found their new quotas were used up on the first day of resuming subscriptions.

Wu said the recent rapid decline in bond yields has led to the clamour for assets.

The yields on China's 10-year government bonds have dropped more than 100 basis points

in a year, and are below 1.6%, with the gap between them and US Treasuries the widest in 24 years.

"It's really hard to find assets with relatively high yield and low risks," Wu said.

First introduced in 2015, the MRF has long been a relatively niche scheme due to restrictions on fundraising.

By the end of November, there were a total of 41 Hong Kong funds participating in it, official data shows, with aggregated sales amounting to 41.5 billion yuan (RM25.5 billion), a 138% jump compared to that at the end of 2023.

Ivan Shi, head of research at fund consultancy Z-Ben Advisors, described the MRF as a "release valve," given the scarcity of quotas in the Qualified Domestic Institutional Investor (QDII) programme, which is China's key outbound investment channel.

With an overall fund sales quota of 300 billion yuan available to mainland investors, the MRF scheme is poised to attract more global funds.

"Some global firms, which have hitherto not been interested in this scheme at all, have started to work on it," said Wong. - Reuters

## Japanese consumer mood worsens, casting doubt on rate hike timing

**TOKYO:** Japan's consumer sentiment deteriorated last month, a government survey showed, casting doubt on the central bank's view that solid household spending will underpin the economy and justify a rise in interest rates.

The results precede the Bank of Japan (BOJ) policy meeting on Jan 23 and 24, when some analysts anticipate a potential interest rate increase from the current 0.25%.

An index measuring consumer sentiment fell to 36.2 in December, a 0.2 point drop from the previous month, according to the survey by the Cabinet Office.

Separate data showed Japan's output gap,

which measures the difference between an economy's actual and potential output, stayed negative in July-September for the 18th straight quarter.

A negative output gap means actual output is running below the economy's full capacity, and is considered a sign of soft demand.

These findings underscore the vulnerability of Japan's economy as rising living costs and uncertainty over US President-elect Donald Trump's policies weigh on consumption and exports.

Nevertheless, some big firms have signalled their resolve to continue offering significant wage increases.

Fast Retailing, owner of clothing brand Uniqlo, said it would raise wages for full-time headquaters and sales staff by as much as 11% from March.

"We'd like to raise (wages) stably and sustainably," Sadanobu Takemasu, president of convenience store Lawson told reporters

The BOJ exited a massive stimulus programme in March and raised short-term rates to 0.25% in July on the view Japan was on the cusp of sustainably achieving its 2% inflation target.

BOJ Governor Kazuo Ueda has signalled a readiness to keep raising rates if Japan continues to make progress toward durably hitting 2% inflation. - Reuters

## Bukalapak to stop selling physical goods

**JAKARTA:** Indonesian e-commerce firm Bukalapak said it would stop selling physical items on its marketplace soon, amid tough competition from TikTok's Tokopedia and Sea's Shopee in Southeast Asia's largest economy.

Bukalapak, which went public in 2021, said in a statement that it later would only sell virtual products ranging from mobile phone credits to streaming vouchers.

Customers have until Feb 9 to make last orders for certain items, Bukalapak added.

"Bukalapak will undergo a transformation in an effort to increase focus on virtual products ... we fully understand that these changes will impact the sellers and we are committed to making this transition as smooth as possible," the company said.

Shares of Bukalapak were up 2.56% to 120 rupiah at market close yesterday.

On the day of its market debut in August 2021, Bukalapak shares had soared by the daily limit of 25% to 1,060 rupiah a piece as investors looked to get a piece of the company that raised US\$1.5 billion in its initial public offering.

But over the three years since its listing, Bukalapak has faced fierce competition from Indonesia's e-commerce market leader Shopee, which is owned by Southeast Asian technology firm Sea, and from Tokopedia.

Tokopedia, another homegrown e-commerce company, is now majority owned by ByteDance's TikTok, which acquired 75.01% of the shares from local tech conglomerate GoTo early last year.

Bukalapak reported a loss of 593.23 billion rupiah (RM165 million) in the first nine months of 2024, according to its latest financial results. - Reuters



# Trump mulls economic emergency declaration

➤ Move is to provide legal justification for universal tariffs: CNN

**WASHINGTON:** US President-elect Donald Trump is considering declaring a national economic emergency to provide legal justification for a series of universal tariffs on allies and adversaries, CNN reported on Wednesday, citing unnamed sources familiar with the matter.

The move will allow Trump to build a new tariff programme by using the International Economic Emergency Powers Act (IEEPA), which authorises a president to manage imports during a national emergency, the report said.

"Nothing is off the table," a source familiar with the matter told CNN, acknowledging that a discussion had taken place over declaring a national emergency.

The Trump transition team did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

A national emergency declaration under IEEPA has long been considered as a key legal tool that Trump may invoke to take quick action on his campaign promise to impose a universal tariff of at least 10% on all imports into the US.

Three weeks after his election in November, Trump said on social media that immediately after his Jan 20 inauguration, he would sign "all necessary documents" to begin charging Mexico and Canada 25% tariffs unless illegal immigration and fentanyl trafficking is halted.

Trade experts view that action as likely involving an IEEPA emergency declaration.

Trump invoked IEEPA in 2019 for a similar 5% tariff threat against Mexican imports over illegal immigration, which was withdrawn after Mexico agreed to tighten border security and hold migrants on its territory.

Trump, a Republican who imposed tariffs

of up to 25% on some US\$370 billion (RM1.6 trillion) worth of Chinese goods during his first term, has also vowed to impose new 60% tariffs on all Chinese imports.

On Monday, Trump denied a media report that his team was exploring a scaling back of these plans to cover only critical imports due to concerns about inflation.

Trump used Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, an unfair trade practices statute, to back his past China tariffs and may return to that tool, trade lawyers say.

He also may invoke a national security trade law, Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, for further universal tariffs.

Section 232 was used to back global US tariffs of 25% on steel and 10% on aluminum.

The IEEPA statute is an updated version of the 1917 Trading with the Enemy Act, which the late President Richard Nixon invoked in 1971 to impose a 10% universal tariff to ease a balance of payments crisis and push Germany and Japan to strengthen the value their currencies against the dollar. - Reuters

## Heineken's United Breweries halts beer sales in Indian state

**MUMBAI:** Heineken-owned United Breweries on Wednesday stopped supplying beer to Telangana in southern India, following the state's refusal to allow price rises, which the company said have caused it huge losses.

United Breweries, maker of India's most popular Kingfisher brand, is India's biggest beer company and the state of Telangana is India's biggest beer consumer.

"Despite our continuous efforts over the past two years, there has been no increase in the base prices offered for our products. This has resulted in escalating losses, making our operations in the state unviable," United Breweries said in a statement announcing the suspension of supplies.

The stock market disclosure triggered an up to 7% fall in its shares on Wednesday.

In India, strict regulations for the alcohol sector require states to sign off on alcohol industry pricing changes every year.

United Breweries did not give detail on the size of the losses, but Karan Taurani, an analyst at Elara Securities, said Telangana state contributed roughly 15% to 20% of beer sales by volume for United Breweries and around 10% to 12% of earnings.

United Breweries CEO Vivek Gupta had said in an earnings call last May that it was owed seven to eight billion rupees (RM369 to RM418 million) in lost revenue.

Last year, the Brewers Association of India, a federation of some of the country's largest beer makers urged the state government to allow price hikes for alcoholic beverages to compensate for inflation.

The state of Telangana, according to the association, accounts for the sale of roughly 55 million cases of beer a year, or 500 million litres.

The state rejected the request, a government source familiar with the matter told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity. - Reuters

## Indonesia to make resources exporters keep earnings at home

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia plans to require exporters of natural resources retain their export proceeds in the country for at least one year, up from the current three months, its chief economic minister said.

Airlangga Hartarto, coordinating minister of economic affairs, said the change was intended to bolster the country's foreign exchange reserves.

Under the current rules, introduced in 2023, natural resource exporters must keep 30% of the proceeds on every custom document for export worth at least US\$250,000 (RM1.1 million) in the domestic financial system for three months.

It was unclear based on the local media reports whether the requirement details would be revised.

"One year is the minimum," Airlangga was quoted as saying.

"We're preparing (all regulations) to be issued within a timeframe of a month," he added.

Indonesia's foreign exchange reserves were at an all time high of US\$155.7 billion at end-December, the central bank said.

But the rupiah has been volatile due to capital outflows.

Last year, Airlangga said export retention rules were under review due to ongoing pressure on the rupiah.

Sensitive to swings in market sentiment, the rupiah was often volatile in 2024, falling into its weakest since 2020 before recovering.

It closed the year down 4.7% against dollar. The rupiah has depreciated by 0.7% against the US dollar this year. - Reuters



A man wearing a face mask uses his phone in front of mannequins at a clothing store in Hanoi yesterday. - AFPPI

## US trade deficit with Vietnam soars beyond US\$110b

**HANOI:** The US trade deficit with Vietnam exceeded US\$110 billion (RM495 billion) in the first 11 months of 2024, latest US figures show, as exports from the Southeast Asian industrial hub grew amid a record fall of its currency against the dollar.

The latest reading showed a nearly 18% rise in the deficit compared with the same period the previous year.

The data confirms the Communist-run country has the fourth highest commercial surplus with the United States, topped only by China, the European Union and Mexico.

The large gap is seen by analysts as a major risk for the export-reliant nation amid threats from President-elect Donald Trump to impose tariffs of up to 20% on all US imports.

That risk has been compounded by a sharp

fall of Vietnam's dong in recent months, with the dong trading near its lowest ever levels against the dollar.

The trend is closely watched in Washington as Vietnam is one of the countries under scrutiny for potential currency manipulation.

Vietnam, which counts the US as its biggest market, is home to big export-focused industrial operations of American multinationals such as Apple, Google, Nike and Intel.

Latest seasonally adjusted trade figures show that in the January-November period Vietnam accumulated a commercial surplus with the US of US\$111.6 billion, up from US\$94.8 billion in the same period in 2023. Unadjusted data pointed to a larger gap of US\$113.1 billion.

In November, the trade gap expanded by another US\$11.3 billion, accelerating from

October, as Vietnam's exports to the US rose, the adjusted data show, possibly supported by the weak dong.

"If the US perceives that Vietnam is deliberately keeping the dong weak to gain an unfair trade advantage, it could trigger renewed accusations of currency manipulation," said Leif Schneider, head of international law firm Luther in Vietnam.

Trump ended his first term as president with Treasury declarations of Vietnam and Switzerland as currency manipulators over their market interventions to weaken the value of their currencies.

Vietnam's central bank has said it was ready to intervene in the foreign exchange market in case of adverse economic impacts from currency moves, and has sold dollars in the past to strengthen the dong. - Reuters



## Shell warns of weaker Q4 LNG, oil trading

**LONDON:** Shell trimmed its liquefied natural gas production outlook for the fourth quarter on Wednesday and said oil and gas trading results are expected to be significantly lower than in the previous three months.

In a trading update ahead of Jan 30 full-year results, Shell also said it would take US\$1.5 billion (RM6.75 billion) to US\$3 billion of non-cash, post-tax impairments, including up to US\$1.2 billion in its renewables division, linked to European and North American assets.

Shell last month said it was stepping back from new offshore wind investments and splitting its power division following an extensive review of the business, part of CEO Wael Sawan's drive to focus on the most profitable parts.

The world's top oil and gas companies have seen profits decline throughout 2024 following record earnings in the previous two years as energy prices steadied and global oil demand faltered.

Shell, the world's largest LNG trader, said trading results for the division in the fourth quarter would be significantly lower than in the previous three months due to the expiry of hedging contracts Shell took in 2022 to protect itself against a potential loss of Russian production following the invasion of Ukraine.

Trading in its chemicals and oil products division was also expected to be significantly lower quarter-on-quarter due to lower seasonal demand.

Shell does not provide earnings figures for its trading operations. – Reuters

## Belgium's Galapagos to spin off innovative medicines business

**AMSTERDAM:** Pharmaceutical firm Galapagos said on Wednesday it plans to split into two listed entities by mid-2025 by spinning off its activities focused on innovative medicines.

Galapagos, headquartered in the city of Mechelen in Belgium, will provide around €2.45 billion (RM11.4 billion) of cash for the new company, to be named at a later date, it said in a press release.

"The proposed separation aims to help investors more easily assess the merits, and future prospects of the two distinct businesses," Galapagos' finance chief Thad Huston said.

The group's American partner and shareholder Gilead will hold about 25% in both Galapagos and the newly created firm, which will both be listed on Euronext, Galapagos said.

The new business will aim to build a pipeline of innovative medicines, while the remaining part of Galapagos will focus on developing its cell therapy platform in oncology, it said.

"While we think this is a positive step for the company, it does leave Galapagos 2.0 with an early stage cell therapy programme," KBC analyst Jacob Mekhael said.

The reorganisation is expected to lead to the reduction of around 300 positions in Europe, or around 40% of the group's workforce, Galapagos said. – Reuters



French Minister in charge of Health and Access to Care Yannick Neuder (second from left) and French Minister in charge of Industry and Energy Marc Ferracci (centre) visiting the office of pharmaceutical group Euroapi in Vertolay, France. – AFPPIC

# Eurozone ended 2024 on downbeat note

Key sentiment indicator fell more than expected in December

**FRANKFURT:** The eurozone economy, skirting recession for more than a year, ended 2024 on a weak note, several key indicators showed on Wednesday, suggesting that a long hoped for recovery remains a distant prospect.

The European Commission's key sentiment indicator fell more than expected in December, German industrial orders plunged and German retail sales unexpectedly fell, all adding to already gloomy indicators from the 20-nation currency bloc.

The figures suggest that the eurozone, which faces the fresh threat of tariffs on its exports from the incoming Donald Trump administration, barely grew last quarter and German growth may have been negative again.

This extended a dismal streak since soaring energy prices after Russia's invasion of Ukraine hit industry.

"Today's grim Economic Sentiment Indicator poses a clear downside risk to our forecast of moderate GDP growth in the first quarter of the year," Leo Barincoiu at Oxford Economics said.

"There is no bright spot for the eurozone economy."

The EU's main economic sentiment reading fell to 93.7 last month from 95.6 in November, falling well short of expectations for a steady reading.

The index of industrial climate plunged, consumer sentiment fell, all the while price expectations rose.

The figures came just hours after separate data showed that industrial orders in Germany, the eurozone's biggest economy, declined 5.4% from the previous month, underperforming expectations for no change.

Retail sales meanwhile declined by 0.6% in real terms from the previous month, against forecast for 0.5% growth.

Germany's vast industrial sector has been

in recession for over a year as high energy costs, waning demand from Asia and cheaper competition from other markets have all been weighing on the sector.

"There is still no trend reversal in sight for the German industry. It's bottoming out at best," ING economist Carsten Brzeski said.

"Disappointing retail sales suggest that the rebound in private consumption in the third quarter is unlikely to continue in the fourth quarter."

Economists have long counted on private consumption to drive the recovery since households are now enjoying substantial real income growth amid dwindling inflation.

But a study from the European Central Bank suggests that households will continue to save an unusually large portion of their income to rebuild wealth lost to high inflation, possibly confounding hopes for more spending.

This trend could even be exacerbated by any further softness in the labour market, which has started to suffer from weak growth, shrinking corporate margins and lacklustre demand for corporate goods and services, economists argue. – Reuters

## Travellers from dozens of countries now face UK entry fee

**LONDON:** Visitors to the UK from dozens of countries, including the United States, Canada and Australia, must now pay to enter Britain after a new visa-waiver entry system took effect on Wednesday.

The Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) scheme – similar to the ESTA system in the United States – requires visitors who do not need a visa to enter Britain to acquire pre-travel authorisation.

Costing £10 (RM56) and allowing stays of up to six months at a time over two years, it first launched in 2023, with Qatar, before being extended last year to five regional Gulf neighbours.

Now, it has been expanded to include citizens of around 50 more countries and territories, from Argentina, Brazil and New Zealand to Japan, South Korea and Caribbean nations.

With the system kicking in for them on Wednesday, they have been able to apply since last November.

The scheme, aimed at tightening border security, will next be extended to dozens of EU and European countries and territories on April 2.

Those citizens covered by the scheme will be able to apply for the new ETA – which is digitally linked to the traveller's passport – via an app, from March 5.

Around six million people from the United

States, Canada and Australia visit Britain each year, according to the UK government.

Eligible travellers will need one even if they are just using the UK to connect to an onward flight abroad.

ETA also applies to children and babies.

Northern Ireland Economy Minister Conor Murphy warned that ETA will have a "devastating" impact on tourism in the British province, given that its neighbour the Republic of Ireland is not involved with the scheme.

Murphy fears that the cost and red tape will deter international tourists visiting the republic from making the journey across the land border to visit Northern Ireland, and has called for a

time-limited exemption for people visiting up to seven days.

Heathrow Airport has also opposed the scheme, saying its rollout has reduced the number of passengers transiting through the UK, and that it makes the country "less competitive" and harms economic growth.

The new requirement does not apply to British and Irish citizens, those with passports from British overseas territories and legal UK residents.

It does not change the requirements for citizens of countries who need a visa to visit Britain, such as Chinese, Ecuadorian and South African travellers. – AFP



# MARKET ROUND-UP: JANUARY 9

## Bursa Trade Statistic

09 JAN 2025

Source: Bursa Malaysia, Inter-Pacific Research

Participation

Retail (21.35%)	Institution (46.69%)	Foreign (31.96%)
Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)	Net (in RM mil.)
<b>+118.35</b>	<b>+43.98</b>	<b>-162.33</b>
Bought (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)	Bought (in RM mil.)
685.53	1391.63	856.36
Sold (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)	Sold (in RM mil.)
567.18	1347.65	1018.69

Preliminary status (Excluding Trade Amendments) | Final data, refer to Bursa website

**Need Some Ideas?**  
Our Monthly Trader's Talk will be held Every 1st Monday of the Month. Live webinar with Q&A.

**iPaOnline** | @iPaOnline | @iPaOnline1972 | Inter-Pacific Securities | @iPaC\_TV

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	12,294.60 -135.00
FBMKLCI	1,600.81 -14.02
CONSUMER PRODUCTS	536.14 -2.89
INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS	170.62 -2.72
CONSTRUCTION	318.23 -10.70
FINANCIAL SERVICES	18,853.70 -44.60
ENERGY	835.32 -16.50
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	531.93 -0.79
HEALTH CARE	2,226.54 -50.60
TRANSPORTATION	1,041.94 -10.30
PROPERTY	1,129.06 -8.98
PLANTATION	7,533.36 -22.50
FBMSHA	12,260.80 -166.00
FBMACE	5,309.83 -68.30
TECHNOLOGY	62.86 -1.59

TURNOVER: 3.486 bil VALUE: RM2.933 bil

## Bursa ends weaker as external pressures linger

THE FBM KLCI extended its decline for a second consecutive day, as investor sentiment remained pressured by rising external risks, particularly weak economic growth in China and stronger-than-expected US economic data.

The FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI (FBM KLCI) ended 14.02 points, or 0.86%, lower at 1,600.81, compared to Wednesday's close of 1,614.83.

Decliners trounced advancers 900 to 231 on the broader market, while 454 counters were unchanged, 785 untraded, and 10 others suspended.

UOB Kay Hian Wealth Advisors head of investment research Mohd Sedek Jantan said the combination of weak Chinese economic data, robust US economic performance, and uncertainty surrounding future US trade policies has created a challenging environment for investors.

These factors continue to dampen risk appetite, further contributing to the sustained decline in the FBM KLCI, which has dropped more than 40 points year-to-date. The broader economic outlook remains clouded by these external pressures.

Compounding these uncertainties, he said, the US Federal Reserve's (Fed) latest meeting minutes signalled "placeholder assumptions" regarding potential trade policy shifts under the Trump 2.0 administration.

On Bursa Malaysia, Mohd Sedek said, all sector indices posted losses, reflecting the broader market downturn.

"However, despite this negative performance, trading volume remained robust, with 3.28 billion shares changing hands, which suggests that investor activity continued, indicating a level of resilience and engagement despite the prevailing market uncertainty," he added. - Bernama

## Top 20 Actives

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
SET	0.420	0.025	6.33	1,270,149
HSI-PWB1	0.125	-0.005	-3.85	1,242,143
TWL	0.025	-	-	1,088,666
HSI-CWAY	0.105	0.005	5.00	909,584
VELOCITY	0.070	-0.010	-12.50	896,617
MYEG	0.920	-0.040	-4.17	604,150
GAMUDA	4.990	-0.200	-3.85	492,583
YTL	2.460	-0.220	-8.21	470,856
NATGATE	2.620	-0.330	-11.19	469,352
JCY	0.510	-0.030	-5.56	465,783
YTLPOWR-C64	0.060	-0.020	-25.00	369,307
YTL-C98	0.055	-0.020	-26.67	355,694
SUPERMX	1.130	-0.040	-3.42	335,170
TOPGLOV	1.200	-0.040	-3.23	315,457
PBBANK-CIL	0.025	-0.005	-16.67	298,904
ELRIDGE	0.455	0.035	8.33	288,525
HSI-CWAZ	0.040	-	-	260,539
SCABLE	0.135	0.015	12.50	254,833
YTLPOWR	4.200	-0.310	-6.87	254,777
TENCENT-C43	0.140	-0.020	-12.50	244,661



## Top 20 Gainers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
TOPGLOV-C4J	0.130	0.120	405
PTT	1.320	0.110	9,082
CANONE	2.380	0.090	31
AIRPORT	10.850	0.080	12,770
PETDAG	19.700	0.060	1,113
PPB	12.400	0.060	3,078
CDB	3.660	0.050	15,219
EUROSP	2.570	0.050	199
KLCC	8.050	0.050	36
MAXIS	3.610	0.050	35,496
TANCO	2.010	0.050	139,635
GAMUDA-C2W	0.200	0.045	10,101
FBMKLCI-HA4	0.150	0.040	14
HEIM	24.560	0.040	3,319
PARAGON	2.590	0.040	87
TAANN	4.150	0.040	2,962
XIAOMI-C33	0.405	0.040	1,360
YTL-HE	0.225	0.040	5,170
ELRIDGE	0.455	0.035	288,525
ALAQAR	1.400	0.03	8,204

## Top 20 Gainers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
TOPGLOV-C4J	0.130	1200.00	405
FBMKLCI-HM8	0.025	150.00	9,850
OCR-WE	0.010	100.00	4,710
PARLO-WA	0.010	100.00	250
TXCD-PA	0.035	75.00	2,228
FBMKLCI-HA1	0.075	66.67	9,090
MAXIS-C49	0.070	55.56	84,462
GENM-C2Z	0.015	50.00	5,501
HONGSENG	0.015	50.00	25,179
MAXLAND-WB	0.015	50.00	2,516
NEXGRAM-WD	0.015	50.00	5,003
FBMKLCI-HA4	0.150	36.36	14
YTL-HF	0.075	36.36	99,985
NEXGRAM	0.020	33.33	2
SMTRACK	0.020	33.33	342
XDL	0.020	33.33	12,931
GAMUDA-C2W	0.200	29.03	10,101
PETDAG-C11	0.045	28.57	151
YTLPOWR-HG	0.045	28.57	26,187
XOXNET	0.025	25.00	101

## World Stocks/Commodities

INDEX	CLOSING	DAILY CHANGE	DAILY CHANGE (%)
DJIA (US)	42,635.20	+106.84	+0.25
S&P 500 (US)	5,918.25	+9.22	+0.16
NASDAQ (US)	19,478.88	-10.80	-0.06
NYSE (US)	19,240.74	+26.86	+0.14
EURO STOXX 50 (EUR)	4,990.62	-5.77	-0.12
FTSE 100 (UK)	8,300.07	+49.04	+0.59
DAX (GER)	20,310.80	-19.14	-0.09
NIKKEI 225 (JPN)	39,605.09	-375.97	-0.94
TOPIX (JPN)	2,735.92	-34.08	-1.23
HANG SENG INDEX (HK)	19,240.89	-38.95	-0.20
CSI 300 (CHN)	3,779.88	-9.34	-0.25
SH SE COM (CHN)	3,211.39	-18.77	-0.58
KOSPI INDEX (SK)	2,521.90	+0.85	+0.03
MSCI ASIA PACIFIC	180.73	-1.24	-0.68
ASX 200 (AUS)	8,329.17	-19.98	-0.24
ALL ORDINARIES INDX (AUS)	8,577.84	-21.57	-0.25
SENSEX INDEX (IND)	77,598.94	-549.55	-0.70
FBM KLCI	1,600.81	-14.02	-0.87
STRAITS TIMES INDEX (S'PORE)	3,862.60	-24.38	-0.63
WTI (US\$/BBL.)	73.12	-0.20	-0.27
BRENT (US\$/BBL.)	76.02	-0.14	-0.18
GOLD (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	2,679.50	+7.10	+0.27
SILVER (COMEX) (US\$/T OZ)	30.88	+0.19	+0.60
PLATINUM (US\$/T OZ)	959.35	+1.17	+0.12
COPPER (COMEX) (US CENTS/LB.)	430.85	+5.00	+1.17
COPPER 3MO (LME) (US\$/MT)	9,031.50	28.50	0.32
CORN (US CENTS/BU.)	454.75	+0.75	+0.17
WHEAT (US CENTS/BU.)	538.50	+2.25	+0.42
SOYBEAN OIL (CBOT) (US CENTS/LB.)	41.23	-0.36	-0.87
COCOA (ICE) (US\$/MT)	10,453.00	-757.00	-6.75
RUBBER (S'PORE) (US CENTS/KG)	189.00	+2.30	+1.23

As at 5pm, Jan 9

## Top 20 Losers (By RM)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (RM)	VOLUME ('00)
MPI	24.660	-0.420	3142
NATGATE	2.620	-0.330	469,352
PIE	5.990	-0.310	2863
YTLPOWR	4.200	-0.310	254,777
MMIS	0.200	-0.300	30
AJ1	15.000	-0.260	300
YTL	2.460	-0.220	470,856
HSI-CWAB	0.370	-0.210	35
DLADY	31.000	-0.200	142
FRONTKN	4.160	-0.200	50159
GAMUDA	4.990	-0.200	492,583
HLIND	13.200	-0.200	1218
TENAGA	14,120	-0.200	41886
KESM	3.900	-0.180	1814
SUNCON	4.900	-0.180	55390
SUNCON-C11	0.980	-0.170	70
VSTECs	3.800	-0.170	17616
IHH	7.040	-0.160	31060
AYER	7.100	-0.150	10
IJM	3.080	-0.150	131606

## Top 20 Losers (By %)

STOCKS	CLOSING (RM)	+/- (%)	VOLUME ('00)
TFP-WB	0.005	-66.67	500
MMIS	0.200	-60.00	30
PENTA-C45	0.010	-60.00	801
FBMKLCI-CQJ	0.020	-55.56	14,892
DAYANG-C47	0.070	-53.33	1,000
MYEG-C7L	0.035	-53.33	7,000
DRBHCOMC3H	0.005	-50.00	6,480
OSONIC-C62	0.005	-50.00	200
HSI-CWAM	0.005	-50.00	10,667
LHI-C23	0.010	-50.00	1,500
MRDIY-C35	0.010	-50.00	1,450
SUNCON-C22	0.015	-50.00	23,352
YTL-C90	0.005	-50.00	16,781
YTL-C91	0.010	-50.00	132,859
MNRB-CG	0.075	-40.00	700
NATGATE-CD	0.100	-39.39	93,179
NATGATE-CA	0.120	-38.46	15,949
YTL-C97	0.050	-37.50	16,430
FBMKLCI-CQT	0.035	-36.36	1,000
FRONTKN-C34	0.035	-36.36	2,850

# 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.

## MIDF positive on banks, expects robust earnings

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The banking sector is expected to have robust earnings in 2025, supported by solid gross loan growth and stable asset quality, said MIDF Amanah Investment Bank Bhd.

The investment bank also remains "positive" in the banking sector as a solid economic outlook would be good for growth and earnings. "The earnings performance of the sector is closely tied to the economy's performance, being its backbone.

"Economic activities create demand for financial services such as productive loans for businesses, consumptive loans and transactional deposits," it said in a note.

MIDF projects that Malaysia's gross domestic product will continue growing, albeit at a more normalised level of +4.6% next year.

The investment bank also believes that the 2025 dividend outlook remains bright.

"We expect this dividend expectation and defensive feature of banks to be a key proposition in 2025 given the possibility of the market to remain volatile," it said.

MIDF expects net interest income (NII) growth to remain robust due to stable net interest margin (NIM) and sturdy loan growth; the normalisation of non-interest income (NOII) growth; operating expenses (OPEX) to come in at a more contained level; and asset quality to continue improving with no stress expected.

It said NII saw better performance as the prolonged deposit competition in 2023 waned.

MIDF also observed that there has been a segmentation among banks, with some focusing on different segments and not competing on a broad front.

For example, some banks have reduced focus on residential mortgages due to the razor-thin margins. — Bernama

## Ringgit may experience near-term volatility: BNM

**THE** ringgit is heading in the right direction, reflecting the country's strong economic fundamentals and growth prospects for the next couple of years, according to Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM).

Governor Datuk Seri Abdul Rasheed Ghaffour said he believes the ringgit will continue to remain supported by the further narrowing of interest rate differentials with the United States and other countries, as well as the growing investor optimism.

"We have noticed, especially when we did our roadshow ... an increase in investment sentiment and this will help the ringgit as we move forward. Second, in terms of the structural reforms that the government is undertaking, this is something that (will have) enduring support for the ringgit.

"Nevertheless, I think given the uncertainty, we can expect some bouts of volatility to happen in the near term as the market navigates a shift in US policies with the new president later this month," he said at the Malaysia Economic Forum 2025 yesterday.

The governor also highlighted that the ringgit regained its footing beginning in July last year when the US Federal Reserve started to cut its interest rate, narrowing the rate differentials between the United States and Malaysia.

Additionally, the coordinated actions undertaken by the government with BNM also ensured two-way flows in the market.

"In terms of coordinated action, since we started in February last year, we have seen that there is a very healthy two-way flow.

"For example, if you look (at) the average daily forex volume in the onshore market it has increased to about US\$18 billion (RM81 billion) compared to about US\$15 billion in 2023.

"So there is some improvement that we have seen from the coordinated action." — Bernama

## Exchange Rates

FOREIGN CURRENCY	SELLING TT/OD	BUYING TT	BUYING OD
1 Australian Dollar	2.8600	2.7430	2.7270
1 Brunei Dollar	3.3460	3.2470	3.2390
1 Canadian Dollar	3.1830	3.0950	3.0830
1 Euro	4.7290	4.5740	4.5540
1 New Zealand Dollar	2.5760	2.4800	2.4640
1 Singapore Dollar	3.3460	3.2470	3.2390
1 Sterling Pound	5.6570	5.4770	5.4570
1 Swiss Franc	5.0520	4.8390	4.8240
100 Bangladesh Taka	3.8490	3.5830	3.3830
100 Danish Krone	64.9700	59.7600	59.5600
100 Hongkong Dollar	59.5200	56.5300	56.3300
100 Indian Rupee	5.4200	5.0900	4.8900
100 Indonesian Rupiah	0.0293	0.0265	0.0215
100 Japanese Yen	2.9000	2.8050	2.7950
100 Norwegian Krone	41.1800	37.8500	37.6500
100 Pakistan Rupee	1.6700	1.5600	1.3600
100 Philippine Peso	7.9400	7.4800	7.2800
100 Saudi Riyal	123.3600	117.1100	116.9100
100 South Africa Rand	25.0500	22.6300	22.4300
100 Sri Lanka Rupee	1.5900	1.4600	1.2600
100 Swedish Krona	42.3600	38.5300	38.3300
100 Thai Baht	13.8100	12.2400	11.8400
1 US Dollar	4.5695	4.4355	4.4255
100 UAE Dirham	126.2000	119.6100	119.4100
100 Qatar Riyal	127.0300	120.6000	120.4000
100 New Taiwan Dollar	14.9000	N/A	N/A
100 Chinese Renminbi	62.9100	60.2300	N/A

Source: Malayan Banking Bhd/Bernama

## Public Bank Bhd Outperform. Target price: RM5.10



Source: Kenanga Research

**KEY** takeaways from our recent meeting with the group are as follows:

i. Spreading risks prudently. With regards to participating in Johor's Special Economic Zone initiative, the group intends to be selective with its involvement to stay well-diversified across its geographical and away from large corporate portfolios to be up to 15% of their total loans book. SMEs are preferred (making up 18% of total loans) for their typically higher margin, stand to benefit from the supply chain spillover from upcoming developments such as data centre and other infrastructure projects.

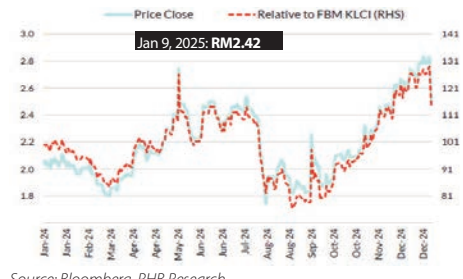
ii. NIM stability hopeful despite competition. PBBANK looks to close FY24 with a positive landing to NIMs (stable to +1 bps, from FY23: 2.20%), which was a positive surprise to us given much conservatism on margin retention at the start of the year. Led by the trimming of deposit rates (Oct 2024 fixed deposit board rates up to 2.50%), the group still sees favourable reception for its longer-term deposits (YoY, Sep 2024 +4.0% vs. industry +3.3%), which we attribute to its sticky retail clientele.

iii. Eyeing a gradual release of LLC. A credit cost target of <10 bps will likely extend into the long term thanks to continued discipline surrounding asset quality. Amid its prudence, the outstanding overlay of RM1.6b is preserved to safeguard against sudden shift in macros.

iv. Synergies from LPI to materialise. We gather that 25% of LPI's business presently originated from PBBANK, predominantly in its fire (mortgage) and motor (hire purchase) class products. The completion of LPI's acquisition presents more opportunities for collaboration by tapping into its wide agent network (over 3,000 personnel) and PBBANK's 200 physical branches.

Maintain OUTPERFORM and RM5.10 TP. — Kenanga Research, Jan 9

## Kossan Rubber Bhd Neutral. Target price: RM2.60



Source: Bloomberg, RHB Research

**KOSSAN** Rubber remains in a sweet spot to benefit from the potential trade diversions stemming from the US raising tariff rates on China imports. However, its earnings recovery prospect may be dampened by the glove makers' inability to arbitrage against higher import tariffs. Limited ASP-cost spread persists, which may take time to recover, and possible front-loading activities by the US may undermine 1H25 sales volume.

Several factors contributed to our sector downgrade following the rally of rubber product stocks under our coverage.

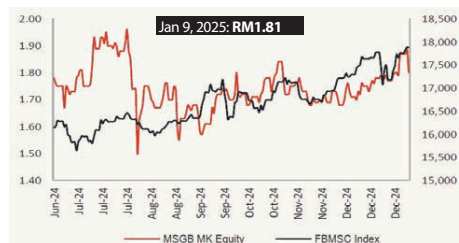
The primary reason was the inability of Malaysian glovemakers to fully benefit from the import tariffs imposed on China manufacturers. Malaysia glovemakers found it challenging to raise prices beyond US\$24 per 1,000 pieces, given the stiff pushback from US customers. US customers also front-loaded, as the US' October monthly import data surpassed its pre-pandemic 2-year monthly average by 50%.

The higher US import tariff on China could be viewed as icing on the cake but we think the reshuffling of the global supply chain already took place in mid-Nov 2024, ahead of the tariff's commencement (considering the time required for the shipment of goods). That said, future volume growth may only be supported by organic replenishment rather than trade diversions.

Our 2025 base-case ASP range assumption for Malaysia glovemakers remain at US\$21-23 per 1,000 pieces (2024: US\$18-21). Also, the Malaysia glovemakers will remain vigilant in staying relevant in non-US markets by closely monitoring their pricing strategies, given that competitors from China are gaining market share. As such, we think the sector's profitability may not recover to pre-pandemic levels until at least 2026.

Downgrade to NEUTRAL with RM2.60 TP — RHB Research, Jan 9

## Mah Sing Group Bhd Buy. Target price: RM2.43



Source: Rakuten Research

**MAH SING** Group Bhd holds a total remaining gross development value (GDV) of RM28.5bn across 2,412 acres of landbank, with an average selling price of below RM500,000 per unit. The company has also demonstrated its commitment to innovation and growth by making significant advancements in the data centre (DC) industry. Based on our estimates, the data centre business is projected to contribute more than RM80m in EBITDA for MAHSING in FY26.

In 2024, MAHSING made significant steps by acquiring over 60 acres of prime land across Klang Valley and Johor, paving the way for projects including (i) M Aspira, Taman Desa; (ii) M Aurora, Old Klang Road; (iii) MSS Business Park, Sepang; (iv) M Tiara 2; (v) M Tiara 3; and (vi) M Grand Minor. These initiatives are expected to yield a gross development value (GDV) of approximately RM5.8bn, with land acquisition costs comprising 7%–17% of the GDV.

The company launched 4 projects in 2024, all located in Klang Valley. These high-rise residential developments include (i) M-Zenya, Kepong (GDV: RM607m); (ii) M Azura, Setapak (GDV: RM613m); (iii) M Vertica, Cheras (GDV: RM150m); and (iv) M Aspira, Taman Desa (GDV: RM1bn). These projects are expected to be well received due to their proximity to the KL City Centre.

MAHSING forged key partnerships with Bridge Data Centres (BDC) to drive the development of state-of-the-art data centre facilities. The Mah Sing DC Hub@Southville City, Bangi currently holds 300 MW of secured power capacity, with an additional 200 MW earmarked for future collaborations, solidifying its role as a major regional data centre hub.

Furthermore, MAHSING has 42 acres of land at its Meridin East township in Johor Bahru, capable of supporting 300 MW of future power capacity, offering significant opportunities for further growth and value creation.

BUY with a target price of RM2.43. — Rakuten Research, Jan 9



BY THASHINE SELVAKUMARAN

**B**RIGHT and full of flavour, orange-coloured foods bring a touch of sunshine to your plate. These recipes make the most of natural orange hues. Packed with nutrients such as beta-carotene and vitamin C, these dishes are as wholesome as they are delicious. Here is a vibrant lineup of orange-coloured dishes to enjoy throughout the day.

#### Orange pancakes

Start your day with a burst of citrus. These fluffy orange pancakes are infused with fresh orange juice and zest, offering a tangy twist to your morning routine.

#### Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon of sugar
- 1 tablespoon of baking powder
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- 1 cup of orange juice
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons of melted butter
- Zest of one orange

#### Instructions

1. In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt.
2. Whisk orange juice, egg, melted butter and orange zest in a separate bowl.
3. Slowly add the wet mixture to dry ingredients, stir until combined.
4. Heat a non-stick pan over medium heat and grease lightly.
5. Pour batter into the pan and cook until bubbles form on the surface, then flip and cook until golden brown.
6. Serve with a drizzle of honey or orange marmalade for an extra burst of citrus.



Carrot and orange soup is a blend of sweet carrots and tangy orange juice. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @HEINEN'S

#### Carrot and orange soup

A comforting bowl of carrot and orange soup for a light yet satisfying lunch. The natural sweetness of carrots blends with the zesty notes of orange juice, creating a warm dish.

#### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon of olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 3 carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 cups of vegetable stock
- 1 cup of orange juice
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh cream for garnish

#### Instructions

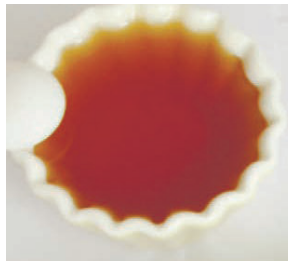
1. Heat olive oil in a pot over medium heat. Add onions and saute until translucent.
2. Add carrots and cook for five minutes.
3. Pour in the vegetable stock and orange juice. Bring to a boil, then simmer for 20 minutes.
4. Blend the mixture until smooth.
5. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with a swirl of fresh cream before serving.

#### Orange chicken stir-fry

A quick and easy dinner option, this orange chicken stir-fry combines tender chicken with the sweetness of orange marmalade and the crunch of bell peppers.

#### Ingredients

- 500g chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 tablespoon of soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon of ginger, minced
- 2 tablespoons of orange marmalade
- 1 orange, juiced and zested
- 1 cup of mixed bell peppers, sliced
- 2 tablespoons of oil



Orange chicken stir-fry with crunchy bell peppers for a quick dinner.

This orange cake is a classic sweet and tangy treat for any occasion.



2. Add rice and stir to coat with butter.
3. Gradually add stock, one ladle at a time, stirring continuously.
4. When the rice is nearly cooked, stir in pumpkin puree and Parmesan cheese.
5. Season with salt and pepper. Serve hot.

#### Classic orange cake

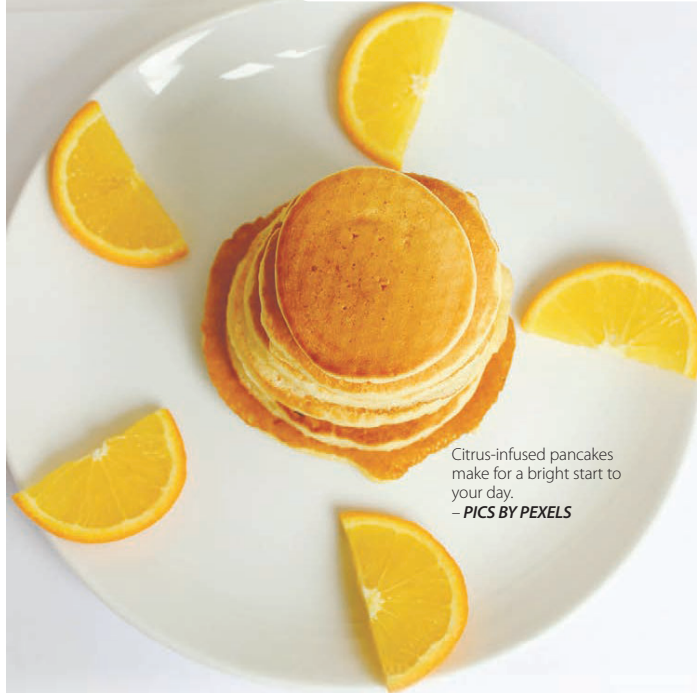
This classic orange cake is a delightful dessert for any occasion.

#### Ingredients

- 1 ¾ cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ teaspoon of baking powder
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- ¾ cup of sugar
- ½ cup of butter, softened
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup of orange juice
- Zest of one orange

#### Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 175°C (350°F). Grease a 9-inch round cake tin.
2. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time.
3. Combine flour, baking powder and salt in a separate bowl. Gradually add to the wet mixture, alternating with orange juice.
4. Fold in orange zest and pour the batter into the cake tin.
5. Bake for 30–35 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean. Cool before slicing.



Citrus-infused pancakes make for a bright start to your day.  
– PICS BY PEXELS

# Orange obsession

➤ Seven vibrant citrus fruit recipes

#### Instructions

1. Marinate the chicken with soy sauce, ginger and orange zest for 15 minutes.
2. Heat oil in a wok and stir-fry the chicken until fully cooked. Set aside.
3. In the same wok, stir-fry bell peppers for three minutes.
4. Add orange juice and marmalade to the wok, stirring until the sauce thickens.
5. Return the chicken to the wok and toss to coat evenly. Serve hot with steamed rice.



Salmon fillets paired with tangy orange glaze.  
– FREEPIKPIC

#### Salmon with orange glaze

The citrusy sauce enhances the natural richness of the salmon, making it a show-stopping main course that is easy to make.

#### Ingredients

- 2 salmon fillets

- 2 tablespoons of orange juice
- 1 tablespoon of honey
- 1 tablespoon of soy sauce
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon of olive oil

#### Instructions

1. Combine orange juice, honey, soy sauce and garlic in a bowl.
2. Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium heat.
3. Sear the salmon fillets for three to four minutes on each side until golden brown.
4. Pour the glaze over the salmon and let it simmer for 2 minutes.
5. Serve with a side of roasted vegetables or mashed potatoes.

#### Pumpkin risotto

The golden hue of the pumpkin puree brings a subtle sweetness that balances the savoury Parmesan cheese.

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup of Arborio rice
- 2 tablespoons of butter
- 1 small onion, diced
- 1 cup of pumpkin puree
- 3 cups of chicken or vegetable stock
- ½ cup of grated Parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### Instructions

1. Heat butter in a pan and saute onions until soft.



This Indian dessert is made with slow-cooked carrots, milk and cardamom. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @FLAVOURS OF FOOD

#### Gajar halwa

Gajar Halwa is a sweet carrot pudding that is slow-cooked with milk, ghee and sugar.

#### Ingredients

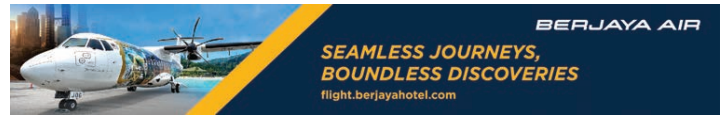
- 4 large carrots, grated
- 2 cups of milk
- ½ cup of sugar
- 2 tablespoons of ghee
- ¼ cup of chopped nuts (almonds, pistachios)
- ½ teaspoon of cardamom powder

#### Instructions

1. Heat ghee in a pan and saute grated carrots for five minutes.
2. Add milk and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently until the mixture thickens.
3. Stir in sugar and cardamom powder, cooking until the sugar dissolves and the halwa reaches a pudding-like consistency.
4. Garnish with nuts before serving warm.



Pumpkin risotto brings comfort with its subtle sweetness. – PIC FROM YOUTUBE @RECIPE TIN EATS



## Your weekend horoscope



**ARIES**  
**March 21 – Apr 19**  
 You feel a burst of motivation this week, ready to tackle challenges head-on. In your career, ambition propels you forward but do not rush decisions. Focus on balancing your energy, burnout is a risk. Financially, unexpected expenses may arise, so plan carefully. Family may need your support while romance benefits from your honesty.



**TAURUS**  
**Apr 20 – May 20**  
 Patience serves you well this week as career progress feels slower than expected. Steady effort will pay off. Your health improves as you embrace routines that bring stability. Financially, budgeting leads to peace of mind. In love, small gestures go a long way and family bonds strengthen when you prioritise communication.



**GEMINI**  
**May 21 – June 20**  
 This week is full of opportunities, especially at work. Collaboration feels natural but do not spread yourself thin. Health-wise, prioritise sleep and hydration to avoid fatigue. Financially, a conversation with a trusted adviser could help clarify your goals. In relationships, romance thrives when you let your playful side shine.



**CANCER**  
**June 21 – July 22**  
 You are deeply introspective this week, focusing on self-growth. Career-wise, you will see progress by staying true to your values. Health improves with a mindful approach, consider yoga or journaling. Financially, avoid unnecessary risks and stick to what feels safe. In love, prioritise time for yourself without guilt.



**LEO**  
**July 23 – Aug 22**  
 This week challenges you to balance ambition with compassion. In your career, bold steps forward are rewarded but collaboration is key. Health-wise, watch for signs of overexertion and pace yourself. Financially, it is a good time to align spending with long-term goals. Relationships sparkle as romance feels exciting and friends rally around you with support.



**VIRGO**  
**Aug 23 – Sept 22**  
 This week, you will experience a sense of clarity as you refine your goals. At work, remember to step back and celebrate small wins. Your health is steady but do not ignore emotional wellness, self-care is vital. Financially, a thoughtful approach helps you feel in control. Open conversations strengthen family and romantic relationships.



The Barry Jenkins-directed film appears on track to reach the half-billion-dollar mark. – AFPIC

# Mufasa tops US box office

» Roaring numbers for animated film

**D**ISNEY'S animated drama *Mufasa: The Lion King* reigned over North America's box office this weekend, surpassing *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* to start the new year with an estimated US\$23.8 million (RM103 million) take, industry watcher *Exhibitor Relations* reported on Sunday.

The showing pushed *Mufasa* to a domestic total of US\$168.6 million over three weekends, propelling it to the top 15 of 2024 releases, *Variety* reported.

With an additional US\$307 million earned internationally, the Barry Jenkins-directed film appears on track to reach the half-billion-dollar mark.

*Sonic*, the Paramount action comedy about a speedy blue hedgehog, slowed a bit as the year-end holiday season wound down in the US and Canada, taking in US\$21.2 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period.

The videogame-based film has now raked in

US\$187.5 million in domestic ticket sales and US\$148 million abroad, for a total of US\$333.5 million.

Focus Film's vampire flick *Nosferatu*, the latest remake of the 1922 silent classic inspired by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, held tight in third place at US\$13.2 million.

Down one spot from last weekend was Disney blockbuster *Moana 2* at US\$12.4 million.

With accumulated ticket sales of US\$425 million domestically and US\$535 million overseas, its US\$960 million total puts it on the verge of passing *Despicable Me 4* (US\$969 million) as the third top-grossing release of 2024 and brings it close to the US\$1 billion milestone.

In fifth place, also down one spot from last weekend, was Universal Pictures's musical fantasy *Wicked*. This latest take on the magical world of Oz logged ticket sales of US\$10.2 million, even after becoming available for on-demand video viewing.

**Rounding out the top 10 were:**  
*A Complete Unknown* (US\$8.1 million)  
*Babygirl* (US\$4.5 million)  
*Gladiator II* (US\$2.7 million)  
*Homestead* (US\$2.1 million)  
*The Fire Inside* (US\$1.2 million)

## Wicked film boosts Broadway show

**THE** *Wicked* movie continued to work its magic as its adaptation of the musical, starring Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande, gave the Broadway show a boost in the recent festive season. Grossing US\$5 million (RM22.4 million) during last year's Christmas week, *Wicked* achieved the biggest weekly gross ever for a Broadway show, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*.

It was a special week for the famous musical, which ran nine performances instead of the usual eight, setting another record since its opening night in 2003. The cult musical grossed an additional US\$2 million over the previous week. According to the magazine, the average ticket price for *Wicked* on Broadway was US\$290.

While the release of Jon Chu's feature-length film was a factor, the festive season is traditionally good to musicals. For instance, *The Lion King* (US\$4.2 million), *Aladdin* (US\$2.81 million) and *The Great Gatsby* (US\$2.62 million) also saw their grosses rise. Meanwhile,



*Wicked* stars Erivo and Grande as Elphaba and Glinda, respectively. – PIC FROM UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

*Hamilton* achieved the third-highest gross of the week, taking US\$2.93 million.

Last year's holiday week grosses jumped by almost 23%, compared with the same period in 2023. Overall, the 2024-25 season has so far posted growth of over 16%, compared with the previous season. – ETX Studio



**LIBRA**  
**Sept 23 – Oct 22**  
 Harmony feels attainable this week. Career opportunities arise when you lean into your natural diplomacy and charm. Health-wise, consider creating routines that nourish mind and body. Finances benefit from careful planning. In relationships, romance thrives on shared experiences while family bonds are fortified by listening.



**SCORPIO**  
**Oct 23 – Nov 21**  
 Transformation is the theme of your week. At work, your intensity leads to breakthroughs but avoid micromanaging. Health-wise, detoxifying habits bring renewed energy. Financially, be strategic as small sacrifices lead to long-term gains. Romances deepen as emotional walls come down and family interactions benefit from openness.



**SAGITTARIUS**  
**Nov 22 – Dec 21**  
 You are bursting with ideas this week. Professionally, innovation sets you apart but follow-through is key to success. Outdoor activities or a new fitness goal boosts health. Financially, a calculated risk may pay off, trust your intuition. In love, spontaneity strengthens bonds while family gatherings feel warm and uplifting.



**CAPRICORN**  
**Dec 22 – Jan 19**  
 This week is about laying solid foundations. In your career, do not shy away from asking for recognition. Health improves when you avoid overworking. Financially, consider setting new savings goals for the year ahead. Family relationships deepen through honest communication and romance feels steady yet comforting.



**AQUARIUS**  
**Jan 20 – Feb 18**  
 Fresh ideas and a sense of purpose define your week. Professionally, grounding your ideas in practicality ensures success. Health-wise, prioritise movement to release built-up tension. Financially, collaborations bring positive outcomes. Romance is filled with excitement while family ties benefit from your fresh perspective.



**PISCES**  
**Feb 19 – March 20**  
 Your intuition guides you this week as you focus on aligning with your true desires. In your career, quiet confidence helps you navigate challenges gracefully. Health feels balanced when you create space for rest and creativity. Financially, avoid emotional spending, long-term stability is within reach. In relationships, romantic energy feels dreamy and fulfilling while family moments bring healing.



## LYFE'S PICK

BY VERONICA ELANKOVAN

**A**NTHONY Bourdain once said: "I think food, culture, people and landscape are all absolutely inseparable." From gourmet to home-cooked, good food has historically brought people together. Whether handmade pasta by Italian *nonnas* or freshly prepared *sashimi* by Michelin-recognised Japanese chefs, every good core memory begins with food. But, food is beyond just a good meal time — behind every cuisine and taste, there is a story being told.

Building economies and shaping communities for aeons, food has continued to be the crux of every society. A bridge between distinct cultures, it is a language that transcends linguistic barriers — just like music!

So, here are seven documentaries picked by *theSun* for you to experience different cultures through food from the comfort of your couch.

**Korean Food Rhapsody Collection (Netflix)**

Hosted by South Korean Baek Jong Won, the *Korean Food Rhapsody Collection* features docuseries of popular Korean food. Each series provides a deep dive into the rich history of K-food as well as its unique traditions and evolution. The collection comprises: *Korean Fried Chicken Rhapsody*, *Jjajangmyeon Rhapsody*, *Korean Cold Noodle Rhapsody*, *Korean Porkbelly Rhapsody* and *Hanwoo Rhapsody*.

**Street Food Collection (Netflix)**

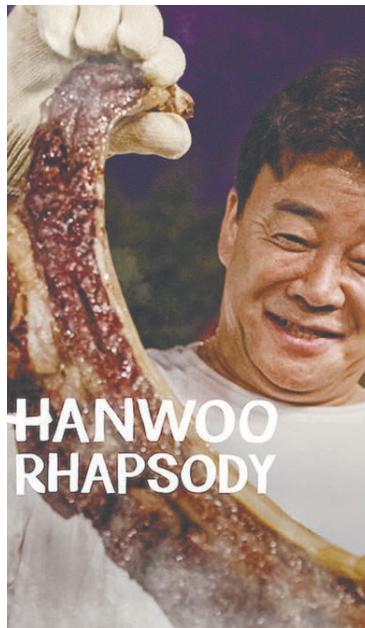
Street food is an integral facet of society. This gastro-phenomenon, that boomed thanks to working-class communities, is now the heartbeat of the middle-class society. Building on this, *Street Food Collection* is a set of docuseries that takes viewers on a culinary journey across three food havens — Asia, Latin America and the US. It explores the emotional and cultural significance of street food, which informs the culinary DNA of these continents and countries.

**KFoodShow (Netflix)**

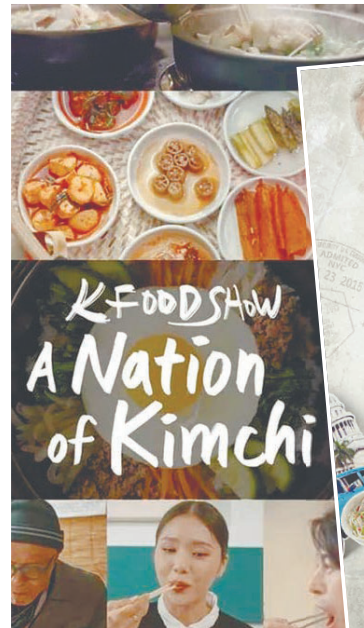
Another Korean food show, this limited series collection is narrated through the point-of-view of three foodies of different generations — Boomer Huh Young-man, Gen X Ryu Su-yeong and Millennial Mimi. The show takes viewers on a gastronomic journey across South Korea to learn the key essence of its traditional food via *A Nation of Broth*, *A Nation of Kimchi* and *A Nation of Banchan*.

**Flavourful Origins (Netflix)**

A 10-episode series, *Flavourful Origins* invites viewers to explore the Chinese food tradition.



Hanwoo Rhapsody.



KFoodShow: A Nation of Kimchi.



Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown.

# Food for thought

➤ Seven culinary docuseries for hungry travellers

From the multi-use of mutton to flaxseed and potato, the documentary explores different key ingredients that remained fixtures in Chinese cuisines for aeons. Viewers will learn the different ways ingredients are used to make comfort and gourmet food.

**Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown (Prime Video)**

Released in 2013 and hosted by the late world-renowned chef Anthony Bourdain, this namesake series delves into niche, unknown areas of the world, celebrating their diversity

and of course, food. An educational programme in its own right, the series also explores the politics and socio-economic state of these countries while highlighting their dining rituals and culture.

**Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy (Max)**

The two-season food and travel show follows the voyage of American actor Stanley Tucci as he reconnects with his Italian roots. Served hot with Tucci's charismatic storytelling, the show explores Italian cuisines through the lenses of culture, history and traditions. More than just a food documentary, the Emmy-winning show reminds viewers that food is a universal language. At its heart, the series is a celebration of simplicity and comfort in reconnecting to one's essence.

**Gordon, Gino and Fred's Road Trip (Prime Video)**

Premiered in 2018, the show is a fun road trip to different locales with three famous personalities — British chef Gordon Ramsay, Italian chef Gino D'Acampo and French *maitre d'hotel* Fred Sirieix. With playful banter and lots of laughter, the trio delves into the local culinary scene, immersing themselves in its customs, festivities and traditions. The show emphasises the cultural exchange that takes place in the form of food and camaraderie.

Through these documentaries, we are reminded every dish reflects the history and traditions of their place of birth. It gives a deeper understanding of the world and its inhabitants. So, why not spice up your weekend by binge-watching these shows?

Gordon, Gino & Fred's Road Trip.  
— ALL PICS BY IMDB

Flavourful Origins.



Street Food Asia.



Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy.





# the Sun Motoring

FRIDAY | JAN 10, 2025

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The J7 PHEV can be recharged with AC and DC charging.



Retractable door handles improve aerodynamics.



The side view mirror is sleeker than the petrol model.



## Super efficient



The PHEV variant gets dual-tone paint job.

With a range of 1300km, the Jaecoo J7 PHEV is worth the wait

BY KESHY DHILLON

**T**HERE has been plenty that has been said about Jaecoo in Malaysia. Countless *Youtube* and *TikTok* videos have been circulating and dozens of articles written.

A quick check on Google will verify that and tell you almost anything you want to know about the brand.

The topic of choice has largely been about the Chinese brand and how it is just a little over a year old.

We also know that it is the export brand for Chery meaning that it is only available in certain markets outside of China, and the J7 is its first salvo to arrive in Malaysian.

The Jaecoo J7 has undoubtedly shaken the local market. It has stolen sales from legacy car makers, and for this article we spent a few minutes analysing owner pages online and chat groups and we found that there are zero complaints among buyers of the J7.

You may argue that the brand and

Under floor battery is reinforced with three layers of armour.



the model is still new but we sometimes hear about quality issues when a new model is first launched, but we didn't find any such complaints so far.

We also drove the J7 extensively as well and found that there is plenty to like about the SUV which counts the mighty Honda HRV and the Proton X50 as two of its closest competitors.

There is little doubt that Jaecoo is on a roll and there are more models coming up, including the plug-in hybrid (PHEV) version of the J7.

To demonstrate the capabilities of the J7 PHEV, Jaecoo Malaysia flew a group of journalists to China late last year.

And though this publication was not part of that group, it is worth noting



The new powertrain is ultra efficient.

that many of the attending journalists were raving about how the J7 PHEV could travel about 1300km without refuelling or recharging.

Then came our turn to drive J7 PHEV in Malaysia recently and we found that there is a lot more to the car than just efficiency.

But before we get into the finer details, you must be wondering if the J7 PHEV is indeed capable of travelling over 1300km.

We didn't get a chance to put that to

the test owing to the timing of the drive which happened during school holidays which meant traffic was at its peak, we might put it to the ultimate efficiency test later on.

However, we did see a range of 1070km when we picked up the car. And after about five days of driving the car without refuelling and just a single recharge session which costed RM14.59, we still had a range of close to 800km when we returned the J7 PHEV. Impressive? Most definitely.



## THE DETAILS

From the outside, the Jaecoo J7 PHEV looks like the regular model. But the devil is always in the detail. For starters, the side mirrors are sleeker while the standard ones are boxier.

The J7 PHEV also rolls on new 19-inch wheels and sports a dual tone paint job with a gloss black roof.

The biggest difference between the standard J7 and the PHEV is the interior and what lays underneath the metal skin. The interior is somewhat different yet remains the same.

The dashboard is the same design, you still get the same massive 14.8-inch infotainment screen, the same steering wheel and the same seats which are wide and comfortable.

However, look closer and you will notice that the gear shifter has been replaced with two charge pads.

The shifter has been relocated to the right side of the steering column, which is quite typical of EV's. In fact, it is quite like the interior design of the Omoda E5.

Just under the charge pads are two cup holders and next to that are easy-access buttons that give you access to the air-conditioning settings, door locks, drive modes, hazard lights and there are two more buttons that let you select between driving in pure EV mode or in hybrid mode. This is probably the biggest difference inside but there is more.

The door panels are completely different as well and no longer have those chunky, tough design elements that the standard J7 has and even the window controls have been updated as well. For better or for worse, this writer likes the simplicity of the interior now.

## THE POWERTRAIN

This is of course the biggest update to the Jaecoo J7 PHEV. It no longer uses the 1.6-litre, turbocharged, four-cylinder engine which puts out 197PS and 290Nm of torque. Depending on the variant, the power could be sent to either all-four or just the front two wheels.

Replacing that is a 1.5-litre, turbocharged, four-cylinder engine that is backed up by a 18.3kWh lithium-ion battery as well as an electric motor. This powertrain now offers a combined system output of 347PS and 525Nm of torque.

Through a dedicated hybrid transmission, all that power is channelled to the front wheels exclusively. So, you can't have the PHEV variant with all-wheel-drive.

Though this PHEV packs quite an impressive amount of power, it does not translate that to brute performance in the real world. In fact, it accelerates



The dashboard, 14.8-inch infotainment screen and steering wheel is the same as the petrol variant.



Gear stalk is unique to the PHEV model.



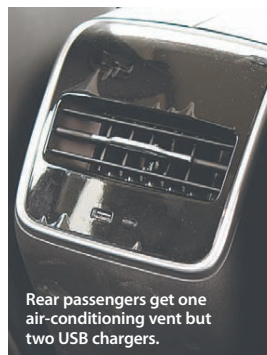
The Sony sound system is fantastic.

to 100kph in 8.5 seconds which is not exactly brutish acceleration.

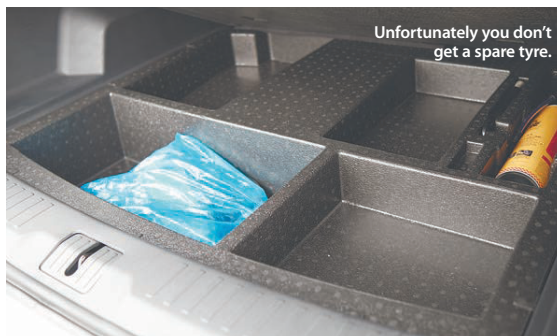
Despite that though, it is quite easy to light up the front wheels when you flex your right foot, as we found out during a drive in the torrid monsoon rain. So, in the wet, it is better to feather the accelerator rather than stomp on it.

However, feathering the accelerator also has some benefits, such as immense savings. Go easy and you may just see the claimed fuel consumption figure of 4.9-litres per 100km, or 20.4km per litre. That is with the engine and battery working in unison, but what about when the battery goes flat?

Unlike some of the PHEV's available in our market, you can't force charge the battery while the car is on the move.



Rear passengers get one air-conditioning vent but two USB chargers.



Unfortunately you don't get a spare tyre.

You can use the regenerative brakes and drive mode to trickle charge, but you can't get the system to run on the engine alone and charge the battery to 100% like you can in a Volvo XC90 for example.

So, at some point during a long-distance drive, the battery is going to be depleted, leaving you to run on the engine alone. But even then, the J7 PHEV has a claimed fuel efficiency figure of 5.99-litres per 100km, that is an impressive 16.7km per litre.

And because the J7 has a 60-litre fuel tank and impressive efficiency, you have a theoretical range of 1001km, and that is on petrol power alone.

## CHARGING THE BATTERY

There is great news here because unlike more expensive PHEV's like the Volvo XC90 we referred to earlier, the Jaecoo J7 PHEV is capable of recharging with a DC charger.

In fact it can take on 40kW of DC charging which means that you could fully charge the battery in about 30 minutes.

But when it comes to AC charging the J7 PHEV can only take 6.6kW, which is fine as well because you can simply plug it in one of those AC chargers at shopping malls and let it take its time.

But don't shop for more than three hours though for you risk being a nuisance to others because with an

AC charger the battery can be fully charged in just two hours and 45 minutes.

So, despite the J7 PHEV having a smallish battery, the benefits of it is that it can recharge rather quick.

## TRAVEL DISTANCE ON ELECTRIC MODE

The J7 PHEV might have a small battery, but it can travel 88km on electric power alone and we were told that some have even seen an electric range of 120km. It all depends on how you drive and the topography of the terrain.

## COMPARISON WITH PETROL VARIANT

You will be hard done to tell the difference if we were to blind fold you. Of course the PHEV will be a little quieter and smoother when in EV mode and that makes it feel more refined, but besides that, the car generally feels the same.

Power delivery also feels more urgent when the system is working in unison but if you are running on the engine alone, acceleration tends to feel watered down as the engine puts out 144PS by itself.

As for the way the car feels, the J7 has always had a comfortable and poised ride quality and that remains with the PHEV variant.

## SHOULD YOU BUY ONE?

We can't tell you the price since it has not been launched yet, but if you want something that is efficient or have always been curious about EV's but never wanted to deal with the hassle of recharging, then the Jaecoo J7 PHEV might just be the car for you.

## SPECIFICATIONS

**Engine:** 1.5-litre, 4-cylinder, turbo-charged with electric motor  
**Power (Combined):** 347PS  
**Torque (Combined):** 525Nm  
**Transmission:** 3-speed Dedicated Hybrid Transmission  
**Battery:** 18.3kWh Lithium-Iron Phosphate  
**Charging:** 6.6kW (AC) / 40kW (DC)  
**Price:** Not available  
**We like:** Efficiency, Refinement.  
**We don't like:** No spare tyre.



Rear passenger space is generous.



The seats have always been Jaecoo's strong point.



# Toyota launches 2025 models

Designed for both thrill-seeking enthusiasts and everyday drivers

UMW Toyota Motor Sdn Bhd has unveiled three highly anticipated models, the 2025 GR Yaris, GR Corolla, and Corolla GR Sport, during the closing of Toyota Gazoo Racing Season 7.

These models, inspired by Toyota Gazoo Racing's motorsport heritage, aim to redefine performance vehicles in Malaysia. Designed for both thrill-seeking enthusiasts and everyday drivers, they showcase Toyota's commitment to engineering excellence, style, and versatility.

## 2025 GR Yaris: Competition-Tuned Craftsmanship for the Road

The 2025 GR Yaris brings rally-inspired engineering to Malaysian roads. Powered by a 1.6-litre turbocharged G16E-GTS engine, it delivers 300 PS and 400 Nm of torque, paired with a 6-speed manual transmission for ultimate driver engagement. Its GR-Four all-wheel-drive system, derived from Toyota's World Rally Championship experience, ensures unmatched control across various terrains.

The GR Yaris features advanced cooling systems, a refined suspension for sharp handling, and aerodynamic upgrades like the Functional Matrix Ver.2 design. Inside, a driver-focused cockpit boasts a 12.3-inch GR Full TFT meter, ergonomic controls, and race-inspired accents. Available in four colours, including the striking Precious Metal, the GR Yaris starts at RM315,600.

## 2025 GR Corolla: Motorsport Performance for the Streets

The 2025 GR Corolla raises the bar for hot hatches with its G16E-GTS 1.6-litre turbocharged engine, delivering 300 PS and 400 Nm of torque. Paired with a 6-speed manual



Corolla GR Sport



GR Yaris

transmission, it features the GR-Four AWD system for exceptional traction and stability. Enhanced suspension and aerodynamics, including widened wheel arches and triple exhaust outlets, reflect its rally-bred DNA.

Inside, rally-tuned seats, a digital performance display, and premium finishes emphasize both function and style. Available in vibrant colours like Emotional Red 2 and Platinum White Pearl Mica, the GR Corolla starts

at RM367,000, blending bold design with cutting-edge engineering.

## 2025 Corolla GR Sport: Everyday Practicality Meets Sporty Elegance

For those seeking a balance of sportiness and everyday comfort, the 2025 Corolla GR Sport delivers. Powered by a 1.8-litre engine paired with a 10-speed Sport Sequential Shiftmatic CVT, it offers smooth acceleration and engaging manual mode. Its dynamic design features a

two-tone exterior, GR-specific honeycomb grille, and redesigned 18-inch alloy wheels.

The interior combines premium suede and leather with sporty red stitching, while modern conveniences like a 10-inch high-definition audio system, wireless charging, and Toyota Safety Sense enhance both comfort and safety. Starting at RM149,800, the Corolla GR Sport is available in stylish two-tone options, including Platinum White Pearl Mica with a Black Roof.

# Volvo EX30 Electric SUV open for bookings

VOLVO Car Malaysia has officially opened bookings for the locally assembled (CKD) Volvo EX30, following the overwhelming success of its fully imported (CBU) units launched in September 2024.

The introduction of the EX30 underscores Volvo's commitment to offering sustainable, safe, and innovative mobility solutions tailored to the Malaysian market.

The locally assembled Volvo EX30 Model Year 2025 (MY25) will be available in two variants: the Ultra and Ultra Twin Performance.

Pricing starts at RM208,888 for the Ultra variant, while the Ultra Twin Performance variant is priced at RM228,888.

Customers can choose from three stunning colours: Cloud Blue, Vapour Grey, and Crystal White.

The first deliveries are expected in the second week of January 2025, making the EX30 an exciting addition to the growing electric vehicle market in Malaysia.

Powering the EX30 are advanced electric drivetrains tailored to diverse driving preferences. The Ultra variant features a single motor producing

272PS and 343Nm of torque, allowing it to accelerate from 0-100kph in 5.3 seconds.

Meanwhile, the Ultra Twin Performance variant boasts a dual-motor setup delivering an impressive 428 PS and 543 Nm of torque,



achieving 0-100kph in just 3.6 seconds.

Both variants are equipped with a 69 kWh NMC battery, offering a range of up to 476km (WLTP) for the single motor and 450km for the twin motor. Fast-charging capabilities enable the battery to go from 10% to 80% in just 28 minutes when using a 175 kW DC

charger.

Volvo Car Malaysia is also offering extensive after-sales support to provide peace of mind for EX30 owners. The Volvo Car Service Plan (VSP) covers essential services, including air filter replacement, brake fluid checks, wiper blade replacement, and software updates for up to five years or 100,000 km.

Additionally, wear-and-tear items such as brake pads and discs are included in the plan. Customers will also benefit from a five-year roadside assistance program, which includes towing services to the nearest authorised Volvo service centre.

The EX30 comes with comprehensive warranties, including a five-year/unlimited-mileage vehicle warranty and an eight-year/160,000km high-voltage battery warranty.

The battery warranty ensures free repairs or replacements if capacity falls below 70% during the warranty period, further reinforcing Volvo's commitment to customer satisfaction.

# VPCM adjusts Touareg pricing



VOLKSWAGEN Passenger Cars Malaysia (VPCM) has announced revised pricing for its flagship SUV, the Touareg R-Line, aiming to make the luxury model more attractive to Malaysian customers.

The locally assembled Touareg R-Line is now priced at RM382,690, excluding the Volkswagen Assurance Package (previously priced at RM469,990, inclusive of VAP), reflecting the brand's commitment to passing operational savings onto consumers amid favourable market conditions.

The Touareg R-Line is celebrated for its cutting-edge technology, advanced safety features, and commanding design.

Under the hood, the SUV boasts a 3.0-litre turbocharged V6 engine that delivers an impressive 340PS and 450Nm of torque, ensuring a dynamic and robust performance for discerning drivers.

Among its standout features is the IQLight HD Matrix headlights, a state-of-the-art lighting system equipped with over 38,000 interactive micro-LEDs.

The Touareg R-Line offers added peace of mind with the optional Volkswagen Assurance Package (VAP), available for RM17,300.

This package includes 5-year service maintenance for hassle-free ownership, a 5-year manufacturer warranty for comprehensive coverage, and 5-year roadside assistance to provide reliable support during emergencies.

This price adjustment underscores VPCM's dedication to offering competitive value while maintaining the premium quality associated with the Volkswagen brand.

The new pricing strategy is expected to attract a wider audience and solidify the Touareg R-Line's position as a top choice in the luxury SUV segment.

# Mercedes-Benz rolls out latest system update

MERCEDES-BENZ has achieved a significant milestone in autonomous driving with the latest update to its Drive Pilot system, now certified by Germany's Federal Motor Transport Authority.

This upgrade positions Drive Pilot as the fastest conditionally automated driving system (SAE Level 3) available in standard production vehicles.

The feature is set to hit the market in early 2025, offered on the S-Class and EQS luxury saloons at a starting price of €5,950 (RM28,000).

Existing vehicles equipped with

Drive Pilot can receive the software update for free, either over-the-air or at authorised service centres, with no need for hardware modifications.

The updated Drive Pilot system enables conditionally automated driving at speeds of up to 95kph on Germany's extensive 13,191km long Autobahn network.

Under specific conditions, drivers can activate the system and legally shift their attention to other activities, such as streaming movies, reading, or working, while the vehicle autonomously handles the driving task.

Safety remains a cornerstone of Drive Pilot's design. The system boasts a redundant architecture, duplicating critical functions like braking, steering, and electronics.

In cases where the driver fails to reclaim control after prompts, the system safely brings the car to a halt, activating hazard warning lights.

Mercedes-Benz is pushing the boundaries of autonomous driving with innovative features, including turquoise "Automated Driving Marker Lights," which signal Drive Pilot's activation to other road users and law enforcement.



These lights, already tested in the US, aim to enhance public trust and road safety, though they are yet to be approved in Germany.

Looking ahead, the automaker aims

to extend the system's capabilities, targeting speeds of up to 130 kph – the current legal limit for automated driving in Germany – and eventually higher speeds.





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DALAM NEGERI SELANGOR DARUL HASAN, MALAYSIA SAMAN NO. BB-4726/CVC-998-10/2024

- 1. NOR AZLI BIN MASOM (No. K/P: 720296-46-XXXX / A2069697)
2. NORFASHKIN BINTI ABDUL KARIM (No. K/P: 770127-46-XXXX / A5176320)

DALAM MAHKAMAH SESYEN DI JOHOR BAHRU

DALAM NEGERI JOHOR DARUL TAJIM SAMAN PERUSAHAAN PENGANGKAPAN NO. JA-38-141-07/2024

- 1. JEEVA A/L SUBRAMANIAM (No. K/P: 860312-98-9294)
2. KATYREKHAIR A/P SRIHARANAN (No. K/P: 800912-98-6540)

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG

DALAM MAHKAMAH TINGGI MALAYA DI PULAU PINANG DALAM KEABANGKRAPAN NO. (No. K/P: 720926-08-5761)

Per: Arumugam A/L Subernaniam (No. K/P: 720926-08-5761)

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322 Notices

FOCAL PARK SDN BHD (358989-H) NOTIS LELONG AWAM KENDERAAN UNTUK DILELONG SEPERTI SEDIA ADA TAMPAT & TARIKH LELONG: East Coast Region (Kota Bharu, Kuantan & Temerloh)

Table with columns: Item, Reg No, Jenis & Model, Tahun. Lists various car models and their registration numbers.

Perhatian: Kenderaan-kenderaan diatas yang tidak diada dalam perletangan akan dilelong semula pada 21-01-2025

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF HAVABUSA ENGINEERING SDN. BHD.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 439(2) of the Companies Act, 2016 that the following resolution set out below were duly passed by the members of the Company at the Members' Meeting...

REDUCTION OF SHARE CAPITAL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 117(1) of the Companies Act 2016 (the Act), the Board of Directors of the Company has resolved to reduce the share capital of the Company...

1. THAT subject to the approval from Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia, the share capital of the Company of RM6,000,000.00 divided into 60,000 issued and fully paid-up ordinary shares...

2. THAT the Directors of the Company be authorized with full powers to take all such steps as they may deem necessary...

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

MASNOOR NAKASHIRI Dated: 10 January 2025

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF HAVABUSA ENGINEERING SDN. BHD.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of HAVABUSA ENGINEERING SDN BHD, which is being wound up voluntarily are required on or before 10 January 2025 to send in their names and addresses...

Any creditor of the Company may apply to the High Court for the Special Resolutions to be cancelled within six weeks from the date of the Special Resolutions.

Wong Tak Keong Company Director

Office based in Petaling Jaya (5 days a week)

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF SOLAR AND LUNAR PRESS SDN. BHD.

(Company No. 44357-X) (IN MEMBERS VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act, 2016, the FINAL MEETING of the Company will be held at 11.00 a.m. for the following purposes:-

- 1. To receive the Liquidators' Statement of Account showing the manner in which the winding up has been conducted and the property of the Company has been disposed of, and of hearing any explanation that may be given by the Liquidators.

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF DATA PROFFCORP SDN. BHD.

(Company No. 198001002982) (IN MEMBERS VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 459(1) of the Companies Act, 2016, the FINAL MEETING of the Company will be held at 11.00 a.m. for the following purposes:-

- 1. To receive the Liquidators' Statement of Account showing the manner in which the winding up has been conducted and the property of the Company has been disposed of, and of hearing any explanation that may be given by the Liquidators.

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF LA DREAM RENOVATION SDN. BHD.

(Company No. 201001002982) (IN MEMBERS VOLUNTARY WINDING UP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 459 of the Companies Act 2016 that a Final General Meeting of the Members of the Company will be held at 2nd Floor, Actax Corporate Centre, No. 2, Jalan Bawasah, 10050 Georgetown, Penang on 10th day of February, 2025 at 2.00 p.m.

AGENDA

- 1. To consider and, if thought fit, adopt the final account of the Liquidator showing the manner in which the winding-up has been conducted and the property of the Company has been disposed of; and

2. To resolve under Section 518(3)(b) of the Companies Act 2016 that after the expiration of three (3) months from the date of Final General Meeting, the books, accounts and documents of the Company and of the Liquidator be destroyed.

Dated this 10th day of January, 2025 Neoh Chin Wah Liquidator

Notes: 1. A member entitled to attend and vote at the General Meeting is entitled to appoint a proxy and vote in his stead. The proxy may be deposited to the Liquidators' address at Suite 15, 6th Floor, IOI Business Park, Bandar Puchong Jaya, 47170 Puchong, Selangor at least 48 hours before the date and time of the meeting.

322 Notices

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF HAVABUSA ENGINEERING SDN. BHD.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 439(2) of the Companies Act, 2016 that the following resolution set out below were duly passed by the members of the Company at the Members' Meeting...

REDUCTION OF SHARE CAPITAL

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Section 117(1) of the Companies Act 2016 (the Act), the Board of Directors of the Company has resolved to reduce the share capital of the Company...

1. THAT subject to the approval from Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia, the share capital of the Company of RM6,000,000.00 divided into 60,000 issued and fully paid-up ordinary shares...

2. THAT the Directors of the Company be authorized with full powers to take all such steps as they may deem necessary...

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

MASNOOR NAKASHIRI Dated: 10 January 2025

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPANIES ACT, 2016 AND IN THE MATTER OF HAVABUSA ENGINEERING SDN. BHD.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the creditors of HAVABUSA ENGINEERING SDN BHD, which is being wound up voluntarily are required on or before 10 January 2025 to send in their names and addresses...

Any creditor of the Company may apply to the High Court for the Special Resolutions to be cancelled within six weeks from the date of the Special Resolutions.

Wong Tak Keong Company Director

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# Tough draw for Djokovic

**WORLD NO. 1** Jannik Sinner was drawn yesterday against big-hitting Nicolas Pietrangeli to start his Australian Open defence while Novak Djokovic is on a collision course to meet Carlos Alcaraz in the quarterfinals.

Italy's Sinner defeated Russia's Daniil Medvedev in last year's final in Melbourne to secure his first major and went on to add the US Open and ATP Finals crowns to his collection.

But the top seed will begin his title defence under a doping cloud after twice testing positive for traces of the steroid clostebol in March.

He was exonerated by the International Tennis Integrity Agency but is awaiting the outcome of an appeal by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

The 23-year-old could meet Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas or Australian Alex de Minaur in the quarterfinals, and Medvedev in the semis.

Serbia's Djokovic drew American wildcard Nishesh Basavareddy to start but has a huge task in front of him to win an 11th Australian Open and record 25th Grand Slam.

He is seeded to meet world No. 10 Grigor Dimitrov in round four and Spain's Alcaraz in the last eight, before a potential clash with Alexander Zverev in the semifinals.

Alcaraz gets under way against Kazakhstan's

... as Sinner faces Jerry test at Australian Open

Alexander Shevchenko, who scored a confidence-boosting win over world No. 11 Tsitsipas at the recent United Cup tournament. Zverev will meet French wildcard Lucas Pouille.

In the women's draw, world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka kicks off her title defence against American former US Open winner Sloane Stephens.

The Belarusian top seed is looking to become the first woman since Martina Hingis (1997-99) to win three consecutive titles.

World No. 3 Coco Gauff also faces a tricky start, against 2020 Australian Open winner Sofia Kenin.

But second seed Iga Swiatek was handed an easier assignment against Czech doubles specialist Katerina Siniakova, ranked 46.

However, the Polish star has sixth seed Elena Rybakina and eighth seed Emma Navarro in her half of the draw.

Two-time major runner-up and fourth seed Jasmine Paolini takes on a qualifier, as does Chinese fifth seed Zheng Qinwen, who lost to Sabalenka in last year's final.

In another notable match, four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka opens against Caroline Garcia in a repeat of last year's first round clash that the French player won.

Should all go to plan, Sabalenka could meet Zheng in the quarterfinals and Gauff in the semis, with Swiatek projected to face Paolini in the last four.

The Australian Open starts Sunday. - AFP



Novak Djokovic. - AFP/PPIC

# Sabalenka eyes win to widen gap on rivals

**ARYNA SABALENKA** will look to join a select group of players to win three straight Australian Open titles this month but the big question ahead of the year's first Grand Slam is can anyone stop the Belarusian from tightening her grip on the women's game?

The 26-year-old world No. 1 is the red-hot favourite at Melbourne Park, where another victory would give her a fourth major title and widen the gap in the rankings to Poland's Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff of the United States.

Sabalenka, who started her season by winning an 18th career WTA title in Brisbane on Sunday, has reached at least the semifinals at nine of her last 12 Grand Slams, a run which included the addition of the US Open crown to her trophy cabinet.

That kind of form has earned comparisons with Serena Williams, who got to the final four at 10 Grand Slams between 2014 and 2017 during a run when the American great won six of her 23 major titles.

"Definitely, I've got some confidence at the Grand Slams," said Sabalenka, who can become the first woman to capture three successive Australian Open titles since Switzerland's Martina Hingis achieved the feat from 1997-1999.

"I know I'm capable of so many things, that I'm able to hold that beautiful trophy. It's good to know that. But there's still (some) way to go. A lot of things have to be done."

"You have to focus on improving yourself every day, do your best, and hope for the best. That's my mentality going into the Australian Open."

After being replaced by Sabalenka as world No. 1 one at the end of last season, Swiatek has no shortage of motivation heading into the Melbourne Park major.

The Pole held the top spot for 125 weeks during two spells from the 2022 season and while the clay courts of Paris continue to offer her the best chance of adding to her five major titles she is already showing strong form in Australia.

A Melbourne semifinalist in 2022, Swiatek, 23, delivered some strong individual performances in the United Cup mixed team competition, taking Poland to the final last weekend.

"I'm very satisfied with my game," said the world No. 2. "I was able to overcome difficult moments by maintaining a high level of tennis for a long time."

"This is what all players seek, so it's nice to feel like this already in the first week of competition."

Swiatek came up short in her bid to lead Poland to victory at the United Cup after she lost in straight sets to American Gauff, who hailed the win over the Pole as one of the best performances of her career.

Gauff's sole Grand Slam title came at Flushing Meadows in 2023 and she underlined her hardcourt credentials by beating both Sabalenka and Swiatek en route to winning the WTA Finals in November.

"I think after the way she finished (last season), she's going to be really interesting to see," said Australia's former women's doubles world number one Renneae Stubbs.

"I believe she has absolutely put her hands up to be one of the favourites for the Australian Open." - Reuters

322 Notices

DALAM MAHKAMAH MAJLISRET DI KUALA KUBU BHARU DALAM NESEN SELANGOR DARUL ISLAMIAN NO- RE-A72N0VC-266-11/2024

MAJLIS PERSANDARAN HULU SELANGOR (MPPHS) ... PLAINTIF DAN

CHANDRASEGARAN A/L ARUMUGAM (NO K/P: 700626-10-6307) ... DEFENDAN

NOTIS IKLAN

Kepada:

CHANDRASEGARAN A/L ARUMUGAM No.20, Jalan Desa 7/8, Bandar Country Homes, 46000 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

CHANDRASEGARAN A/L ARUMUGAM 11A, Jalan 10/1/00, Jalan Gasing, 46000 Rawang, Selangor Darul Ehsan.

**AMBIL PERHATIAN** bahawa satu Writ Saman dan Pernyataan Tututan telah dikeluarkan terhadap kamu dalam Mahkamah ini oleh MAJLIS PERBANDARAN HULU SELANGOR (MPPHS) yang berlandaskan di Jalan Bukit Kerajan, 46000 Kuala Kubu Bharu, Selangor Darul Ehsan dan Mahkamah telah membolehkan supaya Writ Saman dan Pernyataan Tututan tersebut disampaikan kepada kamu dengan memampakan salinan-salinanya beserta satu salinan yang dimeterai bagi Perintah untuk penyampaian ganti pada Papan Notis Mahkamah Majlister di Kuala Kubu Bharu, Selangor, memapal satu salinan Writ Saman bersama dengan Perintah tersebut ke alamat terakhir Defendan yang diketahui dan pengiklanan Perintah tersebut dalam satu kalendar selebar tempatan 'The Star' selama satu hari dan bahawa penyampaian, pengposan dan pengiklanan sedemikian dianggap sebagai penyampaian yang wajar dan mencukupi akan Writ Saman dan Pernyataan Tututan ini kesial kamu atas penamatan EMPAT (4) hari selepas tarikh terakhir penyampaian dan pengiklanan tersebut. **DAN SELANJUTNYA** AMBIL NOTIS bahawa tarikh pengurusan kes Writ Saman dan Pernyataan Tututan tersebut telah ditetapkan di hadapan Majlister **17.01.2025** pada **9.00** pagi di dalam Pengurusan Kes secara **ex-ante** (dalam talian).

Jika kamu berhasrat untuk menentang dan/atau membela diri, kamu mestilah dalam masa empat belas (14) hari dari tarikh penyampaian dan pengiklanan tersebut, menjadi sempurna memohon kepada Mahkamah untuk memajukan kehadiran di Mahkamah ini. Jika tidak, kuasa Pengiklanan boleh dikeluarkan terhadap kamu.

Writ Saman dan Pernyataan Tututan ini boleh dipertika oleh kamu dengan melalui permohonan kepada Mahkamah ini.

Bertarikh 30 Disember 2024

Pendolong Pendaftar Mahkamah Majlister Kuala Kubu Bharu

NOTIS IKLAN ini difailkan oleh **TUAN IBRAHIM & FUADAH**, Pengambila & Penganalisa bagi Plaintif yang berlandaskan di No.12F, Jalan Bidara 8, SU Mali, Saujana Utama 3, 47000, Sungai Buloh, Selangor, No. tel: 03-80381854/0201 email: info@ibrahimfuadah.my Raj.fax: 18711442/16724/MPPHS(HT)

## AO storylines

**THE** Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the year, begins in Melbourne on Sunday and promises to be jam-packed with plotlines. Here are five themes to watch for:

### Doping questions swirl

The Australian Open will get under way with the spectre of doping hanging over tennis. It emerged in August that Jannik Sinner, the defending champion in Melbourne, had failed two doping tests five months earlier. He was subsequently cleared by tennis authorities to continue playing. WADA has appealed against the decision to exonerate him and is seeking a ban of up to two years. Then five-time major champion Iga Swiatek accepted a one-month ban after also testing positive for a banned substance. She also denied knowingly doping, saying it came from contaminated non-prescription medication, with tennis authorities accepting her explanation.

### Djokovic tilt at history

Novak Djokovic is the last of the "Big Three" still playing, following the retirements of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. The 37-year-old Serb is the undoubted king of Melbourne Park, having won a leading 10 titles there. Another triumph would be his 25th Grand Slam crown overall, a record. In



2024 Djokovic failed to lift a major title in a year for the first time since 2017, calling it "one of the worst-performing seasons" of his career. Djokovic did, however, win gold in Paris for his first Olympic singles title.

### A match made in heaven?

Following that poor season by his sky-high standards, Djokovic made a surprise call to one of his old rivals to come and coach him. Enter Andy Murray. "We were going through names and I realised that the perfect coach for me at this point would be someone who has been through the experiences I am going through, possibly a multiple Grand Slam winner, a former number one," said Djokovic. Sitting in the coaching box will be a whole new experience for the three-time major champion Murray, who retired last year after persistent injury and is just a week older than Djokovic. It promises to be a fascinating dynamic to watch, especially if Djokovic turns his fire on his coaching team in the heat of battle.

### Can anyone stop Sabalenka?

Aryna Sabalenka is world No. 1 and has won the Australian Open for the

past two years. She also triumphed, again on hard courts, at the US Open in September. So who can stop her? Sabalenka deposed Swiatek at the top of the rankings in October and the Pole's record in Melbourne is average by her standards, her best run being the semifinals in 2022. It also remains to be seen how the scrutiny of Swiatek's drug case will affect her. Coco Gauff finished 2024 strongly, winning the China Open and the WTA Finals under a new coaching team, while another threat to Sabalenka could be Zheng Qinwen. Sabalenka beat Zheng in straight sets in last year's Melbourne final and defeated her at the US Open and in the final in Wuhan, but the 22-year-old Chinese won Paris Olympic gold. Or how about Naomi Osaka? She's a two-time Australian Open winner but is yet to recover top form since returning to tennis a year ago.

### Kyrgios is back (probably)

Nick Kyrgios has barely been seen on a tennis court in the past two years because of injury. The feeling is that the temperamental Australian has never fulfilled his talent after reaching the Wimbledon final in 2022 in his best performance. It would be a surprise if Kyrgios goes far in Melbourne after injuries and inaction. He pulled out of an exhibition match against Djokovic this week with an abdominal strain, in what was likely a precaution. The 29-year-old is always box-office, especially on home soil, and with a raucous crowd behind him he will be looking to prove the many doubters wrong. - AFP



## Neymar says 2026 World Cup will be his last

**NEYMAR** said that the 2026 World Cup will be his last adding he was confident that Brazil would qualify for the finals in North America.

"I know this will be my last World Cup, my last shot, my last chance and I will do everything I can to play in it," the 32-year-old attacker, who has not played for Brazil in more than a year, told *CNN*.

He also told the American news network in the interview published yesterday that he would not rule out reuniting with former Barcelona teammates Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez at US club Inter Miami.

"Obviously, playing again with Messi and Suarez would be incredible," Neymar said at an award ceremony in Dubai.

Brazil have struggled in South American World Cup qualifying.

After 12 of the 18 rounds, they are fifth in the 10-nation group. But the top six are guaranteed places in the World Cup and Brazil are five points ahead of Bolivia in seventh.

"I have a lot of faith in the team, in the players who are emerging, who are young," he said. "We're not in a position where we would like to be."

"I think together we can achieve something very big. We have a year, a year-and-a-half to work, to do the right things to reach the World Cup," Neymar said.

Neymar started Brazil's first four qualifying games but went off injured at halftime as they lost to Uruguay in October 2023. After knee surgery he was out for a year.

He returned for his Saudi club Al Hilal with two brief appearances in October and November but injured a hamstring and has not played since. He said he is targeting the World Cup.

"I want to be there, I'm going to try to do my best, to work very hard so that I can be with the Brazilian team."

He will be 34 by the time the competition in the USA, Canada and Mexico, kicks off.

He could play in the United States before then. Al Hilal will appear in the expanded Club World Cup in the United States in June where Miami, with Messi and Suarez, will also be competing. – AFP

## Milan back into groove under Conceicao

**SERGIO CONCEICAO** has brought back the feelgood factor to AC Milan as the seven-time European champions host Cagliari on Sunday (3.45am Malaysian time) still on a high from a dramatic Italian Super Cup triumph over local rivals and Serie A kings Inter Milan.

Little has gone right for Milan this season, with supporters demanding American owners RedBird sell the club as inconsistent performances and results left one of Italy's footballing giants miles off the title pace.

But the manner with which Conceicao has started his San Siro reign, replacing compatriot Paulo Fonseca just as Milan set off for Saudi Arabia and commandeering his new team to two fine wins over Juventus and Inter, has completely changed the atmosphere around the club.

Two goals down a minute into the second half of Monday's final in Riyadh, few would have back Milan to

bounce back against Italian champions Inter.

But Milan showed the sort of courage rarely seen this season to snatch victory deep in stoppage time, just as Conceicao did on his playing debut in Italy in 1998, when the Portuguese scored a last-gasp goal to win the Super Cup for Lazio.

Videos of Conceicao dancing for his players while smoking a chunky cigar in triumph immediately flew around social media and were shared by delighted fans in chat groups, celebrating an unexpected success and goading rivals *Interisti* who have lorded it over Milan in recent seasons.

Combative, charismatic Conceicao fits the profile fans wanted in the summer when they demanded league-leading Napoli boss Antonio Conte and the 50-year-old now has to guide Milan to the Champions League spots.

Milan are eighth and trail fourth-placed Lazio, who host Como tomorrow hoping to bounce back from a Rome derby defeat, by eight points having played two matches fewer.

One of those games in hand is at Como on Wednesday as the Super Cup contenders – the Milan clubs, Juventus and Atalanta – play the league fixtures they missed just after the turn of the year.

And Conceicao will see whether Rafael Leao and Theo Hernandez's sensational performances against Inter are a sign of things to come from two players who frequently clashed with Fonseca.

"After this kind of win players can lose motivation and get complacent," added Conceicao.

"That can't happen because we need to keep showing that we have a winner's attitude. Milan do not belong in seventh or eighth place in the league." – AFP

## Barcelona reach Super Cup final

Catalans boosted by Olmo, Victor news before beating Bilbao

**YOUNG STARLETS** Gavi and Lamine Yamal fired Barcelona, without Dani Olmo after his licence to play was revoked, into the Spanish Super Cup final with a 2-0 win against Athletic Bilbao in Jeddah yesterday.

Spanish playmaker Olmo was cleared to play again on a temporary basis before the game but the decision came too late for him or Pau Victor, in the same position, to feature against Copa del Rey winners Athletic.

Gavi put Barcelona ahead from close range after 17 minutes and teenage winger Yamal netted the second early after the break.

"Athletic are a very physical team that make you run a lot, we suffered above all towards the end, but we were able to play well and we're very happy," Yamal told *Movistar*.

The winger said Olmo and Victor were pleased to be allowed to play once more.

"In the end you're nervous when you can't play and when you get news like that, you're very happy," added Yamal.

Barca coach Hansi Flick hailed the decision from Spain's national sports council regarding Olmo

and Victor.

"The whole club is very happy for this right decision," said Flick, hoping to win his first silverware at the helm of Barca. "We wanted to show we are a team and we win also for them."

Barcelona, who qualified as La Liga runners-up, started brightly and Raphinha volleyed over from a fine Jules Kounde cross and forced Unai Simon into a good save with a

freekick.

It was no surprise when the Catalans broke the deadlock with Alejandro Balde cutting the ball back for Gavi, playing in Olmo's attacking midfield role, to turn home for his first goal since suffering a severe knee injury last season.

The 20-year-old pointed at an imaginary watch in his celebration, a nod to Olmo who regularly produces the same gesture after scoring.

Wojciech Szczesny, on his second start in goal for Barcelona, made a good save to keep Inaki Williams at bay before the break.

Barcelona doubled their lead early in the second half when Gavi slipped in Yamal who finished with aplomb.

Athletic coach Ernesto Valverde, who was sacked as Barcelona boss after a defeat at the same stadium in 2020, brought on Nico Williams to try and turn the game around.

The winger set up Oscar de Marcos to strike but the Athletic defender had strayed just offside and the goal was ruled out.

Inaki Williams also had a goal ruled out for offside after Frenkie De Jong's poor back-pass took a slight deflection off Alvaro Djaló on its way to the Ghana international.

"It's a shame given all the effort... but we have good things ahead of us and we have to continue," said Williams.

Barcelona were able to book their place in Sunday's final, in which Olmo will be allowed to feature.

"We don't care (who we face in the final), it will be hard and we want to win it, which is the important thing, and go back home with the trophy," said Yamal. – AFP



Barcelona's Lamine Yamal celebrates scoring his team's second goal during the Spanish Super Cup semifinal against Athletic Bilbao. – AFP/PPIC

### BRIEFS

#### LIV Golf's Niemann accepts Masters invite

**LIV GOLF'S** Joaquin Niemann was among two golfers who accepted a special invitation to compete in this year's Masters as part of the tournament's tradition of inviting leading international players who are not otherwise qualified for the event. In addition to the 26-year-old Chilean, Augusta National yesterday also said it extended an invitation to Denmark's Nicolai Hojgaard, who in his Masters debut last April held top-six positions after each of the first three rounds. "In support of Augusta National's efforts to develop interest in golf globally, deserving international players not otherwise qualified have been invited throughout the tournament's history," Fred Ridley, chairman of Augusta National Golf Club, said in a statement. "The tradition continues as we welcome Nicolai and Joaquin back to the Masters, as both players have showcased their talent while competing

around the world. We look forward to their arrival this April."

#### Maxwell misses out

**GLENN MAXWELL'S** hopes of reviving his Test career may be over after the all-rounder missed out on selection in Australia's much-changed squad for the Sri Lanka tour. All-rounder Mitchell Marsh has also been overlooked for the squad, which will be captained by Steve Smith, having been dropped for the fifth Test against India in Sydney after a poor run with the bat. Selectors have instead opted for uncapped all-rounder Cooper Connolly as another spin option, joining Nathan Lyon, Todd Murphy and Matthew Kuhnemann. Batter Nathan McSweeney, who was dropped mid-series against India after struggling as an opener, has been recalled in the 16-man roster named yesterday for the two-test series starting in Galle from Jan. 29. Teenage opener Sam Konstas and all-rounder Beau Webster have been retained in the squad following impressive test debuts

against India. Uncapped quick Sean Abbott joins Mitchell Starc and Scott Boland among the pace options.

#### Matsuyama seeks Hawaii sweep

**HIDEKI MATSUYAMA** opened the PGA Tour season in record-breaking style last weekend at the Plantation Course in Kapalua, Hawaii. The Japanese star will ride a wave of birdies to Honolulu this week as he tries to make it a two-week sweep at the Sony Open in Hawaii, beginning today at Waialae Country Club. Matsuyama won The Sentry on Sunday with a 35-under 257, the lowest 72-hole score in relation to par in PGA Tour history. He became the seventh player to win both of the tour's Hawaii events, having previously captured the Sony Open in 2022. "I'm very happy. I wanted to definitely win both tournaments in Hawaii," Matsuyama said through a translator. "So, I'm very happy to be able to do that." He will be the man to beat this week thanks to his current form, his past success at Waialae and the fact that he is the only top-10

player in the field.

#### Kiwis crush Sri Lanka to win series

**NEW ZEALAND** ripped through Sri Lanka's top order on Wednesday to win the rain-reduced second one-day international in Hamilton by 113 runs and clinch the series. Sri Lanka spinner Maheesh Theekshana took a hat-trick as the home side posted 255-9 off 37 overs, but the tourists could only muster 142 all out off 30.2 overs in response. It followed New Zealand's comfortable nine-wicket win in Wellington to go 2-0 up in the series, with the third match to be played in Auckland tomorrow. Sri Lanka's top order has misfired badly in both games. They slumped to 22-4 at Seddon Park, leaving little chance of reaching their target of 256 in a match reduced to 37 overs each because of early rain. Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka said their run target should have been achievable. "I think it was a fair score for batsmen in this kind of small ground, and it's a fair pitch," he said. "I think again the bad batting in the power play cost us the game."

# Postecoglou hoping for Cup boost

BY **DUNCAN BECH**

**A**NGE POSTECOGLU believes lifting the Carabao Cup at a time when Tottenham are stricken by injuries could be a springboard to greater prizes.

Spurs sit 12th in the Premier League and have not won a match in any competition since the 4-3 victory over Manchester United on Dec 19 that set up yesterday's semifinal first leg against Liverpool.

Postecoglou has traditionally viewed League form as the best barometer of his team's progress but with 10 players out injured and Pape Sarr and James Maddison serving suspensions against Arne Slot's side, he believes something special could be forged in adversity.

"We're having a tough season. Our League form is really poor and we need to improve," he said.

"But we are in a semifinal of a competition and with the group of players we've got at the moment,

*Carabao trophy could be springboard for Tottenham, says Aussie*

if we can achieve something where they are in their careers, it sets you up really well for what we're trying to build here. I think it does.

"It's not the be-all and end-all, as I've said many times. But if we get to a final and win a trophy, we'll look back on this period of where we are as a small group of players having to rise above and beyond to get there. That will be as worthy of the achievement as actually winning it."

Tottenham enter the showdown in north London buoyed by the knowledge that Son Heung-min will remain at the club until at least the summer of 2026 after activating an option to extend his contract.

The South Korea forward is an influential player for Spurs, scoring 169 goals in 431 appearances, but Postecoglou insists there is no rush to discuss his longer-term future.

"It's not something that needs to be forced one way or another," he said.

"When you've got a player like Sonny who has such a standing at a club - and I know how highly the club regards him and how much he loves the club - I just think it'll all happen mutually.

"I don't think the club will be in a position of trying to force anything or Sonny would try and force anything.

"There is enough respect and credit between both parties that those kind of discussions will happen naturally and I think will come to a conclusion that everyone is happy with."

Affected by a hamstring injury, Son has struggled to find his best form this season with his record of five goals and six assists below his usual output.

A month ago Postecoglou stated that it is

dangerous to write off the 32-year-old, comparing his situation to Liverpool's outstanding Mohamed Salah when he was struggling for form.

Returning to the theme, Postecoglou said: "Mo is an unbelievable player but he's playing in a fantastic team that are flying at the moment.

"I'd hazard to say that if you put Sonny in Liverpool's team, I reckon his goalscoring return would be decent.

"It's hard for our players at the moment, they're trying awfully hard to be the best they can be.

"But when we're at our best, I still think you'll see Sonny's return, in terms of his ability to score goals and be really effective for us. I don't think that's diminished at all." - The Independent

## Bentancur in hospital for further checks

**RODRIGO BENTANCUR** has been hospitalised after the Tottenham star was stretchered off during yesterday's League Cup clash with Liverpool.

Bentancur went down unopposed just six minutes into the game while attempting a diving header from a Spurs corner.

The 27-year-old received medical treatment on the pitch and was eventually stretchered off following a lengthy delay.

In a statement posted on X, Tottenham issued an update on the midfielder's condition, saying: "We can confirm Rodrigo is conscious, talking and will go to hospital for further checks."

Liverpool followed up with a statement of their own, adding: "@SpursOfficial We're all thinking of you, Rodrigo. Speedy recovery."

Brennan Johnson replaced the Uruguayan international for Tottenham, with 11 minutes added on to the first half following the injury stoppage.

Commenting at half-time during the League Cup semifinal, *Sky Sports* presenter Mark Chapman said: "The latest we have on Rodrigo Bentancur after that awful-looking injury in the first half, when he was stretchered off the doctors accompanied him to the dressing room and he is still in there with the doctors. That is the only update that we have at the moment."

Just before the second half got underway, Chapman followed up with: "We've received another update in the last few minutes on Rodrigo Bentancur, who is conscious and talking and is on his way to hospital for further tests."

The incident had caused panic among the players, given it happened when Bentancur wasn't surrounded by any Liverpool defenders.

Describing the incident, co-commentator Alan Smith said: "There's a lot of concern there.

"Bentancur went for the diving header, nobody challenged him I don't think. I think he just fell awkwardly."

Lead commentator Rob Hawthorne said: "Yeah, I think he stooped low to try and get his head on the ball and possibly ended up crashing into the ground and landing on his head which is a concern that Spurs could do without after such a bright start.

"Immediately players from both sides were urging the medics on such was the urgency of the situation with Rodrigo Bentancur."

Smith concluded: "You saw the reaction of his teammates, they knew their pal was in a bit of trouble." - Express Newspapers

## Hammer falls on Lopetegui

**WEST HAM UNITED** have sacked head coach Julen Lopetegui after seven months in charge, with former Chelsea boss Graham Potter listed as the leading candidate to take over.

The Spaniard had been preparing for the team for their FA Cup third-round tie against Aston Villa tomorrow (4am Malaysian time). But the board have decided to act, bringing an end to the 58-year-old's tenure.

Lopetegui was relieved of his duties by David Sullivan after holding crunch talks with the West Ham owner in a meeting on Wednesday.

It comes after the Hammers were left languishing in 14th place in the Premier League table following their 4-1 defeat at the hands of Manchester City.

A club statement reads: "West Ham United can confirm that head coach Julen Lopetegui has today left the club.

"The first half of the 2024/25 season has not aligned with the club's ambitions and the club has therefore taken action in line with its objectives.

"The club can confirm that assistant head coach Pablo Sanz, head of performance Oscar Caro, head analyst Juan Vicente Peinado, fitness coach Borja De Alba and technical coach Edu Rubio have also left with immediate effect.

"The board would like to thank Julen and his staff for their hard work during their time with the Hammers and wish them every success for the future.

"The process of appointing a replacement is underway. The club will be making no further comment at

this time."

It is claimed that Sullivan has already spoken to three managerial candidates, with widespread reports suggesting that Potter, 48, is the favourite to take the vacancy.

The Englishman has been out of work since he was brutally sacked by Chelsea just seven months into a five-year contract.

Potter has been biding his time for the right role to come along, spurning the chance to take jobs at other Premier League clubs.

But it appears that he will end his 22-month absence from the dugout to replace Lopetegui after holding positive talks with West Ham supremo Sullivan.

According to *talkSPORT*, Potter is "expected" to be named as the direct replacement for Lopetegui, although it remains to be seen whether he will officially take charge of their game at Villa Park.

Lopetegui was hired in May 2024 as David Moyes' successor after the Scot left at the end of his contract after a second stint in charge that lasted four years.

The former Wolves coach, who has previously worked with Spain, Benfica and Real Madrid, signed a two-year deal with the option of a third included.

However, he struggled to implement his style of football on the team and results have been poor of late, with boos often emanating from around the London Stadium this season. - Express Newspapers



Julen Lopetegui.  
- AFP/IC

## Timber has big aspirations at Arsenal ahead of Devils clash

BY **PHILIP DUNCAN**

**JURRIEN TIMBER** said Arsenal are determined to "win everything" and has challenged his teammates to bounce back from their disappointing defeat against Newcastle by beating Manchester United in the FA Cup.

The Gunners' bid to win this season's Carabao Cup suffered a major dent after they fell to a 2-0 home loss to Newcastle in the opening leg of their semifinal.

The defeat came after Arsenal could manage only a 1-1 draw at Brighton to leave their Premier League title ambitions in danger with Liverpool six points clear having played a game less.

They will next be back in action on Sunday (11pm Malaysian time) when hosting United as they look to secure their spot in the fourth round of a competition they last won in 2020 - a triumph which remains Mikel Arteta's sole major trophy of his five-year tenure.

Asked if the third-round clash will carry greater importance in the wake of their reverse to Newcastle, Timber said: "It was already a big game because United always is.

"We want to win and give the fans something to celebrate so we are going to give our all on Sunday. I am really looking forward to that game and to bounce back. It is another cup game so we have to win.

"Every competition is really important. We want to win everything. It is not easy, and it is not always going to happen, but that is why it is important that we bounce back. The focus is on the FA Cup and then, after that, the Premier League."

Arsenal secured a 2-0 league victory over United last month but Ruben Amorim's side will arrive in north London brimming with confidence after their 2-2 draw against Liverpool at Anfield.

But Timber added: "We played them already a month ago so we know what we are getting. They have a good squad with a lot of good players. It is not going to be easy but we will be ready." - The Independent



## RESULTS

**CARABAO CUP (Semifinal, 1st leg)**  
**Tottenham 1 (Bergvall 86) Liverpool 0.**

**SPANISH SUPER CUP (Semifinal)**  
**Athletic Bilbao 0 Barcelona 2 (Gavi 17, Yamal 32).**

## SHORTS

### Turtles register first ACC win

**TERENGGANU FC** picked up their first win in the 2024/25 Asean Club Championship (ACC) campaign after beating Myanmar champions Shan United FC 5-0 in their third Group A match at the Thuwanna Stadium in Yangon on Wednesday.

Despite playing on the opponent's turf, Terengganu FC who registered a lost and a draw in their first two matches, produced a sizzling display to take a comfortable 3-0 lead in the first half.

The combination of national players Muhammad Safawi Rasid and Muhammad Akhyar Abdul Rashid saw the visitors convert a penalty in the 11th minute and in first-half extra time respectively after Manuel Ott had doubled the lead in the 25th minute.

To make matters worst, Shan United FC player Htet Min Zue was shown a red card after tackling a Terengganu player in the penalty box just before halftime.

The start of the second half saw Terengganu continued to press and managed to score two more goals through Ott's header in the 64th minute and Muhammad Akhyar's strike in the 71st minute, thus providing three valuable points for the team.

Terengganu is scheduled to host PSM Makassar at the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium, Kuala Nerus on Jan 22 while Shan United will face BG Pathum United from Thailand in Yangon.

### NSI CEO set to step down in February

**AHMAD FAEDZAL** Md Ramli's tenure as chief executive officer (CEO) of the National Sports Institute (NSI) will end on Feb 24.

The 47-year-old said there is no possibility of his services being extended as he is subject to the Public Service Department (JPA) procedure.

"I will complete my service (with NSI) on Feb 24 after six years. My tenure does not extend until the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics. I am an officer with the Administrative and Diplomatic Service (PDT), so after this, the JPA will decide where I will be posted.

"No possibility (of extension) because I am subject to JPA procedure, which is usually for five years, and if there is an extension, it is based on certain cases," he told *Bernama* yesterday.

Asked about his best moments as CEO of the NSI so far, Ahmad Faedzal said that offering services to national athletes during the Covid-19 pandemic gave him and his team the opportunity to think out of the box.

"At that time, we faced various challenges on the sports bubble, and then the quarantine issue. There was also the difficult situation at the Tokyo Olympics, which had very stringent standard operating procedures (SOPs).

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime situation to help athletes at the highest level," he said.

On Feb 25, 2019, Ahmad Faedzal, the then deputy director of the Social Services Department, Ministry of Economic Affairs, replaced Dr Mohd Khairi Zawi as the new NSI CEO.

## National women elite keglers shine, secure WC spot

**THREE** of Malaysia's elite women bowlers stylishly secured their spots in the Top 32 of the individual event at the 2025 International Bowling Federation World Cup after dominating their respective group stages in Kowloon, Hong Kong on Wednesday.

Siti Safiyah Amirah Abdul Rahman, Natasha Roslan and Sin Li Jane will be joined by another national representative, Gillian Lim, who also

made it into the Top 32 after finishing fifth in her group stage.

In Group A, Siti Safiyah amassed 36 points with 2,783 pinfalls, while Natasha led Group C with 30 points and 2,800 pinfalls.

Li Jane topped Group D with 33 points and 2,723 pinfalls, while Gillian scored 24 points with 2,785 pinfalls in Group B.

"The past two days have been nervous for me because it's my first

World Cup, the day after tomorrow we will be in the knockout format which is based on three games, so I will do my best and see how it goes," said Gillian in a video shared with reporters.

Meanwhile, Siti Safiyah is gunning for a semifinal spot.

"Over the past two days of this tournament, I've been in first place. This has given me confidence in my game plan.

"My target is to steadily progress

from the Top 32 to the Top 16, then the Top 8, and hopefully make it to the semifinals," she said.

"After the singles event, we'll have the team event. If I don't meet my target in the singles, we'll give our best effort in the team event because that is a very important event for Team Malaysia," she said.

The women's individual Top 32 knockout round is scheduled for today. - Bernama



National mixed doubles pair Chen Tang Jie (right) and Toh Ee Wei in action against Taiwan's Lu Ming-Che-Hung En Tzu yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

## Class act

Tang Jie-Ee Wei cruise into Malaysian Open quarterfinals

**TOP** national mixed doubles pair Chen Tang Jie-Toh Ee Wei crushed Taiwan's Hung En Tzu-Lu Ming Che 21-8, 21-14 to storm into the quarterfinals of the 2025 Malaysia Open badminton championships at the Axiata Arena yesterday.

The third-seeded Malaysians hope to check into the last four by getting past Japan's Hiroki Midorikawa-Natsu Saito today.

"No one likes to lose and it's the same with us. It's just that we don't want to think about tomorrow's match yet.

"We just want to rest and undergo the rehabilitation process properly so that we can perform at our best later," Tang Jie told reporters.

Meanwhile, Ee Wei is bent on giving her best to make sure they can notch a fourth win over Midorikawa-Saito.

The world No. 5 best-ever achievement at the Malaysia Open came in the 2023 edition when they reached the quarterfinals, where they lost 21-19, 21-9 to Thailand's Dechapol Puavaranukroh-Sapsiree Taerattanachai.

Earlier, the unseeded Midorikawa-Saito stunned fifth-seeded Indonesians Dejan Ferdinansyah-Gloria Emanuelle Widjaja 21-17, 21-17.

Professional men's doubles duo Nur Azizri

Ayub-Tan Wee Kiong became the seventh and last Malaysian representatives to earn a second round spot following a rubber-set victory against Xie Hao Nan-Zeng Wei Han from China, 21-15, 12-21, 21-18.

Meanwhile, national young women's doubles pair, Ong Xin Yee-Carmen Ting failed to make a mark in their first Malaysia Open appearance, as they succumbed to Sung Shuo Yun-Yu Chien Hui of Taiwan, 15-21, 15-21.

Meanwhile, professional mixed doubles pair Goh Soon Huat-Shevon Lai, followed in Tan Jie-Ee Wei's footsteps to the quarterfinals after prevailing against Indian pair Sathish Kumar Karunakaran-Aadya Variyath in straight sets, 21-17, 21-10.

Shevon said their experience would help them to chase a semifinal spot in the next round tomorrow against seventh seeds Zhang Chi-Chen Xing of China who defeated Dhruv Kapila-Tanisha Crasto from India, 21-13, 22-20.

"I think our experience get us through to the quarter final. We won't put pressure on ourselves," she said.

National men's doubles duo Aaron Chia-Soh Wooi Yik lost their round of 16 match against Taiwanese pair Lee Fang-Chih-Lee Fang-Jen 21-14, 21-18 yesterday. - Bernama



## MALAYSIA OPEN 2025

(National shuttlers in action today)

### Round of 16

**Men's doubles**  
 Jin Yong (KOR) vs Ong Yew Sin  
 Kang Min Hyuk vs Teo Ee Yi  
 21-23, 21-16, 18-21

Lee Jhe-Huei (TPE) vs Man Wei Chong  
 Yang Po-Hsuan vs Tee Kai Wun  
 15-21, 13-21

**Lee Fang-Chih (TPE)** vs Aaron Chia  
**Lee Fang-Jen** vs Soh Wooi Yik  
 21-14, 21-18

**Mixed doubles**  
**Chen Tang Jie** vs Lu Ming Che (TPE)  
**Toh Ee Wei** vs Hung En-Tzu  
 21-8, 21-14

S. Karunakaran (IND) vs Goh Soon Huat  
 A. Variyath vs Shevon Jemie Lai  
 10-21, 17-21

\*All results at press time

## Moksin wins in Labuan

**BRUNEI'S** Moksin Jinaidi emerged as the overall gross champion in Labuan's 9th Senior Men's Open Golf Championship, delivering a stellar performance with a cumulative score of 160 over the two-day competition.

The two-day tournament from Jan 7-8 took place at the 72-par, nine-hole course of Labuan Golf Club (LGC). Moksin, representing Pantairi Golf Club, displayed remarkable consistency, carding 79 on the first day and 81 on the second to create a historic milestone by becoming the first golfer from Brunei to claim the title. - Bernama

## NSI always ready to help Tze Yong get back to his smashing best

**THE** National Sports Institute (NSI) provides men's singles shuttler Ng Tze Yong with psychological assistance and not medications that can help him recover instantaneously, said its chief executive officer Ahmad Faedzal Md Ramli.

He is confident that the effort taken will succeed as all parties are highly committed to ensuring the 2022 Commonwealth Games silver medalist is fully prepared to return to competing at the highest level.

"We are in constant contact with Tze Yong and, even during the rehabilitation process at NSI, we not only focused on injury rehabilitation but also how he can overcome the mental barrier because whenever athletes are in the rehab phase, their

mental state is quite fragile.

"I believe that is the process being taken with Tze Yong. In any sport, athletes must work together with us so that we can face the challenges together and be open enough to tell us what other problems they have so that we can help them," he said when met by *Bernama* yesterday.

Meanwhile, Akademi Badminton Malaysia (ABM) coaching director Remy Mainaky revealed that although Tze Yong has rejoined training, the 25-year-old is still struggling to cope with the trauma of the two back injuries he suffered.

Tze Yong first suffered a muscle tear in his back at the 2024 Malaysia Open followed by a spinal

injury at the 2024 Badminton Asia Team Championship (BATC), which saw him undergo a series of surgeries.

This saw Tze Yong miss out on making his debut at the 2024 Olympic Games after the Badminton Association of Malaysia (BAM) confirmed that he was not ready to continue training or take part in high-level competitions due to the risk of aggravating his back injury.

NSI medical specialist Dr Jasmiza Khuzairi had even commented about the rarity of Tze Yong's case, saying that, out of the 2,000 operations conducted at NSI, only two such operations had been carried out. - Bernama



# theSun Sports

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SCAN ME



National doubles Teo Ee Yi (right) and Ong Yew Sin in action against South Koreans Jin Yong and Min Hyuk Kang (not pictured) at the Petronas Malaysia Open 2025 at Axiata Arena in Bukit Jalil yesterday. - BERNAMAPIC

## Yew Sin-Ee Yi maintain winning streak

NATIONAL professional doubles, Teo Ee Yi-Ong Yew Sin, took the national challenge to the quarterfinals of the Malaysian Open Badminton Championships yesterday.

After defeating the fourth seed of the tournament from Indonesia, Muhammad Rian Ardianto-Fajar Alfian, in the round of 32, they went

down to meet the representatives of South Korea, Kang Min-Hyuk-Jin-yong, the 23-21 victory in the first set was enough to give the national pair a boost.

However, the representative of South Korea managed to drag the game to the deciding set through a

21-16 victory.

In the third set, Ee Yi-Yew Sin, returned to set the pace and managed to lead the game 16-13, before winning 21-18 thus bringing the country's challenge to the quarterfinals. - Agencies

# Fuming Slot

Liverpool boss rages after Spurs teen Bergvall avoids red to sink Reds

LIVERPOOL BOSS Arne Slot slammed the controversial decision not to send off Tottenham's Lucas Bergvall before the teenager sealed a 1-0 win in the League Cup semifinal first leg yesterday.

Slot was furious that Bergvall avoided a second booking after tripping Kostas Tsimikas with a sliding tackle.

Tsimikas was forced off the pitch following the challenge but referee Stuart Attwell opted to give Liverpool the chance to counter-attack.

When Liverpool lost possession just seconds later, Tottenham took advantage by breaking into the space vacated by Tsimikas to score the 86th minute winner.

Dominic Solanke's pass was converted by Bergvall for the 18-year-old's first Tottenham goal.

But fuming Slot said: "The decision made had a lot of impact on the result tonight.

"The fourth official told me why he thought it wasn't a second yellow and he heard that probably from the referee.

"What we can say about it is that he said he didn't stop the counter-attack, every manager would say they prefer the second yellow than a free-kick.

"Spurs weren't happy with a few decisions that happened (against Newcastle) on Sunday. Maybe today a decision went in favour of them, which is of course very unlucky for us."

Inevitably, Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou saw the incident differently.

Asked if Bergvall was lucky to avoid a red card, Postecoglou said: "Great question, no he wasn't.

"It's happened to us consistently, you look at our games, and we've asked the officials and they've said if you play advantage, as long as it's not a cynical tackle, then yellow card doesn't get shown. Now to me, that was pretty clear."

It was a cathartic victory for Postecoglou, who has been under fire from frustrated fans throughout a turbulent season.

Injury-hit Tottenham are languishing in 12th place in the Premier League amid criticism of the Australian's overly-attacking tactics.

Postecoglou's claim earlier this season that he always wins a trophy in his second campaign with a club has been used to ridicule the former Celtic boss as Tottenham's struggles increased.

But he is convinced Tottenham are heading in the right direction as he tries to bring the club their first silverware since the 2008 League Cup.

"People can keep mocking me about it but we will see," he said.

"We haven't achieved anything yet, just that feeling of getting a result in a big game against arguably the best team in the world right now." - AFP



Tottenham's Archie Gray jumps to collect the ball in front of Liverpool's Diogo Jota during the Carabao Cup semifinal first leg match yesterday. - AFP